

## BOOK REVIEW

### ERMENİ İDDİALARI VE GERÇEKLER (THE ARMENIAN CLAIMS AND THE REALITIES)

Author: Dr. Hüsamettin YILDIRIM

(Ankara: Sistem Ofset, 2000). 181pp. Documents,  
Bibliography.

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The Armenian question has long been a controversial field for the international historians. It thus still remains a delicate historical issue and needs to be examined scholarly and carefully. The correct use of original historical material will help to the better understanding of the issue. As this question, by its nature, is open to the use of political prejudices and abuses many historians have unfortunately approached it as being excessively rigid, one-sided and opinionated. Many of these authors have generally failed to conduct a comprehensive research based on comparatively use of the Ottoman and other foreign sources. The unscholarly methods have therefore produced wrong prejudicial allegations serving only to the political and ideological interests of particular groups. Luckily, however, there have appeared a number of scholarly works on the academic environment as such a book written by Dr. Yıldırım.

Based on the use of vast amount of archival material, it is a brief and well-organized book and concentrates specifically on the event of relocation (*tehcir*) of the Armenian population by the Ottoman administration in 1915. The author used comparatively the Ottoman, British, American, and Russian sources in order to explain this event in an objective manner. The central theme in the book is that the statistics on the movements of the Armenian

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population in different times in the Ottoman Empire shows that the Armenian losses during the event of relocation was not that much as alleged by the Armenian historians. Rather, the limited number of deaths, during the event of relocation in 1915, occurred as a result of technical, economical and health problems caused by severe war conditions. The Armenian historians, however, have unjustly called it as 'genocide'. As it can easily be seen, there is a sharp contrast between the two views. The publication of this work, therefore, is a crucial step towards understanding the historical facts that led to the event of relocation of the Armenians in 1915.

In the introduction, the author makes some generalizations to explain the main reasons behind the Armenian claims against Turkey. Then he goes on to say (in page 6) that 'the Armenians, after they had, in many times, been deported and persecuted by the Persian and Byzantine Empires, found the Turkish Justice and Islamic tolerance as a great relieve to themselves'. The author makes it clear that the Armenian population had received such a great deal of freedom and tolerance from the Ottoman administration that they had been called as the trustworthy subjects, *millet-i sadıka*. Then Yıldırım states that the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire were able to occupy such highest posts in the government as the ministries of internal and external affairs, and that of marine and finance. He makes an emphasis on a particular point that Turco-Armenian relations began to worsen at a time when the Ottoman Empire declined from the power. This was because the Great Powers at the time wanted to use the Armenian question as a lever to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire and thereby seizing the opportunity to destroy this Empire.

After listing many numbers of the Armenian rebellious activities against the Turks and the massacres committed by the former against the latter, the author places a special emphasis on the decision taken by the Turkish authorities to relocate the Armenian population who assisted the rebels and the Russian soldiers in 1915. In the pages (10-11) the verbal and legal meanings of 'tehcir' is examined and shown that this has similar meaning with the word 'relocation'. Then, in pages (20-23), attention is paid to the issue of passing the Tehcir Law in 27 May 1915 to explain the main reasons behind it. It is made clear that this law was prepared for those 'who insurrected against the state authority' and helped

the enemy. The Tehcir Law also contained a number of articles to protect the safety and health of those Armenian people subjected to relocation process with all necessary measures during their journey.

The last parts of the book examine the statistical movements of the Armenian population within the different periods of the time in the Ottoman Empire and show that, compared to the great number of Turkish deaths, the amount of the Armenian losses were quite small during the Great War. The author hence concludes that the 'Genocide' claims made by the Armenian historians are not based on the historical facts and evidence but rather they are based on false allegations.