

The Armenian Genocide

During World War I, the Ottoman Empire carried out what most international experts and historians have concluded was one of the largest genocides in the world's history, slaughtering huge portions of its minority Armenian population. In all, over 1 million Armenians were put to death. To this day, Turkey denies the genocidal intent of these mass murders.

My sense is that Armenians are suffering from what I would call incomplete mourning, and they can't complete that mourning process until their tragedy, their wounds are recognized by the descendants of the people who perpetrated it.

People want to know what really happened. We are fed up with all these stories-- denial stories, and propaganda, and so on. Really the new generation want to know what happened 1915.

How is it possible for a massacre of such epic proportions to take place? Why did it happen? And why has it remained one of the greatest untold stories of the 20th century?

This film is made possible by contributions from John and Judy Bedrosian, the Avenessians Family Foundation, the Lincy Foundation, the Manoogian Simone Foundation, and the following. And others. A complete list is available from PBS.

The Armenians. There are between six and seven million alive today, and less than half live in the Republic of Armenia, a small country south of Georgia and north of Iran. The rest live around the world in countries such as the US, Russia, France, Lebanon, and Syria.

They're an ancient people who originally came from Anatolia some 2,500 years ago. The king of Armenia was the first ruler to adopt Christianity as the official state religion in the year 301, even before the Roman Empire. The Armenians have their own alphabet and distinct language, and over the centuries developed a rich cultural and intellectual tradition. In the 15th century, their homeland was absorbed into the Islamic Ottoman Empire, an empire that at its peak stretched from the Caspian Sea to the gates of Vienna.

The Ottoman Empire was organized in a very interesting way, the so-called millet system. In that system, each people in the empire, each religious group-- Armenians, Greeks, Jews, et cetera-- had their own millet, or religious community. And the sultan gave them rights basically to rule themselves within limits. And that is, they had to be loyal to the sultan, they had to pay their taxes, no rebellion, of course, obey the laws. Obviously, Muslims had more rights than unbelievers, infidels-- Armenians, or Greeks, or Jews. Discriminatory, unequal, hierarchical. But if you obeyed, you could get along. And Armenians did rather well for centuries, actually.

Non-Muslim minorities were legally designated infidels. Infidel didn't mean you were banished, but it meant you were subjected to a different social, political, legal structure.



The Armenians also had fewer rights in Islamic courts, they paid higher taxes than their Muslim neighbors, and they were generally not allowed in the military or civil service. Toward the end of the 1800s, the Armenians became increasingly dissatisfied with their second-class status and began to demand change.

The Armenian people pushed the political envelope in the Ottoman Empire by asking again and again, can a Christian be the equal of a Muslim in the Ottoman Empire? And the answer to that question was decidedly, again and again, no.

The sultan was personally committed to stopping any reforms that will pull away from being Ottoman first and foremost. You could be an Ottoman Armenian. That was wonderful. But if you try simply to be an Armenian, then that was an act of treason against the state.

Toward the end of the 19th century, more and more Armenians began to agitate for equal rights. But their efforts were met with increasing resistance by the sultan, who ultimately called upon his personal cavalry, the Hamidiye Regiments, to ensure their reform efforts were effectively thwarted.

My brother, we have killed 1,200 Armenians as food for the dogs. Mother, I am safe and sound. 20 days ago, we made war on the Armenian unbelievers. Through God's grace, no harm befell us.

That Hamidiye army would end up massacring tens of thousands of innocent people in the next couple of years during what would soon be called the Hamidian Massacres. This will begin the kind of open assault on the Armenian people in the wake of their quest for social change and political change in the Ottoman Empire.

These events gained the sultan worldwide infamy and the nickname The Bloody Sultan.

This violence of the 1890s is what I would call repressive violence. That is, a relatively weak government, in order to maintain its control over the local population, uses as an instrument of government massacre to establish law and order, to keep those rebellious elements in their place. This repressive violence leads to what you might call a habit of violence, or a culture of violence in which violence then becomes justified.

According to German foreign ministry operatives and French diplomatic sources, an estimated 200,000 people were killed between 1894 and 1896 in the Hamidian Massacres, but this was only a foreshadowing of what was to come. In 1908, a new political movement came to power in the Ottoman Empire, known as the Young Turks. In a military coup, they forced the sultan from political office.

The Young Turks describes an umbrella organization who believed that they had a better vision for the Ottoman Empire than did the sultan, and who believed that without a constitution and without a parliament the Ottoman Empire would never be civilized and

progressive. That subjects would never have rights, that ordinary people would have no say in their future.

There is talk of the implementation of some reforms and changes for the Christians. For example, very soon Armenians will be allowed in the army. There is a sense of new era here that the Armenians are excited about.

But the excitement did not last. In 1912 and '13, the largely Christian regions of the Balkans-- Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria-- made a final military push to break away from the empire and become independent. The effort was successful.

And for the first time in their recent history, the proud and glorious Ottoman army suffered a major military defeat at the hands of their former subject nations, Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs.

Within two weeks, the Ottomans lost almost 75% of their European territories. That's why the fear of collapse is the basic element, basic factor of the emergence of Turkish nationalism.

The fact that they lose so badly in the Balkans and have to leave the Balkans after being there for hundreds of years, they feel that Anatolia is the last piece of land they have left and they have to keep onto it at all costs. And therefore, they think that everything they can do for it is justifiable.

As thousands of refugees and Muslim Turks returned from lost battles in territories in the Balkans, Turkish nationalism and religious tensions grew. This intensified the animosity toward Christians within the empire.

So there was a huge despair that prevailed in the Ottoman capital in the autumn of 1912. In excess of 100,000 fled Greece, Bulgaria, and flooded into Istanbul. People would describe the condition of these refugees in the mosques in the streets of Istanbul: misery, destitution, bitterness, lost all their belongings, dying from hunger. The Ottoman state not able to take care of them.

There was no place to put them. In fact, sometimes the refugee flows approached the population of the city itself. So Istanbul was the intermediate stage for these refugees coming in from the Balkans, and who were telling horror stories of what the Christians had done to them. And this fed a popular notion that the Christians were out to get the Turks-- that the Christians were out to get the Muslims. And this, I think, helps us explain how we move from state massacres to genocide. Because genocide really can't be perpetrated without popular support.

In the words of Ismail Enver, who would soon become a major figure in the Young Turk government--

If I could recount to you all the horrors done by the enemy, even those done right here inside of Istanbul, you would understand what has happened to the poor Muslims that are far away. But our anger is strengthened. Revenge, revenge, revenge. There is no other word.

In 1913, in the wake of the losses in the Balkans, a radical nationalist wing of the Young Turks gained full control of the Ottoman government with a violent takeover.

The Committee of Union and Progress, as it was called, came together in 1913 when Talaat, who had been rising through the ranks of the Young Turk party and would become minister of the interior; Enver, who was a kind of energetic, dynamic young soldier with great ambition to be a Napoleon for his people, would become the minister of defense; and Jamal would become the minister of the Navy, or the marine. These three merged to create a coalition in 1913.

The Committee of Union and Progress, also known as the CUP, embraced an ideology of Turkish nationalism that made the creation of a Turkish homeland for Turks in Anatolia its top priority. Turkey for the Turks was its slogan.

To save the Turkish race from destruction, the iron fist of the Turks shall once again seize hold of the world, and the world shall once again tremble before its fist.

They started 1913 a new policy of education. From now on, they were going to raise the children to become very good Turkish nationalists. A nationalist in the worst sense of the term-- a chauvinistic sense, almost.

As war broke out in August 1914 between Germany and Russia, the Turkish empire had to decide what to do. And Enver Pasha particularly wanted to join Germany and use the German alliance to expand the empire to the east. The major enemy for Turkey at that point was Russia, and their dream was to conquer the Caucasus and Russian Central Asia and unite all the Turkic peoples of those lands in a grand Turkic empire.

In December 1914, led by their minister of war Enver Pasha, the Ottomans attacked Russia at Sarikamish along the Russian border. It was a strategic blunder. The Ottomans were overwhelmingly defeated. Their hopes for a united empire were smashed.

A few months later, as over 120,000 Russian troops advanced into the empire, their ranks included a contingent of between 5,000 and 6,000 Armenian soldiers. This Armenian contingent consisted of both Russian-Armenian conscripts and a smaller number of Ottoman Armenians who had defected.

Seeing their own Armenian subjects volunteering and fighting for the enemy enraged the Turkish leaders. Fearing that still more of their subjects might join the enemy, they now saw the Armenians of the empire as a threat to the state.

It was now in the wake of the disastrous loss at Sarikamish that the CUP decided to disarm all the Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman Army. They had decided that the Armenians were an unreliable group, and Enver was blaming the Armenians for his loss at Sarikamish.

And then from disarming them, they were thrown into labor battalions-- that is, grunt work forces-- by which they were building roads, cleaning latrines, and so forth. And were easily segregated, rounded up, and just massacred en masse.

The massacres of the Armenian soldiers were the first stage of the Armenian Genocide, but it was still just a beginning.

On April 24 of 1915, the Ottoman government arrests some 250 Armenian intellectuals and cultural leaders in Constantinople, deports them to a prison in the interior where many of them are killed and more of them are imprisoned and tortured. So just as your able-bodied men were wiped out by Ottoman soldiers in the winter of 1915, in the spring of 1915 the intellectual head of the culture is cut off.

It happened in Harput. It happened in Van, it happened in Diyarbakir, it happened in Bitlis, it happened all over the empire. This eradicated a whole generation of Armenian intellectual talent.

In genocide, if you insulate the intelligentsia-- the intellectual, the spiritual elite of a victim group-- you can more easily extinguish the rest-- the unorganized, leaderless rest of a nation. And that was exactly what happened.

The next aspect of the Armenian Genocide is the passage of emergency executive legislation. These emergency acts gave legitimation from the government to arrest and deport the Armenian people in village after village, city after city, town after town.

The deportations were organized by orders from the central government in Constantinople to local governors and officials who oversaw the regional police forces. Throughout the empire, notices were put up that Armenians had to leave, or a town crier would notify the men to gather and tell the others. The local police would guard the streets and organize the march out of town. The Armenians were told they were being taken away from their homes and relocated to unspecified villages in the interior of the country.

It is impossible to convey the consternation and despair this proclamation has produced upon the people. I have seen strong, proud, wealthy men weep like children while they told me they had given their boys and girls to Persian and Turkish neighbors. Many are providing themselves with poison which they will take in case the order is not rescinded.

The only way for these people to go is on foot, a journey of 60 days or more. In the heat and dust, it is still impossible for women, and children, and old men to start on such a journey. Even a strong man without the necessary outfit and food would be likely to perish on such a trip.

In most cases, Armenians were deported on foot. But some others were deported via the Anatolian Railway or the Berlin-to-Baghdad

We're familiar with the images of Jews being crammed into boxcars in Germany and Poland. Box cars were now stuffed with 80 to 100 people who were dying just of asphyxiation and starvation on their journey alone. And to make it even more grotesque, the Ottoman government made the Armenians buy their own tickets to get into these trains because they were telling them that they would be returning. This is what the Nazis told Jews as they arrested them and deported them, as well.

Armenians were deported from all over the Ottoman Empire, but deportation was not the intended result.

That was officially called exile or deportation. But in reality, this was death march. Because purposely the people were driven under escort, long marches in order to exhaust them. They were driven not the nearest roads possible, but they were driven over mountains and sometimes in circles in order to make them weary. They were not allowed to rest. They were not allowed to drink when they were thirsty. And in that way, of course, the weakest in such a convoy would die first-- the weakest being the old people, the youngest, the babies, the children, and also the pregnant women or women giving birth during the deportation.

Days wore on. We marched through mountain roads and valleys. Those who could not keep up were put out of their misery. 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, and now my grandmother were left unmourned and unburied by the wayside. We moved on.

We have evidence that so many people died and were thrown into the Euphrates River that the river ran red with blood. Indeed, many people who could no longer take the marches, who could not stand the pain and torture, killed themselves by jumping into the river.

No human being can imagine such ghastliness. The large area was filled with the sick, but these poor ones no longer looked human. Not even animals could be found in such a condition. People would have had mercy on them and killed them, but these were the hated Christians now in the hands of their enemies who intended to make it as difficult as possible for them.

Half-naked women lay around, and one could not tell if they were alive or dead. Two little girls, nine or 10 years old, were dragging away the corpse of a six-year-old boy. It was impossible to talk to these people about God while they cried, pulled, and tore at us. And the soldiers shout at them and struck them with their sticks. To think that human beings have been the tools that have wrought such terrible misery, and it is the government that promised us time after time that nothing evil would befall our friends.

Central to the process of massacre and deportation was a certain group within the Committee of Union and Progress known as the Special Organization. Led by a physician named Bahaeddin Shakir.

He's a fanatical CUP member committed to the extermination of the Armenians with a plan to create mobile killing units that would do the dirty work of exterminating the Armenian people of the Ottoman Empire.

It was a secret extralegal clandestine military wing of assassins, trigger men, military men, et cetera who swore a special oath to be absolutely loyal to the top leadership of the legal party. They started organizing death squads out of former Caucasian tribes as well as the lumpenproletariat, the scum of the earth, convicts, people deliberately released from prison for this kind of purpose. And they started hitting and massacring Armenian convoys-- convoys of Armenian deportees-- either on the move or when they were encamped in certain places or inside certain camps.

The genocide of the Armenians was ordered and initiated from the top, but in many ways it was a disorganized event. Because as these deportation marches occurred, ordinary people became involved. Kurds, Circassians, Turks along the road-- anyone who could find any advantage in killing Armenians, stealing their jewels or whatever they might have.

Many citizens in Turkey of both Kurdish and Turkish ethnicity remember vividly what their parents and grandparents told them about what happened to the Armenians.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

Occasionally, the Armenians did fight back. In the city of Van in 1915, they killed Turkish soldiers and held off Turkish forces for more than a month. There were similar uprisings in three other villages, but 1915 was not the first time Armenians had chosen to fight. In the years before World War I, Armenians responded to what they considered to be excessive taxes and oppression with violence against Turks and Kurds, and engaged in three uprisings.

In one case in 1896, they even took over an Ottoman bank by force. During the same period, there were also episodic attacks against Turks, usually officials, by Armenians. There are no exact records, but experts estimate that Armenians killed close to 100 Turkish officials in these attacks. As 1915 went on, the deportations and massacres of the Armenians continued.

In Trabzon, they decided to take men, women, and children out in boats and just dumped them in the Black Sea where they drowned.

In other areas, they were outright tortured.

Diyarbakir was then under the leadership of a notoriously Christian- or Armenian-hating governor, and he was one who got notorious for this particular cruel ways of torturing Armenian clerics, which were horseshoed with burning iron or stripped naked and chased around, and other ways of torturing. In particular, clerics seemed to attract the hatred of the torturing people.

Rape was a universal component of the Armenian Genocide. Very few women were spared. Even old woman. But the most horrendous part of the rape was the rape of young children- female children as young as 6, 7, 8 year old. And many of them succumbed.

Aurora Mardiganian, a genocide survivor, wrote down her experience in the harem of a man named Hadji Ghafour.

Nearly all the younger were Armenian girls who had been stolen. Already I'd made up my mind to be as brave as I could, and to hope and pray that I might be delivered from that house.

We were not allowed outside the haremlik. Each night we were compelled to say the Mohammedan prayers. I learned to say them aloud and translate them in my mind into the words of Christian prayers. The head servant of the haremlik, an elderly Turkish woman who was as kind to us as she could be, took occasion every day to warn us that if we wish to live and be happy we must be pleasing to Hadji Ghafour. Other women told us of girls who had come into the harem never to appear again after their betrothal to the master.

When these things were spoken of, we could not help thinking of the body we saw hanging from the window across the court. That was Hadji Ghafour's way of teaching us to be submissive.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

During the period of the genocide in 1915, there was tremendous response from the US. Writers, religious and political leaders such as H. L. Mencken, as Ezra Pound, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Rabbi Stephen Wise, and William Jennings Bryan all spoke out for the Armenian cause. Former President Roosevelt described the events as the greatest crime of the war.

In addition, a charity called the Near East Relief Foundation sent over \$100 million in aid to the starving Armenians, as they were known. \$1.3 billion in today's currency. So thoroughly were the Armenian massacres covered in the press that in 1915 alone the New York Times

ran 145 articles, and the reporting was clear. This was government-planned, systematic race extermination.

Several US consuls and their staffs were stationed throughout the Ottoman Empire. The US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau was in Constantinople. US consul Jesse Benjamin Jackson was in Aleppo. US consul Oscar Heizer was in Trabzon, and US consul Leslie A. Davis was stationed in Harput.

We saw hundreds of bodies, and many bones in the water below. It was rumored that many of the people who were brought here had been pushed over the cliffs by the gendarme. That rumor was fully confirmed by what we saw. In some of the valleys there were only a few bodies, but in others there were more than a thousand. I do not believe there has ever been a massacre in the history of the world so general and thorough as that which is now being perpetrated in this region, or that a more fiendish, diabolical scheme has ever been conceived by the mind of man.

This is the American consul who is describing what he himself saw directly to the American government in 1915. So this is the sort of information that we have about the Armenian Genocide in the American archive. It's not hearsay. It's not secondary. It's not, well, maybe this and that. It is an outright killing on a massive scale.

It is extremely rare to find a family intact that has come any considerable distance, invariably having lost members from disease and fatigue. Young girls and boys carried off by hostile tribesmen, and about all the men having been separated from the families and suffered fates that had best be left unmentioned, many being done away with in such atrocious manners before the eyes of their relatives and friends.

So severe has been the treatment that careful estimates place the number of those surviving even this far at being less than 150,000. There seem to have been about one million persons lost up to this date.

For those Armenians who survived the forced marches, the end of the line was a region far to the south in what today is Syria called Deir Zor.

Some people made it to Deir Zor where they simply died of famine and starvation.

All that I have seen and heard surpasses all imagination. Speaking of 1001 horrors is very little in this case. I thought I was passing through a part of hell.

Everywhere is the same governmental barbarianism which aims at the systematic annihilation through starvation of the survivors of the Armenian nation in Turkey. Everywhere is the same bestial inhumanity on the part of these executioners and the same tortures undergone by these victims all along the Euphrates to Deir Zor.

Women who had not seen me arriving were searching in the dung of horses barley seeds not yet digested to feed on. I gave them some bread. They threw themselves on it like dogs dying of hunger.

These men and other American diplomats filed reports on the atrocities they witnessed, which today are housed in the US National Archives. They constitute nearly 4,000 pages of testimony and witness to the Armenian Genocide. The International Association of Genocide Scholars affirms that over one million Armenians died during the Armenian Genocide. Other scholars put the numbers as high as 1.5 million. The Turkish government today denies that a genocide took place and has denied this historical fact for nearly a century.

In 1919, shortly after World War I ended, the British pushed the Turks to hold war crimes tribunals for the Armenian massacres. A series of trials were then held in Constantinople.

Post-war Turkish court-martials are a very significant event in criminal justice in Turkish history and in terms of future settlement of the issue of the Armenian Genocide. Because the Turkish military tribunal scrupulously investigated the issue of the Armenian Genocide. It concluded in its final verdict that the Young Turk party was responsible for the conception, organization, and execution of the Armenian Genocide.

The authors of the above-mentioned crimes, the fugitives Prime Minister Talaat Pasha and Minister of War Enver, now expelled from his military career, Jamal, the Minister of the Navy, likewise expelled from the service-- their guilt has been determined by a unanimous vote. In accordance, therefore, with the law code, Talaat, Enver, and Jamal are sentenced to death.

The three leaders of the Young Turks-- Enver, Jamal, and Talaat Pasha-- were tried in absentia as they had all fled the country. Talaat Pasha had run ultimately to Germany where he had lived in hiding with his wife. On March 15, 1921, a young man named Soghoman Tehlirian approached Talaat, tapped him on the shoulder, then shot him in the head. Moments after firing the fatal shot, Tehlirian said to the German police--

It is not I who am the murderer, it is he.

Tehlirian, an Armenian student, was arrested by the German police and tried for murder. He was found not guilty. Jamal Pasha, who had also fled Turkey, was living in Tiflis, what is now the capital of the country of Georgia. But in July of 1922, while traveling, two Armenians shot and killed him. Enver Pasha, like Talaat, fled to Germany and later to Russia. On August 4th, 1922, he was killed in what is the present-day Republic of Tajikistan, shot while fighting with a local army.

In 1923, a new Turkish state, a new Turkish Republic, was created, which really disconnected itself comprehensively from the Young Turks of 1915.



Impatient with former methods, Atatürk banished ancient ways. Under Atatürk's 15-year rule, Constantinople was renamed Istanbul and became a westernized city of modern well-planned buildings. Under his one-party government, factories increased as he industrialized Turkey. The social revolution he accomplished was widespread. In every way, he emphasized the change from the old Turkey to the new.

What this new Turkish state then did was it embarked on an all-out program of westernization, adopting a Western-style constitution, adopting secularism, dropping the old Arabic-inspired alphabet in favor of the Latin script, adopting Western-style dress, costume, civil code, everything. As a result, Britain, France, Germany, everybody else-- they were now out to court this new Turkey to try to become friends with it. And the great powers did not have any interest in pursuing the dirty matter of what had happened in 1915.

And all kinds of reasons like this made it undesirable for the young republic to maintain an honest memory of what had been done in 1915. And as a result, you have an enormously constructed, fabricated, manipulated national memory.

In Turkey today, the official state position on the Armenian Genocide, which is widely shared by both citizens and academics, is one of active denial. Yusuf Halacoğlu is the head of the Turkish Historical Society in Turkey.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

In September of the year 2000, a senior Turkish diplomat repeated this position to US lawmakers.

That the Turkish people firmly believe that what happened to the Armenians was not genocide. It was a relocation to other parts of the Ottoman Empire of only the eastern Anatolian Armenians away from a war zone in which they were collaborating with invading Russian armies, with the aim of creating an independent state of their own in areas where they were only a minority, by ethnically cleansing the majority Turks. Many Armenians were killed, but many more Muslims and Turks perished, as well.

It's complete garbage, of course. But that is the dominant line that they would like to press. They would argue that some Armenians were killed on their way to deportation because of privations due to the war, but they were never systematic-- there were never systematic killings as such, which is not true.

I think Turkey denies the genocide for very complex psychological and political reasons. I think first of all, they deny it because it is officially a crime against humanity and there may be repercussions. That is, there might be compensation of some kind that the Turks would have to pay. That's sort of the political thing. Secondly, Turkey is a nationalist state that is very proud of its achievements in the 20th century, and Turks do not want to recognize that they actually committed this terrible crime.



There is a feeling that Turkey would be putting itself permanently in the company of Adolf Hitler. That that same stain, then, would also envelop Turkey as it seeks, of course, to become a major player on the international stage. Another factor is just plain old unwillingness to wrap your mind around atrocities carried out by people like you.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

I mean, it was not a genocide. And I do believe that. I am free to say if there was any genocide.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

Neither the Turkish Embassy to the United States nor the Turkish Embassy to the European Union would provide someone to interview for this film, but they did release a letter which stated in part,

The measures taken by the Ottoman government during World War I concerning a segment of its Armenian population cannot not be acknowledged as genocide as described in the UN Convention on the Elimination and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The United Nations Convention describes genocide as any act committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.

The crucial question is why the Armenians, not content with the word tragedy, or catastrophe, or disaster, insist on genocide. What determines genocide is not necessarily the number of casualties, or the cruelty of the persecution, but the intent to destroy a group. Turks have never harbored any anti-Armenianism. The victims of genocide must be totally innocent.

What the word genocide connotes is a systematic campaign of destruction. If you simply call the horrors of 1915 crimes against humanity, or atrocities, it doesn't fully convey just how methodical this campaign of slaughter and deportation really was. And I think that's why historians look at the record and they really can come to no other conclusion but that this word genocide applies to this methodical campaign of destruction.

The word genocide was coined in 1943 by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who lost over 40 members of his family in the Holocaust.

He struggled to find a word that was commensurate with the horrors that had occurred in 1915 against the Armenians, and then that were ongoing in the Second World War against the Jews.

Genocide is a new word combining the Greek word genos, meaning race or group, with the root of the Latin caedere, meaning to kill. Dr. Raphael Lemkin, who is a professor of law at Yale University and specializing in teaching matters about the United Nations. Dr. Lemkin is

the man who created the word genocide. Dr. Lemkin, could you give us a little background on how you came to be interested in this genocide?

I became interested in genocide because it happened so many times. It happened to the Armenians, and after the Armenians Hitler took action.

Lemkin became the leading force behind the drafting and adoption of the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on December 9th, 1948.

I would urge-- and I think that's the spirit, the unanimous feel of the Assembly-- that this Convention be signed by all states, ratified by all parliaments at the earliest date, in order that basic human rights be given the protection of international law for the sake of progress, social, and international peace.

Despite Lemkin's efforts and those of countless scholars, activists, politicians, and even other governments, the Turkish state continues to maintain its position of denial regarding the genocide. In recent years, however, an increasing number of Turkish intellectuals have broken with the state line and spoken out on the genocide. It has often been at their own risk.

I was speaking out of a feeling of utter disgust at all the hypocrisy surrounding this question. That is to say, this nauseating repetition of all these state line phrases about the Armenian slanders, the so-called genocide, the false Armenian allegations, and so on and so forth. It was fairly clear that somehow, the state-- the deep state-- was signaling the press that this was how they should be talking, and the media, the press, the journalists, the TV anchormen, et cetera, were all instinctively falling into line.

In the year 2000, professor Berktaç gave an interview on the genocide to a major Turkish newspaper.

It was as if I was yelling very loudly, the emperor has no clothes. And they started yelling, traitor. Here is this traitor in our midst. Here is this person who is aiding and abetting the enemy. He should be instantaneously fired from his university. There must be punishment for him.

Not only did they organize hate mail, and obscenity mail, and death threat campaigns, I became this rare animal-- a Turkish historian inside Turkey that has spoken up.

Another man in Turkey, Ragıp Zarakolu, had a similar experience when he and his wife published the book *The Armenians a History of the Genocide*, by Yves Ternon, in the early 1990s. It was the first book to be published in Turkey that openly acknowledged the events of 1915 as genocide.

Ragip Zarakolu and his late wife have been taken to trial over 40 times and even imprisoned for the books they published, most of which dealt with the Armenian Genocide or other human rights issues. Ragip lives in Turkey to this day.

Armenian efforts for genocide recognition have also included a violent component. From roughly 1975 to 1985, two Armenian terrorist groups engaged in attempted assassinations of Turkish diplomats in various locations around the world.

These groups committed over 100 attacks that resulted in the deaths of several dozen Turkish diplomats and many innocent civilians. Infighting, public condemnation, and arrests of several terrorist leaders ultimately led to the demise of these groups. Turkey continued to maintain its position on the genocide.

The fact that you could actually live in a society, get the best education that society has to offer, which I did, and not know about it or have any books or anything available to read about it puzzled me, obviously. Why didn't I know anything? Why was there that silence?

In April 2003, the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey issued a directive to all schools that they have to organize teaching to show that the Armenian Genocide and its claims that such things occurred were groundless. That they never occurred. In other words, official denial by the state taught as part of the curriculum in the national schools of Turkey.

Imagine for a moment the history books of the Western world being printed without having the story of World War I in there. Here is a significant country in our world is spending an enormous amount of its money, of its resources on one subject. Don't you mention the Armenian Genocide. And that's what their ambassadors, and their designated representatives, including in academia, are busy doing all around the world. And the story gets dirtier.

I can tell you-- anybody can tell you of conference after conference, book after book, efforts to produce a TV program, a movie about the Armenian Genocide where the Turkish government has intervened at every conceivable level.

One of the most famous examples occurred when movie giant MGM announced it was making a movie on the Armenian Genocide in 1935 called *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. But as soon as the news reached Turkey, the US State Department was contacted and pressured by Turkey into all but forcing MGM to shut the production down, which it did.

When I wrote my book and included the Armenian Genocide, I actually expected in city after American city to have to defend inclusion of that case because I understood how much controversy there was about use of the term genocide. And what amazed me was that there were deniers, there were people who raised their hands from time to time as I traveled around, but they were always either Turkish or officials or individuals who had been sent

out by the Turkish embassy. That's a sign, in a way, that already Turkish deniers are becoming the equivalent socially, culturally, of Holocaust deniers.

[NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]

What makes me especially upset is the lack of acknowledgment of the grief of a people or their right to grieve over loss.

I believe the recognition of genocide issue is a matter of time. I wish it took place not because Turkey was forced to do so, but because they wanted to do so. I hope the impetus comes from within Turkey itself so that just as Turks might be characterized as genocidal, at the same time they also take the credit for putting their own house in order to show that not all Turks are genocidal. In fact, many are honorable, and they are willing to do the right thing even if their parents' or grandparents' generation didn't do so.

Maybe that is the way out in the future. Maybe that will happen. I really don't know.

When it so comes to pass that in Turkey this question can be discussed and debated like any other question without one or the other kind of point of view necessarily being labeled treason, treachery, betrayal, the enemy in our midst, et cetera-- when it can be deemotionalized and discussed in the same breath and in the same category with any other question of scholarly truth about what actually happened in history, then that will be the solution.

This film is made possible by contributions from John and Judy Bedrosian, the Avanesians Family Foundation, the Lincy Foundation, the Manoogian Simone Foundation, and the following. And others. A complete list is available from PBS.