

# PROTEST AGAINST RUSSELL CROWE'S DISTORTION OF HISTORY

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**Anthony McAdam**, [The Spectator](#), 10 January 2015

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If intentions are taken seriously, the film is a huge disappointment. Its release came packaged to suggest that it presents a more honest and more understanding appreciation of our then enemy, the Turks. Besides being the director, Crowe is the star and driving force in the film's conception, and hence fully responsible for the result. His intention: 'It is time to teach our children the other side of the Gallipoli story'.

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Many of the media reviews have been just as presumptuous and wrong-headed. *The Age*, for instance, tells us 'This is perhaps the first Australian war movie to deal honestly with the Turks and that is one of its achievements'.

Well, not really. This highly sentimentalised and rather pointless attempt to depict the human dimension of the Gallipoli campaign, as experienced by an Aussie father (Crowe) searching for the bodies of his three sons, fails both as plausible drama and as an honest attempt to confront the actual behaviour of the enemy (the Ottoman empire), not to mention the moral justification for the terrible sacrifice of Allied lives.

On that last point, distinguished British historian Jeremy Black recently wrote: 'The current fashion for commemorating the dead by honouring their struggle does not in fact honour them unless we explain why they were fighting and facing the personal, moral and religious challenges of risking and

inflicting death. Why did men volunteer in 1914? Why did they advance across the 'killing ground'? To mark the struggle without recalling its point and value is both to lack a moral compass and, indeed, not really to seek one'.

And for those who believe, as Crowe seems to, that Britain and Australia entered the war for ignoble reasons, or no reason at all, it is worth 'remembering' that Britain was responding to a clear act of German aggression against a neutral country, Belgium, with which it was honour bound by treaty to defend, a decision overwhelmingly supported at the time by the Australian government and the Australian people. Turkey threw in its lot with the Germans and made itself the enemy.

Not only does the film fail to show the slightest inkling of interest as to why the allies fought and, for that matter, why the hero's sons died, but Crowe bathes the whole story in a painfully mawkish and barely credible tale of a heart-broken water diviner (Crowe himself) who miraculously emerges as a body diviner rambling around the rocky cliffs of Gallipoli 'bonding' with the very soldiers responsible for his sons' deaths, with of course the now obligatory Aussie sneer directed towards a British officer made out to be a right pompous git (shades of Weir's *Gallipoli*?).

Leaving aside aesthetic considerations, the fact is the film's lack of any historical context is breathtaking. There are many, but there is one really glaring omission.

It so happens that the well-documented genocide of the Armenians at the hands of the Turks was initiated on the day immediately before the Gallipoli landing, an overlap that traditionally receives hardly a mention from Australian historians, and no reference whatsoever in this film.

What happened to the Armenians? Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, author of *The First World War in the Middle East* (2014) paints the basic picture:

*The Armenian genocide started in earnest on 24 April 1915 with the arrest and deportation of thousands of Armenian political leaders and intellectuals. This act triggered widespread massacres that subsequently killed an estimated 1 million Armenians. The combination of the outright killings and the forced marches through the Syrian Desert constituted one of the earliest examples of a 'crime against humanity'...*

The mass murder of this ancient Christian community made no exception for women and children and was conducted with a barbarity that shocked even officers of the Ottoman's German allies, some of whom witnessed the gruesome scenes first hand, as did missionaries and other outsiders.

The legacy of what happened a hundred years ago in Turkey this April is now taking on all the characteristics of a diplomatic perfect storm. Obviously, the Australian centenary commemorations at Gallipoli will be more elaborate than anything previous, the worldwide protests by the Armenian Diaspora will be more vociferous than ever, and the Turkish government's fierce opposition to even the mention of the word genocide will be as aggressive as ever.

This combination of factors is now coming to a head with Turkey virtually ruling itself out of any hope of having its stalled application to join the EU accepted, its position on the Armenian issue being a major factor. If all this were not enough, more evidence is emerging that highlights Turkey's current machiavellian position vis-a-vis the Islamic State's forces on its borders, a savage army currently trying to murder what's left of Iraq's and Syria's Christian communities, and other demonised faith communities.

Where does Australia sit in this gathering storm with its myriad strategic and moral conundrums? Not well. While Opposition Leader Tony Abbott did not hesitate to condemn the Armenian genocide, last June Foreign Minister Julie Bishop issued a statement that called the Armenian killings 'a tragedy' but added, quite unnecessarily, 'we do not recognise the events as genocide' for which, according to (former *Speccie* Diarist) Geoffrey Robertson QC, 'she was duly lauded in Turkey as a genocide denier'.

The moral issue at stake is neatly captured in the subtitle of Robertson's recently published book on the genocide: 'Who now remembers the annihilation of the Armenians?' It was Hitler's comment to his generals on the eve of the invasion of Poland urging them to show no mercy as there would be no retribution. It's all part of 'the other side of the Gallipoli story' that Russell Crowe somehow didn't get around to even hinting at.

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From: **The Greek Genocide**: 1914-1923 <[greekgenocide1914@gmail.com](mailto:greekgenocide1914@gmail.com)>  
To: Greek Genocide <[greekgenocide1914@gmail.com](mailto:greekgenocide1914@gmail.com)>  
Sent: Mon, Jan 12, 2015 6:43 pm  
Subject: PROTEST: Russell Crowe's new film a distortion of history

Russell Crowe's new film about Gallipoli, *The Water Diviner*, has offended many descendants of genocide survivors - Greeks and Armenians alike - through its false portrayal of the events during the period which the film is set. There has been public outrage on our [Facebook page](#), and for that reason, we've drafted a letter which you may use to voice your opinion. You may address it to whomever you choose, however we have listed some recommendations at the bottom of the draft (see below) including *Andrew Anastasios* the screenwriter, and *The Rabbitohs Rugby League team* which Crowe is shareholder of, and which is currently chaired by a good friend of Crowe's, Dr Nick Pappas. Let's stand up and be a voice for our ancestors who were brutally massacred during that period!

*Dear*

I am writing this letter to express my shock at the false portrayal of historical events in the Russell Crowe film 'The Water Diviner'. The film is presented as being 'inspired by actual events', but as a person whose family has been deeply affected by the genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Government during that period (1914-1923), I can say that the events in the movie are far from the

truth. In fact, they are a gross distortion of it.

In May of 2013, the New South Wales Parliament officially recognised the mass killing of Greeks, Armenians and Assyrians during that period as an act of genocide. Similar recognitions have occurred throughout the world condemning the acts as genocide. Geoffrey Robertson QC has for years been calling on Turkey to recognize its past, using the term 'genocide' to describe the events. Turkey has continuously denied committing genocide, while the rest of the world has been calling for recognition.

So how can a film such as *The Water Diviner* be made? How can a film show the exact opposite? How can Russell Crowe direct a film in which he portrays Greeks as satanic, while he portrays the Turks as victims? Just two weeks before the ANZAC landings, some 32,000 indigenous Greeks living in the Gallipoli peninsula were forcibly deported by the Ottoman Turkish government, and many died of harsh conditions. Other Greeks of Asia Minor such as those from Livissi (today Kayakoy) were also victims of the genocidal campaign during that period. Ironically, the final scenes in the movie were shot at the current ghost town of Livissi, Turkey.

In 1919, the Greek Army was sent to the western Ottoman port city of Smyrna (Izmir) via a British mandate, to protect the remaining Christian population in Anatolia from further massacre. When Greek forces landed, the Christians saw them as liberators. During and after WW1, the international media widely reported Turkish massacres against Greeks and Armenians. The methods used included mass killings, death marches, rape, forced conversion to Islam and confiscation of property amongst others.

On April 24, 1915, just one day prior to the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli, the Ottoman government rounded up some 240 Armenian intellectuals and most were killed. By 1923, over half of the Armenian population (1.5 million people) was massacred, some 1 million Greeks, and several hundred thousand Assyrians. All these events were happening during the time period of the scenes depicted in *The Water Diviner*, yet Russell Crowe managed to paint the Turks as victims.

*The Water Diviner* is a film that offends the descendants of genocide victims and should therefore be condemned. If a film depicting Adolf Hitler as a hero and the Jews as terrorists were made, the reaction would be one of shock and outrage. Russell Crowe's film is a distortion of history that only serves to appease Turkey and its continued agenda of genocide denial.

Regards

SEND EMAILS TO:

ANDREW ANASTASIOS: [ajana@bigpond.net.au](mailto:ajana@bigpond.net.au)

eOne PRODUCTION HOUSE: [info.au@entonegroup.com](mailto:info.au@entonegroup.com)

SOUTH SYDNEY RABBITOHS: [thumper@rabbitohs.com.au](mailto:thumper@rabbitohs.com.au)

WARNER BROTHERS: <http://www.warnerbros.com/help/customer-service>

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD: [letters@smh.com.au](mailto:letters@smh.com.au)

THE AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPER: [letters@theaustralian.com.au](mailto:letters@theaustralian.com.au)

NATIONAL FILM EDITOR, FAIRFAX MEDIA: [kquinn@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:kquinn@fairfaxmedia.com.au)

Other ways to PROTEST include going to ROTTEN TOMATOES and giving it a really low rating and leaving a negative comment.

ROTTEN TOMATOES: [http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_water\\_diviner/](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_water_diviner/)

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## **The Gallipoli centenary is a shameful attempt to hide the Armenian Holocaust**

**Robert Fisk**, [The Independent](#), Monday 19 January 2015

When world leaders, including Prince Charles and the Australian and New Zealand prime ministers, gather at Gallipoli to commemorate the First World War battle at the invitation of the Turkish government in April, the ghosts of one and half million slaughtered Christian Armenians will march with them.

For in an unprecedented act of diplomatic folly, Turkey is planning to use the 100th anniversary of the Allied attempt to invade Turkey in 1915 to smother memory of its own mass killing of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, the 20th century's first semi-industrial holocaust. The Turks have already sent invitations to 102 nations to attend the Gallipoli anniversary on 24th April — on the very day when Armenia always honours its own genocide victims at the hands of Ottoman Turkey.

In an initiative which he must have known would be rejected, Turkish President Recep Erdogan even invited the Armenian President, Serge Sarkissian, to attend the Gallipoli anniversary after himself receiving an earlier request from President Sarkissian to attend ceremonies marking the Armenian genocide on the same day.

This is not just diplomatic mischief. The Turks are well aware that the Allied landings at Gallipoli began on 25th April – the day after Armenians mark the start of their genocide, which was ordered by the Turkish government of the time – and that Australia and New Zealand mark Anzac Day on the 25th. Only two years ago, then-president Abdullah Gul of Turkey marked the 98th anniversary of the Great War battle on 18th March 2013 — the day on which the British naval bombardment of the Dardanelles Peninsular began on the instructions of British First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill. At the time, no-one in Turkey suggested that Gallipoli – Canakkale in Turkish — should be remembered on 24th April.

The Turks, of course, are fearful that 1915 should be remembered as the anniversary of their country's frightful crimes against humanity committed during the Armenian extermination, in which tens of thousands of men were executed with guns and knives, their womenfolk raped and then

starved with their children on death marches into what was then Mesopotamia. The irony of history has now bequeathed these very same killing fields to the victorious forces of the 'genocidal' Islamist ISIS army, which has even destroyed the Armenian church commemorating the genocide in the Syrian city of Deir ez-Zour. Armenians chose 24th April to remember their genocide victims because this was the day on which Turkish police rounded up the first Armenian academics, lawyers, doctors, teachers and journalists in Constantinople.

Like Germany's right wing and revisionist historians who deny the Jewish Holocaust, Turkey has always refused to accept the Ottoman Turkish Empire's responsibility for the greatest crime against humanity of the 1914-18 war, a bloodletting which at the time upset even Turkey's German allies. Armenia's own 1915 Holocaust – which lasted into 1917 – has been acknowledged by hundreds of international scholars, including many Jewish and Israeli historians, and has since been recognized by many European states. Only Tony Blair's government tried to diminish the suffering of the Armenians when it refused to regard the outrages as an act of genocide and tried to exclude survivors from commemorating their dead during Holocaust ceremonies in London. Turkey's claim – that the Armenians were unfortunate victims of the social upheavals of the war – has long been discredited.

Several brave Turkish scholars – denounced for their honesty by their fellow countrymen – have researched Ottoman documents and proved that instructions were sent out from Constantinople (now Istanbul) to regional officials to destroy their Armenian communities. Professor Ayhan Aktar of Istanbul Bilgi University, for example, has written extensively about the courage of Armenians who themselves fought in uniform for Turkey at Gallipoli, and has publicised the life of Captain Sarkis Torossian, an Armenian officer who was decorated by the Ottoman state for his bravery but whose parents and sister were done to death in the genocide. Professor Aktar was condemned by Turkish army officers and some academics who claimed that Armenians did not even fight on the Turkish side. Turkish generals officially denied – against every proof to the contrary, including Torossian's photograph in Ottoman uniform – that the Armenian soldier existed.

But now Turkey has changed its story. Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu recently acknowledged that other ethnic groups – including many Arabs as well as Armenians – also fought at Gallipoli. "We fought together at Gallipoli," he said. "That's why we have extended the invitation to President Sarkissian as well." The Armenian president's reply to Erdogan's invitation even mentioned Captain Torossian – although he sadly claimed that the soldier was also killed in the genocide when he in fact died in New York in 1954 after writing his memoirs – and reminded the Turkish president that "peace and friendship must first be hinged on the courage to confront one's own past, historical justice and universal memory... Each of us has a duty to transmit the real story to future generations and prevent the repetition of crimes... and prepare the ground for rapprochement and future cooperation between peoples, especially neighbouring peoples."

Armenians hold their commemorations on April 24th – when nothing happened at Gallipoli –

because this was the day on which the Armenian intellectuals were rounded up and jailed in the basement of Constantinople's police headquarters prior to their deportation and — in some cases — execution. These were the first 'martyrs' of the Armenian genocide. By another cruel twist of history, the place of their incarceration is now the Museum of Islamic Arts – a tourist location to which Prince Charles and other dignitaries will presumably not be taken on 24th April. These killings marked the start of the Armenian people's persecution and exile to the four corners of the earth.

Professor Aktar's contribution – along with that of historian Taner Akcam in the US — to the truth of Turkish-Armenian history is almost unique. They alone, through their academic research and under enormous political pressure to remain silent, forced thousands of Turks to debate the terrible events of 1915. Many Turks have since discovered Armenian grandmothers who were 'Islamised' or seized by Turkish militiamen or soldiers when they were young women. Aktar also points out that other Armenian soldiers – a First Lieutenant Surmenian, whose own memoirs were published in Beirut 13 years after Torossian's death – fought in the Turkish army.

He has little time, however, for either the Turkish government or Armenian president Sarkissian. "If you want to honour the Armenian officers and soldiers who... died for the fatherland (Turkey) in 1915, then you should invite the Armenian patriarch of Istanbul," Aktar told me. "Why do (they) invite President Sarkissian? His ancestors were probably fighting in the Russian Imperial Army in 1915. He is from Karabagh as far as I know! This is a show of an 'indecent proposal' towards President Sarkissian... it is rather insulting!"

Many Armenians might share the same view. For several months, Sarkissian was prepared to sign a treaty with Turkey to open the Armenian-Turkish frontier in return for a mere formal investigation by scholars of the genocide. Then-US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supported him, along with sundry politicians and some Western journalists based in Turkey. But the Armenian diaspora responded in fury, asking how Jews would feel if friendship with Germany was contingent upon an enquiry to discover if the Jewish Holocaust had ever occurred. In the First World War, American and European newspapers gave massive publicity to the savagery visited upon the Armenians, and the British Foreign Office published a 'black book' on the crimes against Armenians of the Turkish army. The very word 'genocide' was coined about the Armenian holocaust by Raphael Lemkin, an American lawyer of Polish-Jewish descent. Israelis use the word 'Shoah' – 'Holocaust' — when they refer to the suffering of the Armenians.

The Turkish hero of Gallipoli, of course, was Lieutenant Colonel Mustapha Kemal – later Ataturk, founder of the modern Turkish state – and his own 19th Division at Gallipoli was known as the 'Aleppo Division' because of the number of Arabs serving in it. Ataturk did not participate in the mass killings of Armenians in 1915, but some of his associates were implicated – which still casts a shadow over the history of the Turkish state. The bloody Allied defeat at Gallipoli was to cast a shadow over the rest of Winston Churchill's career, a fact well known to the tens of thousands of Australians and New Zealanders who plan to come to the old battlefield this April. How much they will know about



an even more horrific anniversary on April 24th is another matter.

