

Armenian Christians and Turkish Muslims: Atrocity, Denial and Identity

A. Christian van Gorder, D. Phil., Queen's, Belfast
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I. Introduction

And this evening before sunset all of you will go back to your houses whether they are mud or marble, and calmly close the treacherous shutters of your windows. Shut them from the wicked Capital; shut them to the face of humanity, and to the face of your god. Even the lamp on your table will be extinguished by the whispers of your clear soul.

- **Grief**, by Siamanto, translated by Peter Belakian and Nevart Yaghlian

Why is Armenian history important today? Before invading Poland, Adolph Hitler scoffed, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians."¹ Earlier, Hitler had warned, "We intend to introduce a great resettlement policy... Think of the Biblical deportations, the massacres of the Middle Ages and remember the extermination of the Armenians."² Historian Carolyn Forché felt, "Any 20th-century history of human rights... must begin with the massacre of Armenians, then the largest Christian minority population of Turkey... because it is the first instance of political mass murder³ made possible by advanced technology and modern communications." ⁴

Beginning in April, 1915,⁵ entire villages were burnt to the ground with Armenians being either evacuated on forced death-marches or killed inside their homes. Armenians claim that between 1.5 and 2 million Armenians were murdered by order of Ottoman Interior Minister Talaat Pasha.⁶ Turks admit atrocities, but counter that between 200,000 to 700,000 Armenians died. Turkish historians⁷ argue that, in 1915 there were fewer than 1.5 million Armenians⁸ in the entire Empire. Turks maintain there was never a state-sponsored policy of "genocide" while admitting to "inter-communal warfare."⁹ In 1985, a United Nations Human Rights commission concluded that "at least one million were killed."¹⁰ The facts of this labyrinthine problem during an anarchical time and fraught with political considerations¹¹ may never be known. It is certain is that horrific brutality caused the deaths and exile of almost all of Eastern Anatolia's Armenian population.¹² Death came in many guises: citizens in Trebizond were pushed onto boats and thrown overboard; thousands more died in Syria's open air concentration camp at Deir el-Zor.

Muslim Farid Esack observed that South Africa has become a land of "...nightmares, like a childhood trauma and (historical tragedy) will reappear in nightmares and neuroses until the child brings it out into the open and looks at it."¹³ "Reconciliation" equates with justice and a meaningful resolution of past atrocities instead of simply the re-opening of old, festering wounds. Esack's hopes for his homeland mirrors the lament that Armenians share about the disputed historical nightmare of 1915.¹⁴ I will explore how these unresolved histories affect present Muslim Turks and Christian Armenians in their faith and identity development. What role might faith play in fostering reconciliation? What lessons from Armenia, 1915 are instructive to Muslims, Christians and Jews committed to interfaith partnerships for human rights?

Depending on one's vantage, the legacy of 1915 is either one of denial or character assassination; of "genocide" or an unorganized "ethnic cleansing." Armenian scholars, such as Richard Hovannisian, argue that Turkish views have undergone many phases: "There has been neither candid admission nor willing investigation, neither reparation nor rehabilitation."¹⁵ In contrast, strident Turkish assertions about Armenian accounts sends an unambiguous message that negative stereotypes about "barbaric Turks" will no longer go contested. The "memory" of these events remains to affect the religious identities of Turkish Muslims and Armenian Christians. As a battleground for culture-religious interpretation of history, Armenia 1915, provides an intriguing context for examining ways that past atrocity becomes part of the present experience of a faith community.

Objective historicity¹⁶ will proceed with the task of sifting through the vituperative silt of time to determine what actually transpired. Noted scholars have already written accounts of the specific events of this period from their variant perspectives.¹⁷ The task for people of faith committed to social justice and human rights is to extract lessons from these competing narratives and to explore strategies for substantive reconciliation between Turkish Muslims and Christian Armenians.

II. Armenian Perspectives

*"Don't be afraid. I must tell you what I saw. So that people will understand the crimes that men do to men...It was Sunday morning...Suddenly I heard from afar a dark crowd standing in a vineyard lashing twenty brides and singing dirty songs.... 'Dance,' they raved, 'Dance till you die, infidel beauties...Then someone brought a jug of kerosene. Human justice I spit on your face. The brides were anointed. 'Dance,' they thundered-Here's a fragrance you can't get in Arabia.' Then with a torch, they set the naked brides on fire. And the charred corpses rolled and tumbled to their deaths...."*¹⁸

The first "Armenian Empire" dates from around 500 B.C.E. Others claim there has been a distinct Armenian community for over 3,000 years.¹⁹ Armenian Christians lived relatively peacefully in Anatolia and often played a key role in national governance. Armenians were some of the first citizens of Byzantium to welcome the Seljuk conquest.²⁰ Later, under Ottoman rule, Armenians rose to economic, political and military importance. Tensions began to become noticeable after Greek Independence in the 1820's. When the "Young Turk" movement of 1908 transpired, many Armenians were supportive because it promised more ethnic and religious autonomy.²¹ By 1915, however, interfaith tensions were pronounced. American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau claimed that the, "...common term applied by Turks to Christians is "dog" with the estimation of most Turks being that this is no mere rhetorical figure."²²

For Armenian-Americans, these events²³ have taken on epic, symbolic importance. “1915” has come to dramatically impact, and even define, both their religious identity and cultural survival. An example can be found in recent-best sellers by Peter Balakian: *The Burning Tigris* and *Black Dog of Fate*²⁴ which focus on Armenian-American cultural identity. One also sees this synergism when attending any number of Armenian-American Christian churches with shrines commemorating the victims of 1915.

Interest in Armenia, 1915 is increasing. Armenian protestations against most²⁵ Turkish historical accounts began in earnest in the 1960’s. This coincided with the involvement of America’s Jewish community in commemorating the Holocaust. Armenian-Americans have been active in molding public education curricula. In some states, Armenians have established public events such as Massachusetts’s “Armenian Genocide Day” every April.²⁶ In these forums, Armenian-Americans often present Turks as “evil” while they suffer as martyrs at the hands of “Muslims”: thus, foreshadowing present Muslim-Christian tensions. In this paradigm, Armenia was the first salvo in modern civilization’s war against contemporary “Islamic” extremism and fundamentalism.

Because of Turkish “denials,” Armenian-Americans feel they are being “crucified afresh” on a Mount Calvary of political calculation and moral expediency. The Turkish response is not surprising: while horrific events happened it must also be remembered that Turks themselves have long been marginalized in their relations with Europe. Armenian charges are particularly galling because they revive the medieval aspersion that Turks are a backward, superstitious, callous butchers and rapists.

For Armenians, the experience of being a persecuted band of believers has been a force for religious unity and cultural revival. Some assert that the suffering of their ancestors sprang from their unwillingness to compromise with Islamic blasphemy. The theme of Christian persecution is important for Armenians who note that, “The Empire’s non-Muslim inhabitants must either be forcibly Islamize and Turkified and when this is not possible, must be destroyed.”²⁷ The alternative to death was conversion to Islam and so, the living are imparted with the task of maintaining this anti-Islamic legacy while also serving as witnesses for truth against denial and for justice against oppression. As Armenians drink fully from the “Gethsemane” of their past they will also find a way to speak as a voice in the modern world against oppression directed toward others.

A prescient lesson for Armenian-Americans is that their trauma was not relieved by American Christians in their midst. American missionaries made numerous converts among Armenians before, and even during, the period of atrocity.²⁸ Because these missionaries were not allowed to evangelize Muslims,²⁹ they focused on the Armenians and found ready converts among their less-dogmatic, more tolerant numbers. American missionaries became increasingly involved in Anatolia’s educational and social life. Later, these same missionaries became the primary foreign-eyewitnesses to atrocities.

Armenian-Americans feel betrayed by the American missionaries in Anatolia who did nothing to stop the mass-killings. Congregationalist, Baptist and Catholic churches did raise money to help Armenians in exiles. Little of substance, however, was accomplished beyond “wind-blown” pity. The fact that American Christians did little to stop the slaughter serves as an ongoing reminder to Armenians of where they should maintain their own distinct sense of cultural loyalty. The Armenian in America is an “outsider” from a destroyed and distant past and from a distant land. In this tension, retelling their history becomes important. This tragic history is what is unique about Armenians and, “...fulfills the need for a distinctive identity and meaning system in the context of the mass of humanity and the indifferent character of the universe.”³⁰

Armenian-Americans also feel they were betrayed by the American government. President Wilson,³¹ intent on keeping America out of the war, was in a “quandary” responding to an atrocity that would inflame the population to war because he was promoting a policy of “peace at any price.” Later, after the war, the United States was eager for rapid demobilization and balked at the idea of a “Greater Armenian state.”³²

While American politicians were quiet, this was not the case for the British and French governments who called for a quick end to the barbarities of “Armenia”³³ as a way to fan flames of resentment against the Turks and their German allies.³⁴ The French Minister Aristide Briand warned in 1916: “When the hour for legitimate reparations shall be struck, France will not forget the terrible trials of the Armenians.”³⁵ What intervention that did occur was of more harm than benefit because it fostered resentment and actually supported the idea that the Armenians were not loyal to the Ottoman state.

Armenian-Americans maintain that the Turkish “denial” of this “genocide” means that they are a people who are “twice killed.” The facts of the Turkish attitude, and the Islam of the region, are the explanations that Armenian-Americans give for the fact that, today, only about 40,000 or 50,000 Armenian Christians remain inside Turkey. As an exiled religious minority in America, and among a persuasive majority culture, the emphasis on tragedy sustains a sense of being embattled and the need for vigilance and zeal. In a real sense, the atrocities are still going-on and Armenian-Americans need to carefully confirm the memory of those who have died.

It may be easier now to appreciate why there seems to be little interest among Armenian-American Christians in engaging Turkish Muslims on anything more than a minimal and symbolic level. In addition, Armenian-Americans today face no present threats to their safety that would mandate they work for historic reconciliation. Instead of the issue disappearing, the atrocity narrative actually seems to be gaining greater importance as the Armenian-American community asserts its unique identity in response to contemporary challenges.

III. Toward Better Understanding the Turkish Position

It is the servant of the All-Merciful Lord who goes about the earth in modesty and who answers: "Peace" when accosted by those who talk to them rudely" -Qur'an³⁶

An African proverb formulates, "If a person has only heard one side of a story they have heard nothing." It is important to understand both the content and the motives behind Turkish responses to Armenian claims. This is the message that the Turkish Embassy website³⁷ in the United States hopes to convey about the events of 1915. Non-Armenians also died in the chaos but have not been given proper narrative consideration. This website also emphasizes the tempestivity of 1915. Wars of both external and internal aggression were being waged on all sides. Turks, as well as Armenians, were "caught" in a cross-fire of radical "reforms" and uncertainties.

On the other hand, any nuanced Turkish rendering of Armenia, 1915 is represented in Europe and North America as a completely reprehensible action of political contrivance. What clarification can be given in the face of genocide? Could it be that political "expediency" (for a host of reasons) is more important to Turks than simply an objective and accurate historical examination? Or, to think of the "uses of history" (Berdayev),³⁸ would it not be true that the Turkish claim that an actual "ethnic-cleansing" did not take place in Armenia is actually an act of forward-looking accommodation. The new Turkish State was committed to creating a monolithic and homogenous nation. State. Armenian calls for inquiries, financial reparations and territorial restitutions have added to Turkish "anxieties and attempts to avoid the past."³⁹

The Turkish version of history emphasize that these horrors were acts of "organized brigandage,"(in Turkish, *nizam altinda haydut*). It is explained that many Armenians were killed in spontaneous actions of Turkish peasants and bands of Kurds and Circassians who were acting out of anti-Christian and pro-Islamic zeal.⁴⁰ Many Muslims in this region feared the Armenians and especially those serving in the Russian army. These fears were based on a number of incidences of indiscriminate slaughter by Russians and Armenians against these Muslim groups. Tragedies took place during a chaotic "fog of war" at the end of 700 years of the Ottoman Empire and before Ataturk had gained complete political control.⁴¹ In a brief period of time, the Empire lost over 1.1 million square miles and more than 24 million subjects.⁴² Most that left the Empire were multinational and multi-religious and this loss drew more attention to Armenian "uniqueness" as non-Turkish speakers.⁴³

Ataturk himself was not directly involved in military campaigns against defenseless Armenian populations. He arrived in Eastern Anatolia in the fall of 1916. It is important to recognize that, for Turks as well as for Armenians, this history is more about the present and the future than it is about the past. Contemporary political forces interested in a secular Turkey rely heavily on Ataturk as the axial symbol of their cause and assaults against the "historical Ataturk" are actually attacks against the "iconic Ataturk."

This history is also of concern because a string of terrorist attacks, beginning in 1921,⁴⁴ have been inflicted by Armenian terrorists against Turkish officials including a few who were directly involved in the monstrosities of 1915. These attacks reached their zenith in the 1970's⁴⁵ and the 80's with their threat continuing into the present era.

American media in World War I wrote about the Armenian "extermination" and warned that, at the end of the war, Turkey would pay heavily for its crimes. This created a posture of Turkish defensiveness from the outset. When a peace treaty was signed in Lausanne 1923, there was no mention of the Armenian grievances because the European Powers were eager to forge an alliance with Turkey against Bolshevik Russia. At the same time, a few American missionaries who had recounted Armenian massacres now admitted that their earlier reports of genocide had been greatly exaggerated.⁴⁶

It has been said that "the worst of all historiographies" are "state historiographies."⁴⁷ Not all who support Turkish accounts, however, were simply speaking for the Turkish state.⁴⁸ One example of a "neutral perspectives" came from U.S. Admiral William Colby Chester who declared, "The Turks were falsely maligned during World War I, and that their policy toward the minorities had been one of utmost benevolence."⁴⁹ Other non-Turkish sources, including British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey,⁵⁰ agreed with Turkish appraisals that the situation was not as extensive as the Armenian community claimed.

Turks, beginning with Halide Edib, claimed that 200,000 Armenians died between 1915-1918 and that most of these died because of war, disease and hunger (while at the same time and, for the same reasons, about one million Turks died).⁵¹ These events, according to Turkish sources, were not deliberate acts of an intentional strategy for "genocide." Today, Turkish historians have embraced numbers that range between 500,000 and 600,000 Armenian casualties while noting that at least 2.5 million Anatolian Muslims died from the fighting.⁵² Included in this number were 90,000 soldiers serving in Eastern Anatolia and who died due to food shortages and war. In one incident, Turks claim that at least 60,000 Muslims were killed in March, 1915 during the Armenian revolt in Van.⁵³

Related to Turkish defensiveness is the broader issue of shame and how the "Terrible Turk"⁵⁴ has been presented to Europeans from before (and including) Luther and Shakespeare to represent the villainous and threatening "other."⁵⁵ Stories of persecutions against Armenian Christians became ready reinforcements of these characterizations. Europeans observed that Anatolia, as "the sick man of Europe" was, once again, unable to control its own country. Turks themselves were again confirmed to be evil and ruthless barbarians. As is true for Armenians, the Turk is an "outsider." An example of this portrayal is found in an oft-repeated anecdote which has Emir Pasha remarking that "all Armenians should be eliminated. This quote cannot be substantiated. Talaat Pasha did state in an interview for the New York Times in January 1915 that "there was no room for Christians in Turkey;"⁵⁶ a clear reference to the larger objectives of Pan-Turanism.

Turkish historians⁵⁷ often trace the foundations of the Armenian question to the 1878 Treaty of Berlin (between six European Nations and Turkey). In the 19th century divisive ethnic nationalism was taking increasing root in the Ottoman Empire. Ethnic rebellions encouraged Turkish nationalists to respond with “a sense of duty and the ‘necessity’ in their mission....”⁵⁸ The Armenian revolutionary movement of 1894-1896 had a tremendous impact on Ottoman attitudes toward the Armenians. Even earlier, Armenian rebels actively attempted to murder Sultan Abdul Hamit.⁵⁹

Bernard Lewis argued in support of what is called the “provocation theory” that for the Ottoman Empire the nationalism of the “Armenian movement was the deadliest of all threats.”⁶⁰ Armenians menaced Turkish nationalists because they lived on both sides of the Turkish-Russian⁶¹ border and advocated for neutrality instead of entering World War I on the German side. Many Armenian rebels were effectively a “fifth-column” which supported Russian offensives into Turkey. The flames of this sentiment were fueled by Russia’s actively working to promote support for their war effort among Armenians. Two prominent Armenians did lead Czarist troops against the Ottoman Empire.⁶² These adversarial facts alienated the pro-German Young Turks.⁶³

After World War I, Britain occupied Turkey with 320,000 soldiers and oversaw a tribunal against eight Ottoman leaders who had led deportations against Armenians. This tribunal found ample Ottoman documentation⁶⁴ supporting the deportation of Armenians but, instead of calling for their murder, actually demanded their protection.⁶⁵ Armenian historians counter that Talaat Pasha sent secret telegrams ordering executions. This tribunal chose not to accept as legal evidence Pasha’s “secret cables” due to questions about their authenticity.⁶⁶ The main result of the tribunal’s efforts was the hanging of Lieutenant Governor Kemal Bey whose death sparked tremendous resentment among Turkish nationalists. Turkey’s postwar government assisted this tribunal in exchange for more favorable peace terms. After Ataturk gained power, pending verdicts were reversed and other efforts were stopped. Finally, in 1921, British efforts to arrest more war-criminals came to an end after a prisoner-exchange agreement with Ataturk.⁶⁷

In conclusion, one must approach the Turkish narrative (as is also true with the Armenian narrative), fully aware that what the writers are seeking to do is to “perform a useful service, proving or supporting a point of view”⁶⁸ which strengthens the long-term interests of the Turkish people. For both Turks and Armenians their present life and identity is closely tied with their history. The simplest solution to the Armenian question is seen in the fact that present history texts and courses in Turkey do not even mention the Armenians or discuss this historical tragedy. Armenians are increasingly removed from the picture and perception of the average modern Turk. This gradual progression, rather than boding hope for the future of Turkish-Armenian relations, seems to forebode a continued impasse of indifferent hostility and simmering tension between these two communities of culture and faith.

IV. Jewish Perspectives on Armenia

“Only those who cry out for the Jews...can also cry out to God for mercy.”- Bonhoeffer.

“Whoever controls the past controls the future. Whoever controls the present controls the past.”
- George Orwell

Variant interpretations regarding the Armenia, 1915 are prescient to people of interfaith engagement because of the rather unique fact that these events are of great interest to adherents of three major religious traditions. Although Jews were not directly involved in most events in Anatolia during 1915, there are a host of reasons why a significant number of Jewish scholars have found the Armenian narrative compelling.

Ottoman Palestinian Jews, like Ottoman Armenians were under the Islamic “millet” system which was designed to protect religious and cultural minorities. There were incidents against Ottoman Jews in Palestine but these “...ended in the relatively small loss of life and minor damage to property....”⁶⁹ Wanting to avoid a “similar fate”⁷⁰ Zionists chose not to support Armenians or challenge later Turkish denials of Armenian genocide. The European Holocaust dramatically changed that posture. Jewish writers today are some of the most strident supporters of Armenian calls for justice.

Armenians have often framed events in terms of “Muslim” and “Christian.” This is also true in some Jewish narratives. Henry Morgenthau⁷¹ saw it as his duty as a devoted Jew, to aid oppressed Armenians. Yosef Goell asserts, “The Armenians preceded us and the Cambodians followed us.”⁷² Kenneth Stern, from an organization known as the American-Jewish Community describes 1915 as a clash between “Armenian Christians by Turkish Muslims.”⁷³ In this paradigm, an emphasis on the Muslimness of the Ottomans, quite a dubious position in itself,⁷⁴ becomes instructive as a resource for Jews or Christians to discuss a larger pattern of Muslim intolerance and aggression. Although not Jewish, the view of Armenian historian Vahkhan Dadrian,⁷⁵ who inaccurately describes Anatolia as an “Ottoman theocracy,”⁷⁶ bears attention in this light:

Although Islam is a creed it is also a way of life for its followers, transcending the boundaries of faith to permeate the social and political fabric of the nation. Islam’s bent for divisiveness, exclusivity and superiority, which overwhelms its nominal tolerance of other religions, is therefore vital to an understanding of a Muslim-dominated, multi-ethnic system such as Ottoman Turkey.⁷⁷

The important term “genocide” was first used in 1933 by the Jewish scholar Raphael Lemkin to describe the events of Armenia, 1915.⁷⁸ Israeli historian Yisrael Ring states that what happened in Armenia was a “purifying precedent which laid the ground for the Holocaust.”⁷⁹ Both Armenian-American and Jewish observers find parallels in each others “genocides” that advance their faith community’s objectives of survival.

Jewish historians note that both the Turks and Nazis had numerous similarities and even had some mutual interaction.⁸⁰ On parallel made was that both relied upon some technology to carry out their agendas.⁸¹ Dadrian writes, “The two principal architects of the two genocides of the twentieth century, i.e. of the Armenians and the Jews, are on record exulting the experience of success as a warrant for mass murder which they justify in terms of higher national interests.”⁸² Jews and Armenians share the experience of having to fight for a sense of acceptance in an unsympathetic majority context. Stern also notes that “Jews, like Armenians, were seen as a hostile minority during wartime”⁸³ and “Jews, like Armenians, were painted as having reason for exaggerating claims.”⁸⁴

The import of the Armenian Genocide for some Jewish observers revolves around the fact that the Turkish government is actively seen as, “denying the atrocity.” Jewish-Americans are vividly aware that there are also some who have tried to deny the reality of Hitler’s Holocaust.⁸⁵ Stern writes, “The Turkish government ultimately decided to deny the truth, knowing that the Armenians have no state of their own, no apparatus to fight the historical denial. In the same way that Armenians would benefit from a homeland, so also Jewish people will be protected as long as the State of Israel remains intact. This point was first made with great force by none other than David Ben-Gurion in 1936 when he said, “The promise of a national home was made to the Armenians and violated.”⁸⁶

The 1982, International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide in Tel Aviv embraced the Armenian narrative while dismissing Turkish counter-arguments.⁸⁷ Turks resent parallels being made between Jewish and Armenian experiences because Jews in Hitler’s Europe did not usually call for armed revolution against the Germans. After the Conference, some participants complained that, “The Turkish government warned that the topic should not be included and mentioned, threateningly, that the well-being of Turkish Jews.”⁸⁸ The problem with this claim is that both Armenians and Jews in Turkey have lived, and continue to live, in peace and security. In fact, under Ataturk, many European Jews found safe-haven in Turkey before the Second World War.⁸⁹ Recent bombings of synagogues in Istanbul were the work of non-Turkish terrorists and were met by strong condemnation from both Turkish citizens and the Turkish government.

In conclusion, there have been a wide ranging set of responses of the Jewish intellectual community towards Armenia, 1915. The official response of the State of Israel has been circumscribed by the “realpolitik” of ongoing interactions with Turkey. The logic of this view was that “a live Jew was more important than a dead Armenian.”⁹⁰ The frayed moral rationale underneath avoiding official commemorations of Armenian atrocities would mean that other victims worldwide would also have to be commemorated. In North America however, many Jewish writers have come to see their own story foreshadowed in the Armenian narrative. In a sense, 1915 is actually another “tool” to “explain” the unexplainable horrors of Nazi Germany with the suffering of the Armenian people fully embraced and mourned along with their own beloved dead.

V. Armenian and Turkish Conflict Resolution and Muslim-Christian Interaction

“Lord, now is the time to send your wisdom and kindness to the tortured who, although they have forgotten, need you as they hurl themselves closer to the precipice...Let the struggle of our time be short. Let it be settled with justice. Let the fortress of egos, that huge barricade, crumble. And let every treasure go to every man. Let every garden gate be open. But let no flower be crushed. No single branch fall.”⁹¹

-Prayer On the Threshold of Tomorrow, Vahan Tekeyan, translator: Diana Hovanesian.

Is it certain that, “religious cleavages, despite official and other Turkish assertions to the contrary, were crucial in the origin and growth of that conflict”?⁹² How are the events of 1915 to be conceived of to be religious in nature? There are two different answers to this question. Religion and culture have merged to become one inseparable thing for many Armenian-Americans. It is their shared legacy. Turks discuss 1915 in terms of the larger regional tensions of that era: Armenians were siding with Russian interlopers; the Ottoman Empire was in disarray and nearing dissolution. Why, Turks ask, would religion suddenly become an issue in Turkic-Armenian relations when, at the same time, the country was moving toward secularization? Why indeed, if not to placate the very religious constituents within Turkey who opposed increasing secularization?

Another seemingly obvious question needs to be addressed: “Is resolution between Turkish Muslims and Armenian Christians a desirable end? Why should we be talking about change? After all, the situation has settled into a comfortable, well-defined stasis for close to a century and both communities have been able to garner some benefit from keeping the issue at a low-boil. To use a Texas-ism: “Why not let sleeping dogs lie?”

In both cultures, the events of 1915 have more importance in the formation of the future and than as an object for casual analysis of events from an increasingly distant past. Even though there is a basic need for integration and cultural peace, both the Armenian-American Christian community and the keepers of the Ataturk-legacy in Turkey have a more pressing need, and that is for identity affirmation and maintenance of their control over these distinct cultural legacies. I am suggesting that any “reconciliation” between Armenian Christians and Turkish Muslims must take this into account first and foremost before other efforts are initiated to build bridges where no “bridges” are being requested.

International legal structures for the promotion of reconciliation have their merit but my focus is on religiously-based conflict resolution. Intercultural and interfaith violence often has very little to do with the development of a moral and psychologically healthy future relationship. Healing may even threaten to disturb deeply cherished faith-identities that relate to persecution and vindication.

Present intercultural mechanisms for conflict management often minimize the religious as part of the solution and see it primarily as only part of the problem. Faith communities are able to extend the boundaries of ethical responsibility beyond themselves, however, may offer hope for progress. Could Turkish religious jurisprudence be an avenue for the formal acknowledgment of past atrocities? Could Islamic leaders initiate reconciliation? Could Muslims fight against such government laws as Section 306 of the penal code which criminalizes (for up to ten years in prison) even the open discussion of an “Armenian Genocide”?⁹³ Prospects for present progress seem very unlikely.

The complexity of Armenian-Turkish tensions means that issues are not simply religious (any more than Protestant-Catholic tensions in Northern Ireland are only religious). But a point of entry is needed into these seemingly intractable problems and these two religious traditions, Armenian Christian and Turkish Muslim, must work toward peacemaking. Muslims and Armenians could begin by crafting faith-based intercultural statements that foster mutual respect. Until this is done, alienation and bitterness seem inevitable.

The fact that both groups are “outsiders” may present the possibility for partnership. How might the situation change if Armenians advocated for Turkey’s admission into the European Union or if Turkey donated significant amounts of money to Armenian social and educational structures? In the Jewish tradition, the “care for the outsider (*ger*) . . . is a litmus test of the ethical conduct of the majority group.”⁹⁴ This Biblical view not only celebrates particularity and boundary but it also creates space for mutuality and the creation of a new shared narrative. Muslims and Christians share these cherished values.

Armenian and Turkish historians could begin to focus on the centuries of harmonious relationships between the two cultures and explore ways that the two religious and linguistic cultures have influenced each other. The pro-Armenian view of the Turkish historian Karal is not uncommon in stating that, in the 1820’s, many Armenians had “adopted Turkish culture and were not pursuing independence as was the case of other Ottoman communities.”⁹⁵ Scholars might focus on some of the ways that Armenians have helped to make Turkey what it is today while others might explore the ways that Turkish culture has contributed to the development of an Armenian identity. This sounds like an implausible stretch but only because the battle-lines are so identifiably polarized.

What is needed is religious conflict-resolution training which has the courage to surmount deep historical hurts for the sake of future intercultural interaction. Both the peace and justice resources within the Bible and the Qur’an can facilitate this task. Both Armenian Christians and Muslim Turks share a strong commitment to the interiority of spirituality expressed in practices of prayer, meditation and other direct experiences of the divine. These similarities should be explored. Conflict-resolution mediators and studies will work with a shared religious language from a shared monotheism to initiate creative forces for generating a new Turkish and Armenian identity to replace the victimized-other and the misunderstood-other. “Neutral” advocates for reconciliation and peace between these two historic enemies will take both courage and moral authority.

The first step is to get both religious Turks and Armenians to see reconciliation as a desirable goal. Honesty is requisite. Judith Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery* wrote, “Criminal behavior is always defined by the perpetrator’s compulsion to promote forgetting. Secrecy and silence are the perpetrator’s first line of defense.”⁹⁶ Any confidence-building measures between these two faith-communities must be rooted in a mutual commitment to both honesty and empathy.

The second step is refraining from sweeping generalizations about Islam as a religion of war and focusing on citations completely out of context of Qur’anic passages that call for the deaths of infidels.⁹⁷ In the case of Armenia, 1915, it is fairly clear, in spite of some views introduced earlier in this paper, that Islamic views of non-Muslim communities⁹⁸ had little to do with the events of that time. While the common faith of the Ottoman citizenry was undoubtedly Islam, the actual power of the Empire had nothing to do with Islamic ideals, teachings or ethical values. It might even be argued that, as Turkey became more secular and less “Islamic” it became increasingly unable to accommodate the human rights of its non-Muslim citizens.

There are now between 40,000 and 50,000 Armenian Christians living inside Turkey today. Their voices need to be heard and their story needs to be told. They live in relative harmony with the local populations and are full citizens. There are 30 separate schools and 17 Armenian cultural organizations and two Armenian language newspapers in Istanbul alone. These Turkish Armenians are mostly Georgian Orthodox but there are also Armenian Catholic and Protestant church communities. In an interesting memorial service, on November the 1st, 1981, the Armenian Patriarch held a service in honor of those Turkish diplomats who had been killed at the hands of Armenian-American terrorists. This same patriarch in 1982 denied that modern Turkey had been involved in oppressing its Armenian minority population. Turkish relations with the neighboring Republic of Armenia, in contrast, have been quite punitive.

The very possibility for interfaith engagement on this issue has been sorely lacking. Armenian Christians and Turkish Muslims each face, through the horrific weave of this situation, the unique opportunity of history to make a clarion statement to the rest of the world about the nature of their ability to forgive and work to establish genuine and meaningful solutions to longstanding problems. All Muslims and Christians should support each community as they struggle toward that painful but important task.

VI. Conclusion

“One should not believe all things concerning a man, because a man can say all things. One should believe of a man only what is human.” -Cyrano de Bergerac

“When in the silence of abjection, all one can hear is the slave’s chains and the traitor’s voice, when all tremble before the tyrant and it is as dangerous to incur his favor as to fall from his grace, the historian appears, charged with the vengeance of peoples.”
-Chateaubriand, article in the *Mercure*, July 4, 1807

“The terrible thing about looking for the truth is that one often finds it.”
-Maxim cited by La Vieille Taupe

Before Jean-Paul Sartre published an article entitled *Genocide* he complied with the request of a Turkish friend to delete any references to the Armenian Genocide.⁹⁹ This is one example of the many times that the events of Armenia have been obliterated from the consciousness of a world that cannot come to grips with its lessons. The great tragedy is that not only were these events “unpreventable but also impervious to punishment.”¹⁰⁰

There are myriad lessons to be gleaned from Armenia, 1915. The International community’s failure to respond to plaintive cries for help underscore the need for organizations such as the International Criminal Court.¹⁰¹ Organizations such as the International Center for Transnational Justice have sought to develop national and political pressure in the world court in order to censure Turkey.¹⁰² Their approach is to focus on legal contemporary legal ramifications of these historical events.¹⁰³

Another political lesson is that competing military rivalries reduced the human rights needs of Armenians to issues of political expediency. Calls for intervention became intertwined with questions about ulterior geo-political agendas. It can be argued that what Lloyd George called a great political victory against the Ottomans, the 1878 Berlin Treaty which mandated that the Empire “protect” its Armenian citizenry, actually fueled such resentment and animosity toward Armenians that its net effect was negative.¹⁰⁴

This paper has considered the ways that faith communities have remembered the events of 1915 to solidify their own cultural and religious visions and how these variant accounts have been consistently contested with each group talking about an ongoing “legacy of duplicity.”¹⁰⁵ Another question remains: Is there any interface to be found between Armenian and Turkish needs vis-à-vis the events of 1915?

Cultivating a positive, constructive spirit of mutual empathy based on mutually agreed upon historical details is foundational to Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. At present, I was unable to find only a few examples of this kind of mutual interaction between the two communities. One bright spot was the establishment of the fledgling Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission which was virulently attacked by Armenian-Americans at a public meeting in 2001 at the Sourp Khatch Church Hall in Bethesda, Maryland.¹⁰⁶ Another was an academic seminar entitled “Armenians at the end of the Ottoman Empire” and sponsored at the University of Michigan in 1998 by Professor Ronald Suny of the University of Chicago.¹⁰⁷

Carter was the first President to make mention of Armenia, 1915 when, in 1978, spoke about events without using either the terms “Turkish” or “Genocide.” President Reagan, in 1984, was quick to acquiesce to Turkish protestations.¹⁰⁸ In 2000, the Armenian Genocide House Resolution number 398 was proposed by Congress asking President Clinton to mention in his annual April 24th commemoration address the word “genocide.”¹⁰⁹ The Turkish government put severe pressure on the American government including threatening to close Turkish airbases (including those close to the Iraqi border). In contrast, the French government passed a similar resolution. In 1987, the European Parliament also rejected Turkey’s admission into their organization partly because of Turkey’s ongoing denial that genocide had occurred.

Further prospects seem remote. There is no will on either side. And, beyond Turkish and Armenian, I know of no discussion of these events from a Muslim and Christian perspective, although such a discussion is long overdue. It would be instructive to use Armenia, from 1821 to 1915 as a starting-point to engage Muslims and Christians in a discussion on the religious “uses” of history. Perhaps (more neutral) Muslims who are not Turkish and Christians who are not Armenians could lead the way in encouraging Turks and Armenians to revisit these issues with an eye toward future interrelationships. This effort is greatly hindered in Muslim perceptions by what is seen as the “uses” of the Armenian tragedy to promote what they would describe as a “Zionist Internationalist” agenda to support the nation of Israel and combat anti-Jewish Holocaust deniers.

Writing about the Jewish Holocaust the German Lutheran Pastor Martin Niemoeller reminded people of the importance of solidarity with all groups of people who are being abused.¹¹⁰ Armenia, 1915 is not about sanguine disagreements; it is about horrific atrocity. Given the precedent of a vicious and defining history, community-based religious institutions may be the most helpful resource for fostering empathy and a sense of common bond between Muslims and Christians; Turks and Armenians. It will be a gradual process. The issues are visceral. One survivor wrote that he saw the poverty, political unrest and frequent earthquakes that Turkey has suffered all as signs of God’s wrath against the Turkish people.¹¹¹ Because of this pain, the empathetic content as well as an empathetic methodology of religiously-based conflict resolution needs to be carefully examined.

Czech novelist Milan Kundera wrote that, “The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.”¹¹² Today, as in the last century, both Armenians and Turks continue to clamor for “truth.”¹¹³ While dealing with the tragedies of history, neither community should become captive to an irresolvable past. There should be proper mourning for those who have suffered but, at some future point in time, the cost of continuing to make this tragedy define Turkish-Armenian relationships should be considered. Christian and Muslim faith can help Armenians and Turks appropriately mourn the events of the past but these two faiths are also able to help members of these two faith communities find ways to live together in the present and work together in the future for empathy, reconciliation and peace between Armenian and Turkish children. In the words of Armenian-American scholar Peter Balakian, “The time has come for the closing of the wound.”¹¹⁴

Endnotes

¹ Richard G. Hovannisian, editor. *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*. Oxford, U.K.: Transaction Books, 1987. In Hovannisian’s article, “*The Armenian Genocide and Patterns of Denial*,” Page 123-124. Hovannisian relates that the Turk Ahmet Vefa actually used this quote in reference not to the Ottoman excesses against Armenians but Armenians who destroyed the Pre-Armenian Urartuans in the Seventh Century before Christ. The timing of the statement was shortly before Germany’s invasion of Poland. There are also numerous versions of this statement, another being (cited in Stern, 1993, page 87) “Who still

talks nowadays of the extermination of the Armenians?” Historian Edouard Calic calls this statement an “inimitable mixture of brutal honesty and the art of concealment” (eine unnachahmliche Mischung von brutaler Ehrlichkeit und Kunst des Verbergens). Page 8 of Edouard Calic’s, *Ohne Maske. Hitler-Breitung Geheimgesprache*, 1931 published in Frankfurt-Am-Mainz in 1968 and quoted in a footnote from Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict From the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*. Providence: Berghahn Books, 1995, page 417. Turks deny that this quote ever appeared before it being quoted in a November 24, 1945 article in the Times of London. It also appears in a book by Louis Lochner (AP Berlin) written in 1942. The author of this article said that this quote came from the Obersalzberg meeting of August 22, 1939 and it was included as evidence in the November 23, 1945 session of the Nuremberg Tribunal. Yet this quote is not in the official transcripts. Interestingly, the quote appears on the wall of the permanent exhibition of the American Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

² Bardakjian, Kevork B. *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide*. Zoryan Institute Special Report Number 3. Cambridge, MA: The Zoryan Institute, 1985, page 28.

³ Sven Lundquist in *Exterminate all the Brutes: One Man’s Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness and the Origins of European Genocide*, Norton: New York, 1992 (1996), and other scholars have argued that atrocities in Central and Southern Africa actually may have this dubious distinction,

⁴ Carolyn Forché, editor. *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1993.

⁵ Armenians point to reform measures against them by Sultan Abdul-Hamid II (1876-1909) as the preface to these events. Pogroms began in Sassun in 1894 and continued in 1895 and 1896 with as many as 200,000 Armenians being either killed or exiled from their homes.

⁶ Talaat Pasha was later assassinated on March 14, 1921 in Berlin by Soghomon Tehlirian, an Armenian from the village of Erzindjan, who was seeking revenge for the deaths of his family members during June, 1915. The assassin himself was then part of a column of 20,000 people evacuated from the town and was left for dead but miraculously awoke in a pile of corpses alongside his mother and four brothers and sisters.

⁷ Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Documentation of the Armenian Genocide in Turkish Sources*. Published in *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, volume II (Israel W. Charny, editor), London: Mansell Publishing, 1991. Reprinted by the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, Jerusalem.

⁸ The website www.turkishembassy.org states that fewer than 1.5 million Armenians lived in the entire Ottoman Empire in 1915. British, French and Ottoman sources cite a figure between one million and 1.5 million Armenians. This source quotes the number of “historian and demographer Dr. Justin McCarthy of the University of Louisville at slightly less than 600,000 while Toynbee suggests about 500,000. This source cites French missionaries who conclude that, after the war about 280,000 Armenians remained in Anatolia while 700,000 Armenians immigrated to other countries.

⁹ Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response*. New York: Harper and Collins, 2003. Page 379.

¹⁰ Article, *The Armenian Genocide* by the California State Department of Education, 1987. Reprinted in *Genocide*, William Dudley, editor. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2001, page 19.

¹¹ An excellent article which provides helpful background about the political tensions of this era is entitled, “*The Culture and Politics of Violence in Turkish Society, 1903-1914*” and published in the Middle Eastern Studies Journal, volume 22, number 3, July, 1986. The author, Ottoman historian George Gawyrch of Baylor University was particularly helpful in helping me to better understand this fascinating era.

¹² In the Southeastern region of Anatolia, the zone most immediately threatened by Russian advance, there were the highest numbers of outright massacres. In the Northwestern districts of the frontier zone there was more effort to focus on deportations and a semblance of order which, of course, also led to massacres.

¹³ Esack, Farid. *On Being a Muslim: Finding a Religious Path in the World Today*. New York: One World, 2000. Page 186.

¹⁴ When discussing the events within the Ottoman Empire of 1915 one faces an immediate problem when using terms. The terms “Turk” and “Turkish” and “Turkey” are used at times in this research in a way that is not intended to deflect from the historical facts that the Ottoman Empire was completely distinct from Kemal Ataturk’s Turkey. What is intriguing about this distinction for the purposes of this discussion is that the two separate governments, both Ottoman and Turk develop similar ways of discussing Armenian problems. This confirms the deeply rooted (and diametrically opposite) assumptions held by both critics and supporters of the Turkish denial that almost two million Armenians were killed in Turkey in 1915-1916.

¹⁵ Quoted in the article, “*The Armenian Genocide and Patterns of Denial*” by Richard Hovannisian in Hovannisian, editor, page 111.

¹⁶ There have been numerous accusations from both Turks and Armenians that many historians have been anything but objective. One of the most dramatic series of accusations to this affect swirled around Heath Lowry of Princeton University who, while challenging the conclusions of historian Robert Jay Lifton, Lowry wrote an extensive rebuttal to the Turkish Ambassador to the United States which became public and which led to Lowry being censured and removed from his position in the endowed Atatürk Chair of Turkish Studies at Princeton.

¹⁷ There are a number of excellent resources that one could read to familiarize themselves with the specific details of Ottoman-Armenian tensions between 1897 and 1916. These include, *The History of the Armenian Genocide* by Vahakn N. Dadrian (1995); *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective* by Richard G. Hovannisian, editor (1987) and *Starving Armenians: America and the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1930 and After* (2004). Two resources from a Turkish perspective would be the books: “*A Chronology of the Armenian Problem with a Bibliography: 1878-1923*” by Recep Karacakaya and published by the Republic of Turkey Prime Minister General Directorate of State Archives in Ankara in 2002 and *The Armenian File: the Myth of Innocence Exposed* by Kamuran Gurun published jointly by K. Rustem and Brothers (Istanbul) and Weidenfeld and Nicholson, Ltd (London), 1985. In 1984, Ihsan Sakarya has also published a book on the subject in Ankara but not yet translated entitled *Belgelerle Ermeni Sorunu*. One of the most sympathetic books to the Turkish view published in the United States is the “*History of the Ottoman Empire*” written by Samford Shaw where Shaw and his Turkish wife questions almost every Armenian position and basically conclude that these accusations are fabrications of history.

¹⁸ Poem, *The Dance* by Siamanto, translators, Peter Balakian and Nevrat Yaghlian, in Forche, page 59.

¹⁹ Dudley, ed., page 15. Herodotus spoke of a civilization in Phrygia that is cited by Armenians as a reference to their ancestors. Today, a connection is seen between the Armenians and the Iron Age kingdom of Urartu in the vicinity of Lake Van. Armenia was only an independent country for a brief time under the rule of Tigranes the Great. The written Armenian language was the creation of the scribe Mesrop-Mashtots in 405 C.E. and about a century after Gregory the Illuminator established the Armenian Christian Church. Armenia became absorbed into the Ottoman Empire in the 15th Century after the fall of Byzantium.

²⁰ This revolution, beginning in 1453, was supported because the Seljuk’s promised to protect the Armenian church which was seen as a heretical schism by Orthodox Christians. Taxes were also rescinded for a period of time before the dhimmi system was instituted.

²¹ The most famous of these political parties called the Dashnaksutium was in fact linked in an alliance with the Young Turks or the (Itthihad ve Terakki Teshkilati. Armenians hailed their victory as a modernizing force and a voice for secularism. Hovannisian, page 27.

²² Balakian, page 153. The quote comes from a letter written in 1913 by Henry Morgenthau, Sr., Ambassador for the United States to the Ottoman Empire.

²³ On the night of April 23 and on the morning of April 24th, 1915, Armenian political and religious leaders were arrested in Constantinople which then led to a series of deportations in May of 1915. Armenians serving in the Ottoman Army had, prior to these events, had already been segregated in the Army into unarmed labor battalions. They, along with other young males, were the first to be executed.

²⁴ Balakian, Peter. *Black Dog of Fate*. New York: Broadway Books, 1997. Balakian is a Professor at Colgate University. Balakian’s other book, *The Burning Tigris*, has been cited previously.

²⁵ One interesting exception is Turkish historian Taner Akcam who writes as a Turk in a way that is very favorable to Armenian perspectives on events. He did some graduate research in Hamburg, Germany and speaks in the United States. He is criticized by Turks in the website: <http://tallarmeniantale.com>

²⁶ www.arzo.com is an English language Armenian Newsweekly published in the United States that cites numerous states who have succeeded in gaining this commemoration. Legislation for this commemoration in Massachusetts began in 1995 and was met with success by 1998.

²⁷ Article by Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The Armenian Question and the Wartime Fate of Armenians as Documented by the Officials of the Ottoman Empire’s World War I Allies: Germany and Austria-Hungary*. International Journal of Middle East Studies, 34 (2002), pages 59-85. This quotation, from page 66, is from an extensive report for the German Chancellor prepared by Max Erwin Scheubner-Richter a captain of reserves with the title “vice-consul” at Eruzum. This general was also part of an expeditionary force whose task it was to march into Iran and Azerbaijan conducting anti-Russian guerrilla operations.

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- ²⁸ The first missionaries from North America to Armenia were Congregationalists named Elias Riggs, Eli Smith and Harrison Gray Otis Dwight who arrived from Boston in 1830. After graduating from Amherst Riggs spent the next 68 years of his life among Armenians. His children and grandchildren also followed his example. In the next twenty years countless other Congregationalist missionaries arrived and soon the Bible was translated by these missionaries into Armenian. They worked among people who were already members of the Armenian Apostolic Church. One of the most famous missionaries was Caleb Frank Gates who went to Armenia in 1881 from Beloit College in Wisconsin. He founded Euphrates College in Harpoot and Robert College in Constantinople. By 1900 some 300 missionaries served on 162 missions in 21 different mission stations most of which included hospital or medical facilities. From Peterson, page 19.
- ²⁹ Conversion to Christianity from Islam was a capital offense.
- ³⁰ Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Page 5.
- ³¹ Wilson, son of a Presbyterian minister and himself a devout Protestant was very aware of the sufferings of the Armenians but chose not to work for their assistance for political reasons.
- ³² Hovannissian, page 34-35. Prospects for a Free Armenia vanished by 1921.
- ³³ This term replaced the term "Eastern Anatolia" which was the phrase used by the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli who defended Ottoman sovereignty against Russian expansionism. British consulates were opened in Armenia as part of this effort to bring greater attention to their plight.
- ³⁴ For information about German and Austrian perspectives see Vahakn N. Dadrian's article, *Documentation of the Armenian Genocide in German and Austrian Sources*. Reprinted from *Genocide: A Critical Biographic Review*, volume 3, Israel Charny, editor. New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1994.
- ³⁵ Hovannissian, page 31.
- ³⁶ *Peace Prayers: Meditations, Affirmations, Incantations, Poems and Prayers for Peace*. (no compiler cited). San Francisco: Harper Books, 1992. Page 122
- ³⁷ <http://www.turkishembassy.org/governmentpolitics/issuesarmenian.htm>
- ³⁸ Nicholas Berdayev's classic, "The Meaning of History" was published in 1923; the exact same time historians were beginning to evaluate the events of Eastern Anatolia, 1915-1916.
- ³⁹ Hovannissian, in his article, op. cit. page 111. One is reminded of the sage United States State Department axiom which warns, "don't believe anything until it has been officially denied!"
- ⁴⁰ Hovannissian, page 55.
- ⁴¹ The actual title of this group was the so-called Committee of Union and Progress but became known simply as the "Young Turk Party." In 1908, they contributed to a military coup which led to Sultan Abdul-Hamid being forced to launch a constitutional monarchy. This transition was hailed by Armenians as a step away from an Islamic Turkey toward a more tolerant and modern nation-state. In 1909, however more than 20,000 Armenians were reportedly massacred in the region of Cilicia. These events were blamed by the Young Turks on Abdul-Hamid and they contributed to him being deposed. Constitutional rights were also suspended for several years at this time because of these problems.
- ⁴² Hovannissian, editor, page 72.
- ⁴³ When the Greeks and Balkan Christians seceded from the Empire, the Armenians became the last significant Christian minority under Ottoman rule. Even with this change, the millet system was still in place as was the larger Islamic assumption that the Armenians were "people of the book."
- ⁴⁴ An Armenian group named "Nemesis" based in Boston assassinated Ottoman Ministers Taalat Pasha and Jamal Pasha and others. Beginning again in the 1970's the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (JSAG) claimed responsibility for 230 violent attacks which resulted in wounding over five hundred people and the deaths of over 70 people, 31 of which were Turkish officials.
- ⁴⁵ The first attack was against the Turkish Consul General in Los Angeles named Mehmet Baydar and his Deputy Bahadır Demir. These two men were killed by the Armenian Gurgun Yanikan on January 27, 1973 in Santa Barbara, California. www.ermenisorunu lists thirteen pages of attacks against Turkish diplomats. A similar list can be found at www.karabkh.org which focuses on ongoing Armenian-Azerbaijani tensions.
- ⁴⁶ These articles were written by Cleveland Dodge, George Plimpton and others who had earlier written about what they had seen. A number of missionaries became very disappointed by this movement in American government to become friendly with Ataturk but others saw his coming to power as an opportunity for Christian missionaries to work in the country without religious opposition. Hovannissian, op. Cit. In the article by Marjorie Houspian Dobkin, "What Genocide? What Holocaust? News from Turkey, 1915-1923." Page 106.

⁴⁷ Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust*, translated by Jeffrey Mehlman, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, page 121.

⁴⁸ There were, of course, tribunals sponsored during the Armistice period that made presentations about the recent events. Resad the Procuror-General of the Turkish Military Tribunal and Ahmad Ferid (Tek), the Interior Minister of the fledgling Turkish Republic would be two examples of such interpreters.

⁴⁹ Mentioned in the article, *What Genocide? What Holocaust? News From Turkey, 1915-1923: A Case Study* by Marjorie Housepian Dobkin in Hovannisian, editor, page 103-104.

⁵⁰ Grey cautioned that Britain lacked direct knowledge of massacres and that, if they had occurred, they were “not all on one side.” Quoted in Powers, page 5.

⁵¹ Hovannisian, editor, op. cit., page 107

⁵² www.turkishembassy.org, page 2 (of 7). Talaat Pasha himself boasted that about 300,000 Armenians had been killed. The number 600,000 appeared in the 1918 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica.

⁵³ www.turkishembassy.org, page 5.

⁵⁴ In the article “*The Armenian Genocide and Patterns of Denial*” by Hovannisian, edited by Hovannisian, page 121. The author also notes that the Turkish government was active in protesting Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer’s attempts to make the movie, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*” based on the book of the same name written by Franz Werfel in 1933. The movie, backed by Armenian businessmen, was finally made in 1982. The title refers to a siege which actually lasted 53 days but the number 40 was seen to have symbolic value.

⁵⁵ Bulgars (Bulgarians) welcomed Russian influence in their region as a foil against Ottoman control and the Bulgarian word for Turk is also used interchangeably as a profane insult. Countless rebelling Bulgarian communities were massacred during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. This war was also the occasion for the first laws called “Armenian Reforms” focusing on the status of Armenians inside the Empire.

⁵⁶ Power, Samantha. “*A Problem from Hell*”: *America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: New Republic (Basic) Books, 2002. Page 2.

⁵⁷ Especially Feroz Ahmed, Danishmend, Resad and Enver Ziya Karal according to the Armenian historian Vahakn Dadrian. Dadrian also states that Article 61 of the 1878 Treaty was the key issue because it called for the protection of non-Muslim communities within the Ottoman Empire. The six nations, known as the “concert of nations,” had different reasons for supporting Armenia and signing the treaty. Austria, one signatory, would only have supported Article 61 in the most ambivalent of ways. France, another signatory, had vast economic interests in maintaining the status quo and was not interested in Armenian problems. Article 23 of the same treaty focused on ensuring that Macedonian minorities inside the Empire be given fair treatment. The Berlin Treaty thus became a legal and political instrument for International intervention into the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Seeing Bulgarians and Greeks gaining independence inspired some Armenians at this time to follow suit. They sought British political support for their ambitions which were not embraced. British politics during this time were particularly divisive and incapable of presenting a unified voice of opposition on behalf of the Armenian people. They became “pawns” in the ‘Great Game.’ Article 61, in its entirety reads as follows: “The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians, and to guarantee their security against Circassians and Kurds. It will be periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the powers, who will superintend its application.” Quoted in Peterson, page 17.

⁵⁸ Hovannisian, editor. In the article by R. Hrair Dekmejian, “*Determinants of Genocide: Armenians and Jews as Case Studies*.” Op. cit. Page 93.

⁵⁹ European intervention on behalf of the Armenians at that time fueled this idea that they were primarily representing non-Ottoman interests.

⁶⁰ Quoted in the article *Provocation or Nationalism: A Critical Inquiry into the Armenian Genocide of 1915* by Robert Melson in Hovannisian, editor, page 67

⁶¹ Russian Armenia, between Eastern Anatolia and the Transcaucases was taken from Persia by conquest in 1828. When Czar Alexander II, declared war on the Ottoman Empire in 1877, he mentioned Armenians as being allies of Russian interests. At that time there were probably one million Armenians in Russia. In 1882, the Patriarch of the Apostolic Church stated that there were 2.6 million Armenians. Of these about 180,000 lived in Constantinople where many were wealthy bankers and merchants. Peterson, page 18.

⁶² Powers, page 3.

⁶³ Especially Minister of War Enver Pasha and the Minister of Internal Affairs, Taalat Pasha who sealed an agreement with Berlin who promised Ottoman control of Central Asia in the event of victory. Armenians stood in the way of that objective.

⁶⁴ Since 1915, there has been ongoing controversy about the extent and accuracy of Ottoman Government Documents. In 1985, the Turkish Government led by Prime Minister Turgut Ozal announced the complete opening of all official Ottoman Archives relating to the Armenian question. Armenian scholars have countered that this effort was not genuine or comprehensive and even that some of the material released was clearly inauthentic. For an Armenian perspective on the “Ottoman Archive Debate.” Read the article written by Ara Sarafian entitled, *The Ottoman Archive Debate and the Armenian Genocide* published in the Armenian Forum, Volume 2, number 1 (Spring 1999), pages 35-44. Published by the Gomidas Institute.

⁶⁵ Ottoman officials were told to protect those being deported. Of course, this is seen by Armenians to be only formal language which should be seen to have no meaning in the context of these brutal deportations. In the tribunals around the Peace Treaty of Sevres, 144 Ottoman officials were deported for trial to Malta. At these trials British officials had the Armenian Haig Khazarian examine the documents about these deportations. For any number of reasons, including their actual innocence, charges was dismissed.

⁶⁶ Supposedly these cables were found when General Allenby captured Aleppo in 1918 in the office of an official named Nairn Bey. They were also published in the Daily Telegraph of London in 1922. British officials at the Tribunal dismissed these as forgeries generated in Paris in 1920 by Aram Andonian. The authenticity of these documents is also discussed in Ara Sarafin’s article described in footnote number 64.

⁶⁷ Powers, page 16.

⁶⁸ Foss, Clive. *The Turkish View of Armenian History*, in Dadrian’s *The Armenian Genocide*, page 276.

⁶⁹ Auron, Yair. *The Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide*. New York: Transaction Press, 2002, page 9. In reference to this quote, Auron said the term was used in a “legal conference in Madrid.”” On page 378 of his book, Balakian says the term was coined in 1944. A major focus of this book is on the *Yishuv*, the small Jewish community in Ottoman Palestine and the question of whether or not they could have done more to help the Armenians. I am grateful for Armenian friend and scholar, Art Tonoyan, for bringing Auron’s book to my attention after he attended a lecture on this topic.

⁷⁰ Auron, page 9.

⁷¹ According to www.turkishembassy.org, Morgenthau stated in his writings that the Turks were an inferior race who possessed “inferior blood.”

⁷² Goell, Yoseff, in an article entitled, “*The Tragedies of Other People: Israel and the Turkish Attempt to Play Down the Armenia Holocaust*,” The Jerusalem Post, October 26, 1989, page 4.

⁷³ Stern, Kenneth. *Holocaust Denial*. New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1993.

⁷⁴ Most Ottoman leaders were either agnostics, Muslims in name only, or atheists British Ambassador Lowther in a report dated June 7, 1909 commented that the Young Turkish leaders of the Ittihadist movements, “depreciation of the Koran bordered on contempt for it and what it stood for.” At about the same time Ambassador Morgenthau of the United States wrote, “I can personally testify that he (Talat) cared nothing for Mohammedism (sic.) for, like most of the leaders of his party, he scoffed at all religions.” Citation from Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story*. Garden City, New Jersey: Harpers Press, 1918, pages 20 and 323. Turkish historian S.A. Mardin said that the leaders of that time took a “manipulative instrumental attitude toward...institutional Islam.” Quoted in Dadrian, page 378.

⁷⁵ Another reason for the insertion of this Armenian scholar in this section is the extent and popularity of both his research and his arguments. One interesting expression of the extent of Dadrian’s influence can be found in the fact that Heath Lowry’s refutation of the scholarship of Robert Jay Lifton (previously discussed) notes Lifton’s extensive reliance on Dadrian. This is on page 6 of the article: *Professional Ethics and the Denial of the Armenian Genocide* by Roger W. Smith, Eric Markusen and Robert Jay Lifton and published in the Holocaust and Genocide Studies Journal, volume 9, Number 1, Spring 1995, pages 1-22.

⁷⁶ It is true that the Sultan of the Empire also carried the title of Khalif (the successor of Muhammad) and as “supreme protector of Islam” but how these titles are to be construed is an issue of some debate.

⁷⁷ Dadrian, page 3.

⁷⁸ Auron, page 15.

⁷⁹ From Yisrael Ring’s book, “*Are There Laws in Genocide*,” quoted in Auron, page 17. Auron notes that a number of Jewish thinkers have explored the question of whether or not the Holocaust had precedents. Notable among these scholars would be Eliezar Schweid, Emil Fackenheim and Richard Rubinstein. Jewish historian Robert Melson in *Revolution and Genocide* and Helen Fein in, “*Accounting for Genocide*.” also

talk about Armenia, 1915. Both writers note both similarities and significant differences. Non-Jewish German historians such as Ernst Nolte, have also looked for parallels between events. Richard Rubinstein, in his book *Modernity and the Policy of Destruction* notes that the “fact” of genocide has become a fundamental characteristic of modern culture as we experience it.

⁸⁰ Auron, page 20 notes that what he calls “one of the founding fathers of Nazism, Max Erwin Von Scheubner-Richter was in Armenia at the time, described the massacre as Asiatic Barbarism.”

⁸¹ Young Turks used the completed sections of the Berlin to Baghdad Railway to remove victims from Anatolia to the Syrian Desert where they left cattle cars and joined forced marches.

⁸² Dadrian, page 383. In confirmation of this Dadrian notes that the two terms used by the Ottoman Empire to explain their actions namely “deportation” (*tehcir*) and “relocation” (*tebdili mekan*) were actually euphemisms that were also used by the Nazis in their atrocities against Jews in Europe.

⁸³ Stern, page 87.

⁸⁴ Stern, page 87.

⁸⁵ It should also be noted that these views are very popular throughout the Arab world. For a complete description of those who deny the German Holocaust of the Jews I would recommend the book, *Denying History: Who Says The Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It* by Michael Shermer and Alex Gobman. Berkley: University of California Press, 2000. One might also consult, *Holocaust Denial: Demographics, Testimonies and Ideologies* by John Zimmerman. New York: University Press of America, 2000.

⁸⁶ Auron, page 26. There were a number of articles in the Palestine press before that time that confirmed this view.

⁸⁷ Such dismissals are evident when one reads papers from this conference such as Israel W. Charney’s paper, “*One is Either for Human Life or Not*” where he states that the “Turkish government is currently engaged in massive campaigns obliterate the history of the Armenian Genocide...” Peterson, page 6.

⁸⁸ Stern, page 87.

⁸⁹ This positive situation for Jews in Turkey changed in 1942 when Ismet Inonu’s government established punitive taxes against non-Muslims.

⁹⁰ Auron, page 358.

⁹¹ Forche, op. cit. page 61.

⁹² Dadrian, page 377.

⁹³ This law was passed in late September of 2003 and states that Turkish citizens are forbidden to confirm the fact of the Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Turkey or to call for the end of Turkish control of Northern Cyprus. Prison terms are possible but it would seem that fines are more likely according to the International Publishers Association press release of April 21, 2004 found at <http://www.ipa-uae.org/PressRelease> This situation is also discussed on the website of the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy which can be accessed at <http://www.eafjd.org/rubrique.php3?id> and at the website of the Armenian National Committee of America in their press release of August 1, 2003 at <http://anca.org/pressrel.asp> One of the most active American politicians on behalf of the Armenian-American community in confronting Section 306 has been Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. of New Jersey. Consult his website at http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/nj06_pallone/pr_oct4_turkish_punishment.html

⁹⁴ Gopin, op. cit., page 6.

⁹⁵ Dadrian, page 47.

⁹⁶ Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, page 373.

⁹⁷ Dadrian writes: “The Koran (Sic.), the centerpiece of the *Seriat*, embodies some 260 verses; most of them uttered by Mohammed in Mecca, enjoining the faithful to wage *cihad*, holy war, against the disbelievers and to ‘massacre them.’” Dadrian, page 4.

⁹⁸ For a more complete discussion of these ideas consult H. Gibb and H. Bowen’s book, *Islamic Society and the West*, volume One published by the Oxford University Press, New York, 1962 and *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, edited by B. Braude and Bernard Lewis, volume One, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.

⁹⁹ Vidal-Naquet, page 129. Of this anecdote the author poetically responds, “...such is the serenity of ‘justice.’”

¹⁰⁰ Dadrian, page 422.

¹⁰¹ At Versailles Treaty Conference of 1919, and on the basis of sovereign immunity, Secretary of State Robert Lansing objected to the creation of a permanent international criminal court to try the Kaiser or

Ottoman leaders for crimes during the war and this policy has remained consistent. This American posture stands in stark contrast to the overtures made by Henry Morgenthau (Senior), then Ambassador for the United States in Constantinople who protested crimes against Armenians in the strongest way. His efforts were joined by those of former President Theodore Roosevelt who, as early as 1915, began calling for America to enter the war against the Ottomans in order to save Armenians facing death and deportation

¹⁰² Unpublished Article: *The Applicability of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to the Events Which Occurred During the Early Twentieth Century*. This “legal analysis” was prepared by a “think-tank,” the International Center for Trans-National Justice.

¹⁰³ One article that conveys this approach was written by Vahakn N. Dadrian entitled *Genocide as a Problem of National and International Law: the World War I Armenian Case and Its Contemporary Legal Ramifications*. New Haven, CT: Yale Journal of International Law, volume 14, number 2, 1989.

¹⁰⁴ Lloyd George is referring to the fact that in Treaty negotiations in 1878, the Armenians became a pawn between Russian and Ottoman interests. The plight of Armenians became a political “football” between Gladstonain liberals against Disraeli’s Conservative Party: In one vivid illustration of this trend William Summers a Liberal member of Parliament said, “Gladstone and I are involved in the Armenian Question for the sole purpose of causing difficulties to the (Lord) Salisbury Government.” Dadrian, page 63.

¹⁰⁵ Dadrian, page 385.

¹⁰⁶ Hosted by the Washington ‘Sebouh’ Gomideh of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the meeting had over one hundred invited guests and looked at a meeting of six Turks and four Armenians who had decided at the outset to set historical issues aside. Discussed in website: www.asbarez.com

¹⁰⁷ Suny is reputedly a member of the Armenian Assembly Committee for the Holocaust Museum and a member of the pro-Armenian Zoryan Institute. The Turkish-American Cultural Association of Georgia (USA) has an interesting website which includes their views of “Armenian allegations.” This site is <http://tacaga.org> this site recommends to its readership the scholarship of Justin McCarthy (published by Darwin Press), Michael Gunter of Greenwood Press and Heath W. Lowry of the Isis Press in Istanbul.

¹⁰⁸ Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, page 386.

¹⁰⁹ Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, page 390.

¹¹⁰ First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out for them because I was not a Jew. /Then they came for the communists and I did not speak out for them because I was not a communist./Then the came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out- because I was not a trade unionist./ Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me.” Quoted in the Foreword of *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, edited by Richard G. Hovannisian, New York: Transaction Press, 1987, page 7.

¹¹¹ Quoted in the article, *An Oral History Perspective on Responses to the Armenian Genocide* written by Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, edited by Hovannisian, page 201

¹¹² Peterson, page 10.

¹¹³ Hovannisian attacks this notion: “The term discourse has pretty much replaced the word “truth” an indication all its own of the way our professional modes of thinking and speaking are controlled by shifts in institutional authorization. Strange to think that the people least likely to use the word truth are sophisticated scholars who staff our universities. There are reasons for this reluctance, no doubt, in particular the victory of rhetoric of matters of public consciousness. Today, we possess, at most, a nostalgia for truth, evident in the persistence of the word, which suggests that “truth” in its nonionic usage might still be, in residue, a term of empowerment. . . Foucault tells us that, “each society has its own regime of truth.” Hovannisian, page 14.

¹¹⁴ Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, page 390.