

FACTS ABOUT APRIL 24, 1915:

THE DATE COMMEMORATED BY ARMENIANS AS “GENOCIDE DAY”

April 24, which Armenians widely accept as the “date of genocide”, has nothing to do with the mandatory relocation and resettlement decision implemented against the Armenians. The decision to migrate a certain portion of the minority Ottoman Armenian population was taken later on May 27, 1915.

April 24, however, is the date of three important decisions that were made, on details of which I shall below elaborate.

1. April 24 is the date on which mutinous Armenian Committee centers were shut down.

During the First World War (WWI), while the Ottoman Empire was fighting its enemies on eight separate fronts, five of which being primary and three being secondary fronts, Armenians who were carried away by the empty promises of the imperialist states rebelled to establish an “independent Armenia” on the territories of the Ottoman Empire. While the Ottoman Armies were fighting their enemies on multiple fronts, they were also having to fight behind the front lines to suppress these Armenian rebellions. The suppression of these rebel and criminal elements necessitated the Ottoman Empire to divide and allocate its military forces in the face of the enemy to ensure public order. This situation created a very serious security vulnerability that weakened the military operations of the Ottoman (Turkish) Army.



Aiming to establish an “independent Armenia” by changing the demographic structure of the regions in which they rebelled, “revolutionary” Armenian factions formed into armed gangs and began perpetrating massacres in Turkish villages, which consisted only of women, children and elderly people as men capable of bearing arms were already drafted into the military. In addition to these massacres, Armenians made many other attempts to inflict real harm on the Ottoman Army.

Armenians who were under arms deserted their positions in the Ottoman Army along with their issued weapons, joined the ranks of the enemy armies, and entered Anatolia as defected vanguard units of the Russian Caucasian Armies. On the Iraqi and Palestinian fronts, 8,000 Armenians fought on the side of the British Army, against the Turkish Army¹. The Armenians that remained behind, spied for the enemy armies, and attacked the Turkish Army’s supply convoys. Armenian bakers poisoned Ottoman Soldiers by adding arsenic poison into the breads they baked².

Despite all warnings, mutinous Armenians continued to massacre innocent civilians and disrupt the military operations of the Ottoman Army. Hence, the Ottoman Empire made a decision to shut down the Armenian Committee Centers, confiscate their weapons and documents, and arrest the committee leaders on April 24, 1915. In this context, 226 Armenian committee leaders were arrested in Istanbul.

Thousands of cached weapons, munitions and bombs were seized during the searches conducted by the Ottoman authorities in the homes and workplaces of these 226 arrested committee leaders. 155 of the arrested committee leaders were sent to the City of Çankırı and 71 were sent to Ayaş District. However, not all of the arrested (persons) were put in prison. Those sent to Çankırı were interned in summer houses in groups of two or three and were allowed to roam freely in and around the city. They were only required to visit the police station once a day to prove that they did not leave the area.

Armenians named Mardiros (son of Arshak) and Arshak Diradoryan, who were being kept under supervised surveillance, stated to the Ottoman authorities that their financial situations deteriorated due to their prolonged internments and requested financial aid. Their requests for financial aid were accepted. 35 of the Armenians who were sent to Çankırı were later found innocent upon trials and were allowed to return to Istanbul. 3 of the 7 Armenian foreign committee leaders were deported and 31 Armenians were pardoned by the Ottoman State. Three of the committee leaders held in Ayaş District were later released due to the signing of Armistice of Mudros, and the remaining ones were released upon the occupation of Istanbul by the British occupation forces³.

One of them, named Gomidas Vartabed, was interned in the City of Çankırı for a duration of only 13 days. He was later pardoned along with his 7 comrades, and all were

¹ Ömer Lütfi Taşcıoğlu, “*Turkish and Armenian Losses in the First World War*”, Trakya University Journal of Social Sciences, December 2017, Volume 19 Issue 2 (1-28); Hikmet Özdemir, Kemal Çiçek, Ömer Turan, Ramazan Çalık, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Armenians: Exile and Migration*, Turkish Historical Society Publications, Ankara, 2004, p. 140.

² *Aims of the Armenian Committees and Revolutionary Movements*, Joint Chiefs of Staff Military History and Strategic Studies Directorate Publications, Ankara 2003, p. 164.

³ Yusuf Sarıınay, “*What happened on April 24, 1915? The Circular of April 24, 1915, and the Arrest of Armenian Committee Members in Istanbul*”, Int. Turkish Studies Vol. 14, Nos.1&2, 2008, p.78-79

allowed to return to Istanbul. Vartabed later came down with an illness in 1917 and went to Vienna to receive treatment. He later moved to France in 1919 and died in Paris, in 1935. A statue was later erected in Paris, in the name of Gomidas Vartabed, with the following phrase written underneath: "*Turks massacred 1.5 million Armenians*". This alone should suffice to reveal the invalidity of the Armenian claims and the extent of history fraud they have been committing.

2. April 24 was the date on the morning of which enemy forces were to land in Gallipoli.

April 24 was also the date on the morning of which the British, French, Indian and ANZAC troops were to land on the Gallipoli Peninsula and report to their battle stations. As a matter of fact, Commander of the 19th Division, Staff Lieutenant Col. Mustafa Kemal, ordered his division to move to the coastal areas where the enemy was likely to land on the night of April 24, 1915.

Had the Armenian committee leaders in Istanbul not been arrested on April 24, internal uprisings would have been ignited inside the areas controlled by the Ottoman Military, especially in Istanbul, in synchronicity with the landing operations of the enemy troops which was to occur in the morning of April 25, 1915. This would essentially leave the Ottoman Army between crossfires and severely weaken the defense of Çanakkale. At the end of the war, the plan was that England, France, and Russia (aka the "Triple Entente") would seize the Ottoman Capital, Istanbul, dismantle the Ottoman Empire and establish for Armenians a sovereign Armenian State. This is what was promised to the rebellious Ottoman Armenian political factions. However, when the leaders of the rebellion were arrested in a timely fashion on April 24, the plans of both the Armenians and the imperialist states that promised them sovereignty were averted. Armenians, whose hopes of establishing an "independent Armenia" were dashed forever with the arrest of the Committee leaders on April 24, 1915, cannot help but commemorating this day every year as if it were a day of national disaster even though this date has nothing to do with the mandatory relocation and resettlement decision.

As the rebel Armenians continued with their rebellions and massacres, even after the decision to arrest the committee leaders, the Ottoman Empire, in consultation with her ally, Germany, decided to forcibly migrate them on May 27, 1915. In this context, under the state's self-defense doctrine, the Ottoman Empire decided that the mutinous Armenians who formed into gangs and massacred civilians would have to be removed from the regions they inhabited and be forcibly transferred to provinces such as Damascus and Mosul. This was no "*mass deportation*" as widely claimed by some historians though because these places were still Ottoman territories at the time but were far away from the war zone. However, not all Armenians in Anatolia were subjected to relocation, either. Those who were subjected to mandatory relocation were under such orders on a temporary basis only. They were later allowed to return to their places of residence once the orders of temporary relocation were lifted by the Ottoman Minister of Interior, Talat Pasha.

Before the onset of WWI, some of the Ottoman Armenians in Anatolia immigrated to other countries of their own accord, while some of them stated that they decided to change their religion and become "Muslims", in order to elude the mandatory migration orders. 87%

of the 438,758 Armenians who were relocated, safely reached their relocation destinations. The Armenian losses en route, during this period of mandatory relocation is 56,610 persons. This number, in fact, includes those who escaped from the convoys during relocation and returned home and those who died from various diseases. The number of Ottoman soldiers who died from epidemics in the same period was 466,759 persons. 9 times more Turks than the Armenian losses incurred during the mandatory relocation practice (518,105 persons) were directly killed by Armenian rebels, inside Anatolia⁴. And 7 times more Turks (413,000 persons) were killed by Armenians in the Trans-Caucasia⁵, as historians and researchers later found out.

3. April 24 is the date when a “Mandatory Migration Decision” was made for the Turks

The importance of April 24 date for the Turks, however, is based on reasons quite different. When the Russian Army crossed the Turkish border and began invading Eastern Anatolia, under the guidance of the Armenian vanguard units who deserted their positions in the Ottoman Army along with their issued weapons, thus effectively joining the Russian Army, Armenians residing in the region around the City of Van formed into gangs and began massacres in the City Center of Van (as well as surrounding districts and villages). Taking advantage of the fact that only the Gendarmerie Detachment remained in the City of Van upon the 33rd Infantry Division leaving the city to intercept the Russian Army, the Armenians burned down the Ottoman Bank, the Public Collections (“*Duyunu Umumiye*”) Building and the Post Office in Van on April 20, 1915, while setting ablaze all Muslim quarters of the city⁶.

During this period, Armenians massacred 22,900 Muslims, within one month, in the Van Province alone. During the period in which Armenian gangs’ attacks on the Muslim civilians intensified, Van Governor Cevdet Bey tried to ensure the safety of the people who were stuck outside the Van Castle by allowing them to take refuge inside the castle. However, after the Armenian gangs attacked the Van Castle too, Governor Cevdet Bey sent a letter to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on April 24, 1915, requesting that the Muslim residents of Van be allowed to migrate westwards so that they may be saved from the massacres of the Armenian gangs⁷.

In other words, the date of April 24, over which the Armenians raise hell claiming that it is the “day of genocide”, is actually the date on which a very tough decision had to be made to migrate westward the civilian Muslim population of Van, consisting primarily of women, children and elderly, who sought refuge in the Van Castle so that they could escape the cruelest massacres of the armed Armenian gangs. After a permission was obtained to migrate the civilian Muslim population westward in Anatolia, 80,000 survivors of the Muslim population in Van had to leave their lands and migrate in utter panic and frenzy. Most of

⁴ “Documents on the Massacres by Armenians (1914-1919) Volume I and (1919-1921) Volume II”, BOA Publication No: 49 & 50, Ankara, 2001

⁵ Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile, The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922*, Translated by: Fatma Sarıkaya, Publication Turkish Historical Society, Ankara, 2014, pp.262-266

⁶ Şenol Kantarcı, “An Important Event on the Road to Relocation: 1915 Van Rebellion”, *Türk Yurdu*, May 2006, Year 95, Issue 225

⁷ İlknur Koç Çiftçi, “1915 Armenian Revolt in Van and Aram Manukyan”, *Academic Journal of History and Thought*, Autumn 2022 / 9-3, p. 1149; Joint Chiefs of Staff ATASE Archive, World War I Collection, K-44, D-207 F-2

these Muslim civilians died on the road due to attacks by Armenian gangs, starvation, and disease. The number of Muslims massacred by Armenians in Van Province only, between 1914 and 1921 was 217,132 people. In each massacre case, the identities of the murderers and the victims are provided in detail in the Ottoman archival records. Ottoman Archives have two recorded volumes of documents totaling 1329 pages, that tell us in explicit details on what day, at what time and in what ways these heinous murders were committed⁸.

The number of Turks who had to migrate to escape the Armenian massacres increased over time and reached to 1,604,038 persons. This number is more than 3.5 times the number of Armenians subjected to forced relocation (438,758 persons), and two-thirds of them (about 1,000,000 people) lost their lives en route. When this number is added to the number of 931,105, which is the number of Turks and other Muslims murdered by Armenians in the regions they inhabited, the number of Turks and other Muslims persons killed, reaches 2 million⁹.

Comparison of the Migration Conditions of Turks and Armenians

The Ottoman Empire provided all possible assistance to the migrating Armenians before, during and after the relocation practice was undertaken. Before the relocation, the property and land left behind by the displaced Armenians were recorded and taken into the protective custody of the State. Perishable goods were sold at local auctions by committees and the proceeds were transferred into protected state accounts on behalf of the owners. Information such as the type, quantity, value of the goods sold, and to whom they were sold were recorded in special books and upon being approved by the committee, reports were kept in two original copies. One copy was provided to the Government and one official copy was provided to the "Abandoned Properties Commission". 98% of the properties, money and real estate taken into State custody were returned to the Armenian returnees after the end of WWI¹⁰.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has taken measures to ensure that the Armenians subjected to mandatory relocation reached their destinations safely. Before commencing the mandatory relocation practice, the Ottoman Government wrote letters to all local provinces, instructing them to take the necessary precautions and stock up on food to meet all the needs of the migrant convoys that would pass through their regions¹¹. For this purpose, a budget of 2,250,000 Ottoman Kurush (currency) was allocated to the local sanjaks and provinces. This figure corresponds to nearly 74 billion Turkish Liras in today's currency.

The Ottoman Empire provided train tickets to the Armenians who were subjected to mandatory relocation, gave an ox cart to each family in places where there was no railway, established food centers in Nusaybin, Rasulayn, Tel-Ermen and Kirkil for the migrant convoys and provided hot meals for them, under wartime conditions where the Ottoman soldiers

⁸ "Documents on the Massacres by Armenians (1914-1919) Volume I and (1919-1921) Volume II", BOA Publication No: 49 & 50, Ankara, 2001

⁹ Ömer Lütfi Taşcıoğlu, "Turkish and Armenian Losses in the First World War", Trakya University Journal of Social Sciences, December 2017 Volume 19 Issue 2, pp.1-28

¹⁰ Bülent Bakar, *Armenian Relocation*, Atatürk Research Center, Ankara, 2009, p.200-212.

¹¹ Yusuf Halaçoğlu, "Armenian Relocation and Facts (1914-1918)", Turkish Historical Society Publications Issue 90, Ankara, 2001, p.66; Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA) Ministry of Internal Affairs, Office of Encrypted Documents: No. 55-291, 55-341, 55-A/17, 55-A/77, 55-A/135, 57/110

were fighting on empty stomachs in the Battle of Çanakkale¹². Ottoman Government even built hospitals to treat sick Armenians¹³. In addition, the elders among the displaced Armenians were paid an allowance of 3 Kurush per day, and their children were paid an allowance of 60 para (currency) per day.

Dispatching of Armenian migrants were halted temporarily after November 25, 1915, due to winter conditions, and permanently on February 21, 1916¹⁴.

The Ottoman State provided relocated Armenians with deeded houses, arable lands and seeds, tools and capital with which they could practice of their professions in their new places of residence. In addition, the debts of Armenian persons (subjected to mandatory relocation) to the State and private individuals were either frozen or wiped off completely. Also, all criminal proceedings against criminals and suspects of Armenian origin were postponed¹⁵.

After the end of WWI, the Ottoman Government issued a decree on January 4, 1919, allowing Armenians who were subjected to mandatory relocation to return to their former places of residence. Instructions were telegraphed to the relevant local authorities to ensure the safe transfer of Armenians who wanted to return to their former places of residence and the necessary security precautions were duly taken¹⁶.

However, Turks, who ended up having to leave their lands and migrate in order to save their lives by escaping Armenian oppression, could not benefit from any of the above-mentioned privileges afforded to Armenian migrants. They had to migrate by their own means. And while migrating, two thirds of the 1,604,031 Turkish migrants lost their lives due to reasons such as attacks by Armenian gangs, starvation, disease and freezing to death.

As the child of a family from Van who left their ancestral lands behind and migrated westward to escape the Armenian massacres, one who lost many martyrs out of his family during this ordeal, I wrote this article to sincerely provide the above facts little known to the Turkish public and the world public at large. I hope that this article, which is based entirely on documented facts, will contribute to exposing the “Armenian genocide” lies and understanding of the real historical facts. And I surely hope that those who unjustly accuse us, Turks, of genocide will at least blush after reading this article, if they have even an ounce of shame left in them.

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¹² Joint Chiefs of Staff, ATASE Archives, BDH, Folder. 2451, File. 219, Cir. 005-02

¹³ US Archives NARA 867.4016/193, Copy No: 484

¹⁴ Halaçoğlu, *ibid*, p.81

¹⁵ BOA Ministry of Internal Affairs Office of Encrypted Documents: No. 54-A/226; Halaçoğlu, *ibid.*, p.67-68

¹⁶ BOA The Sublime Porte Document Room, Cypher No: 341055