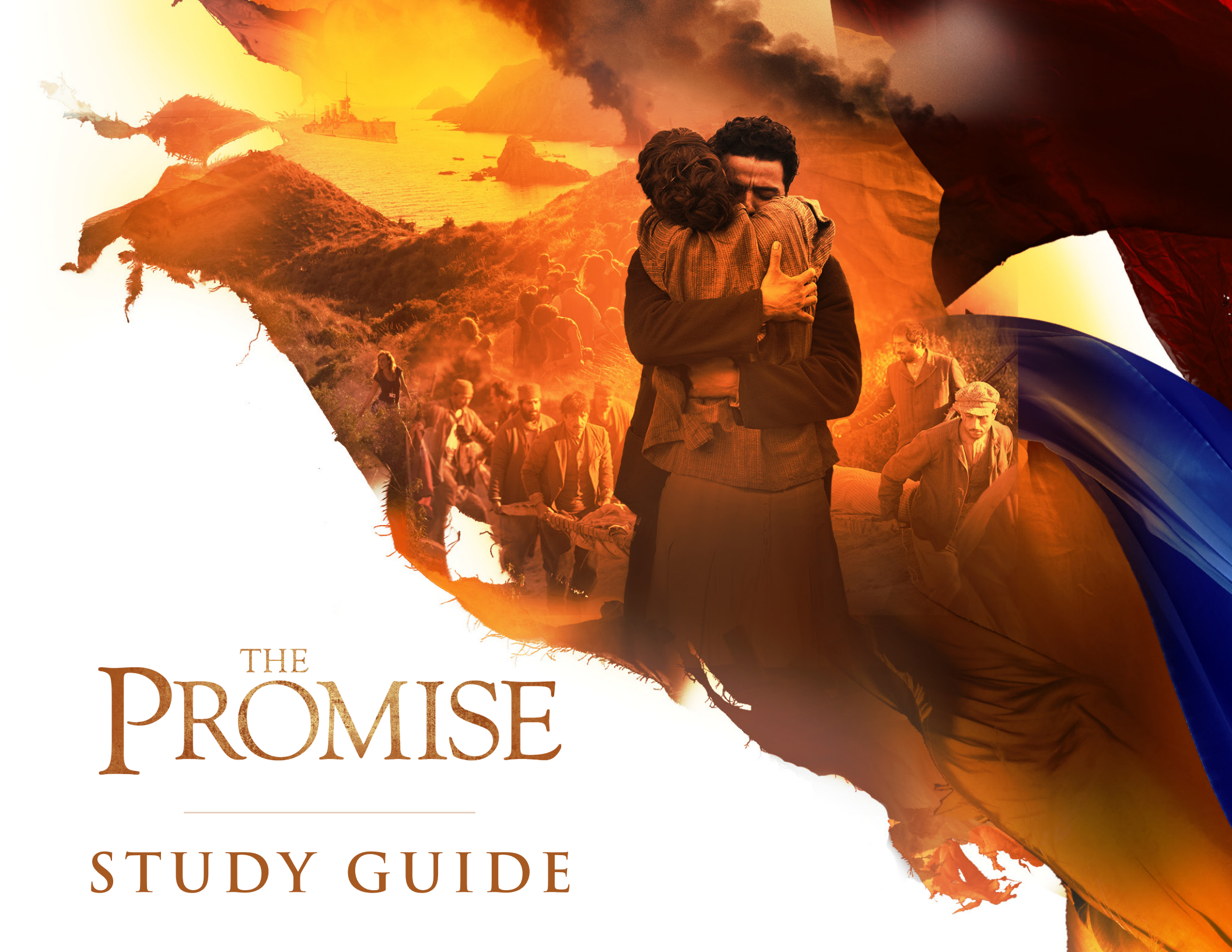


THE PROMISE

STUDY GUIDE



01 OVERVIEW

During the First World War, the Turkish government embarked on a policy to eliminate systematically its civilian Armenian population. Starting in April 1915, the Armenians and other Christian groups — Assyrians and Greeks — were targeted by the Young Turk military regime, which subscribed to a racist policy of "Turkey for the Turks."

Between 1915 and 1923, as many as 1,500,000 Armenians were killed through massacres, forced deportations, starvation, disease and exposure, and brutally dispossessed of their ancestral homeland of several thousand years.

In 1915, the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire was around 2 million. By 1918, more than one million were dead, with hundreds of thousands made homeless, stateless refugees. While the largest numbers of Armenians were massacred in 1915 and 1916, the genocide continued after the Young Turk regime fell in 1918. Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), leader of the Turkish nationalist movement, continued to target Armenians in a series of military campaigns — Russian Armenia in 1920, Cilicia in southern Turkey in 1921, and Izmir (Smyrna) in 1921-1922. When Atatürk went on to found the new



Turkish Republic in 1923, the so-called "Armenian Question" (including all matters of resettlement and restitution) was considered closed and, as far as the international community was concerned, forgotten.

Where is Armenia?

Historical Armenia is located in the Middle East at the crossroads of three continents — Europe, Asia and Africa. It is bound by the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea to the north, the Caspian Sea to the east, the Syrian Desert to the south, Anatolia to the west and the Mediterranean Sea to the southwest.

The Armenian people have been divided between the Turkish Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire and Persia. In 1915, four-fifths of Historical Armenia was in Turkey; one-fifth in the Russian Empire. In 1920, the Russian part of Armenia was incorporated into the Soviet Union and a part of it (Kars and Ardahan) was annexed by Turkey. In 1991, Soviet Armenia declared its independence from the Soviet Union. Today, the Republic of Armenia borders on Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran.



02 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Roots of Genocide

The Young Turks used the occasion of the First World War as a cover for their genocidal plan. But why did they want to eliminate the Armenians?

The Armenians were an indigenous people that lived on the great highland plateau that constituted the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. They had lived here for more than 3000 years. They established their first historic kingdom in the first millennium B.C. Long periods of independence were interrupted by the shadow of powerful empires — Persian, Roman, Arab, Byzantine, and Mongol. Withstanding the domination of the Persian Achaemenian and Parthian empires, as well as conquest by the Romans, Armenians unified into a formidable empire in the first century BC. Around 301 A.D., they became the first nation to accept the Christian faith as a state religion.

From Independence to a Subject Nation

Armenian independence in the traditional homelands ended in the eleventh century, when Seljuk Turks from Central Asia overran the Kingdom of Ani in Greater Armenia. In the sixteenth century,



Sultan Abdul Hamid II

Armenia became part of the Ottoman Empire. For 600 years, Armenians would be a subject people on their own ancestral land, living under a reign of oppression as second-class citizens under Islamic law. As non-Muslims they were obligated to pay discriminatory taxes and denied participation in government. Despite these restrictions, many prospered in the arts, architecture, manufacturing, and the silk trade.



Courtesy of the Armenian Film Foundation. Voices from the Lake.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Armenians started to see the possibility of greater freedom. Through trade and interaction with Europe and the influence of American Protestant and other missionaries in Turkey, the Armenian mercantile and intellectual classes experienced a cultural renaissance. In the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans were demanding greater political participation and democracy. Mirroring this movement, and influenced by the ideals of the French and American revolutions, Armenians sought greater justice and equality in the Ottoman Empire.

The Armenian Question

With demands from the Armenians for greater civil rights, the fragile relationship between the ruling sultan and his Christian subjects fractured.

The sultan could not imagine an egalitarian society in the Ottoman Empire. As a result, oppression and victimization of the Armenian minority increased.

Following several wars and increasing corruption, Turkey had become indebted to European countries, earning the title "The Sick Man of Europe." European powers, using their financial leverage for their own interests, tried to impose sanctions and reforms on Turkey, to help the Armenians. These European efforts led to the internationalization of the so-called "Armenian Question" with a series of diplomatic arrangements, beginning with the San Stefano Treaty in 1878 and the Congress of Berlin in 1878. All were designed to pressure Turkey into treating its Christian minorities better.



Clara Barton

This pressure only hardened Turkey's resolve. Under Sultan Abdul Hamid II, a wave of terror was unleashed against the Armenians. In 1894, the first acts of extermination began, culminating two years later with more than 100,000 Armenians massacred, forced conversions, and enormous economic losses. These atrocities were widely reported in United States and Europe and became the impetus behind the first international humanitarian relief campaigns by Clara Barton and the Red Cross.

In response to the Hamidian Massacres, some Armenians took up arms in self-defense. This compounded Turkish fears that one day Armenians, like their Christian counter-parts in the Balkans, would try to break away from the Empire.



Postcard publicizing the new Turkish constitution featuring the slogan, "Long live the fatherland, long live the nation, long live liberty."



Declaration of the Young Turk Revolution by Armenian, Greek and Muslim leaders of the Ottoman millets, 1908

The Young Turks Offer Hope

After the Hamidian massacres, Armenians did not push for independence, nor had they done so before. Almost all Armenian leaders sought reforms and a degree of self-government. They wanted an equal place in Ottoman society, the right to vote and freedom from harassment and persecution. In 1908, reform-minded Turkish nationalists took control of the fragile Ottoman government. They called themselves Ittihad or "Young Turks." Armenians were hopeful, believing in the Young Turks' call for greater democracy and equality between all Ottoman subjects.

That hope was short-lived. Only a year



Radical Turkish nationalists within the Young Turk movement (The Promise)

later, in 1909, between 20,000-30,000 Armenians were massacred in Adana and other areas in the region of Cilicia near the Mediterranean Sea.

Armenians suspected the Young Turks were involved in the massacres. In fact, the Young Turks were moving to the extreme right. The Ottoman Empire was crumbling fast. In 1911, the Italians invaded Libya, which had been under Ottoman control. The Balkan countries had also broken away in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. This last defeat produced a wave of Muslim refugees from newly independent Christian Balkan countries. Muslim refugees were also coming into Turkey from the expanding Russian empire. The Young Turk leadership wanted these Muslim refugees to be re-located in historic Armenian lands in Turkey.

Turkey for the Turks

Territorial losses and the desire to displace Armenians contributed to the rise of a new radical nationalist faction within the Young Turk movement. This faction took control of the country in 1913. They were led by three men — Enver, Minister of War; Talaat, Minister of the Interior; and Jemal, Minister of the Navy. The Young Turks created an ultra-nationalist policy — "Turkey for the Turks."

These radicalized Young Turks regarded Armenians as a privileged group, religious infidels, and a potential revolutionary force. The goal became



Erzerum massacres, 1896



Adana massacre, 1909

consolidation of the Turkish race by killing all Armenians who would not convert to Islam. The cover of the First World War and the Turkish alliance with Germany presented the opportunity to destroy the Armenians — as well as other Christian minorities, such as Greeks and Assyrians — with impunity. As seen in *The Promise*, the Young Turks' genocidal intentions became clear on April 24, 1915, when the Armenian leadership in Constantinople was rounded up, exiled and murdered.


03
ARMENIAN
GENOCIDE

A Systematic Government Policy

The extermination of the Armenians in Ottoman Turkey was well-organized. In 1913, the Committee of Union and Progress, called Ittihad or the Young Turks, formed a dictatorial ruling triumvirate, overrunning the Turkish legislature. They formed a quasi-military Special Organization, under the direction of Behaeddin Shakir, which operated under the direction of Talaat Pasha, Minister of the Interior. Around 10,000 men were released from prison for this para-military force. Many were convicted killers. They underwent military training for their assigned tasks to target and kill Armenian civilians.



A pattern evolved in the genocidal process: a methodical timetable with town criers announcing deportation schedules; lists of deportees posted on church doors; sometimes opportunities given to convert to Islam; men and women separated; men killed in nearby valleys and woods; women, the elderly, and children deported, their possessions and homes pillaged; deportees attacked en-route by Special Organization and tribal units, in cooperation with armed police (gendarmes) accompanying the deportees. In some areas, the massacres were carried out directly by the Turkish military. A few Armenian master artisans were permitted to remain.

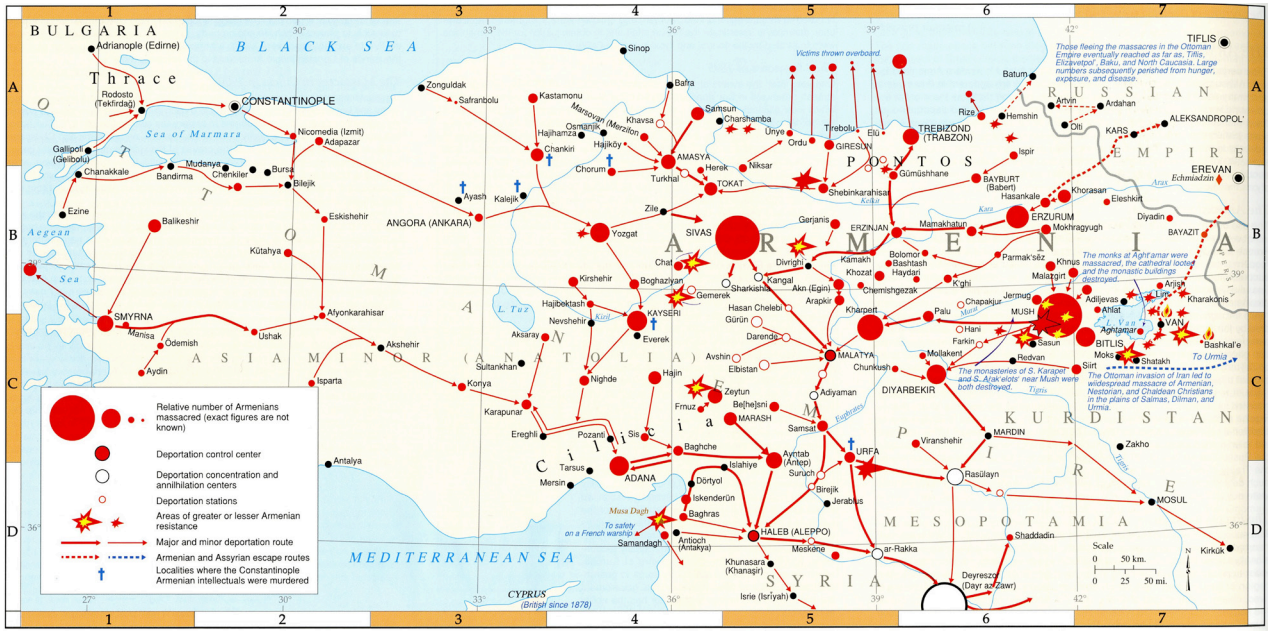
Deportation "caravans" (ox-cart wagons) and on foot started from many towns throughout the Ottoman Empire — from major Armenian towns like Erzerum, Erzinga, Sivas, Kharpert, Bitlis, Malatia, and Marash. There were around 4,000 towns and villages in Ottoman Turkey overall. Slowly, like caterpillars, the caravans wound their way through hills, valleys, forests and rocky mountains. Their destination was Der Zor in the Syrian Desert. Detention camps, called "concentration camps" by some eyewitnesses, served as temporary holding areas until advance caravans could be disposed of in the desert. Armenians were deprived of food and water. Many died in the scorching sun. Many were burnt alive or massacred. The Austrian author, Wolfdieter Bihl said,

"often there was no 'effort' to deport the Armenians as the victims, in an outburst of unprecedented bloodlust, were tortured and slaughtered — one has to use this word — on the spot."

The Genocide Map

The main killing fields are seen on the map (SEE MAP). Men and boys were often killed outside of the towns. Women, children, and elderly were then forced on a death march. These civilian groups, under police escort, would be regularly set upon by para-military forces, organized by the Special Organization. Many women and girls were raped, slave auctioned, or killed. Their caravans were pillaged, as they pushed southwards towards the Syrian desert. Most Armenians who survived this carnage and made it as far as the desert were eventually killed there.





Legal Pretext For Genocide

In May 1915, the Young Turks were warned by Western powers that they would be punished for their "crimes against humanity" against the Armenians. This may have been one reason why the Young Turks shrouded their deportation orders in the legal language of a "resettlement program."

Following the round-up of key Armenian leaders on April 24, 1915, the government targeted Armenian men in each city and village of Turkey. They were summarily marched out of town and killed en-masse. The Ottoman Parliament then issued the Temporary Law of Deportation (Tehcir Law), in May 1915, authorizing the deportation of the Ottoman Empire's Armenian population. The Armenians could not take most of their possessions, which were auctioned and sold off for virtually nothing. The Tehcir Law was followed in September by the "Temporary Law of Expropriation and Confiscation" — the so-called Abandoned Property Law — where Armenian lands, bank accounts, businesses and community properties were officially taken by the Government. The language was misleading — Armenians had not "abandoned" their properties; they had been forcibly removed, exiled and murdered.



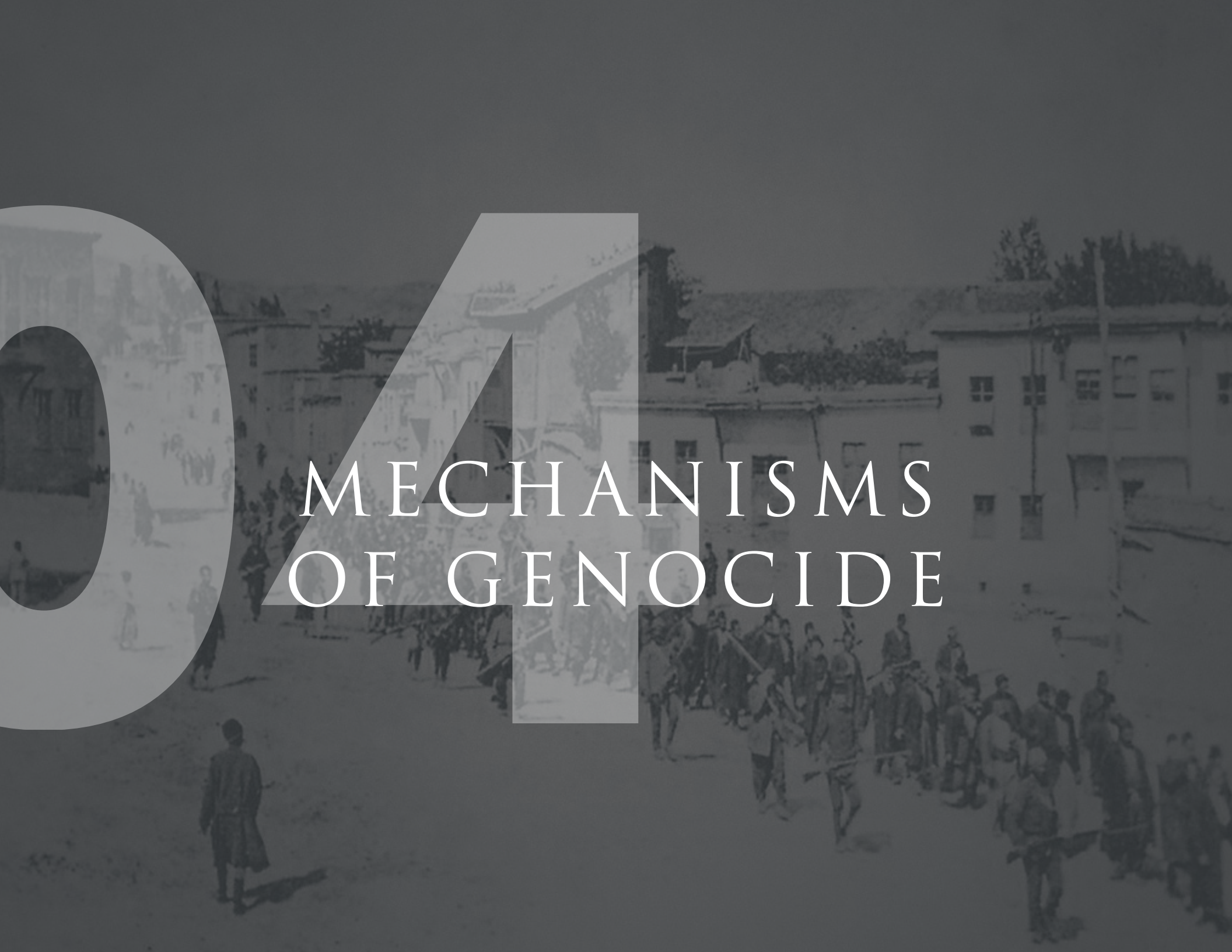
Kharput: Armenian men forced to an execution site.



When Armenians were told they must leave their homes, they were told they were being removed "for their own safety," or "because of the war." The Tehcir Law granted Ottoman authorities the legal authority to suppress any perceived threat to national security. It allowed the government to target any group who undermined the war effort, or was suspected of espionage or treason. This law didn't specifically mention the Armenians, but it was clear who was being targeted.

By calling the deportation a "temporary law," the Young Turks couched the Genocide in the language of wartime necessity. U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau wrote: "The real purpose of the deportation was robbery and destruction; it really represented a new method of massacre. When the Turkish authorities gave the orders for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race."





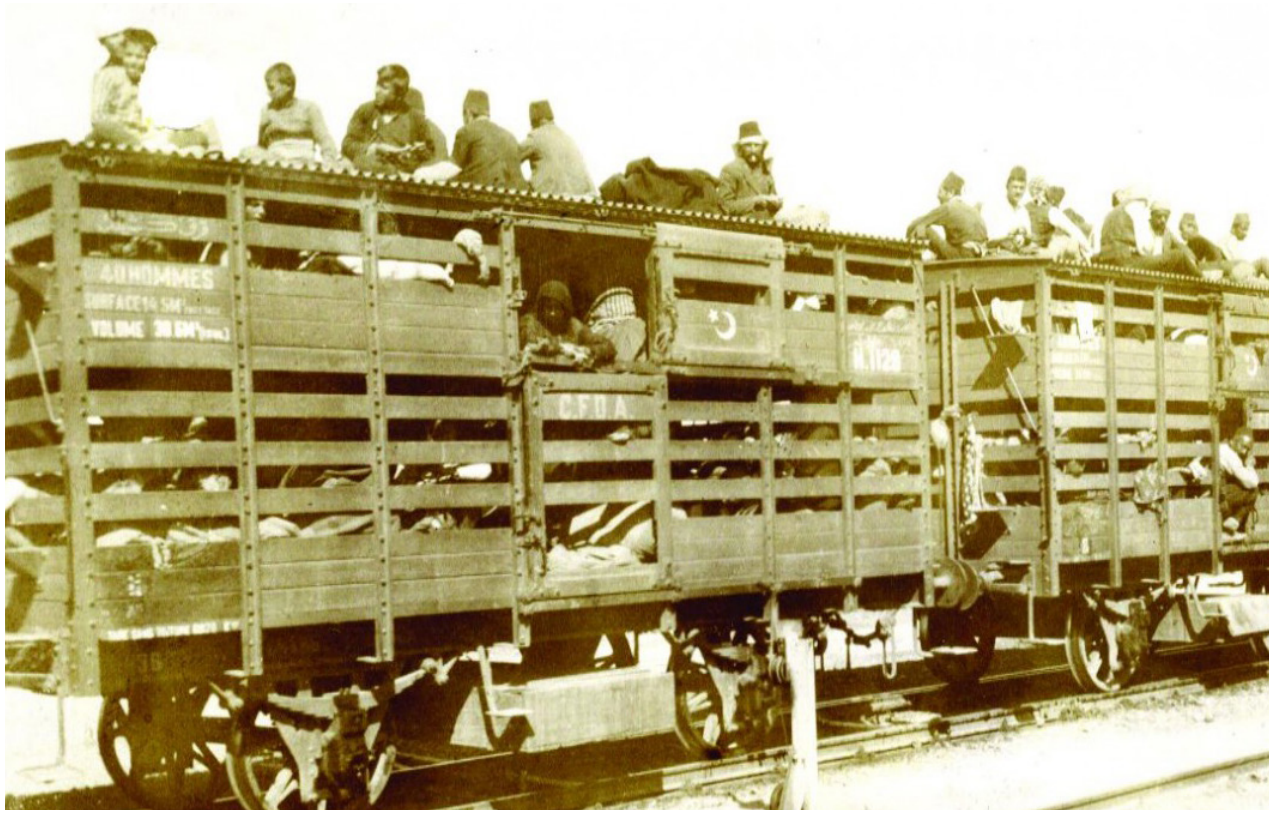
04 MECHANISMS OF GENOCIDE

Concentration Camps

The term "concentration camp" is usually associated with Nazi policies in World War II. The concept originated much earlier. The Spanish in Cuba (1896-1897) were believed to have used such means to control the Cubans, as well as the Germans in South West Africa, in their treatment of the Hereros (1904-07).

The Turks called them "transit" camps. German and American officials used the term "concentration camps" in referring to these vast open-air death camps. Auguste Bernau, an employee of the American consulate in Aleppo, reported on these camps: "The conditions there," he said, "were so fiendish that the most cruel of the Mongols could not have imagined them... The entrance to these concentration camps could well bear the legend imprinted on the gates of Dante's hell — 'Ye who enter here, abandon all hope.'" The Turkish historian, Taner Akçam, called them "death camps" (ölüm kampları). He notes that although labeled as "concentration camps" they were, in fact, an alternative method of killing Armenian victims through artificially induced privations and epidemic diseases.

"For anyone to emerge alive from them was tantamount to a miracle," Akçam said.



The Berlin Baghdad Railway

Converging on the Taurus Mountains, two great forces clashed — the Armenian deportation caravans moving southward and the construction of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, moving eastward.

The Railway was created in 1903, but became a crucial element in Turkey's war-time alliance with Germany. For military and strategic reasons, the Germans were intent on extending a new railroad supply line through Turkey – from Berlin, Germany all the way to the (then) Ottoman city of Baghdad (present day Iraq) — to help them win the war against Britain and the Allies.

The Turks wanted the railway to be used for another reason — to deport Armenians from their towns and villages to as close to the Syrian desert as possible. As shown in *The Promise*, many Armenians were forced into cattle cars and transported to areas like Ras-ul-Ain, one of the largest concentration camps.



Slave Labor

In *The Promise*, Michael Boghosian and other Armenian men are conscripted into labor battalions. When the First World War was declared in 1914, Armenians were drafted to serve in the Ottoman army. Some Armenian men voluntarily enlisted, as a matter of patriotic pride. But the ruling Turkish authorities would not allow Armenians to fight. Instead, these Armenian men were forced into labor battalions. The Turkish authorities wanted to work them to near death and then execute them. Armenian women and elderly were also pressed into labor on the construction of the Berlin to Baghdad railway, in the race of the German's to reach Baghdad, to challenge the British.

The Euphrates River

On the death marches, Turkish authorities often forbade Armenians to bury their corpses, pushing them forward on the death marches. Sometimes, Armenians were able to make shallow graves in the sand — only for these to be later dug up by wild dogs. Eyewitness accounts from U.S. diplomats and other Western observers testify to the appalling scenes of unburied Armenian bodies, and corpses torn apart by animals. Thousands of bodies of Armenians were thrown into the great Euphrates River, their bodies floating towards the estuary 700 miles away.



Kurd pulling Armenians victims out of the water.



05

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE



Christian Bale as Associated Press photojournalist Chris Myers (The Promise)

Eyewitnesses and Newspaper Reports

Contrary to the perception that the Genocide was unknown or under-reported, there is a wealth of sources from around the world, detailing exactly what happened. The Armenian Genocide is well-documented in the national archives of the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Italy and the Vatican, and many other countries. The postwar Military Tribunals held in Turkey in 1919 also contain evidence from the war crime trials of Turkish perpetrators — which resulted in death sentences for its chief perpetrators (even though the chief perpetrators had escaped abroad by then).

German medical officers, like Armin T. Wegner, supplied photographic evidence of the deportations and massacres. American diplomats, like Consul Leslie Davis, and European missionaries, like Maria Jacobsen, all working in Turkey at the time, provided first-hand testimonies of what they saw with their own eyes. Davis' official account, in *The Slaughterhouse Province* and Arnold Toynbee and James Bryce's *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915–1916* (also called the "Blue Book"), detail the genocide in specific areas. Testimony of survivors and other eyewitnesses, now available in books and digital archives, also corroborate the details of the genocide, as they applied to particular towns and regions in Ottoman Turkey and Syria.



The New York Ti

(3:3,4)

SEPTEMBER 25, 1915

SAYS EXTINCTION MENACES ARMENIA

Dr. Gabriel Tells of More Than 450,000 Killed In Recent Massacres.

" When the bugle blows in the
ing," he said, " the Turks rush fl
to the work of killing the Chri
and plundering them of their w
When it stops in the evening, or f
or three days, the shooting and
bing stop just as suddenly then
began. The people obey their
like soldiers.
" The dead are really the happ
he continued. " The living are for
leave their homes and wander
alien country amid a hostile popul
They are allowed as a food ratio
the Government only half a pou
grain a day. The youngest and st
est of the men are forced into the
but not to fight. They are not a
and have to do all the trench di
and the supply carrying for the



The New York Times

(3:1)

SEPTEMBER 17, 1915

MISSION BOARD TOLD OF TURKISH HORRORS

Correspondents Confirm the Reports of the Wiping Out of Armenians.

SCATTERED OVER EMPIRE

You have probably learned something of the sad condition of the Armenians from the papers, but probably nothing gets through that in any adequate way portrays the desperate straits in which these poor people find themselves.
You may have heard that Zeitoon has ceased to exist as an Armenian town. The inhabitants have been scattered, the city occupied by Turks and the very name changed. The same is true to a large extent of Hadjin, except, I believe, the name has not been altered. The Armenians of the regions of Erzrum, Bitlis and Erzingen have, under torture, been converted to Islam. Mardin reports 1895 conditions (the year of the infamous massacres) as prevailing there. The tale is awful to the last degree.
More than a thousand families from Hadjin recently arrived in Aleppo in the last degree of misery, and yet the purpose is to send them much further. Husbands are forcibly sepa-



Aaron Neil as Talaat Pasha (The Promise)

In 1915 alone, the New York Times published 145 articles about the genocide, describing the actions against the Armenians as "systematic," "authorized," and "organized by the government." Headlines included "Appeal to Turkey to Stop Massacres." With both British and Australian forces fighting in Turkey, there were also British and Australian press reports on the genocide. In Australia there were 123 newspaper articles about the genocide.

U.S. Official Eyewitnesses

U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau was in Constantinople (Istanbul) during the genocide. He had regular meetings with Talaat Pasha, Minister of the Interior, who would later become the Grand Vizier (Prime Minister) of Turkey in 1917. When asked why he was so intent on killing the Armenians, Talaat responded by saying, "We have already disposed of three quarters of the



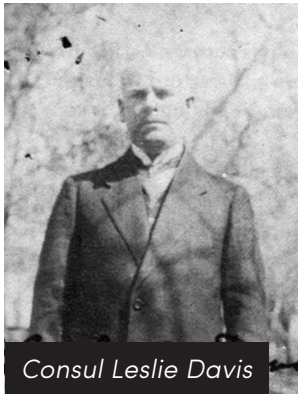
Christian Bale as Chris Myers and Andrew Tarbet as Pastor Merrill (The Promise)

Armenians ... we have got to finish them off." Morgenthau was surprised when Talaat asked for the lists of Armenians insured by the New York Life Insurance company. Talaat reasoned that the Armenians were already dead — so the insurance money owed to them by New York Life really belonged to the Turkish government. Appalled by this gruesome logic, Morgenthau refused to give Talaat any such list.

U.S. Consul Leslie Davis was based in Kharpert, one of the major killing fields of the genocide. He witnessed the aftermath of a massacre in Lake Goljuk, where he estimated 10,000 Armenians were murdered. Consul Davis officially submitted his account to the U.S. State Department. He disputes the Turkish propaganda of the time which tried to portray Armenians as traitors. He says labelling the Armenians as traitors was done to incite ordinary Turks and provide



Maria Jacobsen



Consul Leslie Davis



James Cromwell as U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau (The Promise)

a pretext for the government's policy of total annihilation. Most of the victims were innocent women and children. The government's intention, he believed, was to exterminate the entire Armenian population.

American Protestant missionaries were in Turkey before 1915. Many were eyewitnesses to the genocide, like Mary Louise Graffam, a missionary whose eyewitness reports are now included in the official British and U.S. record of the genocide. American missionary, Tacy Atkinson, recorded in her diary entry of July 19, 1915 that a Turkish Red Crescent officer had told her that "one and a half million of Armenians have been killed these last few weeks." Sister Beatrice Rohner, a Swiss missionary working for the Hülfsbund (German Aid Society for Christian Relief Work in the Orient) reported casualty estimates to the German government. Charges d' Affaires, Joseph von Radowitz, wrote later, on 4 October 1916, that 1.5 million Armenians had been killed.

Pastor Merrill

In *The Promise*, Chris tries to get help from American missionary, Pastor Merrill. During the genocide, Pastor John Merrill ran an orphanage in Marash. There he tried to save Armenian orphans and refugees from Zeitun. Merrill also supplied information on the ground to U.S. Consul Jesse Jackson, who was stationed in Aleppo. Consul Jackson's official account to the U.S. government, dated March 4, 1918, details atrocities against the Armenians. "One of the most terrible sights ever seen in Aleppo was the arrival in early August 1915, of some 5000 terribly emaciated, dirty, ragged and sick women and children, 3000 in one day and 2000 the following day. These people were the only survivors of the thrifty and well-to-do Armenian population of the province of Sivas, carefully estimated to have originally been over 300,000 souls!" As neutrals in the war, Americans were restricted in how much they could help the Armenians.

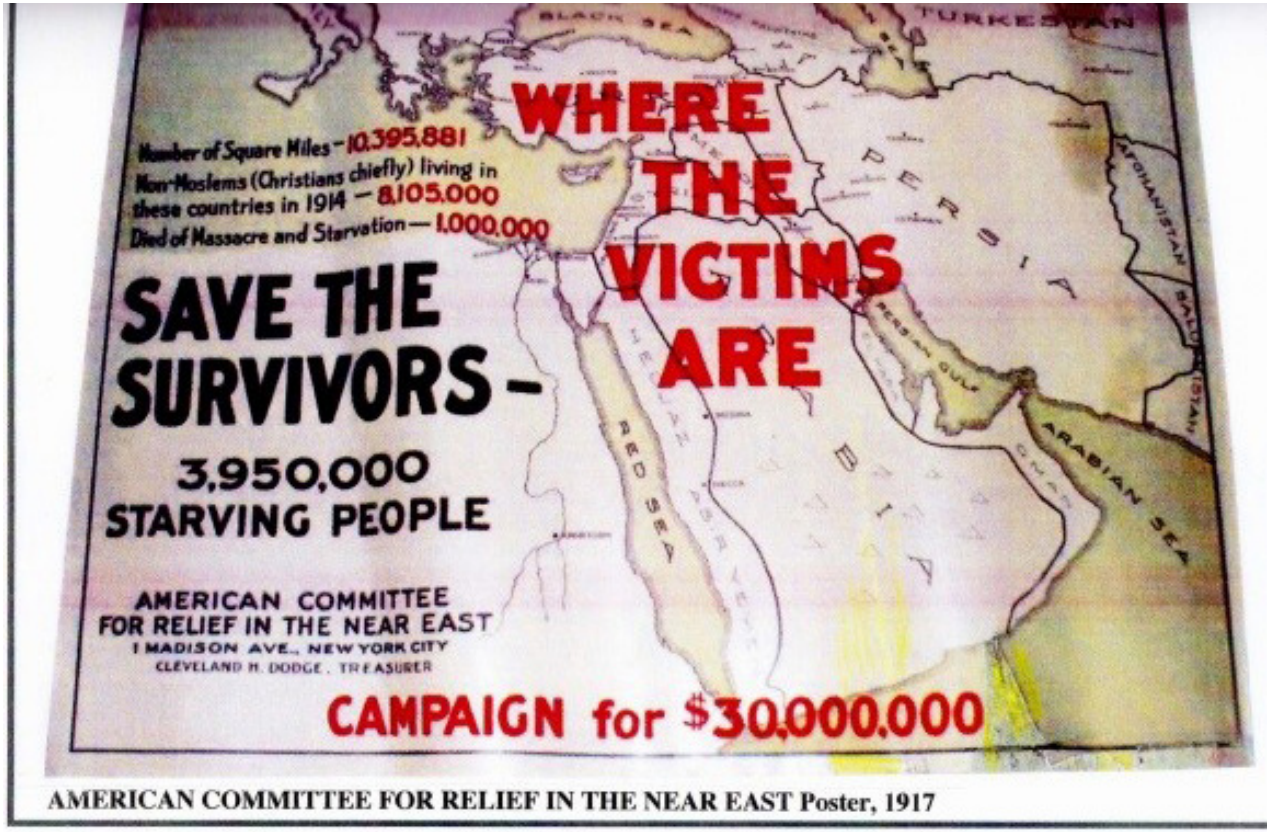
Censorship, Photography

With mobile photography becoming easier and more accessible, the Turks forbade anyone from photographing Armenian victims. Armin T. Wegner smuggled his photographs out of

Turkey through a network of helpers. Consul Davis hid his photographs of the massacres he witnessed in earthen jars, which he buried on the premises of the U.S. consulate. These were only recovered seven years later, when Davis knew he could evade Turkish censorship.

Near East Relief

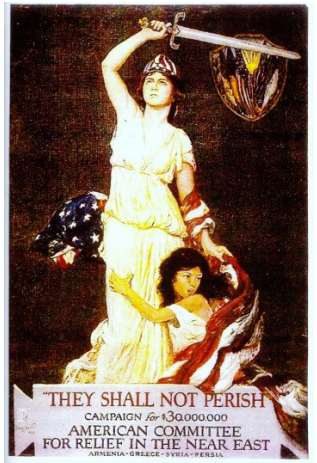
Many photographs of Armenian orphans were taken by the Near East Relief campaign — an American charity organized in the United States by Cleveland Dodge, and supported by President Woodrow Wilson. More than 100 million dollars was raised through public rallies and church collections in the United States to "save the starving Armenians." The child star, Jackie Coogan, was one of the faces of the Near East Relief campaign encouraging American children to donate the equivalent of a carton of milk to Armenian children. In 1919, Near East Relief was incorporated by an act of Congress. It was credited with having cared for 132,000 Armenian orphans scattered across the region. In Britain, the Save the Children fund and the Lord Mayor of London's Armenian Fund also launched campaigns to save Armenian orphans from the genocide.



AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR RELIEF IN THE NEAR EAST Poster, 1917



AMERICAN COMMITTEE RELIEF IN THE NEAR EAST, Posters, 1919
Artist: Ethel Franklin Betts. Publisher: Conwell Graphic Companies, N.Y.



American Committee and Near East Relief Campaign, Poster, 1918
Artist: Douglas Volk




06
ARMENIAN RESISTANCE





Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex, Anjar, Lebanon



One of two flags of salvation hand-sewn by the Musa Dagh resistance

Musa Dagh and Other Resistance

Armenians resisted the Turkish deportation orders in only a few instances — notably, Urfa, Shabin-Karahisar and Musa Dagh. In Van, the victory was short-lived. According to U.S. Ambassador Morgenthau, the resistance in Van was mounted in desperation after over 24,000 Armenians were massacred in three days in the surrounding region. In both Urfa and Shabin-Karahisar, Armenian resistance failed. Armenians in those areas were massacred or deported. In Urfa, German artillery was used to help the Turks bombard the Armenian quarter. Even though Armenians knew they were doomed, they held out against the odds — but ultimately failed to stop the onslaught.



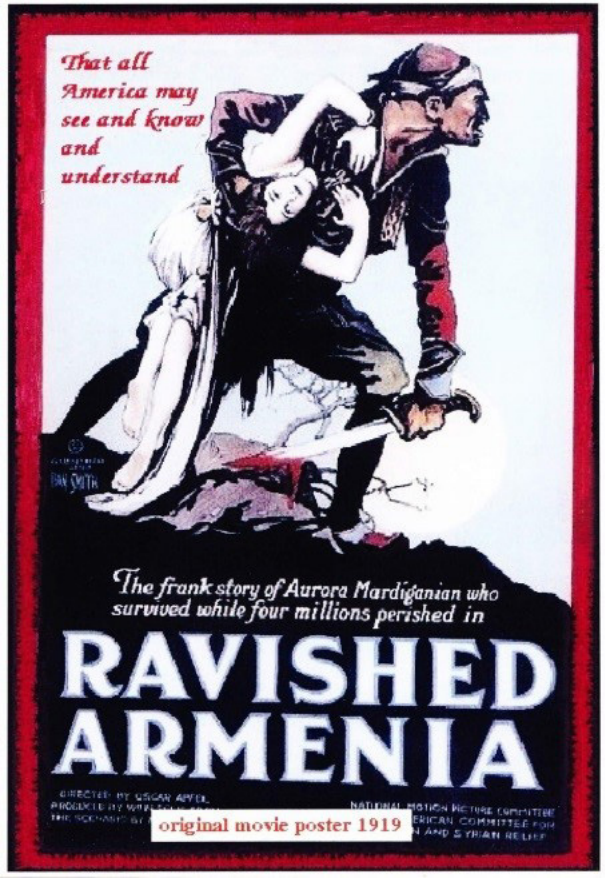


As depicted in *The Promise*, Musa Dagh was an example of Armenians successfully taking their lives into their own hands. Ordinary village people defended themselves between July 31 and September 12, 1915, until French naval vessels rescued and transported approximately 4000 Armenians to safety in Port Said, Egypt.

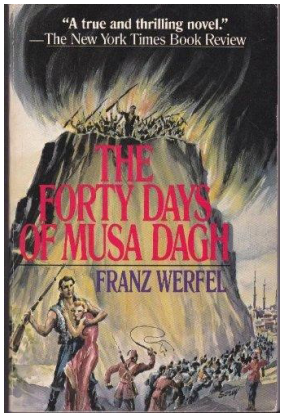
Today, many of the descendants of the Musa Dagh villagers who were rescued in 1915 live in the town of Anjar in Lebanon. There they proudly commemorate the events of 1915. The flag that was sewn on the mountain, and posted to alert passing ships, still exists. Every year, villagers remember the 1915 resistance and rescue by French ships, commanded by Vice Admiral Louis Dartige du Fournet.

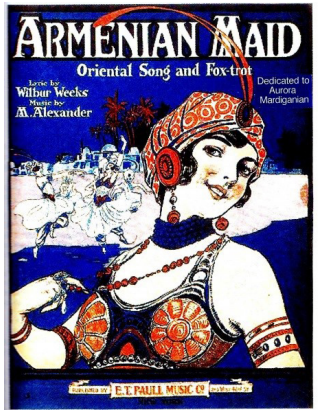
Popular Culture

The popular resistance of Musa Dagh was immortalized in the 1933 best-selling novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, by Franz Werfel. The novel would eventually be translated into 18 languages and used as a primer by the Jewish resistance in the Second World War. MGM studios announced plans to make a movie based on Werfel's novel, but was deterred from making the film after protests from the Turkish ambassador in Washington to the U.S. State Department and threats to boycott American films in Turkey.



original movie poster 1919





An earlier silent film, "Ravished Armenia," later named "Auction of Souls," was released in 1919, based on the true story of Armenian genocide survivor, Aurora Mardigian (Arshaluis Mardiganian). Directed by Oscar Apfel and distributed by American First National Pictures, the film showed harrowing scenes of rape, massacre and pillage of Armenians by the Turks. Released as a means to raise money for the Near East Relief campaign, the film was shown around the world. It inspired a popular song, "Armenian Maid" in the United States. Only excerpts of this silent film about the Armenian genocide have survived.



07

DENIAL

Denial

With so much news coverage, diplomatic correspondence, and eyewitness testimony from all over the world, why has the Armenian Genocide become such a controversial issue? The events were officially recognized as crimes against humanity in 1915 by Britain, France and Russia. America raised more than 100 million dollars to save Armenian children. The post-war Turkish government demanded the Young Turk perpetrators be sentenced to death in 1919. So why is there such controversy now?

The answer lies in Turkey's relations with the United States and Western Europe. From 1923, successive Turkish governments have denied that the events against the Armenians were genocidal. They say Armenians were wartime casualties. There was no government policy to exterminate them, they say. Worse yet, they blame the victims, saying Armenians were traitors.

Unlike other genocide perpetrators (the Nazis, Khmer Rouge, Serbs, Rwandan Hutus), the Turks have never been punished for their actions against the Armenians. Apart from the Turkish military tribunals of 1919, which were limited in scope and later denied by Kemal Atatürk's Republic of Turkey, Armenians have been denied reparations, the right to return, to commemorate — or even an apology.

After the First World War, President Wilson wanted Turkey to be punished for the genocide. In 1918, Armenians declared their own state, based on their historic homeland. The territory was in Russian Armenia. Territory from within Ottoman Turkey was later assigned to this new Armenian republic, as specified in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres.

The independent Republic of Armenia only lasted for over two years. Kemal Atatürk fought against the partition of the Ottoman Empire through his nationalist campaign. He did not want any territory to go to the Armenians. The priorities of the United States were also changing. In the aftermath of the war, Turkey was increasingly being seen as a bulwark against Bolshevist Russia. By 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne, the final treaty drawing a close to the First World War, made no mention of punishing the Turks, or supporting the new Republic of Armenia.

Turkey, and the territory it controlled after the war, especially in what is now Iraq — was oil rich. These resources, and Turkey's position vis-à-vis the new Bolshevik

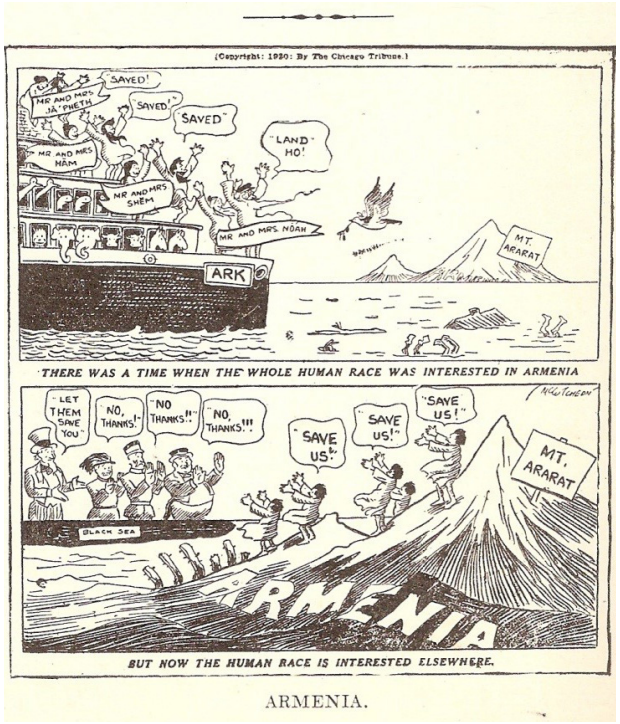


Dayton News.] [U.S.A.

"Bah, the price of Massacre is Oil!"

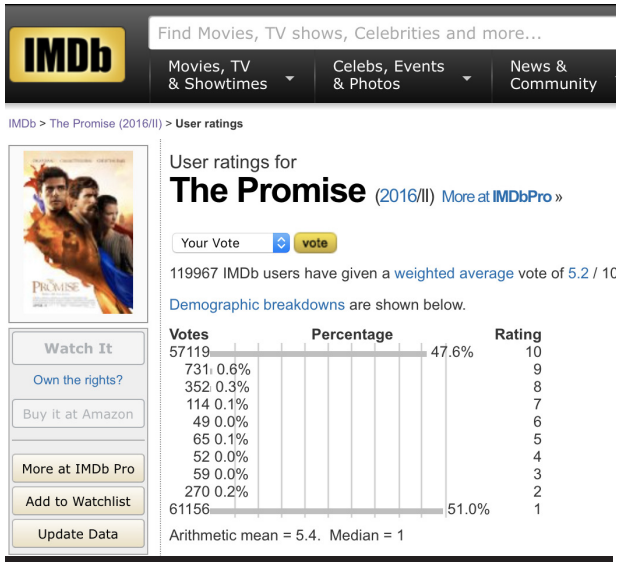
Russia, made Turkey valuable in Western governments' eyes. With this new political calculation, punishing Turkey for the Armenian genocide was seen as a political inconvenience. "Bah, the price of Massacre is Oil," says the figure in the Dayton News cartoon above.

In Gregory Stanton's 10 stages of genocide, denial is the last stage, where the perpetrator blames the victim.



One hundred years later, Turkey continues to blame the victims — the Armenians. Turkey has made it impossible to have a free and open dialogue about the genocide within Turkey itself. It has punished Turkish citizens who want to speak openly about Turkey's past. Under Turkey's penal code, anyone who openly discusses the Armenian Genocide in Turkey can be prosecuted for "insulting Turkishness." For many Turks — Armenians and non-Armenians alike — speaking freely about the Armenian Genocide has become a matter of basic civil rights.

Attempts to have a wider dialogue in Turkey have been met with violence. The journalist Hrant Dink was murdered in Turkey in 2007 for publishing articles about the genocide. The trial surrounding the plot to murder him has continued to this day. More recently, Kurdish and Armenian politicians in Turkey (such as Garo Paylan, member of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)) have also been targeted for wanting to speak openly about the Armenian Genocide.



IMDb ratings pre-release of The Promise: *Before even a thousand people saw The Promise, there were over sixty thousand one-star reviews on IMDb emanating from outside of the US.*



Serj Tankian with Hrant Dink, shortly before Dink was murdered

Samantha Power argues in "A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide" that the Armenian Genocide provides the template for the way genocide was treated by the international community in the twentieth century. Like the Holocaust, the Cambodian Genocide, and the Bosnian and Rwandan Tutsi genocides, facts were known and widely circulated. The problem is not that we did not know what was happening while the events were unfolding. The underlying issue is whether or not the international community has wanted to intervene to stop them. The issue has been, and still remains, political will.



08 AFTERMATH



Genocide Convention: Raphael Lemkin

In the closing days of the Armenian genocide, the Polish lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, read a startling story about a murder on the streets of Berlin in 1921. An Armenian student, Soghomon Tehlirian, killed Talaat Pasha, claiming he was the murderer of all Armenians. Talaat had been sentenced to death in Turkey for his crimes in 1919, but had escaped to Berlin. Tehlirian said he was only executing justice on a fugitive. "I have killed a man; but I am not a murderer."

The subsequent murder trial, in which Tehlirian was acquitted, made Lemkin wonder: why was there only vigilante justice available to genocide victims? Why was there no international law to punish mass murderers like Talaat? Years later, after Lemkin lost his family in the Holocaust, he dedicated his life to create a new international law and a new word — "genocide." In 1948, the new UN Genocide Convention was created. So far, 147 countries have ratified or acceded to this treaty.

Ethnic Cleansing, Genocide, Race Murder

Samantha Power referred to the Armenian genocide as a "Crime with No Name." Before the word "genocide" was coined, many terms were used — e.g., "massacres," "crimes against humanity," "murder of a nation," "extermination" and "forced exile." Winston Churchill, in his 1933 study of the First World War, called the Turks' actions "one administrative holocaust." More recently the term "ethnic cleansing" has been added to this list, to denote the extermination of a group, along racial or ethnic lines.

The United Nations' definition of genocide has become the norm: genocide is a policy enacted by a national government. It is a policy with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. The policy can also, by definition, be government action which amounts to a war of attrition (like deportation); or attempts to erase the identity of the group, through rape or forced marriage. Using this definition, the U.S. government's war of attrition on Native Americans in the nineteenth century could be labelled "genocide" alongside the rape and murder of Bosnian Muslims. Acts of war are not

genocidal, unless it can be proved the intention of the government's policy is to eliminate the target group. "War is bad," says Samantha Power. "But genocide is something different."

By using the U.N. definition of genocide we have some kind of yardstick to measure whether a conflict is, or is not, a policy of state-sponsored mass murder. Historians today now consider Stalin's man-made famine in Soviet Ukraine (the Holodomor) in 1932-33 to be a genocide. Imperial Germany's actions against the Hereros in South West Africa (Namibia today) between 1904 and 1907 is now considered to have been a campaign of racial extermination and collective punishment, amounting to genocide. The massacre of over 200,000 Mayan civilians during Guatemala's Civil War, the 24-year Indonesian occupation of East Timor resulting in the death of an estimated one-third of the population, and the Sudanese Government's ethnic cleansing campaign in Darfur are now considered "genocide" by some human rights groups and genocide scholars.

The word games have given politicians wiggle-room. In the Armenian case, various leaders have referred to the mass murder as "extermination" (Hitler, 1931); "terrible massacres" (George H. W. Bush); "tragedy" (Jimmy Carter, 1978); "forced exile and annihilation" (George W. Bush, 2001); "infamous general massacre and deportation"; "clearance of a race"; "murder of a nation" (Winston Churchill); "senseless deportations and massacres" (Bill Clinton); "massacres or marched to their deaths" (Barack Obama). On April 12, 2015, on occasion of the 100th commemoration, Pope Francis used the word "genocide" which drew official anger from Turkey.



Holodomor



Darfur

Does the "G-Word" Matter?

Successive Turkish governments have denied the genocide took place. Successive U.S. governments have chosen to appease Turkey's denial, rather than risk damaging a key NATO alliance by using the word "genocide." Turkey's position in the Middle East, vis-à-vis Europe and America, continues to influence America's policy. American presidents will acknowledge the events, saying words like "massacres" and "annihilation" — but will not use the "g-word."



Pope Francis with His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians

President Ronald Reagan did, in fact, call the Armenian massacres "genocide" in 1981. But because the United States had not yet ratified the U.N. Genocide Convention, his words did not compel the United States to act against Turkey.

Accusing a government of "genocide" by any nation-state that has ratified the UN Genocide Convention has a direct consequence. Under the UN Genocide Convention, any alleged perpetrator of genocide could be punished under international law. Because President Reagan used the G-word in 1981, before the Convention was ratified by the United States, his words did not apply to Turkey.

President George W. Bush used the word in relation to Sudan's actions in Darfur. The International Criminal Court (ICC) followed his censure, by issuing arrest warrants in 2009 and 2010 against President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan.

The United States and its European allies do not want to punish Turkey, who is a NATO ally. For this reason, the Armenian Genocide continues to be, in human rights attorney Geoffrey Robertson's words, an Inconvenient Genocide. The policy seems to be to recognize it happened, but not to label it in such a way as to trigger punitive action under the UN Genocide Convention.

Never Again — but Do We Mean It?

Samantha Power argues that in the twentieth century — through the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, Cambodian, Bosnian and Rwandan genocides — we have consistently lacked the political conviction to stop genocides while they are happening. We pay lip-service to the concept of Never Again — but, like the Holocaust, the problem is not that we do not know what is going on, while it is happening. The problem is our moral and political will. One hundred years after the Armenian Genocide, the United States and the international community is still grappling with that one central problem.

"It is sadly true what a cynic has said, that we learn from history that we do not learn from history. And yet it is possible that if the world had been conscious of the genocide that was committed by the Ottoman Turks against the Armenians, the first genocide of the twentieth century, then perhaps humanity might have been more alert to the warning signs that were being given before Hitler's madness was unleashed on an unbelieving world."

— The Most Reverend Archbishop Emeritus Desmond M. Tutu



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Timeline

B.C.

2300 Haig, legendary patriarch of the Armenian people

1800–800 Hittite Empires

870–590 Urartuan Kingdoms

330 Alexander the Great defeats the Armenians and the Persians

A.D.

301 Conversion of Armenia to Christianity

395–405 Creation of the Armenian alphabet

640 First Arab invasion of Armenia

1041–1048 Seljuk Turk invasions of Armenia

1098–1291 Crusades

1271 Marco Polo travels through Armenia

C. 1299 Formation of the Ottoman Empire, including modern-day Turkey

1375 Defeat of King Levon V by the Mameluks

15th Century Armenia absorbed into the Ottoman Empire, Muslim Turks begin poor treatment of Christian Armenians

1828 Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid II becomes 34th sultan of Turkey; further fosters distrust of Armenians by Turkish people by strengthening Turkish nationalism and encouraging the resentment of any non-Muslims in the region

1878 Treaty of Stefano, Turkish defeat by Russia, providing for administrative reforms in the Armenian provinces of Turkey

1894 Armenians begin to fight for civil rights, which is met with backlash by the Ottoman government

1894–1896 Hamidian massacres of Armenians

1908 Young Turks come to power in the Ottoman Empire, giving Armenians brief hope that the political tide will change in their favor

1909 Armenian massacres in Adana region

1912–1913 Balkan Wars

1913 Radical faction of Young Turks takes over

1914 Start of the First World War; Turkey enters as German ally; In response, Armenians form volunteer armies that join forces with Christian-ruled Russia; Turkey declares holy war on all non-Muslims (except their allies)

1915 Armenian Genocide begins on April 24 with the arrest of Armenian intellectuals in Constantinople

1916 U.S. Congress creates the Near East Relief organization (currently known as the Near East Foundation), which raises the equivalent of over $2 Billion (in current day dollars) to help survivors of the Genocide

1918 Republic of Armenia created

1918–1920 Ottoman Empire crumbles

1920 Sovietization of Armenia

1922–1923 Formal end of Armenian genocide; only 338,000 Armenians remain in Turkey

1951 United States first officially recognizes the Armenian Genocide in a written statement to the International Court of Justice regarding the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and later by President Ronald Reagan in 1981

1975, 1984 U.S. House of Representatives adopts Armenian Genocide legislation

1988 Catastrophic earthquake in Armenia

1991 Current Armenian Republic created

1996 U.S. reduces aid to Turkey citing the Armenian Genocide

2000, 2005, 2007, 2010 U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee adopts legislation regarding the Armenian Genocide

2014 U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee passage of Armenian Genocide resolution; Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's new president, calls for healing of old wounds between Armenia and Turkey

2016 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan still refuses to acknowledge the Genocide, referring to it as "blackmail"

Resources

Armenian Assembly of America
http://www.aaainc.org/

Armenian Film Foundation
http://www.armenianfilm.org/

Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) WebTalks
http://agbuwebtalks.org/

Armenian Genocide Museum Institute
http://www.armeniangenocidemuseum.org

Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA)
https://anca.org/

Armenian National Institute
http://armenian-genocide.org

Facing History and Ourselves
https://www.facinghistory.org/

The Genocide Education Project
https://www.genocideeducation.org

Gomidas Institute
http://gomidas.org/

Near East Relief Digital Museum
http://neareastmuseum.com/

USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education
Visual History Archive, Armenian Collection
http://sfi.usc.edu/collections/armenian

IWitness Armenia
http://iwitness.usc.edu/SFI/Sites/Armenia/

The Zoryan Institute
http://www.zoryaninstitute.org

Photo Credits

Page 3 - Map: United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917, Gomidas Institute, 2004.

Page 14 - Courtesy of the Armenian Film Foundation. Voices from the Lake.

Page 16 - "Says Extinction Menaces Armenia." The New York Times 25 Sept. 1915: n. pag.

Page 16 - "Mission Board Told of Turkish Horrors." The New York Times 17 Sept. 1915: n. pag.

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Page 22 - Alexander, M. Armenian Maid. New York: E.T. Paull Music Co., copyright 1919.

THE PROMISE

INJUSTICE IS ONLY ENABLED BY SILENCE