

# Holocaust and armenian genocide essay sample

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The German Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide: two interconnected examples of crimes against humanity History contains many examples of glorious and memorable events that remind one of the greatness of the human mind and inspire him or her to pursue his or her own dreams.

Nevertheless, it is also full of horrific events and monstrous doings such as genocides that reflect the darkest corners of human nature. As postulated by the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, “ a genocide is any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life, calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (15).”

Two such events are the German Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide. The German Holocaust was the destruction of European Jews during World War II, as part of a program initiated by Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany. The Armenian Holocaust, on the other hand, is used to denote the deliberate and systematic extermination of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire during and after World War I. Although separated in history by more than two decades, these two atrocities are not only extremely similar in terms of methods and reasons, but also one of them partly inspired the other.

These two examples of crimes against humanity are extremely alike. Both were carried out because of racial and/or religious prejudices and political schemes. The Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide both employed

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methods such as deportations, concentration camps, secret police, and mass massacres; furthermore, the Armenian Genocide, having remained largely unpunished and unrecognized by the perpetrator, ensured Hitler to execute his onslaught on Jews.

The Armenian Genocide is a genocide that occurred during and just after the First World War, from 1914 to 1918, which caused the death of 1, 5 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as a direct result from the Young Turks' government's plans to rid the Turkish lands of Christian population to achieve their pan-Turkic dreams.

Officially, the genocide is said to begin with the arresting of 250 Armenian intellectuals and leaders of the people on the 24th of April, 1915, in Constantinople (?). This was followed by forcing the leaderless Armenian men, women, and children from their homes and making them march through the desert (" Turkey"). This was just an excuse for having Armenians murdered, shot, raped, starved, etc (" Facts about the Armenian Genocide").

This event had a rich and complex historical background. In the Ottoman Empire, Armenians had some freedoms, but nevertheless were treated as second class (" Turkey"). In the middle of the 19th century, under the pressure by Russia, France, and Britain, the Ottoman government started passing the Tanzimat reforms, which were supposed to improve the conditions for minorities, but turned out ineffective (" Facts about the Armenian Genocide"); nevertheless, Armenians remained passive during this time (" Facts about the Armenian Genocide"). During the 1860, however, they began to ask for better treatment; when Russia vanquished Turkey in

the Russo-Turkish war of 1878, they started relying on Tsarist Russia for acquiring this better treatment (“ Facts about the Armenian Genocide”).

In 1908, the government of Sultan Hamid II, who previously had clandestinely ordered massacres of Armenians in 1894-6 (“ Turkey”) (18), was replaced by the Ittihadists, or the so-called “ progressive” Young Turks (“ Frequently Asked Questions”). Armenians helped in this coup, but the promised conditions of better living were forgotten entirely; instead, a triumvirate of extreme nationalists engaged in a kind of dictatorship (“ The Armenian Genocide”). These were Enver, Jemal and Talat. Theirs was the idea to fully exterminate the Armenian race in order to fulfill their pan-Turkic dreams (“ The Armenian Genocide”).

One of the first open harassments of the Young Turks’ government on Armenians was the Turkish boycott of Armenian businesses which started on February 21, 1914 (“ Armenian Genocide 1914, Chronology”). In the same year, on August 28th, Turkish troops were garrisoned in Armenian schools and churches in Sivas Province (“ Armenian Genocide 1914, Chronology”). The next logical step was to falsely accuse Armenians that they had revolted and would join the Russian forces (“ Armenian Genocide 1914”, Chronology). This happened in November the same year, and an Ottoman naval officer in the War Office described the actual accusation:” In order to justify this enormous crime the requisite propaganda material was thoroughly prepared in Constantinople. [It included such statements as] “ the Armenians are in league with the enemy. They will launch an uprising in Istanbul, kill off the

Committee of Union and Progress leaders and will succeed in opening the straits (of the Dardanelles) (“ Armenian Genocide”)

On the 14th of November, Turkish forces attacked the village of Otsni, killed many Armenians, and plundered their homes (“ Armenian Genocide 1914, Chronology”). Five days later, many Armenian soldiers were publicly executed with the purpose of terror; on the next day, Young Turk officials distributed weapons to the Turkish population in Mush after falsely causing panic with stories of Armenian revolts (“ Armenian Genocide 1914, Chronology”). These, however, were isolated cases (“ Armenian Genocide 1914, Chronology”). On the 25th of February the next year, War Minister Enver Pasha ordered that all Armenian soldiers in the active Turkish army be demobilized and sent to an unarmed *amele taburları* (Labour battalion) (“ Armenian Genocide 1915, Chronology”). This was justified “ out of fear that they would collaborate with the Russians” and signaled the subsequent genocide as Armenians were left defenseless (“ Armenian Genocide 1915, Chronology”).

In May, Talat Pasha requested a permission to relocate Armenians, (“ Frequently Asked Questions”) out of fear of the alleged “ Armenian riots and massacres, which had arisen in a number of places in the country. (“ Armenian Genocide”)” Naturally, this permission came: on the 29th of May 1915, the Tehcir Law (Temporary Law of Deportation) was enacted, allowing him to deport anyone suspected of being deleterious to the national security (“ Turkey”). A new law followed in September: the “ Temporary Law of Expropriation and Confiscation”, which guaranteed that the Ottoman

government took possession of all Armenian property that was left behind (“Turkey”). The supposed “destination” of the death marches was the Syrian town of Deir ez-Zor and the surrounding desert; however, Armenians were not allowed any supplies or proper facilities during this time to sustain their lives (“Frequently Asked Questions”). Not only did Ottoman troops turn a blind eye when others were robbing, raping, or killing Armenians; they also participated in the carnage (“Armenian Genocide 1915, Chronology”).

When the First World War ended in 1918, the government of the Ottoman Empire held a trial against Enver, Talat, and Jemal; they found them guilty, and later the triumvirate were all executed by Armenians (“The Armenian Genocide”). This did not change the fact that more than 1,5 million (“Turkey”) Armenians lost their lives by being starved, shot, exhausted to death, etc. during the Armenian Genocide as a result from the policy of the Young Turk government in the years of the First World War and their dream of pan-Turkism, which included the extermination of Christian populations on Ottoman lands.

The Holocaust is a genocide that occurred during the Second World War, from 1939 to 1945, and took the lives of nine to eleven million people; it was perpetrated in Nazi Germany under the jurisdiction of Adolf Hitler as a program to purge Germany, and, eventually, the whole of Europe, from the so-called “lesser races”.

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party came to power; almost immediately, the persecution of German Jews was initiated (“Holocaust”). The Jews were less than 1% of the German population; however, some of

them held important positions and taught in prestigious universities (“Reasons for the Holocaust”). Even though anti-Semitism was a tradition of Europe long before the Nazis existed (as early as in the writings of Martin Luther in the early 1500s) (“Reasons for the Holocaust”), most Jews spoke German and regarded Germany as their home (“Reasons for the Holocaust”). However, Hitler managed to segregate Jews from the rest of the population and made them appear as one of the middle class’s greatest enemies (“Reasons for the Holocaust”). With the beginning of the war, a systematic extermination of nearly 6 million Jews began: the so-called “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” (“Reasons for the Holocaust”).

“The Nürnb erg Laws came into power in 1935: they deprived Jews of their German citizenship and of all their civil rights (“Holocaust”). Hitler stated that if these laws could not solve the Jewish problem, then the National-Socialist Party must initiate Endlösung (a “Final Solution”) (“Holocaust”). The next major event that followed was the so-called Kristallnacht (“The Night of Broken Glass”) on November 9th, 1938: Jewish property was vandalized as over 7000 Jewish shops and 1668 synagogues were destroyed, approximately 100 Jews were killed, and over 30 000 were sent to concentration camps (17). By the end of 1944, the Endlösung had run its course as Jews within reach of the Nazi regime were mercilessly liquidated (“17”). However, the war started taking a bad turn for Germany: their allies were abandoning them; their armies were being defeated, etc (“Holocaust”). As Soviet forces approached, Eastern Polish, and later other, camps were closed down and inmates were sent west, closer to Germany (“Holocaust”).

Nevertheless, this did not mean that the condition of Jews ameliorated: already weakened after long periods of overworking and starvation, camp inmates had to march miles in the snow to train stations, then were transported in horrible conditions; those who could not keep up were shot (“Holocaust”). A survivor of the transportations testimony only hints at the horrors of these death marches: “ My memories are coming back right now. In the beginning when I saw there what’s happened, you know. When I saw there what’s happened, I was shaking like a fish in the water and nothing can come to me, you know. But I was with the children, David and Toby, and they hold me back a little bit. I wasn’t there too long. It was a few days. I can be longer, but I don’t want to be there. See, I got a feeling, I don’t want to go (“Solomon Radasky”).

Consequently, the advancing Soviet troops liberated camp after camp, thus putting an end to the Holocaust.

Nearly six million Jews, two million Poles, and 400 000 Roma people lost their lives by being starved, killed, poisoned, etc. from 1939 to 1945 in the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, as part of a plan by Adolf Hitler to create a Greater Germany in which the pure Aryan race would live undisturbed.

The Armenian Genocide and the German Holocaust are extremely similar because they were inspired by ideas of racial and/or religious dominance, and in both victims were killed by massacres, by overworking, secret police employment, and concentration camps; furthermore, the similarity between the two is evident in Hitler’s assertion that his acts would be forgotten just as the unpunished Armenian Genocide was (at that time) largely forgotten.



First of all, both genocides were caused by racial prejudices. The Ittihadists' pan-Turkism was one of the major reasons for the Genocide as they believed that Christians and more specifically the Armenians should be purged from Turkish lands (" A Comparison"). On the other hand, in Hitler's ideology, Jews were viewed as the so-called " Untermenschen" - lesser men, were a problem for the nation and had to be exterminated (" Reasons for the Holocaust"). Furthermore, both crimes against humanity had strong underlying economic reasons. One of the first open harassments of the Young Turks' government on Armenians was the Turkish boycott of Armenian businesses which started on February 21, 1914. (" Armenian Genocide 1914, Chronology") Also, as already mentioned, " Temporary Law of Expropriation and Confiscation" stated that all Armenian property " left behind" was courtesy of the Turkish government (" Turkey").

During the Holocaust, on the other hand, the murdering and deportation of Jews had numerous economic benefits for the Germans. It is no coincidence that the first open acts against Jewry were economic boycotts: the Holocaust had the effect of reducing competition with German industry, increasing the number of well-paid jobs and high social positions (which many Jews held), and also simply increasing the amount of food and resources available for the ordinary German (" Reasons for the Holocaust"). On a simpler level, the deportations of Jews and the concentration camps meant that their property could be confiscated and it also provided a cheap source of physical labor (" Reasons for the Holocaust"). Also, many similarities are present in the manner that the persecuted people were killed. Another similarity between

the two events can be found in the fact that both included the employment of concentration camps.

During the Armenian Genocide times, approximately 25 concentration camps existed, their commander being Şükrü Kaya, who was one of the right handmen of Talat Pasha ("Armenian Genocide"). Nearly all of them were open air, and their purpose was to be sites of not only direct killings, but also mass burning ("Armenian Genocide"). Eitan Belkind, a spy member, had infiltrated the Ottoman army as an official: his claims involve the witnessing of a burning of 5000 Armenians; another officer in the Ottoman army, Lt. Hasan Maruf, described the rounding up and burning of an entire Armenian village ("Armenian Genocide"). Another commander in the Ottoman army stated that: Turkish prisoners who had apparently witnessed some of these scenes were horrified and maddened at the remembering the sight. They told the Russians that the stench of the burning human flesh permeated the air for many days after ("Armenian Genocide"). This is all very similar to the concentration camps for Jews during the Holocaust: initially built to duress political enemies, they became prisons for those whom the Nazis deemed biologically and racially inferior ("Gas Chambers").

Inmates were forced to work to death under horrible conditions, with poor nutrition and unsanitary conditions ("Gas Chambers"). Also, many prisoners were killed in gas chambers; Zyklon B gas was used to massively dispose of camp inmates who were no longer able to work ("Gas Chambers"). Next, both genocides included a secretive government organization whose purpose was to deal with the targets of the inhumane acts. For the Armenian

Genocide, this was the so-called Teskilat-i Mahsusa, the special organization (“ A Comparison”). It was established on the 17th of November 1913 by Enver Pasha, and many of its members were former criminals, and they participated in the destruction of Armenians: they were called “ the butchers of the human species (“ Special Organization”).” For the Holocaust, this Special Organization’s equivalent was the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units.) Their main task was to murder behind combat lines those who Hitler thought were racial and political enemies and most specifically, Jews (“ Einsatzgruppen”). The killing of Jews by Einsatzgruppen is considered the final step of the Endlösung (“ Einsatzgruppen”).

Not only all this, but Hitler, in one of his speeches, when asked when people would think of his acts, said: “ Who, after all, speaks to-day of the annihilation of the Armenians (“ Hitler and the Armenians”)?” Because at that time the interest in the Armenian Genocide was minimal, Hitler believed that his acts would too go by unnoticed; it is, therefore, no coincidence that there are so many similarities between the two events (“ A Comparison”).

The Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide both employed methods such as deportations, concentration camps, secret police, and mass massacres; furthermore, the Armenian Genocide, having remained largely unpunished and unrecognized by the perpetrator, ensured Hitler to execute his onslaught on Jews. Events such as the German Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide should be remembered as tragic and recurrent manifestations of the evil in human beings. The two events occurred in the Second and First World War, respectively, and consisted of the deliberate decimation of Jews (mainly) and

Armenians, respectively. At a closer look, they are close in nature because of the political motivations that fueled them, the methods used to brutally kill innocents, and the usage of Hitler of the Armenian Genocide as a justification for his acts against Jews.

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