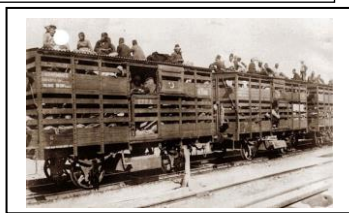
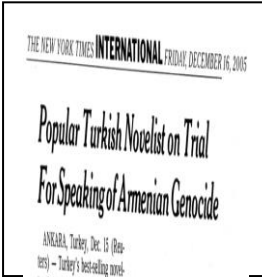


# Aim #24: Why & How did the genocide of Armenians occur during WWI?



## Mini Lecture

- For centuries, the Ottoman Empire was an extensive empire. It was centered in Turkey, but it spread through Northern Africa, SE Europe, & SW Asia.
- The population of the Empire was very diverse religiously & ethnically. For much of its history, the Ottomans had some laws that discriminated against people based on religion. However, the empire rarely discriminated people for their faith. During the religious wars of Europe, both Protestants & Catholics, fled to the Ottoman Empire for its relatively tolerant practices.
- In the region northeast of Turkey most people belonged to the ethnic group of **Armenians**. As Christians, the Armenians did not enjoy equality with the Muslim Turks, but the two groups lived in harmony.
- However, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> & early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, conflict increased. Fearful of the growing nationalism of the **Young Turk** movement and distrustful of Christian minorities, the Ottoman sultan ordered persecutions. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians were killed between 1894 & 1897.
- The victory of the Young Turks in 1908 ended the oppressive rule of sultans in Turkey. Many Armenians had supported the Young Turks in the hope that political reform & modernization would improve their lives.
- However, the new government was strongly nationalist, aiming to "Turkify" the country, "Turkey for Turks". It regarded the Armenians as an obstacle to Turkish unity & expansion.
- The outbreak of WWI unleashed even greater suffering for the Armenians. The Turks who led the Ottoman government feared that the Armenians were not loyal. This fear led to several policies that resulted in the deaths of Armenians:
  - Hundreds of leaders of the Armenian community were summoned to Istanbul (Turkish capital) and were either murdered or deported.
  - Far more Armenians were drafted into the Turkish army. Many forced to hard labor & died from the work.
  - Many Armenian women, children, and the elderly died while being forcibly marched from their homes in to the desert.
- By WWI's end, more than 1 million Armenians died. In 1923, Turkey became a republic under the presidency of Mustafa Kemal, and another wave of persecutions took place against the Armenians-killing another 400,000.
- Much of the world considers the Turkish treatment of the Armenians as **genocide**, an attempted & deliberate extermination of an entire ethnic group. The Turkish government rejects that description, arguing that the loss of life among the Armenians was the result of famine, disease, and the turmoil of war.

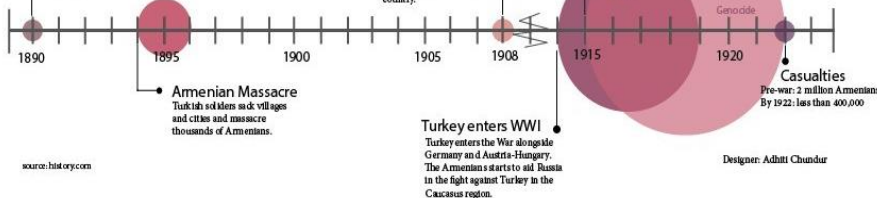
## Armenian Genocide

April marks the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. However, the current Turkish government refuses to acknowledge the event, and denies the genocide occurred. It is currently illegal in Turkey to mention the event.

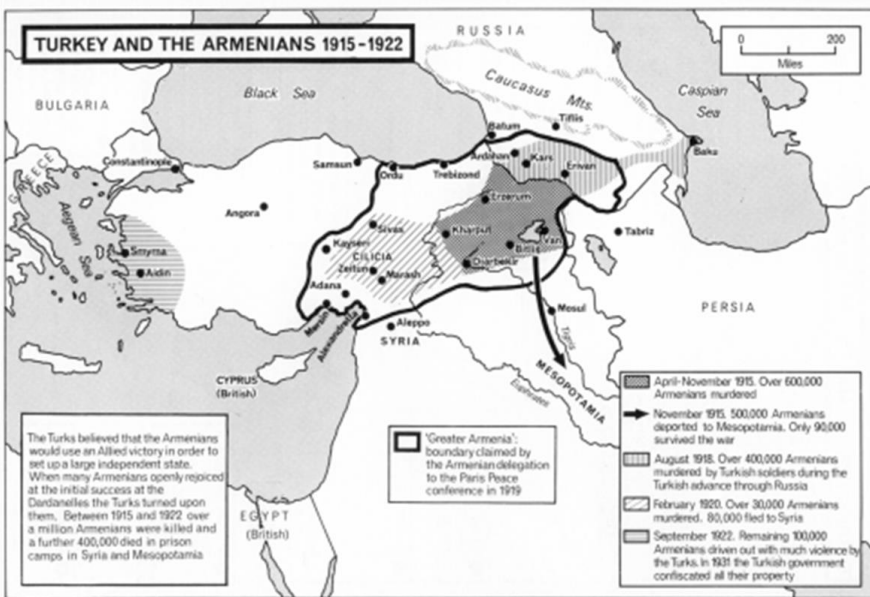
**"Box on the Ear"**  
 Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid said, "I will soon settle those Armenians. I will give them a box on the ear which will make them relinquish their rosy-nazary ambitions."

**Young Turks**  
 A group of reformers called "Young Turks" overthrow the Sultan and reform the government. However their purpose was to "Turkify" the country.

**Genocide Begins**  
 The Turkish government starts the systematic killing. Armenians are forced on death marches through the Mesopotamian desert until they drop dead. The Young Turks start forming "killing squads," who down, crush and burn the Armenians.



## TURKEY AND THE ARMENIANS 1915-1922



## Review Questions:

- How were Armenians treated prior to WWI?
- How and why did WWI change the treatment of Armenians?

## Enduring Issue:

Human Rights Violation; Genocide

## *The Forgotten Genocide*

### Analyzing Historical Documents

Directions: Read the following documents and answer the questions that accompany them.

The Armenian Massacre has been called the “forgotten genocide.” It refers to the destruction, between 1895 and 1923, of the Christian Armenians of Turkey under the Muslim Ottoman government. More than 2 million Armenians lived in Turkey before the genocide. Estimates of those killed vary from 600,000 to 1.5 million. The rest were driven from their ancestral home. Most perpetrators were freed, despite pledges by the allies to punish them after WWI.

#### Document 1

“As it got worse, all of us, and all the people, began gathering in our school. The word came around that the Turks were going on the streets killing all the Armenians and leaving them on the streets. I, myself, was in school already, so I simply stayed there. Then orders came from the school that we, too, should run away. But where? All the buildings are on fire! The Turks were burning everything. There was a whole group of us running away from the school.”

-Annalin, a survivor from Smyrna on events of 1922

#### Document 2

“The massacre of Armenian subjects in the Ottoman Empire in 1896... was amateur and ineffective compared with a largely successful attempt to exterminate them during the first World War in 1915... This genocide was carried out under the cloak of legality by cold blooded governmental action. These were not mass murders committed spontaneously by mobs of private people...”

-Arnold Toynbee, British historian, cited in *Experiences*

#### Document 3

“The 1000 Armenian houses are being emptied by the police one after the other. The furniture, bedding and everything of value is been stored in large buildings about the city... The goods are piled in without any attempt of labeling or systematic storage. A crowd of Turkish women and children follow the police about like a lot of vultures and seize everything they can lay their hands on and when the more valuable things are carried out of the house by the police they rush in and take the balance... I suppose it will take several weeks to empty all the houses and then the Armenian shops and stores will be cleared out.”

-From a report to the American embassy by Oscar S. Heizer, American consul in Tebizond, July 1915

#### Document 4

“The proportion of Armenians killed by the Turks in World War I out of the general number of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was no less than that of the Jewish victims during the Holocaust out of the total Jewish population in Europe. Nor are the methods of killing unique... The type of murder committed by the Germans in the USSR- mass machine gunning- was the traditional method of mass murder in our century, and the death marches of Jews in the closing stages of the war had their precedent in the Armenian case as well. Nor is the fact that in the case of the Holocaust it was a state machine and the bureaucracy that was responsible for the murder unique, because there, too, the young Turks had preceded the German Nazis in planning the execution of a population with such means as were modern at the time.”

- From *Remembrance and Denial* by Richard G. Hovannisian

- 1- According to Document 2, the 1915 massacre of Armenians
  - A. went unpunished
  - B. was ineffective and unsuccessful
  - C. was not as well documented as the 1896 massacre
  - D. was committed with the knowledge of the Turkish government
- 2- Document 3 shows that the Turkish police
  - A. tried to protect the property of Armenian citizens, despite their government orders
  - B. tried to help Armenian citizens as best as they could
  - C. took part in stealing the property of Armenian citizens
  - D. protested to the American embassy to try to help their friends
- 3- According to Document 4, the Armenian Massacre and the Holocaust
  - A. were committed by the same people
  - B. were carried out in a similar way
  - C. had very few similarities, except for the large number of murders
  - D. both took place in Germany