

24 April 1915 – 24 April 2015

100 YEARS GENOCIDE OF THE ARMENIANS



100 YEARS OF SUFFER AND PAIN FOR THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE

100 YEARS OF DENIAL BY THE TURKISH STATE

A hundred years ago, in the night of 24th April in 1915, hundreds of Armenian intellectuals were arrested in Istanbul. These intellectuals arrested by the Ottoman state were displaced and almost all of them were murdered in the course of the events. Ottoman/Turkish newspapers praised these mass arrestments with headlines such as “The problem is nipped in the bud”. A bunch of mass killings of non-Muslim population, especially Armenian people, had been previously put into practice in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. However, the new process beginning with the arrestments of 24th April marked rather a different point. The arrestments of 24th April would trigger the Genocide which left one and a half million Armenians dead.

The Islamist, Turkish-nationalist government of the “Committee for Unity and Progress” (Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) ignited the “ethnic cleansing” planned and systematically executed by state authorities and army. The arrest of Armenian intellectuals was followed in entire Anatolia by blood-thirsty chivvying Armenians, particularly those living in Western Armenia.

Chauvinism and religious hatred against Christian peoples, most particularly against Armenians, were sparked among the Turkish and Kurdish Muslim population. Official authorities forced Turkish and Kurdish people to attack and to loot their Armenian neighbors.

Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army were disarmed and as all other Armenian males forced to slave work. Under inhuman conditions they were maltreated until death. Those who survived these tortures were brutally killed either directly by the soldiers of the Ottoman army or by local paramilitary gangs.

Armenian women, children and old people were chased off their houses and driven in long columns on “a road to

nowhere” as described in a telegram sent by then minister of internal affairs Talat Pasha. On this death march tens of thousands of Armenian women were raped, tortured and murdered by Ottoman soldiers and marauding local gangs. Numerous Armenians perished because of hunger, thirst and illness in the Syrian deserts of Deir-ez-Zor, the “nowhere”.

The heroic resistance of Armenian communities and freedom fighters such as on Musa Dagh, Moses Mountain, could however not stop the massacre machine of the Ottoman Empire. Some Turkish and Kurdish people helped to save their Armenian neighbors by taking a huge risk. However, they were just a few people. In a historical sense Turkish and Kurdish workers are complicit in the genocide and have to face up to this fact.

One of the indigenous people of Anatolia was expelled and crushed in the Syrian deserts. Their cultural artifacts, architecture, literature, handicraft and music were demolished and tried to be erased from historical memory.

Only a few, some ten thousands of Armenians survived this deliberately planned genocide in Western Armenia within the territory of the Ottoman state. They could hide their Armenian identity and had to convert to Islam. Some Armenian orphans who were later adopted by Turkish and Kurdish families. These children were assimilated by the families that adopted them. The Armenian genocide was defined as “resettlement” [Tehcir] in official Ottoman documents – later in documents of the Turkish Republic. The deportation was justified as “a necessary measure under war conditions”. In 1914 the Ottoman Empire entered into the imperialist First World War as an ally of Germany and Austria-Hungary. All the imperialist powers of the period such as France, England, Italy and Russia bear responsibility for the Armenian genocide. However, in terms of responsibility and complicity Germany

holds a unique position among other imperialist big powers. A number of military generals of the German Empire served in high positions of the general staff of the Ottoman state. These generals were fully aware of every step of the genocide and they were directly involved in it and assisted it. Since all the big imperialist powers had differing degrees of responsibility, the genocide was left "forgotten" shortly after the end of the First World War. Only a few Ottoman army officers and local administration officers were sentenced as "war criminals" in domestic courts-martial which were imposed by the victorious French and English imperialists during the occupation of Istanbul (1919-1920). In these courts-martial the term of genocide was never mentioned. None of those who had political and military responsibility were ever charged or sentenced.

In 1939, when the Nazi Empire was preparing for the Holocaust against Jews and for the campaign of destruction against the peoples of Eastern Europe, Hitler referred to the "forgotten" Armenian genocide by saying: *"We will gain the necessary living space only by such means. After all, who is still talking about the annihilation of the Armenians?"*

There was no such thing as an "Armenian issue" for the Turkish Republic newly established in 1923 on the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. The political strategy of the Turkish ruling powers was based on the denial of the Armenian genocide, as well as on the national suppression of the Kurdish nation, of national, religious minorities, such as Armenian survivors of the genocide, Pontus Greeks, Arabs, Roma people, Assyrians.

During the 1970ies and 1980ies armed organisations of Armenians in the diaspora such as ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) broke the persistent silence about the Armenian genocide by actions against Turkish foreign representative offices and Turkish diplomats and prompted the Turkish governments to respond. Until that time Turkish official historiography on the subject had been the following: *"During the disturbances of the First World War there were some Armenian rebellions in Eastern Anatolia; Armenian armed gangs raided Turkish villages and killed the Turkish peasants, Armenian gangs collaborating with the Russian army jeopardized the safety of the east front of the Ottoman army. During these circumstances of war also the Armenian civilian population was effected. In order to clear the situation on the eastern front and to protect the civilian population a resettlement of the Armenian population was decided. On account of the tough conditions of war some undesirable events happened. But the alleged genocide fabricated by enemies of Turkey is nothing than a pure lie."*

In 2000's, having realized that nobody was satisfied with this explanation anymore, the Turkish bourgeoisie reformulated its stance through governing party AKP: "There might be some tragic events in both peoples' history. Evaluation of historical events should nevertheless be assigned to historians". In 2013, the then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for the first time in the name of the Turkish Government expressed his "condolences also to our Armenian brothers who died in these unfortunate events." However, this little positive step is nothing than hypocrisy on account of e.g. current education policy.

New Schoolbooks of 2014-2015, still retain the old tradition of well-known defamation, lies and fabrication about the genocide. School kids are taught that the word "Armenian" is synonymous with the words "traitor" and "enemy". What kind of feeling can Armenian students whose ancestors were bru-

tally killed have when learning those historical distortions? In what ways will they endure hostile attitudes? And all this coincides with the 100th anniversary of the genocide.

The Armenian community/nation in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan is still victim of Turkish chauvinism, persecution and discrimination. The Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who struggled to make Armenian identity recognized and to establish solidarity between the peoples, became a victim of this very racism in 2007. Still in the 21st century a commitment to the Armenian people can mean death.

Turkish and Kurdish workers, democrats and revolutionaries and communists:

Recognize the complicity in the genocide! For real self-criticism, solidarity and support for the recognition of the demands of the Armenian people! Fight Turkish chauvinism! United struggle for a liberated, democratic society!

Our demands on the Turkish state:

Recognize the genocide! Promptly, unconditionally and with all consequences:

- Equal rights, recognition and support for the Armenian community in Northern Kurdistan/Turkey!
- Struggle against and prohibition of all kinds of anti-Armenian racism and chauvinism!
- Right to return from diaspora or Armenia for all descendants of the Armenians expelled!
- Right to self-determination and for separation for West Armenia.
- Clarification of the facts of genocide by the Turkish state in education and instruction!
- Restitution of expropriated homes, premises, property and other belongings!
- Reparations for all confiscated assets!
- Reparations to the Republic of Armenia and cooperation based on equal rights, democracy and good neighbourhood!

It is only by carrying out unconditionally the above mentioned demands that solidarity of people with Armenians in Turkey, in the diaspora and in Armenia can be established.

Our demands on the German state, which is one of the main responsible for the Armenian genocide:

The term of "genocide" was deliberately not used in German Parliament when a decision was issued concerning the 90th anniversary of the genocide in 2005. Thus the German state does not assume the complicity of the German Empire in this genocide. And moreover the German state tries to avoid all demands for compensation and all consequences derived.

We as communists from Germany demand that the State of Federal Republic of Germany should immediately and unconditionally recognize the genocide with all consequences.

April 2015

JOINT DECLARATION of

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