

DON'T BLAME THE TURKS FOR CHRISTIAN DEATHS - THE WALL STREET JOURNAL - 06.13.2019

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Turks have never harbored any anti-Armenianism, or Greekism or Assyrianism.

When Turkey Destroyed Its Christians (Review, May 18) offers no direct evidence to support its allegations and makes no reference to Ottoman material of central importance. The basic events in Asia Minor between 1894 and 1924 are subject to significant debate nearly a century later. In the eastern provinces, rebellions by violent Armenian groups caused considerable losses to the Ottoman army and the population. The Ottoman government quelled the disturbances in 1894-1896 and relocated many Armenians to the south in 1915.

Approximately four million people of all religions died in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War and during the Turkish War of Independence that followed. These deaths werent limited to the Armenians although they lost a higher percentage of their people than did any other group. During this period, deaths could be ascribed to many causes, but especially to massacres and countermassacres, foreign invasion, internal attacks of bandits, famine and disease.

Genocide isnt a word that should be tossed around lightly. It is neither a fact nor a historical summation of events. It is a legal term of art. It is the worst crime that international law has ever defined, first coined in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin, a lawyer and Holocaust survivor. What determines genocide is not necessarily the number of casualties or the cruelty of the persecution but the intent to destroy a group. Historically the intent to destroy a race has emerged only as the culmination of racism, as in the case of anti-Semitism and the Shoah. Turks have never harbored any anti-Armenianism, or Greekism or Assyrianism.

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