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Anna Givargizyan

ARMENIAN  
NATIONAL-CULTURAL GENOCIDE.  
THE CENTURY-LONG  
STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE



«To serve Armenia is to serve civilization.»

*William Ewart Gladstone*

## 1. Introduction

„It is simply in the nature of an Armenian to study, to learn, to question, to speculate, to discover, to invent, to revise, to restore, to preserve, to make, and to give.“

The author of these words is the son of Armenian immigrants from Bitlis, Ottoman Empire, William Saroyan, the greatest American writer. His words accurately describe the nature of the revival of Armenia and the Armenian people. The people of Armenia revived from the ashes of the wars. The people of Armenia create a beautiful and unique culture in response to the burned books and destroyed Churches, in response to the defeated Holy.

The atrocities committed against the Armenian people of the Ottoman Empire during WWI are defined as the *Armenian Genocide* and the *first genocide of the XX century*. When WWI erupted, the Young Turk government, hoping to save the remains of the weakened Ottoman Empire, adopted a policy of Pan-Turkism – the establishment of a mega Turkish empire comprising of all Turkic-speaking peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia extending to China, intending also to Turkify all ethnic minorities of the empire. The Armenian population became the main obstacle standing in the way of accomplishing this policy.

Although the decision for the deportation of all Armenians from the Western Armenia (Eastern Turkey) was adopted in late 1911, the Young Turks used WWI as a suitable opportunity for its implementation against their own citizens. The genocide of Christians – Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians – should not be considered only through the massacres of several millions civilians, but as the genocide of human civilizations and cultural background of all nations.

Genocide is the organized killing of a people for the sole purpose of putting an end to their collective existence. Because of its scope, genocide requires central planning and an internal machinery for its implementation. This makes genocide the quintessential state crime, as only a government has the resources to carry out such a scheme of destruction.

On 24<sup>th</sup> of April in 1915, Red Sunday, the *first phase* of the Armenian massacres began with the arrest and murder of nearly 250 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders mainly from Constantinople, the capital of Ottoman Empire. The date 24<sup>th</sup> April, *Genocide Remembrance Day*, commemorates the Armenian

notables deported from the Ottoman capital in 1915, as a precursor to the ensuing events.

The *second phase* of the „final solution“ appeared with the conscription of some 60.000 Armenian men into the general Turkish army, who were later disarmed and killed by their Turkish fellowmen.

The *third phase* of the genocide comprised of massacres, deportations and death marches made up of women, children and the elderly into the Syrian deserts. During those marches hundreds of thousands were killed by Turkish soldiers, gendarmes and Kurdish mobs. Others died because of famine, epidemic diseases and exposure to the elements. Thousands of women and children were raped. Tens of thousands were forcibly converted to Islam.

Finally, the *fourth phase* of the Armenian genocide appeared with the total and utter denial by the Turkish government of the mass killings and elimination of the Armenian nation in its homeland by cultural genocide.

The cultural genocide continues but the world remains silent and indifferent. Where is the civilized world?

Where is UNESCO?

The civilized world will become more than a beast if it does not condemn what is happening.

The Armenian highlands, the cradle of the Armenian nation, has a rich heritage which derives from the depths of its historic culture of over thousands of years. This heritage was created by the Armenian nation, indigenous to the highlands. This heritage wasn't hidden by the Armenians but was generously shared with the rest of the world. The Armenian nation communicated with waves, worshipping the light with many ancient tribes and nations and their contribution to history resulted in world civilizations. Hence, providing them with wisdom from a more sacred height, like the biblical mountains of Ararat, which are gifted with a spiritual charge and from where the rivers of Yeprat and Tigris start and who invite us to their source, wherein lies paradise.

## 2. Cultural genocide

Acts and measures undertaken to destroy any nation or ethnic groups' culture is called „cultural genocide“. The word „Genocide“, coined by Raphael Lemkin, does not only refer to the physical extermination of a national or religious group, but also its national, spiritual and cultural destruction. However, the concept of a cultural genocide has not yet been accepted into the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. When the Armenian genocide is not recognized by Turkey and the world as a whole, history is in fact being manipulated and obscured and hence it is continuing to the present day.

Many proven facts concomitant with the massacres and deportation are witness to the fact that the Young Turk government premeditated and planned a systematic method aiming to destroy the material testimonies of the Armenian civilization. Realizing the role of the church and Christian faith within the Arme-

nian nation, they knowingly massacred Armenian clergymen, destroyed churches, monasteries and other church property along with thousands of medieval handwritten illuminated manuscripts. The Turkish government of today has the same policy that descends from the same political camp as that of perpetrators of the Armenian genocide. There are many testimonies to what happened, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, from various European dignitaries and newspaper reports (*The Times*), including an Arab eye witness to the Armenian Genocide, *Fayez el Husseyn*, who wrote in his memoirs: „After the massacres of the Armenians, the government established commissions who were engaged in selling the leftover property. Armenian cultural values were sold at the cheapest prices... I once went to the church to see how the sale of these things is organized. The doors of the Armenian schools were closed. The Turks used science books in the bazaar for wrapping cheese, dates, sunflowers“. In 1912 the Armenian patriarchy of Istanbul presented an account of the churches and monasteries in Western Armenia and in the Ottoman Empire. More than 2300 were accounted for including the early unique Christian monuments of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. The majority of them were looted, burned and destroyed by the Turks during the genocide (1914–1923). The policy of destruction adopted by the „Young Turks“ with regard to Armenian historical and cultural heritage was continued in Republican Turkey where these relics were viewed as undesirable witnesses of the Armenian presence. As a systematic method of destruction at the end of 1920s, Turkey began the process of changing the names of certain locations in Western Armenia. Presently 90% of the Armenian cities, towns and buildings in Eastern Turkey, Western Armenia have been „Turkified“. Armenian geographical sites' names have also been replaced with Turkish names. Devising a systematic method of destruction, hundreds of architectural monuments have been destroyed and all Armenian inscriptions erased.

In 1974 UNESCO stated that after 1923, out of 913 Armenian historical monuments left in Eastern Turkey, 464 have vanished completely, 252 are in ruins, and 197 are in need of repair. Armenian architectural buildings are consistently being demolished by dynamite and are used as targets during Turkish military training exercises; the undamaged stones are used as construction materials. In some rural places, Armenian monasteries and churches serve as stables, stores, clubs and in one case, even a jail. On many occasions the Turkish government converted Armenian churches into mosques. On June 18, 1987 *The Council of Europe* adopted a decree wherein the 6<sup>th</sup> point mentions that: „*The Turkish government must pay attention to and take care to heed the language, culture and educational system of the Armenian Diaspora living in Turkey, simultaneously demanding an appropriate regard to the Armenian monuments that are situated in Turkey's territory*“. The manner in which the Turks describe the entirety of the Armenian Highlands is in fact denying and manipulating the geographical and physical concept and especially today, in Western Armenia, they have falsely called it (Eastern Anatolia). They just want to call it by a geographical name but not with the holy sacred spiritual significance of the Armenian Highlands. The Turks invaded Armenia whereas the nomad Kurds, who were supported by the Turks at the time of the Ottoman Empire, evicted Armenians, through illegal usurpation. Armenia has never been part of Anatolia or the Caucuses. The geographical and spiritual posi-

tion of Armenia consists of the sacred Armenian Highlands. German and British researchers, biographers and historians, from as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have confirmed this. When some of the world's most powerful and significant countries, e.g. Great Britain, Israel, USA, Spain, etc. still do not recognize that the Armenian genocide took place, they are in fact supporting the Turkish crime.

### 3. Alliance of civilizations

The *Alliance of Civilizations* is an initiative of Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, who in 2004 proposed this framework to the United Nations, with support from Turkey. The Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, assured the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, that Spain „supports and will support“ the entry of Turkey into the EU. Zapatero and Erdogan also relied on the „success“ of the Alliance of Civilizations.

The proposed programme has points about fundamental counter terrorism cooperation, correcting economic inequalities and a cultural dialogue. Rodriguez Zapatero said he was „sure“ that the business forum will serve to increase trade relations with Turkey, a country with which Spain has to have a „unique way“ in the economic field – *„Friendship, culture, art and knowledge unites people and makes them grow“*.

The U.S. government joined the Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations on 13 May 2010, under the presidency of Barack Obama, recognizing *„the value of the Alliance of Civilizations as an important initiative that seeks a better understanding between cultures and peoples“*.

The United States joined 119 countries and international organizations that are members of the Friends of the Alliance. On 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2009 The Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations took place in Istanbul with the presence of 83 countries and 17 international agencies. It highlighted the presence of United States President Barack Obama to a cocktail before dinner, in September, hosted by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the heads of the delegations participating in the Forum.

#### *If the crimes are not recognized...*

If Turkey annihilates a civilization and does not recognize its crimes and the damage it has done to civilization, how is it possible to assume Turkey's role in The Alliance of Civilizations? This is a new form of politics which has been cultivated by Turkey and its allies to hide their falsifications and crimes, both internal and external. The civilized world has not yet entirely recognized the Armenian genocide (1914–1923). It seems unbelievable that every national State considers itself as civilized. Is the participation of Germany in the Armenian genocide civilized and is the refusal of Great Britain, Spain and the USA to recognize the Armenian

genocide civilized? What alliance? What civilizations? What friends? What initiatives can be talked about or can seek a better understanding between cultures and peoples when in reality all this is to the contrary? The Turkish invader who confiscated Armenia is presently carrying out its last black deed of genocide by continuing to ruin and to raze to the ground Armenian monuments, doing this before the very eyes of the civilized world. Many of the monuments have already been destroyed. Some have either entered the depository of the world's architectural history or a few of the preserved monuments have been maliciously and immorally violated and converted into mosques by them. All this testifies to the fact that the genocide continues to be implemented politically. What assurance do we have that Turkey won't maliciously continue the genocide which affirms the official falsification of Armenian history by Turkey which has been spread throughout the world by spending vast amounts of money on information and publications?

The destruction of Armenian cultural heritage at state level is a crime not only against the Armenian nation but against all civilization. All the world should be made aware of this reality, and in order to be civilized, we must first condemn those crimes against civilization and not conceal them under the name of friendship. (We must put an end to the politics of „official“ banditism. Recognition of the Armenian genocide is not merely just remembering what has happened, but taking a more positive action that should be implemented – by way of getting the Turks to admit to what they have done, be punished for their crimes and then formerly identify and recognize the Armenian homeland within Turkey, where Armenians have lived and established a culture of over thousands of years. Students should be educated about the Armenian genocide in the same way in which they learn about the Holocaust. The Armenian genocide is not just a tragedy for Armenians, but for the rest of the world as a whole.

And I want to finish again with the words of William Saroyan, the greatest American writer:

*“I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race; this small tribe of unimportant people whose history is ended, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, whose literature is unread, whose music is unheard, whose prayers are no longer uttered. Go ahead, destroy this race. Let us say that it is again 1915, there is war in the world. Destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them from their homes into the desert. Let them have neither bread nor water. Burn their houses and their churches. See if they will not live again. See if they will not laugh again. See if you can stop them from mocking the big ideas of the world. You sons of bitches. Go ahead, try to destroy them.”* (Saroyan, 1936)

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