

CONVINCE RAPHAEL LEMKIN OTHERWISE!

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By Vicken Babkenian, Sydney, Australia, 3 December 2008

Mr. Babkenian is an independent researcher for the Australian Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

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It all began when I was cutting an Orange for my niece when she asked me why the name Orange is both a color and a fruit. After doing some research, I discovered that the root of the word Orange in the English language is derived from the fruit. In other words the Etymology of the color and the fruit is interconnected. No one can argue that the fruit Orange is not Orange.

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As someone who has studied the Armenian Genocide over a number of years, I could not help but familiarize myself with the etymology of the word Genocide. I discovered that the word genocide is from the roots *genos* (Greek for family, tribe, race, a people, a nation) and *-cide* (Latin – *occidere* or *cideo* – to Massacre, Kill, exterminate). I looked up the word in the Oxford dictionary and found the definition to be "the extermination of a race". I then recalled that this definition of the word 'genocide' had been used by contemporary eyewitnesses, diplomats, historians, journalists to describe what was happening to the Armenians during WWI. Lord James Bryce in 1915 called it "the Extermination of a Race" in a New York Times article. If the word 'genocide' had been coined before WWI, then that one word would have been used, instead of the five words which mean the same thing.

I then conducted some research on Raphael Lemkin, "The founder of the genocide convention" and on the genesis of the word 'genocide' which he coined in 1944. In his manuscript titled "Totally unofficial", Lemkin wrote:

"In 1915 . . . I began . . . to read more history to study whether national, religious, or racial groups as such were being destroyed. The truth came out after the war. In Turkey, more than 1,200,000 Armenians were put to death . . . After the end of the war, some 150 Turkish war criminals were arrested and interned by the British Government on the island of Malta . . . Then one day, I read in the newspapers that all Turkish war criminals were to be released. I was shocked. A nation that killed and the guilty persons were set free . . . I felt that a law against this type of racial or religious murder must be adopted by the world"

I soon reached the conclusion that the word genocide is etymologically interconnected with the tragedy of the Armenians, just like the word Orange is to the fruit of the same name. The man who coined the word genocide had in large part based it on the Armenian catastrophe. He even stated on national television "that it happened to the Armenians." I further realized that the legal term "Crimes against humanity" which is affirmed by the U.N general Assembly was in the main, derived and adopted from a

declaration made by the Allies on 24 May 1915 with respect to the initiation of the wartime Armenian Genocide, which they branded as a "crime against humanity." This fact is acknowledged by the authoritative UN War Crimes Commission, History of the United Nations War Crimes Commission and the Development of the Laws of War.

I searched online to learn which countries had actually signed and ratified the Genocide Convention. I discovered that most countries in the world had done so, including the United States, Great Britain, Turkey, Israel and so on. I concluded that by ratifying the convention they had in fact recognized that the Armenian holocaust was in fact a genocide.

Yes, I use the word 'holocaust' because that word was used to describe what was happening to the Armenians during the Abdul Hamid Massacres, Adana Massacres and the Armenian genocide by contemporary writers. William Walker Rockwell in an article titled "the Total of Armenian and Syrian Dead" in the New York Times Current History February 1916, wrote "If the ghosts of the Christian civilians who have perished miserably in Turkey since the commencement of the great holocaust should march down Fifth Avenue twenty abreast there might be a million of them ... for most of them will be women and children".

The Armenian genocide has been recognized by the majority of the nations of the world and we didn't even know it. If those countries who have ratified the genocide convention deny that the Armenians were victims of genocide, then they should either terminate their participation to the convention, or have the convention change the word 'genocide' to something else which is not intrinsically connected to the Armenian slaughter. Denying that Armenians were victims of genocide is akin to denying that an Orange is Orange. It is insane and illogical. For those who believe that what happened to the Armenians should not be termed a 'genocide', should have convinced Raphael Lemkin not to base the word on what had happened to the Armenians. Unfortunately for them, it is too late, by signing the genocide convention; most of the world has already recognized the Armenian genocide.

