



April 24 symbolizes the beginning of the Young Turk government's organized genocidal campaign to eliminate Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. On that day in 1915, the Ottoman Turkish government arrested some 200 Armenian community leaders, most of whom were later murdered.

**Background**



During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Armenian population of the decaying Ottoman Empire became the target of heightened persecution. This policy culminated in the Armenian Genocide. Conceived and carried out by the Young Turk regime from 1915 to 1923, the first genocide of the 20th century resulted in the deportation of nearly 2,000,000 Armenians, of whom 1,500,000 men, women, and children were killed, while the remaining 500,000 survivors were expelled from their homeland of 3,000 years.

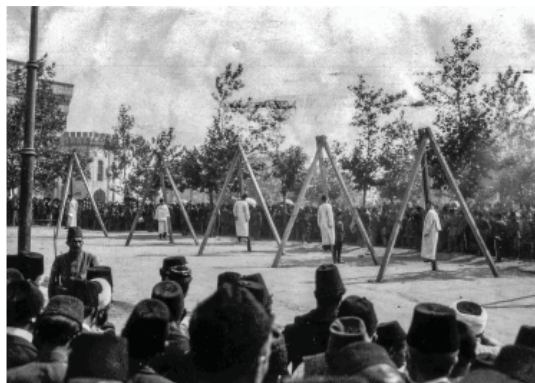
At the beginning of World War I, there were some 2,100,000 Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. Following the Armenian Genocide, fewer than 100,000 declared Armenians remained in Turkey.

**A Proud Chapter in U.S. History**

American intervention prevented the full realization of Ottoman Turkey's genocidal plan. In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson authorized Major General James Harbord, who served as General John J. Pershing's Chief of Staff during World War I, to lead an American Military Mission to Armenia. Major General Harbord submitted his report from the U.S.S. Martha Washington that same year, which read in part: "mutilation, violation, torture and death have left their haunting memories in a hundred



beautiful Armenian valleys, and the traveler in that region is seldom free from the evidence of this most colossal crime of all the ages."



The U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, acting on instructions from Secretaries of State William Jennings Bryan and Robert Lansing, protested the slaughter of the Armenians to the Young Turk leaders. Other nations, including Great Britain, France, and Russia, accused Turkey of "crimes against humanity."

U.S. humanitarian assistance to survivors saved countless starving Armenians from further suffering. In September 1915, U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau telegraphed the State Department indicating that the "destruction of the Armenian race in Turkey is progressing rapidly" and called for the creation of a formal relief organization to aid the survivors. As a result of Ambassador Morgenthau's efforts and President



Woodrow Wilson’s encouragement, Congress established the Near East Relief Foundation in 1919.

In 1920, President Woodrow Wilson stated that “the sympathy for Armenia among our people has sprung from untainted consciences, pure Christian faith, and an earnest desire to see Christian people everywhere succored in their time of suffering, and lifted from their abject subjection and distress and enabled to stand upon their feet and take their place among the free nations of the world.”

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From 1923 to 1929, the Near East Relief initiated the “Golden Rule Sunday” wherein on the first Sunday in December, Americans were asked to eat only a one-course meal similar to what would have been served in an orphanage. The money saved would then be donated to the Near East Relief. As a result “remember the starving Armenians” became a common refrain in American households. The initiative helped raise over \$116,000,000 (or over \$1,000,000,000 in today’s dollars) from 1915 to 1930 to help aid survivors of the Armenian Genocide, including 132,000 orphans.



In 1922, as an expression of deep appreciation for the extraordinary efforts of the Near East Relief, thousands of Armenian orphans stood together to spell out “America We Thank You” at an orphan asylum in what is now modern day Gyumri, Armenia.

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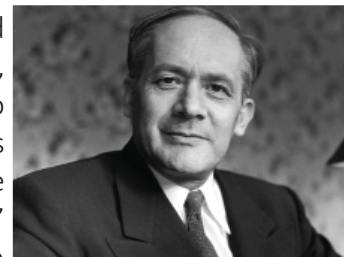
In 1925, as a symbol of sincere gratitude for America’s generosity and humanitarian relief, a rug woven by Armenian orphans was presented by Dr. John H. Finley, Vice Chairman of the Near East Relief’s Executive Committee and Associate Editor of the *New York Times* to President Calvin Coolidge. The inscription on the rug read: “Made by Armenian girls in the orphanage in Ghazir, Syria, of the Near East Relief and presented as a Golden Rule token of appreciation to President Coolidge.”

President Calvin Coolidge sent Dr. John H. Finley a letter stating in part: “The rug has a place of honor in the White House, where it will be a daily symbol of goodwill on earth.” The Armenian orphan rug was displayed in November of 2014 at the White House Visitor Center.



### **First Genocide of the 20th Century**

Professor Raphael Lemkin, a lawyer who escaped with his life during the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland, is the key figure in the history of establishing genocide as a crime under international law. He coined the word “genocide” in 1944, and was the first to characterize the atrocities of 1915-1923 as the “Armenian Genocide.” During his effort to obtain ratification of the UN Genocide Convention, Lemkin repeatedly cited the Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust as prototypes for the crimes of genocide.



Until his death in 1959, Lemkin worked tirelessly toward the adoption of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was ratified by the U.S. in 1988.





### U.S. Presidential Statements on the Armenian Genocide

**President Ronald Reagan:** “Like the genocide of the Armenians before it, and the genocide of the Cambodians which followed it – and like too many other such persecutions of too many other peoples – the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten.” Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust; Proclamation 4838, April 22, 1981.

**President Bill Clinton:** “Eighty-one years ago today, in the city of Constantinople, more than two hundred Armenian civic, political, and intellectual leaders were arrested, deported and subsequently executed. That day marked the beginning of one of this century’s darkest moments. I join with Armenians around the world, on this solemn day, in commemorating the senseless deportations and massacres of one and a half million Armenians that took place from 1915-1923 in the Ottoman Empire.” White House Statement, April 24, 1996.

**President George W. Bush:** “Today marks the commemoration of one of the great tragedies of history: the forced exile and annihilation of approximately 1.5 million Armenians in the closing years of the Ottoman Empire. These infamous killings darkened the 20th century and continue to haunt us to this day.” White House Statement, April 24, 2001.

**President Barack Obama:** “Each year, we pause to remember the 1.5 million Armenians who were subsequently massacred or marched to their death in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. The Meds Yeghern must live on in our memories, just as it lives on in the hearts of the Armenian people. I have consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915, and my view of that history has not changed. My interest remains the achievement of a full, frank and just acknowledgment of the facts.” White House Statement, April 24, 2009.

### Contemporary Figures

**Pope Francis:** “In the past century, our human family has lived through three massive and unprecedented tragedies. The first, which is widely considered ‘the first genocide of the 20th century,’ struck your own Armenian people. It is necessary, and indeed a duty, to honor their memory, for whenever memory fades, it means that evil allows wounds to fester. Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it.” April 12, 2015.

**Desmond Tutu:** “It is possible that if the world had been conscious of the genocide that was committed by the Ottoman Turks against the Armenians, the first genocide of the 20th century, then perhaps humanity might have been more alert to the early warning signs that were being given out before Hitler’s madness was unleashed on an unbelieving world.” 1999.

**David Harris,** Executive Director, American Jewish Committee: “As our organization has testified and written on various occasions, the atrocities committed against ethnic Armenians under Ottoman rule were an unspeakable crime against humanity,” said Harris. “For the often-invoked but too-seldom-fulfilled phrase ‘Never again’ to have real meaning, the full details of that period must be acknowledged.” April 23, 2014.

**Jonathan Greenblatt,** CEO of the Anti-Defamation League: “What happened in the Ottoman Empire to the Armenians beginning in 1915 was genocide. The genocide began with the ruling government arresting and executing several hundred Armenian intellectuals. After that, Armenian families were removed from their homes and sent on death marches. The Armenian people were subjected to deportation, expropriation, abduction, torture, massacre and starvation. What happened to the Armenian people was unequivocally genocide.” May 13, 2016.



### Congressional Resolutions

In addition to the resolutions below adopted by the full House of Representatives, Armenian Genocide Resolutions successfully passed the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in 2000, 2005, 2007, 2010, and 2014 and in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2014.

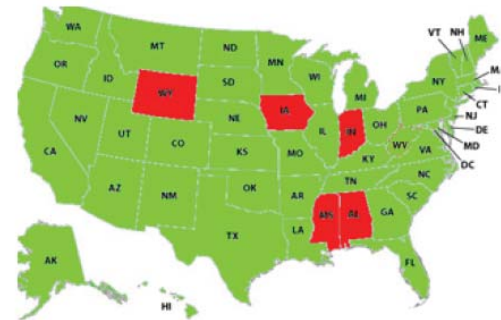
**April 8, 1975** - House Resolution 148: "April 24, 1975, is hereby designated as 'National Day of Remembrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man'...for all victims of genocide, especially the one and one-half million people of Armenian ancestry who succumbed to the genocide perpetrated in 1915."

**March 13, 1920** - Senate Resolution 359: "...the testimony adduced at the hearings conducted by the sub-committee of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations have clearly established the truth of the reported massacres and other atrocities from which the Armenian people have suffered."

**January 27, 1896** - Concurrent Resolution of Congress: "Whereas the American people, in common with all Christian people everywhere, have beheld with horror the recent appalling outrages and massacres of which the Christian population of Turkey have been made victims..."

### U.S. States

Along with the U.S. Congress, 45 U.S. states have adopted resolutions, proclamations and official statements recognizing the Armenian Genocide and commemorating its victims.



### International Affirmation of the Armenian Genocide

Over 26 countries, including Germany, France, Canada, and Argentina, and numerous multinational organizations, including the European Parliament, have recognized and reaffirmed the Armenian Genocide as a historical fact. On April 15, 2015, the European Parliament passed a resolution commemorating the Armenian Genocide, and called on Turkey to "use the commemoration of the centenary of the Armenian genocide as an important opportunity" to open its archives, "come to terms with its past," recognize the genocide and so pave the way for a "genuine reconciliation between the Turkish and Armenian peoples."



In an independent legal analysis of the events of 1915, the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) concluded: "Events, viewed collectively, can thus be said to include all of the elements of the crime of genocide as defined in the [UN Genocide] Convention, and legal scholars as well as historians, politicians, journalists and other people would be justified in continuing to so describe them."

A resolution adopted by the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) states: "That this assembly of the Association of Genocide Scholars in its conference held in Montreal, June 11-13, 1997, reaffirms that the mass murder of Armenians in Turkey in 1915 is a case of genocide which conforms to the statutes of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. It further condemns the denial of the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish government and its official and unofficial agents and supporters."