

# WHY? 100 YEARS OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE QUESTIONS

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[Alan Whitehorn](#), Kingston ON, 26 March 2015

Amidst the ongoing Turkish government denials, one hundred years of questions need to be posed to Turkish officials about the Armenian Genocide. These questions chronologically cover the period from before the 1915 Genocide, during, immediately after, the subsequent decades, the 100<sup>th</sup> memorial anniversary, and the future. Within these time periods, questions can be organized conceptually around aspects of the genocide and its denial.



### **Before 1915**

Why were Armenians treated as unequal Christian subjects in the Ottoman Empire's Islamic state?

Why were discriminatory laws applied to the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire?

Why were there major massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the 1890s and in 1909?

Why were hundreds of thousands of Armenians massacred in the Ottoman Empire before 1914?

Why were the Ottoman government's promises of reform and internationally-signed guarantees of protection of the Armenians not adhered to by the Ottoman regime?

Why were those primarily responsible not punished for the massacres of the Ottoman Armenians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

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### **Before 1915**

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### **During the Genocide**

Why were the Armenians targeted for deportation and death in 1915?

Why were the deported Armenians deliberately force-marched into harsh locales, where the chances of survival were so low?

Why, in addition to the public deportation decrees, were parallel secret orders and telegrams about the mass deportations and killings issued by the Young Turk regime during the Armenian Genocide?

Why did the Young Turk regime forbid Ottoman citizens from helping the Armenian deportees?

Why did the Young Turk regime at times decree the banning of the sale of Armenian properties on the eve of the deportations?

Why did the Special Organization militia, which killed so many Armenians, recruit large numbers of prison convicts?

Why and how did the Turkish military train the Special Organization militia units that were responsible for the killing of so many civilian Armenians?

Why did the Young Turk dictatorship forbid both foreigners and Turks from taking of photographs of the Armenian deportees?

#### *Men*

Why were tens of thousands of Armenian conscripts serving in the Ottoman Army disarmed in 1915 and soon thereafter killed?

Why don't we know how many Armenian men in total were conscripted into the Ottoman Army between 1914 and 1915?

Why can't we find the accounts of these Armenian conscripts in Turkish military histories?

Why were the Armenian religious, educational, literary, political, and business leaders in Constantinople arrested on April 24, 1915 and soon thereafter killed?

Why were the Armenian religious, educational, literary, political, and business leaders throughout the Ottoman Empire arrested and soon thereafter killed?

#### *Deportations*

Why, with the Armenian men conscripted into the Ottoman army, were the remaining Armenian

civilians perceived by the Young Turk leaders as a possible threat?

Why was the Armenian population, not just along the border lands, but across the entire Ottoman Anatolia, rounded up and deported?

Why was so little time allowed between the Young Turk government's draconian deportation orders being issued and the actual commencement of the mass deportations of the Armenian women, children and the elderly?

Why were Armenians not allowed to take more food and clothing during the mass deportations?

Why were the Armenian women, children and elderly not better protected along the deportation routes?

Why were so many vulnerable Armenian women, children and the elderly robbed during the mass deportations?

Why were so many Armenian women raped during the mass deportations?

Why were so many young Armenian girls and women kidnapped during the mass deportations?

Why were so many Armenian babies and infants abandoned to die during the Armenian deportations?

Why were so many Armenian children "given away" to Muslims during the Armenian deportations?

Where were so many Armenian women, children and the elderly attacked by the Special Organization militia along the deportation routes?

### *Population Transfer*

How did the Ottoman Young Turk government so swiftly settle Muslim immigrant families into Armenian deportees' homes?

How much planning and coordination occurred with the Armenian mass deportations and the immigrant Muslims being housed in the Armenians' former homes?

Why are there no lists of the names of those Christian Armenians expelled from their homes and those Muslims who moved into them?

### *Aid*

Why did the Young Turk regime not provide sufficient food, water or food for the state-ordered deportations of the Armenians?

What humanitarian relief efforts, if any, were organized by the Young Turk Ottoman government for the Armenian deportees?

What amount/percent from the Young Turk government's state budget was spent on food and shelter for the Armenian deportees?

Where are the Turkish archival documents on any Turkish state aid or assistance provided to the Armenian deportees?

Why did the Young Turk regime refuse to allow sufficient American and other foreign aid for the Armenian deportees/refugees?

Why did the American government and public commence a major humanitarian assistance programme from 1915 onwards for the Armenian orphans and refugees?

### *Dead*

Why were so many Armenian men, women, children, and infants from Trebizond and elsewhere in the Pontus region deliberately drowned in 1915 in the Black Sea?

How many Armenian women and children were drowned in 1915 in the Euphrates and other rivers in Anatolia?

How many thousands of Armenian Christian priests and bishops in the Ottoman Empire were killed between 1914 and 1918?

How many thousands of Armenian teachers and professors in the Ottoman Empire were killed between 1914 and 1918?

How many Armenian men, serving in the Turkish Army, were killed or died between 1914 and 1918?

### *Churches and Schools*

Why did the Ottoman Young Turk state confiscate Armenian Church properties during the Armenian Genocide?

Why did the Ottoman Young Turk state confiscate Armenian school and college properties during the Armenian Genocide?

### *Property*

What happened to the Armenian homes and property confiscated by the Ottoman Young Turk government?

### *Foreign Witnesses*

Why did the *New York Times* newspaper in 1915 report over 100 articles on the deportations, starvation, rape, and massacres of the Armenian people under the Young Turk regime?

Why did so many foreign witness accounts and subsequent memoirs by missionaries and diplomats describe the horrific treatment of the Armenians by the Young Turk government?

Why was the Armenian Atrocities Committee formed in the United States and what were the major findings of its report?

Why did the British government issue in 1916 an official "Blue Book" on the *Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*?

Why did Henry Morgenthau Sr., the American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide, title one of the chapters of his memoirs "The Murder of a Nation"?

### **Immediately After**

What records did the Turkish government keep on the names of the more than 100,000 Armenian children orphaned by the Armenian Genocide?

Of the Armenian men in the Ottoman Empire who were conscripted into the Turkish armed forces during WW I, how many survived to December 1918?

Why were so many records of the Young Turk political party (CUP) and its government deliberately destroyed at the end of WW I?

Why did the leaders of the Young Turk dictatorship secretly flee Turkey at the end of WW I and hide in disguise under false names in other countries?

Where are the gravesites in Turkey of the 1,500,000 Armenians who died during the deportations and massacres by the Young Turk regime?

Where are the Turkish memorials to the 1,500,000 Armenians who died during the deportations and massacres by the Young Turk regime?

### **Subsequent Decades**

#### *Reparations, Restitution, Restoration*

How many of the Armenian churches and monasteries damaged in the Armenian Genocide have been fully restored by the government of Turkey?

Has the government of Turkey paid compensation to the victims of the Armenian Genocide?

Why has the Turkish government opposed reparations for the families who had their properties confiscated by the Ottoman state during the Armenian Genocide?

Why has the Turkish government not provided compensation to the more than a hundred thousand orphans of the Armenian Genocide?

Why has the Turkish government not returned the confiscated Armenian churches and monasteries to the Armenian Church authorities?

Why have the Turkish museums and libraries not returned the Armenian books, manuscripts and

artwork in their possession that were taken from Armenians during the 1915 Genocide?

What Turkish corporations have offered compensation to the Armenian business owners who had their property taken by coercion during the 1915 Genocide?

Why have so many Turkish families not offered symbolic restitution to the owners of the former Armenian homes and lands they now occupy?

## **100<sup>th</sup> Memorial Year**

### *Education*

Why have so many Armenian-named villages, towns and cities been renamed?

Why are there insufficient signs indicating historic original names of Armenian villages, towns and cities?

Why does the Turkish government today not fully accept the British, French and Russian declaration of May 1915 that the Young Turk regime had committed massacres and "crimes against humanity"?

Why does the Turkish government today not openly acknowledge the 1919 Ottoman military courts martial of the leaders of the Young Turk dictatorship and the convictions for the war crimes and massacres that the Young Turk regime committed against the Armenians?

Why does every English-language genocide encyclopedia include the Armenian Genocide as a key case study?

Why does the Turkish government today not accept the international academic encyclopedias' conclusions about the Young Turk regime's responsibility for the Armenian Genocide?

Why does the government of Turkey continue to ignore the unanimous declaration by the academics of the International Association of Genocide Scholars about events of the Armenian Genocide?

Why does the government of Turkey restrict free speech in Turkey about the Armenian Genocide?

Why does the Turkish government continue to harass Turkish publishers of books on the Armenian Genocide?

Why does the Turkish government continue to fund genocide denialist speakers and authors?

What is the Turkish government, doing today, if anything, to educate its citizens and students about the Armenian Genocide?

Are the Turkish school curriculum and text books continuing to foster negative stereotypes, denigration and animosity towards Armenians?

What books, if any, have been published by the Turkish Ministry of Education about the Near East Relief Organization that assisted so many tens of thousands of Ottoman Armenian orphans?

Why does the Turkish state try to hinder the 100<sup>th</sup> year memorial ceremonies for the Armenian Genocide?

### *Demographic*

How many Armenian orphans were displaced during the Armenian Genocide?

Compared to the Armenians living in the Tsarist Russian Empire during 1914-1918, how many/what rate of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire survived for the same time period?

What percent of the population of Constantinople/Istanbul in 1914 were Armenians and what is the percent today? Why is there such a dramatic difference?

Where are the descendants of the more than two million Armenians who lived in the Ottoman Empire on the eve of WW I?

Why is there such a dispersed diaspora of former Ottoman Armenian families?

Why do most Armenian families in the Diaspora and elsewhere have so many relatives who died in the Ottoman Empire during the period 1914 to 1918?

What happened to the thousands of Armenian churches and monasteries in the Ottoman Empire between 1914 and 1918?

### **Future**

Why does the Turkish government continue to allow the decay and destruction of centuries-old Armenian churches in Turkey?

Will the government of Turkey acknowledge and publicize those righteous Turks and other Muslims who risked their lives to help the Armenian victims of the 1915 Genocide?

Who in Turkey was involved in the killing of Hrant Dink?

Will Turkey ever acknowledge the Armenian Genocide?

Will Turkey ever acknowledge its "crimes against humanity" in the mass deportations and killings of Armenians during the Young Turk dictatorship?

Why does the Turkish government continue its closure of the border with land-locked Armenia?

Is the Turkish government, in essence, hostile to the existence of any Armenian state?

Is the Turkish government trying to weaken or even destroy the tiny, land-locked independent state of Armenia?



Is the government of Turkey still seeking to harm the Armenian nation?

Sadly, the list of questions needing a frank and honest Turkish government response is long and painful. A century after such horrific 'crimes against humanity', the world community expects far more from the Turkish government.

*Alan Whitehorn is author of **Just Poems: Reflections on the Armenian Genocide** and several other books on the Armenian Genocide. He is the grandson of an orphan of the Armenian Genocide.*

