Human Rights and Genocide:
A CASE STUDY OF THE FIRST MODERN GENOCIDE OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Ten-Day Unit – Part I

Part I is designed to take three 50-minute class periods. It includes homework to be completed before each of the three days.

The day before beginning the unit, teacher assigns Homework 1, Introduction to the Armenian Genocide (“Know/Want to Know Table” and Physical Map of the Middle East.) Teacher instructs students to use their maps in their textbook, an atlas, and other appropriate resources to find geographic features they are to label on the map. Features they don’t find right away they should keep an eye out for as their study of the Armenian Genocide progresses.

Day 1 - Teacher Directions

1. To begin the classroom component of the unit, students share the information they included on Homework 1, what they know already and what they would like to know about the Armenian Genocide. The map project will be discussed on Day 2.

2. Teacher makes a large “Know/Want to Know” chart on the board. Students add relevant items to their own list. The teacher tells students to keep track of this original list as they will use it again.

3. As a class, students should read aloud the first three i witness personal accounts (Student Handout 2.) This is a good introduction to the voice of the victims. Students will have a chance to raise any questions or concerns. If time permits, students can read additional i witness personal accounts. (Whatever is not finished in class should be read for homework.)

Please be aware that these stories are of a graphic, sensitive nature. The teacher should read them ahead of time to insure this reading is appropriate for their class.

4. Teacher displays Overhead 1, The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the United Nations’ Definition of Genocide). The teacher begins class discussion by asking “What is genocide?” and can raise the point that this is not the only definition of genocide and there are many scholars who use different definitions. (Refer to teacher background information if necessary.)

5. Teacher asks students to express their thoughts and, as a class, determine their own interpretation of the definition of genocide.

6. Teacher distributes Homework 2, Primary Source Documents.
Day 2 - Teacher Directions

1. Teacher distributes Student Handout 3, Video Study Guide, and instructs students to look for the answers to the questions as they watch the video *The Armenian Genocide* (Atlantis Productions, 1991), which lasts 25 minutes. Teacher should “pause” the video to discuss points and give students time to take notes, as appropriate.

*The Armenian Genocide* video was produced in 1991 for the California Board of Education. The film begins by showing current human rights violations and relates them to other atrocities throughout history. It shows how small violations may lead to genocide and explains the events leading up to the Armenian Genocide. Concluding questions generate discussion and relate history to the present. The video can also be obtained from the Armenian Genocide Resource Center, (510) 965-0152 and from the Armenian Film Foundation (www.armenianfilm.org).

2. Teacher leads a discussion of the video, focusing on the questions in Student Handout 2. Overhead 2, a map of the Ottoman Empire can be used during this discussion; students should also refer to the map they created as part of Homework 1.

3. Breaking into pairs, students discuss the question, “What are the important things you have learned so far in our study of the Armenian Genocide?” Students should use the video and the homework assignments with the primary source documents in this discussion. Students revisit their original list of questions about the Armenian Genocide to determine which have been answered.

4. Teacher hands out Homework 3, Vocabulary and Overview Reading. They will have two nights to complete this homework. Teacher announces that there will be a short reading quiz based on this homework. She/he instructs students that although the vocabulary term sheet has a few terms that are not in the reading, students should look for answers elsewhere.

*Teacher should review the overview Reading before assigning it to students, and adapt the assignment to students’ reading level as appropriate.*

Day 3 - Teacher Directions

1. Teacher displays Overhead 3, Hitler’s Quote, and asks a student to read it out loud. The quote should cause a bit of a discussion among students. Teacher explains this is a true quote by Hitler in 1939 and is on display as part of the exhibit at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The students at this point might draw parallels to the Holocaust or other events in history, and how history was repeated in part because the genocide against the Armenians was not acknowledged.

2. Teacher reminds students of the definition of genocide (Overhead 1) by displaying it on an overhead or by other convenient means. Teacher distributes Student Handout 5, United Nations’ Declaration of Human Rights and directs students to read articles 2, 5, 9, 15, and 17. Teacher notes that the Declaration was passed on December 10, 1948 and explains that it
was created in response to the horrors of World War II and similar earlier events, including the Armenian Genocide.

3. Students should break up into small groups and identify three articles from the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights that may have made a difference if they had been in place in 1915, and explain why.
**Introduction to the Armenian Genocide**

In the left column, list five things you know or think you know about the Armenian Genocide. This could include words, phrases, ideas etc. Don’t worry about being wrong. In the right column, list five questions that you would like to have answered about the Armenian Genocide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I know about Armenia, genocide, or the Armenian Genocide</th>
<th>Questions I’d like to have answered about the Armenian Genocide</th>
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Physical Map of the Middle East

Label the following on the map. Be sure to use pencil and print.

a) Caspian Sea  
b) Persian Gulf  
c) Arabian Sea  
d) Red Sea  
e) Mediterranean Sea  
f) Black Sea  
g) Taurus Mountains  
h) Caucasus Mountains  
i) Tigris River  
j) Euphrates River  
k) Mesopotamia/Iraq  
l) Syrian Desert  
m) Nile River  
n) Mount Ararat

Locate and outline the border of the Armenian plateau in red.
Include a map key showing deserts, valleys, plateaus, and mountains.
Color the map to show the various landforms.

What can you conclude about the location of the Armenian plateau?

Primary Source Study Guide

As you read the primary source documents, highlight or underline the information that strikes you as interesting or important. Then respond to the following:

1. Identify five methods of brutality used against the Armenians.

2. What witnesses testify to the brutality? List them by name and give a short description of each.

3. What is the most important aspect of this reading to you? Explain.

4. On the back of this page or on another, create a visual image that expresses what you have read and how you feel about it. You may want to focus on one piece of the readings. You will be asked to share this image when we discuss the homework.
EDWARD RACOUBIAN
born 1906, Sepasdia (Sivas)

We walked for many days, occasionally running across small lakes and rivers. After awhile we saw corpses on the shores of these lakes. Then we began seeing them along the path: twisted corpses, blackened by the sun and bloated. Their stench was horrible. Vultures circled the skies above us, waiting for their evening meal.

At one point, we came upon a small hole in the ground. It was a little deeper than average height and 25-30 people could easily fit in it. We lowered ourselves down into it. There was no water in it but the bottom was muddy. We began sucking on the mud. Some of the women made teats with their shirts filled with mud and suckled on them like children. We were there for about a half hour. If we hadn’t been forced out, that would have been our best grave.

Many days later we reached the Euphrates River and despite the hundreds of bodies floating in it, we drank from it like there was no tomorrow. We quenched our thirst for the first time since our departure. They put us on small boats and we crossed to the other side. From there we walked all the way to Ras-ul-Ain.

Of a caravan of nearly 10,000 people, there were now only some of us 300 left. My aunt, my sisters, my brothers had all died or disappeared. Only my mother and I were left. We decided to hide and take refuge with some Arab nomads. My mother died there under their tents. They did not treat me well—they kept me hungry and beat me often and they branded me as their own.
KRISTINE HAGOPIAN  
*born 1906, Smyrna (Izmir)*

We had already been deported once, in 1915, sent towards Der-Zor. But, my uncle’s friend had connections in the government and he had us ordered back to Izmir.

Orders came again that everyone must gather in front of the Armenian church to be deported. My father refused to go and told us not to worry. He didn’t think the Turkish government would do anything to him, since he was a government employee himself.

Twelve Turkish soldiers and an official came very early the next morning. We were still asleep. They dragged us out in our nightgowns and lined us up against the living room wall. Then the official ordered my father to lie down on the ground… they are dirty the Turks… very dirty… I can’t say what they did to him. They raped him! Raped! Just like that. Right in front of us. And that official made us watch. He whipped us if we turned away. My mother lost consciousness and fell to the floor.

 Afterwards, we couldn’t find our father. My mother looked for him frantically. He was in the attic, trying to hang himself. Fortunately, my mother found him before it was too late.

My father did eventually kill himself—later, after we escaped.

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SAM KADORIAN  
*born 1907, Hüsenig, Kharpert (Harpoot)*

They took us from Hüsenig, to Mezre, to Kharpert to Malatia and then, after a couple of days walk, to the shores of the Euphrates River. It was around noon when we got there and we camped. For a while, we were left alone. Sometime later, Turkish gendarmes came over and grabbed all the boys from 5 to 10 years old. I was about 7 or 8. They grabbed me too. They threw us all into a pile on the sandy beach and started jabbing us with their swords and bayonets. I must’ve been in the center because only one sword got me… nipped my cheek… here, my cheek. But, I couldn’t cry. I was covered with blood from the other bodies on top of me, but I couldn’t cry. If had, I would not be here today.

When it was getting dark, my grandmother found me. She picked me up and consoled me. It hurt so much. I was crying and she put me on her shoulder and walked around.

Then, some of the other parents came looking for their children. They mostly found dead bodies. The river bank there was very sandy. Some of them dug graves with their bare hands—shallow graves—and tried to bury their children in them. Others, just pushed them into the river, they pushed them into the Euphrates. Their little bodies floated away.
SION ABAJIAN  
_born_ 1908, Marash

The crowds were huge in Meskeneh. We were in the middle of a vast sandy area and the Armenians there were from all over, not only from Marash. We had no water and gendarmes would not give us any. There were only two gendarmes for that huge crowd. Just two. Wasn’t there a single man among us who could have killed them? We were going to die anyway. Why did we obey those two gendarmes so sheepishly?

The word was that from Meskeneh, we were going to be deported to Der-Zor. My father had brought along a tent that was black on one side and white on the other. Each time gendarmes approached us to send another group to Der-Zor, my father would move the tent. He would pitch it on the other side of the crowd—as far away as possible. We were constantly moving. He bought us quite a bit of time that way.

Eventually, we crossed the Euphrates River to Rakka where we found an abandoned house—with no doors or windows—and we squatted there. But we still had no food. We used to eat grass. We used to pick grains from animal waste, wash them and then in tin cans fry them to eat. We used to say: “Oh, mommy, if we ever go back to Marash, just give us fried wheat and it will be enough.”

EDWARD BEDIKIAN  
_born_ 1902, Sepasdia (Sivas)

There was a girl, a girl who I had befriended on the road, earlier. Her name was Satenig. I remember her very well. She was not too strong. I saw her again in that basement. In the basement of the school where they had thrown us. She was there. She had a little bit of money and she gave it to me. “Don’t let them take me,” she said. “Don’t let them take me.” They would come around everyday and take whoever was dead or very weak. She was not in good shape, she was very weak. I stood her up and leaned on her. Held her up, so. They came. I was holding her up, leaning her up against the wall. But they saw her and took her… took her…
I do not remember how many days our decimated caravan marched southward toward the Euphrates River. Day by day the men contingent of the caravan got smaller and smaller. Under pretext of not killing them if they would hand over liras and gold coins, men would be milked by the gendarmes of what little money they had. Then they would be killed anyway.

Days wore on. We marched through mountain roads and valleys. Those who could not keep up were put out of their misery. Always bodies were found strewn by the wayside. The caravan was getting smaller each day. At one place, my little grandmother, like Jeremiah incarnate, loudly cursed the Turkish government for their inhumanity, pointing to us children she asked, “What is the fault of children to be subjected to such suffering.” It was too much for a gendarme to bear, he pulled out his dagger and plunged it into my grandmother’s back. The more he plunged his dagger, the more my beloved Nana asked for heaven’s curses on him and his kind. Unable to silence her with repeated dagger thrusts, the gendarme mercifully pumped some bullets into her and ended her life. First my uncle, now my grandmother were left unmourned and unburied by the wayside.

We moved on.
In 1909, during the Adana massacres, Turkish soldiers attacked Kessab. I was merely a boy then. They were 20,000 strong with Mausers and other artillery. The men of our town fought back, my father among them, with ancient hunting rifles. We lost 50-60 men before we fled. We returned 5-6 days later to find all our houses burned to the ground. It took us months to rebuild.

In 1915, we were the last to be deported out of Kessab because we were Protestant. The American Ambassador in Bolis had apparently secured guarantees for our safety, but we were deported anyway. They took us toward Der-Zor—the interior Syrian Desert. Our whole family: my father, mother, four brothers, two sisters. I was 20-21, at the time. We loaded everything we had on mules and horses and set out under armed guards. They took us to Meskeneh on the Euphrates river. Meskeneh was a huge outdoor camp where ten of thousands of Armenians had been deported—bit by bit they were sent to Der-Zor, to their death. We were there for awhile. We lived under tents along with a lot of others from Kessab. Most of the time we had nothing to eat. Sometimes my father would buy bread from the soldiers but they had mixed sand with the flour—so we ate this hard bread and sand crunched under our teeth.

Meskeneh was a horrible, horrible place. 60,000 Armenians had been buried under the sand there. When a sandstorm hit, it would blow away a lot of the sand and uncover those remains. Bones, bones, bones were everywhere then. Wherever you looked, wherever you walked.
My brother-in-law was American Consul Davis’ body guard in Mezre and the consul himself saved my father’s life. There was a Turkish gendarme by the name of Shadhe who wanted to kill my father. Consul Davis came all the way to our door in Pazmashen. My father was hiding in the back, in the wood shed. He came on his horse and took my father back with him to the consulate.

When the deportations began, I went to Mezre to say goodbye to my father. He cried. The consul saw him and told me to stay. Later, my mother escaped from the deportation and also came to the consulate. We were in the American consulate during the deportations. Consul Davis saved us. Everybody else, my sisters, my maternal aunt—all of them, all of them—were deported. Our whole village was wiped out.

We lived in the consulate until 1922. On September 7, 1922, our family left Kharpert along with 250 Armenian orphans on horses and wagons. My father was asked by the Near East Relief to oversee the transportation of these orphans from Kharpert to Aleppo.

From Aleppo we went to Beirut, then to Marseille and then by ship we came to Providence, Rhode Island.
Most of us believe that torture has long ceased to be an administrative and judicial measure, yet I do not believe that the darkest ages ever presented scenes more horrible than those which now took place all over Turkey. Nothing was sacred to the Turkish gendarmes; under the plea of searching for hidden arms, they ransacked churches, treated the altars and sacred utensils with the utmost indignity, and even held mock ceremonies in imitation of the Christian sacraments. They would beat the priests into insensibility, under the pretense that they were the centers of sedition. When they could discover no weapons in the churches, they would sometimes arm the bishops and priests with guns, pistols, and swords, then try them before courts-martial for possessing weapons against the law, and march them in this condition through the streets, merely to arouse the fanatical wrath of the mobs. The gendarmes treated women with the same cruelty and indecency as the men.

A common practice was to place the prisoner in a room, with two Turks stationed at each end and each side. The examination would then begin with the bastinado. This is a form of torture not uncommon in the Orient; it consists of beating the soles of the feet with a thin rod... until the feet swell and burst, and not infrequently... they have to be amputated. The gendarmes would bastinado their Armenian victim until he fainted; they would then revive him by sprinkling water on his face and begin again. If this did not succeed in bringing their victim to terms, they had numerous other methods of persuasion. They would pull out his eyebrows and beard almost hair by hair; they would extract his finger nails and toe nails; they would apply red-hot irons to his breast, tear off his flesh with red-hot pincers, and then pour boiled butter into the wounds. In some cases the gendarmes would nail hands and feet to pieces of wood---evidently in imitation of the Crucifixion, and then, while the sufferer writhed in his agony, they would cry: “Now let your Christ come and help you!”

One day I was discussing these proceedings with a responsible Turkish official, who was describing the tortures inflicted. He made no secret of the fact that the Government had instigated them, and, like all Turks of the official classes, he enthusiastically approved this treatment of the detested race. This official told me that all these details were matters of nightly discussion at the headquarters of the Union and Progress Committee. Each new method of inflicting pain was hailed as a splendid discovery, and the regular attendants were constantly ransacking their brains in the effort to devise some new torment. He told me that they even delved into the records of the Spanish Inquisition and other historic institutions of torture and adopted all the suggestions found there....

The Central Government now announced its intention of gathering the two million or more Armenians living in the several sections of the Empire and transporting them to this desolate and inhospitable region [the Syrian Desert].... 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; they understood this well, and, in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal the fact.
Documents and Telegrams Record the Genocide

Aram Andonian was an Armenian man who worked as a military censor for the Ottoman government in Constantinople. The following italicized paragraphs are excerpts of his translation of memoirs given to him by Naim Bey, head of the Ottoman General Deportations Committee of Aleppo. Talaat Pasha, Minister of Interior of the Ottoman Empire and other top government officials wrote these telegrams. The telegrams document official Ottoman policy toward Armenians. Note that there was some resistance, even among government officials, to the treatment of Armenians, and note how resistance was stopped.

This reading can also be found in Facing History and Ourselves, Holocaust and Human Behavior (International Education, Inc. Watertown, Mass., 1982, pp. 333-4, The Armenians – A Case of a Forgotten Genocide).

The following telegrams were sent by Talaat Pasha to officials at Aleppo:

**November 18, 1915** - Be careful that events attracting attention shall not take place in connection with those [Armenians] who are near the cities, and other centers. From the point of view of present policy it is most important that foreigners who are in those parts shall be persuaded that the expulsion of the Armenians is in truth only deportation. For this reason it is important that, to save appearances, a show of gentle dealing shall be made for a time, and the usual measures be taken in suitable places.¹

**December 29, 1915** - We hear that there are [foreigners] on the roads who have seen the corpses of the Armenians and are photographing them. It is recommended as very important that those corpses should be buried at once and not left exposed.²

**November 23, 1915** - Destroy by secret means the Armenians of the Eastern Provinces who pass into your hands there.³

The government in charge of Res-ul-Ain, a collection center for Armenians, was Ali Souad Bey who decided to allow the Armenian to live in the town rather than massacre them. This irritated Nouri Bey, who as a deportation official sent the following telegram to Souad Bey:

*It is contrary to the sacred purpose of the government that thousands of Armenians should remain in Res-ul-Ain. Drive them into the desert.*

Souad Bey replied:

*There are no means of transport by which I can send people away. If the purpose which you insist upon is slaughtering them, I can neither do it myself nor have it done.*⁴

Zeki Bey was the governor of Der Zor, another collection center. He used others to slaughter 200,000 Armenians.

*The colossal amount of labor needed has stupefied him. He had been obliged to call to his assistance all the Circassians who had executed the massacres of Res-ul-Ain. But still the butchers were not enough for the victims. Seeing that the Circassians would not be sufficient to complete the work, Zeki Bey had promised the Arab Ashirats of Der Zor the clothes of the victims, if they would come and help in the killings. And they accepted the offer. Most of the Armenians were slaughtered by them.*⁵

*In order to keep the enthusiasm of the Turks for massacre up to the mark, Zeki Bey would often bend down from his horse. [Kill an Armenian child and the say to his followers] . . . “Don’t think that I have killed an innocent being. Even the new-born babes of this people are criminals, for the will carry the seeds of vengeance in themselves. If you wish to ensure tomorrow, kill even their children.”⁶

Throughout 1915 and 1916 telegrams explained deportation procedures were sent to local officials throughout the country some of these instructions and orders were signed by Talaat Pasha; others were guidelines supposedly sent by the Government Assembly in Constantinople, the Jemiet, or
Committee of Union and Progress. The following excerpts are from some of these telegrams:

**March 25, 1915** - To the delegate at Adana . . . It will be forbidden to help or protect any Armenian.

The Jemiet has decided to save the fatherland from the ambition of this cursed race, and to take on its own patriotic shoulders the stain which will blacken Ottoman history.

The Jemiet, unable to forget all old scores and past bitterness, full of hope for the future, has decided to annihilate all Armenians living in Turkey, without leaving a single one alive, and it has given the Government a wide scope with regard to this.

Of course the Government will give the necessary injunctions about the necessary massacres to the Governors. All the delegates of the Ittihad and Terakke will do their utmost to push on this matter.

The property left will be temporarily confiscated by any means that the Government thinks fit, with the intention of its being sold afterwards and the money used [by the Government].

**September 16, 1915** - To the Government of Aleppo from Talaat...It was first communicated to you that the Government, by order of the Jemiet... had decided to destroy completely all the Armenians living in Turkey. Those who oppose this order and decision cannot remain on the official staff of the Empire. An end must be put to their existence, however criminal the measures taken may be, and no regard must be paid to either age, sex nor conscientious scruples.

**September 21, 1915** - To the Government of Aleppo from Talaat . . . There is no need for an orphanage. It is not the time to give way to sentiment and feed the orphans, prolonging their lives. Send them away to the desert and inform us.

**November 5, 1915** - To the Government of Aleppo from Talaat . . . We are informed that Armenian children are adopted by certain Moslem families and received as servants when they are left alone through the death of their parents. We inform you that you are to collect all such children in your province and send them to the places of deportation...

**November 18, 1915** - To the Delegates at Adana . . . As announced in our dispatch dated February 8, the Jemiet has decided to uproot and annihilate the various forces which have for centuries been an obstacle in its way, and to this end it is obliged to resort to very bloody methods. Be assured that we ourselves were horrors at the contemplation of these methods, but the Jemiet sees no other way of insuring the stability of its work.

We are criticized and called upon to be merciful; such simplicity is nothing short of stupidity. For those who will not cooperate with us, we will find a place that will wring their delicate heart strings.

In his memoirs, Naim Bey explained that the phrase “uproot and annihilate the various forces” meant the murder of other groups such as Greeks, Syrians, and Arabs, as well as Armenians.

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2. Ibid., p. 54.
3. Ibid., p. 55.
4. Ibid., pp. 22-23.
5. Ibid., p. 29.
6. Ibid., p. 46.
7. Ibid., pp. 49-50.
8. Ibid., p. 64.
9. Ibid., p. 60.
10. Ibid., p. 59.
11. Ibid., p. 51.
Video Study Guide

As you watch the video *The Armenian Genocide*, please answer the following questions:

1. What is the United Nations’ definition of genocide?

2. What portion of the Armenian population perished in the Genocide?

3. Armenia was the first nation to adopt ________ as a state religion.

4. When did Armenia become part of the Ottoman Empire?

5. What were the first forms of discrimination against Armenians that led up to the first massacre of Armenians in 1894?

6. Explain the quote “cultural genocide begins genocide.”

7. To whom did Armenians appeal for help?
8. Who were the Young Turks? What was Pan-Turkism?

9. What four danger or warning signals of genocide were present in Armenia prior to the Genocide?
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

10. Describe the steps in the Armenian Genocide that began on April 24, 1915. What techniques did the Turkish forces use?

11. What happened to the leading perpetrators of the Genocide?

12. What was the most important thing you learned from this video and why? What question(s) did the video raise for you?
STUDENT HANDOUT 4 – HOMEWORK 3

Vocabulary and Overview Reading

Define and use the following terms in an original sentence. You may use a dictionary, class notes, and readings to answer.

1. Islam:

2. Armenian Apostolic Church:

3. UN Declaration of Human Rights, 1948:

4. Genocide:

5. Mass Murder/Massacre:
6. Hegemony:

7. Pan-Turkism:

8. Zimmi:

9. Millet:

10. Scapegoat:

11. Nationalism:
12. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau:

13. Talaat Pasha:

14. Propaganda:

15. Dehumanization:
A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide


“I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when compared with the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915.”

Henry Morgenthau, American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, 1913–1916.

Who Are the Armenians?

The Armenians are an ancient people who have existed since before the first century C.E. Armenia has gained and lost a tremendous amount of territory throughout its long and turbulent history. Boundaries of the past have extended from that of the present-day Republic of Armenia and through most of modern day Turkey. The name “Armenia” was actually given to the country by its neighbors; inhabitants of Armenia refer to it as “Hayastan” derived from the name Haik, a descendent of Noah (from the Bible), and “stan” which means “land” in Persian. The Armenian language is unique from other Indo-European languages, with its own distinct letters and grammar.

Christianity is a deeply rooted aspect of Armenian history and culture. Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, in 301 C.E. This early Christian identity has greatly influenced Armenian culture, setting it apart from most of its neighboring peoples. The majority of Armenians belong to the Eastern or Western dioceses of the Armenian Apostolic Church, an orthodox form of Christianity.

Although Armenia was at times a kingdom, in modern times, Armenia has been an independent country for only a few years. It first gained independence in 1918, after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, but this ended when Armenia was invaded by the Red Army and became a Soviet state in 1920. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia was the first state to declare its independence, and remains an independent republic today. Armenia is a democracy and its borders only include a very small portion of the land that was historic Armenia.
Early Massacres

The Seljuk Turks began to inhabit Anatolia as early as the eleventh century and by 1453 their descendants, the Ottoman Turks, had captured Constantinople (now Istanbul), firmly establishing the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was a multinational state that incorporated several ethnic groups including the Armenians. The Armenians were second-class citizens of the Ottoman Empire and while they were granted some freedoms, including the ability to practice Christianity, they were faced with extra taxes and discriminatory laws extending to their participation in the justice system, government, and their civil and property rights.

By the mid-1800s, as the idea of constitutionalism swept through Europe, some Armenians began to demand more rights, such as protection from corrupt government officials and biased taxation.

While most Armenians saw themselves as members of the Ottoman Empire, organized groups of intellectuals protested the discriminatory laws, seeking reform from the government, though not an independent sovereign state.

During the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire experienced a period of decline, during which it lost territories to Russia, Great Britain, and new states created by nationalities that had once been part of the Ottoman Empire, such as Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. Early in the century, Russia had gained some of the eastern Armenian provinces, including Tiflis, which became a cultural center for Russian Armenians. Russian Armenians became increasingly interested in supporting Armenians within the Ottoman Empire in their quest for human rights.

The newly created Ottoman Armenian political organizations received some support from Russian Armenians and Russia in their quest to gain equal rights under Ottoman law. The Treaty of Berlin (1878) included a clause that would provide more rights for Ottoman Armenians, including fair taxation practices, protections from tribal attacks, and the right to give evidence in Ottoman courts of law.

Unfortunately these rights were never granted as the Sultan was empowered by the treaty to serve as his protector of the Armenians. This was in contrast to the terms of the earlier Treaty of San Stefano, which the Treaty of Berlin replaced, and which had assigned the Russians the responsibility of ensuring that the Armenians in Ottoman territory would gain more rights. The reason for the change was that the presence of Russian troops in the region was of concern to Great Britain and the other “Great Powers” of Europe who wanted to deter the expansion of Russia.

After the Treaty of Berlin, Ottoman Armenians continued to protest discriminatory laws and eventually the Sultan responded to these protests with massacres. Massacres of the Armenians began in the late nineteenth century under Abdul-Hamid II, the last of the Ottoman Sultans actually to rule...
the empire. The worst massacres during this time occurred from 1894-1896 after a tax protest by Armenians. They are now known as the Hamidian Massacres and some believe represented a foreshadowing of the Genocide to come.

During the Hamidian Massacres, 100,000 to 300,000 Armenians were killed in towns and villages throughout areas of the Ottoman Empire.

Thousands of Armenians fled and found refuge in Europe and the United States. Some who stayed converted to Islam in order to save their own lives.

The massacres caught the world’s attention because of their unique nature. Armenians were unarmed and adhered to the perimeters set forth by the Ottoman government. The massacres were publicized in newspapers throughout the world. The U.S. media paid particular attention to the events. *The New York Times* as well as other news sources regularly published articles about the brutal killings, coverage that would continue through the Armenian Genocide.

Many American missionaries and diplomats who worked throughout the Ottoman Empire witnessed the atrocities firsthand and helped mobilize relief efforts. Aid for Armenian victims became the first international mission of the American Red Cross.

Later during the Genocide, a society known as the Near East Relief would raise more than $100 million in assistance to Armenians; the funds collected saved countless Armenian lives in the 1890s and during the Genocide, which at the time represented more money than all the aid raised to help tsunami victims in 2005. While the funds collected saved countless victims’ lives, it was the only aid Armenians would see.

**Hope to Despair**

In 1908, Armenians and other minorities of the Ottoman Empire began to rejoice in what promised to be a new era of tolerance and the establishment of a participatory government in the Ottoman Empire.

Armenians, Arabs, Greeks, Jews, and Kurds had begun working with a group of Turks to challenge the authority of the Sultan. This group was known as the Ottoman Liberals and the Turkish coalition of the group adopted the name “Young Turks.” They wanted to create a modern state that represented inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire more equally and render the Sultan politically powerless. In 1908, one of the Young Turk groups, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), marched on Constantinople, and overthrew Sultan Abdul-Hamid.

Over the next year, the Ottoman Empire developed a constitutional government providing equal rights for all of its citizens. Ottoman Armenians hoped that the new constitution would protect them from the violence they endured under the Sultan. However, as time passed, advocates of liberalism in the government lost out to a group promoting authoritarian rule and a radical policy of Turkification.

In April 1909, Armenian hopes were dashed as Hamidian supporters in the city of Adana carried out...
a massacre of Armenians as part of an attempt to reestablish the power of the Sultan. Adana was heavily populated by Armenians and had at one time been part of Armenian territory. Despite attempts at resistance, in the end almost 30,000 Armenians were killed and nearly half the city destroyed.

The Armenian Genocide

The culprits of the Adana Massacre were never punished and after 1909, an extreme nationalist political movement promoting a policy of Pan-Turkism (“Turkey for the Turks”) gained backing from Turkish populations throughout the Ottoman Empire. In addition, the Ottoman Empire, now known as the “sick man of Europe,” was weakened by the loss of its lands in southeastern Europe in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. One of the Ottoman Empire’s greatest enemies was Russia, as Russia was constantly threatening the security of the Ottoman borders and controlled parts of the eastern edge of the Ottoman Empire that was populated by Armenians. Since the Russians had advocated for Armenian reforms in the past and because the Russian army did have Armenians serving as soldiers, the Ottoman government was concerned that Ottoman Armenians might commit traitorous acts. This fear helped to fuel Turkish public sentiment against Armenians.

The Ottoman Empire entered World War I in 1914, fighting against Russia in campaigns that straddled territory inhabited by Armenians on both sides of the border. The Ottoman Empire was badly defeated by Russia in a campaign in the winter of 1914-15, and the government then made the Armenian community a scapegoat for the military losses that had occurred at the hands of the Russians.
By the spring of 1915, leaders of the ruling party, the CUP, seized the opportunity of a world preoccupied by war to erase the Armenian presence from almost all Ottoman lands. The CUP was a triumvirate led by Mehmet Talaat, Ismail Enver, and Ahmed Jemal.

Beginning on April 24, 1915 (now commemorated as the beginning of the Armenian Genocide), Armenian civil leaders, intellectuals, doctors, businessmen, and artists were rounded up and killed. Once these leaders of the Armenian communities were killed, the Genocide plan was put into motion throughout the empire. Many Armenian men were quickly executed.

Using new technologies, such as the telegraph and the railroads, CUP leaders sent orders to province leaders to gather women and children and either load them onto trains headed for the Syrian Desert or lead them on forced marches into the desert. Embarking with little food and few supplies, women and children had little hope of survival.

On these journeys, Turkish gendarmes regularly subjected Armenian women to sexual violence. Special militias were created by the government to carry out the deportations and murders; and Turkish and Kurdish convicts who had been set free from jails brutalized and plundered the deportation caravans winding through the severe terrain. Some women and children were abducted and sold, or children were raised as Turks by Turkish families. Some Armenians were rescued by Bedouins and other Arabs who sympathized with the Armenian situation. Sympathetic Turkish families also risked their own lives to help their Armenian neighbors escape.

Within months, the Euphrates and Tigris rivers became clotted with the bodies of Armenian women and children, polluting the water supply for those who had not yet perished. Dysentery and other diseases were rampant and those who managed to survive the march found themselves in concentration camps.

By 1918, most of the Armenians who had resided in this historic land were dead or in the Diaspora. Under the orders of Turkey’s new leader, Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), the remaining Armenians in western Cilicia (the region of the Ottoman Empire originally inhabited by Armenians) were expelled, as were the Greek and Assyrian populations.

By 1923, a 3,000-year-old civilization virtually ceased to exist. One and a half million Armenians, more than half of the Armenian population on its historic homeland, were dead, and the Armenian community and personal properties were lost, appropriated by the government, stolen by others or deliberately destroyed. Only a small number of Armenians remained in the former Ottoman capital of Constantinople.

The Denial

The term “genocide” was not created until 1944. It was devised by a legal scholar, Raphael Lemkin, who had been strongly influenced by his study of the Armenian case and the persecution of Jews under Nazi rule. In 1946, the United Nations adopted the language and two years later the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was passed. Despite the
affirmation of the Armenian Genocide by the overwhelming majority of historians, academic institutions on Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and governments around the world, the Turkish government still actively denies the Armenian Genocide.

Among a series of actions enacted to counter Armenian Genocide recognition and education, the Turkish government even passed a law in 2004 known as Article 305 which makes it a criminal offense, punishable by up to 10 years in prison, to discuss the Armenian Genocide.

Most of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide have now passed away. Their families still continue to demand recognition for the suffering inflicted upon their beloved ancestors more than 90 years ago.
**Key Terms for *A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide***

**Anatolia:** It is a peninsula that forms the western edge of Asia. It falls between the Black Sea to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the south, the Aegean Sea to the west and the Taurus Mountains to the east. Today, most of Anatolia falls within Turkey.

**Armenian Apostolic Church:** The earliest accounts of the introduction of Christianity into Armenia date from the 1st century A.D. when it was first preached by two Apostles of Jesus, St. Bartholomew and St. Thaddeus. Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion, in 301.

**Diaspora:** The dispersion or “breaking up” of a group of people, causing them to settle far from their ancestral home or lands they have inhabited for a period of time.

**Genocide:** The deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group.*

**Ottoman Empire:** An empire which lasted from 1453-1922 ruled by Seljuk Turks in South East Asia. At its height, the Empire stretched from Eastern Europe to North Africa. The Empire ended with the formation of modern Turkey.

**Pan-Turkism:** An ideology seeking the creation of a new Turkish empire stretching from Anatolia into Central Asia whose population would be exclusively Turkic.*

**Scapegoat:** One that bears the blame for others.*

**Ambassador Henry Morgenthau:** (1856-1946) The U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide. Morgenthau sent reports to Washington, DC that “a carefully planned scheme to thoroughly extinguish the Armenian race… a campaign of race extermination is in progress.” (p. 419*)

**Nationalism:** Loyalty and devotion to a nation, especially a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.*

**Sultan:** The title of a ruler or king of a Muslim state. It was the title used for the leaders of the Ottoman Empire.

**Talaat Pasha:** (1847- 1921) The principal architect of the Armenian Genocide. In 1909 he was appointed Minister of the Interior, and then by 1913, Secretary General. After the Genocide, Talaat fled to Germany and in 1921 was gunned down by an Armenian who had lost his family to the genocide. (p. 531*)

**Turkification:** The process of destroying cultures of non-Turkic origin within the Ottoman Empire during the final years of the Ottoman Empire and the early years of modern Turkey.

United Nations: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**Preamble**

*Whereas* recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

*Whereas* disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

*Whereas* it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

*Whereas* it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

*Whereas* the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

*Whereas* Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

*Whereas* a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore,

The General Assembly
proclaims
This Universal Declaration
of Human Rights

as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

**Article 1**

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

**Article 2**

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

**Article 3**

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

**Article 4**

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

**Article 5**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

**Article 6**

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.
Article 7
All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8
Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9
No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10
Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11
(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.
   (2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12
No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13
(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
   (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14
(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
   (2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15
(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.
   (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16
(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
   (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
   (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17
(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
   (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18
Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19
Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
Article 20
(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21
(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22
Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23
(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24
Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25
(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26
(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27
(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28
Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.


**Article 29**

(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Article 30**

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

*Adopted by the*

*United Nations General Assembly*

*December 10, 1948*
Introduction to the Armenian Genocide – Answers

Physical Map of the Middle East

a) Caspian Sea  f) Black Sea  k) Mesopotamia/Iraq
b) Persian Gulf  g) Taurus Mountains  l) Syrian Desert
c) Arabian Sea  h) Caucasus Mountains  m) Nile River
d) Red Sea  i) Tigris River  n) Mount Ararat
e) Mediterranean Sea  j) Euphrates River

What can you conclude about the location of the Armenian plateau?
The Armenian plateau is on the crossroads between East and West, between Asia and Europe.
1. What is the United Nations’ definition of genocide?
   *The extermination of a racial, national, ethnic or religious group through physical
destruction, through the prevention of births, or through the forceful transfer of
children to other families.*

2. What portion of the Armenian population perished in the Genocide? 3/5 or 60%

3. Armenia was the first nation to adopt *Christianity* as a state religion.

4. When did Armenia become part of the Ottoman Empire? 16th century (1500s)

5. What were the first forms of discrimination against Armenians that led up to the first massacre of Armenians in 1894?
   *Name calling (“infidels”), discriminatory taxes, and being forbidden to read and speak
the Armenian language.*

6. Explain the quote “cultural genocide begins genocide.”
   *The first step in destroying a people is often an attempt to destroy their culture, as when
a people is forbidden to use their own names, to use their own language, or to practice
their own religion.*

7. To whom did Armenians appeal for help? *European nations and the United States*

8. Who were the Young Turks?
   *The Young Turks were a political group that took power in the Ottoman Empire in
1908.*

   What was Pan-Turkism?
   *Pan-Turkism is the idea that Turkey should only be for Turkish people. This vision
included Turkish people in the area east of Armenia, and people who believed in Pan-
Turkism thought that Armenians should be eliminated because they geographically
separated different Turkish people in Central Asia from Turkish people in the area we
now call Turkey.*

9. What four danger or warning signals of genocide were present in Armenia prior to the Genocide?
   a. Dictatorship
   b. Racist/Supernationalist ideology
   c. Scapegoating of minorities
   d. Intense crisis, such as war

10. Describe the steps in the Armenian Genocide that began on April 24, 1915. What techniques did the Turkish forces use?
    *Leaders and intellectuals were killed first. Able-bodied males were killed next. Death
squads then targeted women, children and the elderly, by forced marches from their
villages into the desert, where they starved to death or were killed.*

11. What happened to the leading perpetrators of the Genocide? *They were not punished.*
Define and use the following terms in an original sentence. You may use a dictionary, class notes, and readings to answer.

1. Islam: The religious faith of Muslims including belief in God (Allah) as the sole deity and in Muhammad as his prophet.

2. Armenian Apostolic Church: The earliest accounts of the introduction of Christianity into Armenia date from the 1st century A.D. when it was first preached by two Apostles of Jesus, St. Bartholomew and St. Thaddeus. Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion, in 301.

3. UN Declaration of Human Rights, 1948: A United Nations’ declaration identifying common standards of rights and freedoms for all peoples and all nations.

4. Genocide: The deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group.

5. Mass Murder/Massacre: The act or an instance of killing a number of human beings under circumstances of atrocity or cruelty. This includes pogroms, mass executions, and crimes against humanity that lead to death. Although it is not considered to be genocide these acts are “no less vicious and no less tragically final for the victims.” (p. 248*)

6. Hegemony: Preponderant influence or authority over others.

7. Pan-Turkism: The creation of a new Turkish empire stretching from Anatolia into Central Asia whose population would be exclusively Turkic.


9. Millet: Ethnic minority communities in the Ottoman Empire. Regions within the Ottoman Empire where ethnic minorities lived.

10. Scapegoat: One that bears the blame for others.

11. Nationalism: Loyalty and devotion to a nation; especially a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.
12. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau: (1856-1946) The U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide. Morgenthau sent reports to Washington, DC that “a carefully planned scheme to thoroughly extinguish the Armenian Race… a campaign of race extermination is in progress.” (p. 419*)

13. Talaat Pasha: (1847-1921) The principal architect of the Armenian Genocide. In 1909 he was appointed Minister of the Interior, and then by 1913 Secretary General. After the genocide Talaat fled to Germany and in 1921 was gunned down by an Armenian who had lost his family to the genocide. (p. 531*)

14. Propaganda: A way of creating and presenting a socially constructed reality with a clear political intention. (p. 472*)

15. Dehumanization: “killing” the humanity of another. Once a human being is regarded as so inferior as to be subhuman, he or she becomes prey to being reduced to nonexistence (p. 155*). This process justifies to the perpetrator the act of genocide.

OVERHEAD
TRANSPARENCIES

General Assembly Resolution 260A (III) Article 2

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group
Ottoman Empire
C. 1914
“Our strength consists in our speed and in our brutality. Genghis Khan led millions of women and children to slaughter - with premeditation and a happy heart. History sees in him solely the founder of a state. It’s a matter of indifference to me what a weak western European civilization will say about me.

I have issued the command - and I’ll have anybody who utters but one word of criticism executed by a firing squad - that our war aim does not consist in reaching certain lines, but in the physical destruction of the enemy. Accordingly I have placed my death-head formations in readiness - for the present only in the East - with orders to them to send to death mercilessly and without compassion, men, women, and children of Polish derivation and language. Only thus shall we gain the living space (Lebensraum) which we need. **Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?**”

**Adolf Hitler August 22, 1939**

Quoted from a speech delivered by Hitler to the Supreme Commanders and Commanding Generals, as the Nazis marched into Poland in 1939.