

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE



**THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE
& THE HOLOCAUST:
ONE MAN TAKES A STAND**

Armin T. Wegner & The Armenians in Anatolia, 1915-1916

TEACHER'S GUIDE

The Armenian Genocide & the Holocaust: One Man Takes a Stand
Armin T. Wegner & the Armenians of Anatolia, 1915-1916

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Armin T. Wegner & the Armenians in Anatolia, 1915-1916, a traveling exhibit produced by the Armin T. Wegner Society USA, is presented in Vancouver by the Armenian National Committee of Canada and the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE	5
ARMIN T. WEGNER	9
THINKING ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHS	13
WRITING AS RESISTANCE	21
APPENDIX: GENOCIDE	29
TIMELINE	33
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES	38

INTRODUCTION

Armin T. Wegner (1886-1978) witnessed and documented the Armenian genocide while serving in the German army during WWI, and later became exiled from Nazi Germany. This exhibition features a remarkable collection of Wegner's photographs of Armenian deportation camps, and speaks to the possibilities of photography as a form of resistance. A prolific writer and activist, Wegner campaigned for Armenian and Jewish human rights between the wars, writing an open letter to Woodrow Wilson at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. In April 1933 he authored an impassioned plea to Adolf Hitler on behalf of the Jews of Germany. His act of protest and subsequent imprisonment in several Nazi concentration camps prompted Yad Vashem in Israel to honour Wegner as *Righteous Among the Nations*.

THE VHEC SCHOOL PROGRAM CONSIDERS THE QUESTIONS:

- How did this individual respond to witnessing the Armenian genocide in 1915 and the Nazi persecution of Jews in 1933?
- What can photographs tell us about genocide? How can documentation function as resistance?
- What is the potential of letter writing as a form of activism?

Your visit will be interactive and inquiry-based: we will ask students to respond to photographs and documents in the exhibit, and to consider their meaning and significance.

In most instances, your school tour will be comprised of a 45-minute exhibition tour of the *Armin T. Wegner* exhibition and a 45-minute workshop of *In Defiance*. Additional teaching support material about Jewish resistance during the Holocaust can be found on the VHEC's website: <http://vhec.org/teaching.html>.

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE



Courtesy Wallstein Verlag, Germany

Deported Armenians, Aleppo, 1916.

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

For centuries, many different ethnic groups lived together in the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. The Armenians, a Christian minority, were one of these groups. Like other minorities, they had religious freedom but were considered inferior to the Islamic Turkish majority.

In the 19th century, the Armenian community became more educated, wealthier and more urban. This change challenged the social *hierarchy* and resulted in state-sponsored violence against the Armenians.

At the turn of the 20th century, a number of Turkish youth groups (known as the Young Turks) began calling for change in the Empire. They opposed the *Sultan's* control over the state and demanded a more democratic society. In 1908, the Young Turk Revolution achieved this reform, establishing a *constitutional monarchy*.

In 1913, an extremist branch of the Young Turks, the Committee of Union and Progress (the CUP) seized control of the government. They introduced a policy of *Turkification*, encouraging non-Turkish citizens to convert to Islam and become more Turkish. Christian Armenians were particularly targeted by this policy. Some converted but many refused, and instead worked to preserve their cultural identity through education.

In January 1915, Forced Turkification began. To limit resistance, the CUP targeted the Armenian population in phases, removing those most likely to resist. First, young Armenian men in the army were assigned to hard labour in remote areas and executed. Then, on the night of April 24, intellectuals and community leaders were arrested

GLOSSARY

Constitutional Monarchy

a structure of government where power is shared between the people and the monarch

Hierarchy

the arrangement of things or groups according to levels of importance

In Absentia

Latin for “in absence,” refers to a defendant who is not present when being tried in court

Sultan

the title of a monarch in Islamic society; a king

Genocide

the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group
(see Appendix, page 29-32, for further information)

1. Robert Melson: “Responses to the Armenian Genocide: America, the Yishuv, Israel,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (20:1), Spring 2006, p 107.

and deported to the countryside, where they were later executed. In commemoration, Armenian communities around the world today observe April 24 as Red Sunday.

In May, the remaining Armenian population was deported. They were transported by train and foot to concentration camps in the Syrian desert under the supervision of the *Teshkilati Mahsusa* – the Special Organization, a unit of the Turkish army made up of criminals released from prison for the purpose of handling the Armenian deportees. The members of this unit were notorious for their brutality. It is estimated that one million Armenians were killed in, and on their way to, the camps – approximately half of the pre-war population.¹

Reports of the *genocide* soon reached Western nations but these governments ignored calls for action. World War I was being fought on many fronts and other battles were of more immediate concern. The British and American governments did, however, issue official condemnations against the CUP regime, and American humanitarian organizations raised funds in support of the “starving Armenians.”

After the war, the three leaders of the CUP – Talaat, Enver, and Djemal – were tried *in absentia*, having each fled the country. They were later assassinated by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

In 1939, shortly before the German invasion of Poland, Hitler delivered a speech to the commanders of the German military, referencing the Armenian Genocide. Assuring them that history would forgive their use of brutal force against the Poles, he asked, “who today still talks about the annihilation of the Armenians?”

Over twenty nations have officially recognized the Armenian Genocide, among them Canada, Germany, and France. However, controversy continues in Turkey, where the events have not been officially acknowledged.

1. Robert Melson: “Responses to the Armenian Genocide: America, the Yishuv, Israel,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (20:1), Spring 2006, p 107.

ARMIN T. WEGNER



Courtesy Wallstein Verlag, Germany

Armin Wegner, 1916.

ARMIN T. WEGNER

Armin Wegner (1886-1978) witnessed the brutality of the Armenian genocide, and for the rest of his life promoted human rights with his photography and writing.

At the beginning of World War I, Wegner enrolled in the army as a volunteer nurse in Poland. When Turkey joined the alliance with Germany, he was sent to the Middle East as a member of the German Sanitary Corps. Wegner used his leave in the summer of 1915 to investigate rumors about the Armenian massacres. Travelling along the Baghdad Railway, he saw the Ottoman army leading the empire's Armenian population on forced marches through the Syrian desert, and encountered scenes of starvation, disease and murder.

Deliberately disobeying orders meant to prevent news of the massacres from spreading, Wegner collected evidence of the genocide - including photographs, documents, and personal notes - to send to contacts in Germany and the United States. Wegner's secret mail routes were soon discovered and, at the Turkish government's request, Wegner was arrested and recalled to Germany. While some of his photographs were confiscated and destroyed, he nonetheless succeeded in smuggling out images of the Armenian persecution.

Between 1918 and 1921, Wegner campaigned for peace and supported the establishment of an independent Armenian state. In an open letter to American President Woodrow Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Wegner protested against atrocities perpetrated by the Turkish army against the Armenian people.

Wegner was also one of the earliest voices to protest the treatment of the Jews in Nazi Germany. On April 11, 1933 -- immediately following the state-sponsored *boycott* of Jewish businesses and the

GLOSSARY

Boycott

a refusal to have commercial dealings with some organization or group

Righteous Among the Nations

non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust

offices of Jewish lawyers and doctors -- he wrote a letter to German Chancellor Adolf Hitler. Shortly after delivering the letter to the Nazi Party headquarters, Wegner was arrested, tortured and interned in three concentration camps: Oranienburg, Börgermoor and Lichtenburg. Incarceration in seven different prisons was followed by years of exile in England, Poland and Italy.

Wegner's actions were later acknowledged. He was awarded the Highest Order of Merit by the Federal German Government in 1956. His native city of Wuppertal awarded him the prestigious Eduard-Von-der-Heydt prize in 1962. In 1967 he was awarded the title of *Righteous Among the Nations* by Yad Vashem, Israel and in 1968 was awarded the Order of Saint Gregory the Illuminator by the Catholicos of All Armenians. Wegner died in Rome at the age of 92.

Teacher Web Link - Preview Wegner's Photographs: http://www.armenian-genocide.org/photo_wegner.html

Note: Although many of Wegner's images are challenging, graphic imagery has been removed from the VHEC presentation of the exhibit for school groups.

THINKING ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHS

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: BEHIND THE CAMERA

RATIONALE

Students visiting the VHEC will examine photographs of the Armenian genocide taken by Armin T. Wegner. The following activity is designed to help students “read” and understand different types of photographs in preparation for those that they will encounter in the exhibit.

OBJECTIVE

Students will examine and describe visual elements found in photographs in order to predict and make judgments about the significance of the photographs including their subjects, the photographers and the location and circumstances under which the photographs were taken.

TEACHER PREPARATION

- Form small student groups. One student in each group is assigned the role of recorder and one the role of reporter.
- Make copies of the following three photographs and distribute copies to each group.
- Optional: find additional contemporary photographs from online sources or other media of people in situations of trauma or crisis such as war, refugee camps or natural disasters and distribute copies of this photograph to each group.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s photo archive is a good source of other Holocaust images: www.ushmm.org.

ACTIVITY: DECODING PHOTOGRAPHS

Students examine their photographs and respond to the following instructions and questions. The recorder takes notes during the discussion. Groups may wish to make a chart to organize their responses. Reporters share each group's findings with the class.

- What was the first thing that you noticed about each photograph?
- Describe the subject(s) of each photograph, including pose, facial expressions and dress. Describe the location or setting of each photograph.
- Imagine who the subject(s) of each photograph might be and what they might be thinking or feeling.
- Predict where and when the photograph was taken. What visual clues are you using to make your prediction?
- Predict who the photographer might have been. Consider – friend or family member, professional photographer, journalist, witness, an enemy soldier, etc. Why do you think each photographer chose to take the photograph? What was their purpose and who was their intended audience?
- Compare all the photographs. How are they similar or different?
- Read the caption for each photograph.
- Describe how similar or different this information is to your predictions about the subject, the photographer and the circumstances under which it was taken.
- What is the most important thing that you learned about the photograph that you did not know before?
- Do you think it matters who the photographer was? Explain.
- Do you think that the photographer can affect the way the subject of the photograph is portrayed? Explain.
- How do documentary photographs like these contribute to your understanding of war and genocide?

- Draw a chart on the black board, using the headings below. Ask students to list the different types of photographers they have come across in this activity. (Elicit: photojournalists, professional photographers, friends, family, enemies, etc.) Beside each photographer students list the various possible reasons that person might have for taking photos and the visual clues that have informed their ideas.

TYPES OF PHOTOGRAPHY	MOTIVATION	VISUAL CLUES
photojournalist, professional studio, photographer, friend, etc.	curiosity, documentation, financial gain, etc	subject's expression, pose, etc.

POST-VISIT EXTENSION: IMAGING DARFUR

- Compare the photograph of a Darfur refugee camp to the images in the Wegner exhibit. Use strategies introduced in the Pre-Visit Activity and VHEC school program to “decode” the image.
- As a class, or as a homework assignment, have students view photographs taken by former United States Marine Brian Steidle in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s image gallery, “In Darfur, My Camera Was Not Nearly Enough”, and read the accompanying article: www.ushmm.org/conscience/alert/darfur/steidle/.

Discuss how do Wegner’s responses to Armenian genocide compare to Brian Steidle’s observations and records of Darfur. How are their photographs and writing similar? How do they differ?

- Direct students to explore *World is Witness*: <http://blogs.ushmm.org/worldiswitness>. This new “geoblog” from the USHMM’s Genocide Prevention Mapping Initiatives, in partnership with Google Earth, documents and maps genocide and related crimes against humanity.

As a class, discuss the implications of information technology on activism. How does knowing about human rights abuses as they occur affect our capacity to respond?

DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPH

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE



Courtesy of Wallstein Verlag, Germany

While serving in the German Army during World War I, Armin Wegner used his leave in the summer of 1915 to investigate rumors about the Turkish army's massacre of Armenians. Travelling through Asia Minor, he encountered and photographed scenes of starvation, disease and murder. In a letter describing his experiences to his mother, he wrote: "I have taken numerous photographs ... on penalty of death. I do not doubt for a moment that I am committing a treasonable act. And yet I am inspired by the knowledge that I have helped these poor people in some small way. ... Hunger, death, disease, despair shout at me from all sides. Wretched me, for I carried neither bandages nor medications ... I was overcome by dizziness, as if the earth were collapsing on both sides of me into an abyss ..."

DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPH

THE HOLOCAUST



Courtesy of the YIVO Institute

Many of us are familiar with this photograph of a little boy, his arms raised in surrender, as a Nazi soldier trains his machine gun on him. Photographed in the Warsaw ghetto in July 1943, this image has come to symbolize the process of the Final Solution - the systematic roundups and deportations to the concentration camps. After his entire family was killed in their hometown of Sandomierz, Poland, seven-year old Tzvi Nussbaum went into hiding with his aunt and uncle on the Aryan side of Warsaw. The photograph shows him being deported from the Warsaw ghetto to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Remarkably, Tzvi survived and emigrated to Palestine with his aunt and uncle. Tzvi Nussbaum is now a physician who lives in New York with his family. His aunt and uncle live in Toronto.

DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPH

THE VIETNAM WAR



Courtesy of the Associated Press

Kim Phuc, age 9, running up the road outside the village of Trang Bang, her skin on fire, June 8, 1972. Photojournalist Huyng Cong Nick Ut won a Pulitzer Prize for this photo, which dramatically changed public perception of the war in Vietnam. Kim Phuc points out that after Ut took the photograph, he put down his camera to help her. “He was not just a photographer, he was one human being helping another.” It took seventeen operations to save her. Kim Phuc now lives in Ajax, Ontario. The Kim Phuc Foundation is dedicated to healing children of war.

POST-VISIT DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPH

DARFUR REFUGEE CAMP



Courtesy Mark Knobil

A camp established in Chad to temporarily house refugees from the neighboring Darfur region of Sudan, 2005.

Since 2003, the Darfur region of Sudan has been the site of conflict between various militias. The Sudanese government has encouraged the conflict by sponsoring the Janjaweed militia and interfering with international humanitarian aid efforts. The United Nations estimates that at least 300,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million have been displaced from their homes. Refugee camps have been established to house these displaced persons in Darfur and in the neighboring countries of Chad and the Central African Republic. The United States Congress, the International Association of Genocide Scholars and members of the International Criminal Court have labeled the conflict *genocide*.

WRITING AS RESISTANCE

WRITING AS RESISTANCE

OBJECTIVE

Armin Wegner authored two letters that serve as powerful models of articulating outrage and advocating action in the face of human rights abuses. By working with Wegner's 1919 open letter to US President Woodrow Wilson, as well as his 1933 letter to German Chancellor Adolf Hitler, students will consider the motivations and implications of bearing witness. They will then use Wegner's models to write a response to a social justice issue of their choice.

WARM-UP DISCUSSION: TO BEAR WITNESS

- As a class, discuss what it means to be a *witness*.
- What are some of the reasons to speak up? To stay silent?
- What are some of the risks that can be associated with being a witness?

STUDENT READINGS & GROUP DISCUSSION

- In groups, students read one of Wegner's letters and discuss the following questions:

- What do we learn about the Armenian genocide/ the Holocaust from Wegner's accounts?
- What actions does Wegner propose to Woodrow Wilson/ Adolf Hitler?
- Wegner was a poet and writer who used language to great effect. What words do you find particularly powerful?

LETTER WRITING ACTIVITY

- Have students identify a social justice issue they feel strongly about in their school, community or internationally. It should be an issue students have witnessed in some way, either first-hand or via news media.
- Have students identify a decision-maker to whom to address their letter.
- Have students research their issue and draft a letter outlining the problem and suggesting a possible course of action in response. Students should be encouraged to use persuasive language, with Wegner as a model.

EXTENSION TOPICS: WARNING THE WORLD

- THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Read the telegram sent by the U.S. Ambassador in Constantinople, Henry Morgenthau, to Washington (July 16, 1915), notifying the American government of the mounting humanitarian crisis. Research Morgenthau's role and response to the Armenian Genocide, and write a paper outlining the dilemmas he faced.

An additional report detailing his experiences can be found online:

http://www.armenian-genocide.org/statement_morgenthau.html

- THE HOLOCAUST

View the page from the Auschwitz Protocols, a report written by Slovakian Jews Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler after their remarkable escape from Auschwitz in April 1944, and read the text featured in the VHEC exhibit, *In Defiance*. Write an essay about Vrba's hopes in authoring the report and the world's response to this information. Suggested reading: *I Escaped from Auschwitz* by Rudolf Vrba (available in the VHEC library and bookstore).

- THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Roméo Dallaire served as Force Commander of the United Nations peacekeeping force for Rwanda between 1993 and 1994, and tried unsuccessfully to stop the genocide waged by Hutu extremist forces against Tutsis and Hutu moderates. Read the book or watch the documentary film, *Shake Hands With the Devil*, and write a response about Dallaire's experiences and dilemmas as a witness to genocide.

- UPSTANDERS

Samantha Power, an American scholar of foreign policy, describes people who try to make a difference in the face of injustice as "upstanders." What does this term mean to you? Why do you think people become "upstanders" in the face of risks and obstacles?

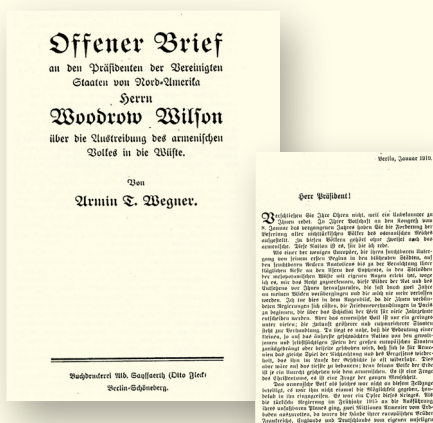
Additional suggested activities about altruism during the Holocaust are available in the "Identity and Rescue" unit of *Schindler & Vancouver's Schindler Jews - A Teacher's Guide*: <http://vhec.org/teachersguides.html>

1919 WEGNER LETTER

SELECTIONS FROM ARMIN T. WEGNER'S OPEN LETTER TO US PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON

Published in *Berliner Tageblatt*

February 23, 1919



As one of the few Europeans who have been eyewitnesses of the dreadful destruction of the Armenian people... I dare claim the right of bringing to your attention this picture of misery and terror which passed before my eyes for nearly two years, and which will never be obliterated from my mind.

The Armenian people as such did not take part in this military campaign. They were not even given the chance to do so. The Armenian people were victims of this War.

The voice of conscience and humanity will never be silenced in me, and therefore I address these words to you.

This document is a request. In it the tongues of thousands dead speak.

With the ardor of one who has seen their unimaginable sufferings and has felt them in his own heart, I speak in the name of those whose despairing cries I had to hear without being able to still them, whose cruel deaths I could only helplessly mourn, whose bones bestrew the deserts of the Euphrates, and whose limbs once more become alive in my heart and admonish me to speak.

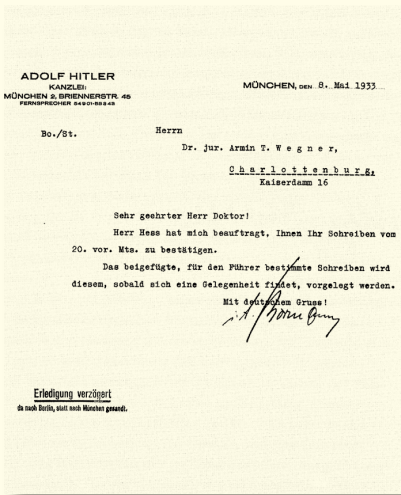
If you, Mr. President, have indeed made the sublime idea of championing oppressed nations the guiding principle of your policy, you will not fail to perceive that even in these words a mighty voice speaks, the only voice that has the right to be heard at all times - the voice of humanity.

Top Image: Open letter from Armin T. Wegner to US President Woodrow Wilson, published in the newspaper, *Berliner Tageblatt*, February 23, 1919. Courtesy Armin T. Wegner Society of USA.

1933 WEGNER LETTER

SELECTIONS FROM ARMIN T. WEGNER'S LETTER TO GERMAN CHANCELLOR ADOLPH HITLER

April 11, 1933



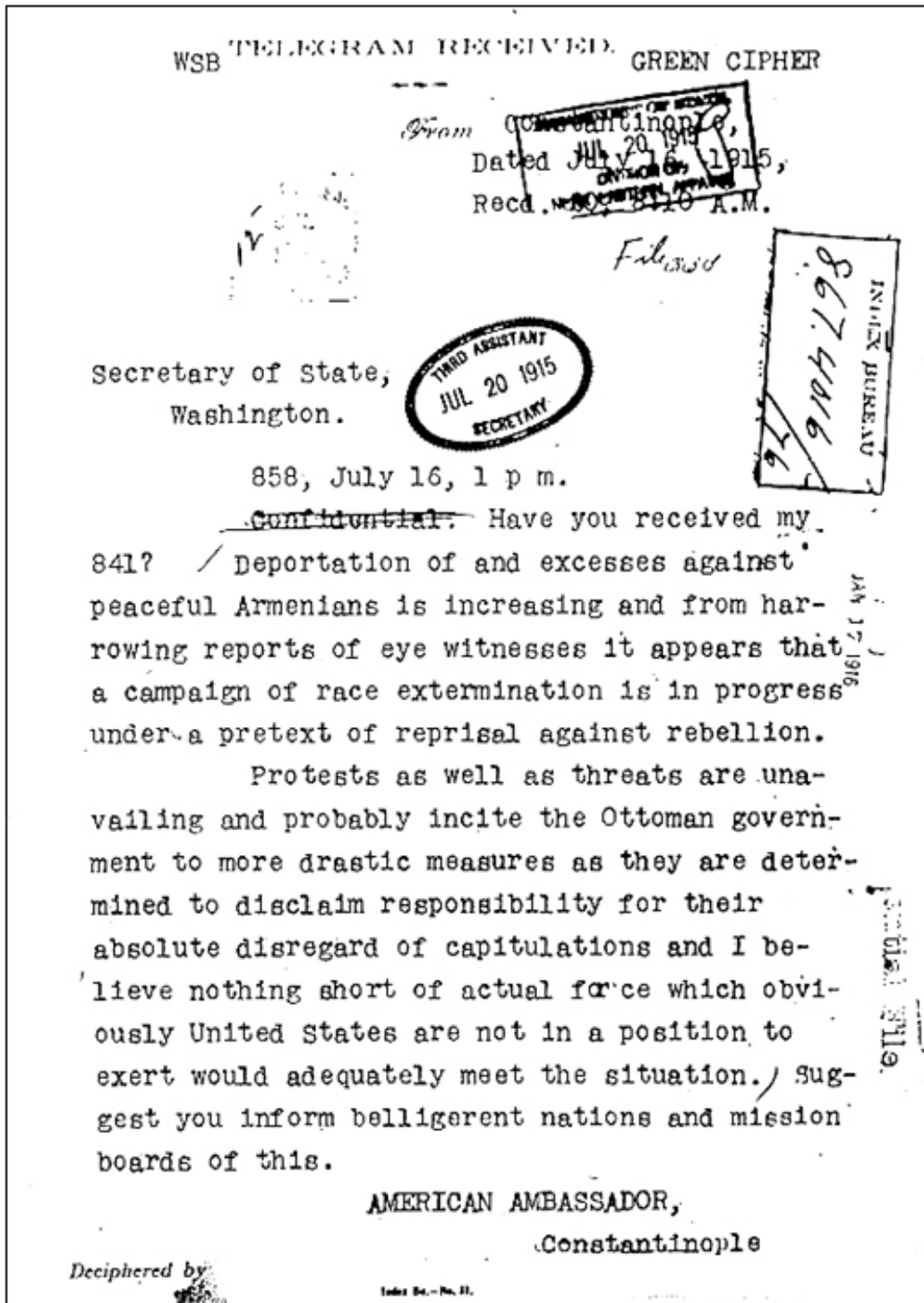
Righteousness was always the jewel in the crown of the nations, and it is not just a matter of the fate of our Jewish brethren, the fate of Germany is also at stake! I appeal to you to put a stop to all this. I have both the right and the duty to appeal to you, for my heart is seething with indignation, and I was not endowed with the gift of speech merely to make myself an accomplice by remaining silent. The Jews have survived captivity in Babylon, slavery in Egypt, the Inquisition in Spain, the oppression of the crusades and sixteen hundred pogroms in Russia. The resilience that has enabled this people to survive to the present day will also enable them to overcome this threat. But the opprobrium and ignominy which now adheres to Germany as a result of this will not be forgotten for a long time!

I dispute the foolish notion that the Jews should be blamed for the world's misfortunes. I repudiate this charge, based on the judgment, testimony and voice of the centuries. And if I turn to you now in the form of a letter, it is because I see no other way of being given a hearing. I appeal to you not as a friend of the Jews but ... out of love for my people. Though all prefer today to stand mute, I for one can no longer.

What would Germany be without Truth, Beauty and Justice? If one day our cities were to lie in ruins, generation upon generation had bled to death and words of tolerance had died away forever, the mountains of our homeland, covered by their everlasting rustling forests, would of course still stand out defiantly against the sky – but they would no longer breathe the air of freedom and justice of our ancestors. They would, with shame and contempt, tell of the generations which had recklessly gambled with the good of our country and disgraced its memory for all time. In demanding justice we want dignity. I implore you! Preserve magnanimity, conscience and a sense of pride, without which we cannot live. Preserve the dignity of the German people!

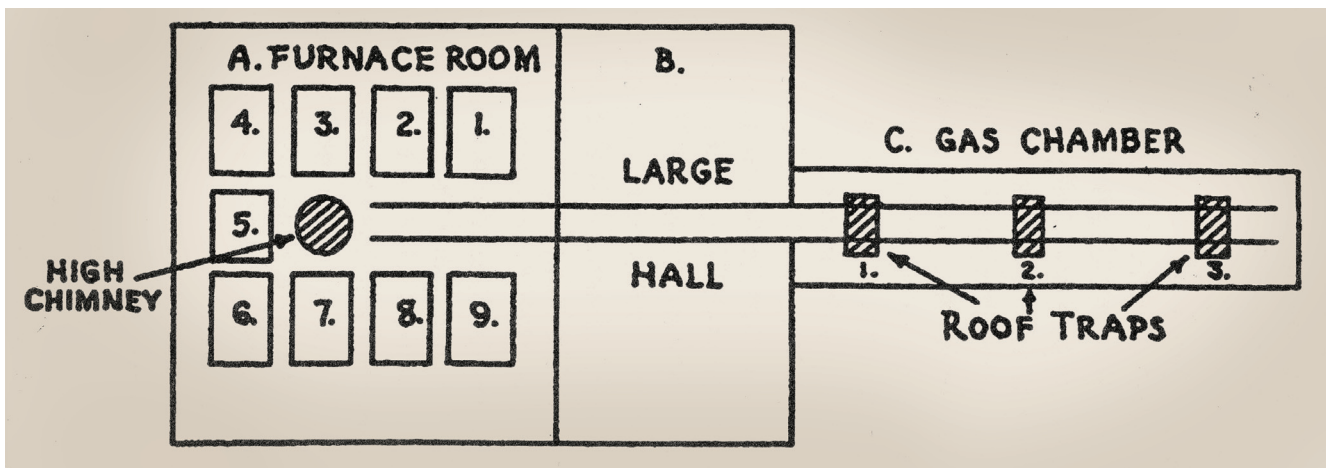
Top left image: Letter dated May 8, 1933 sent from the Munich office of Adolf Hitler to Armin T. Wegner, confirming receipt of his letter of April 11, 1933. Courtesy Armin T. Wegner Society of USA.

1915 MORGENTHAU REPORT

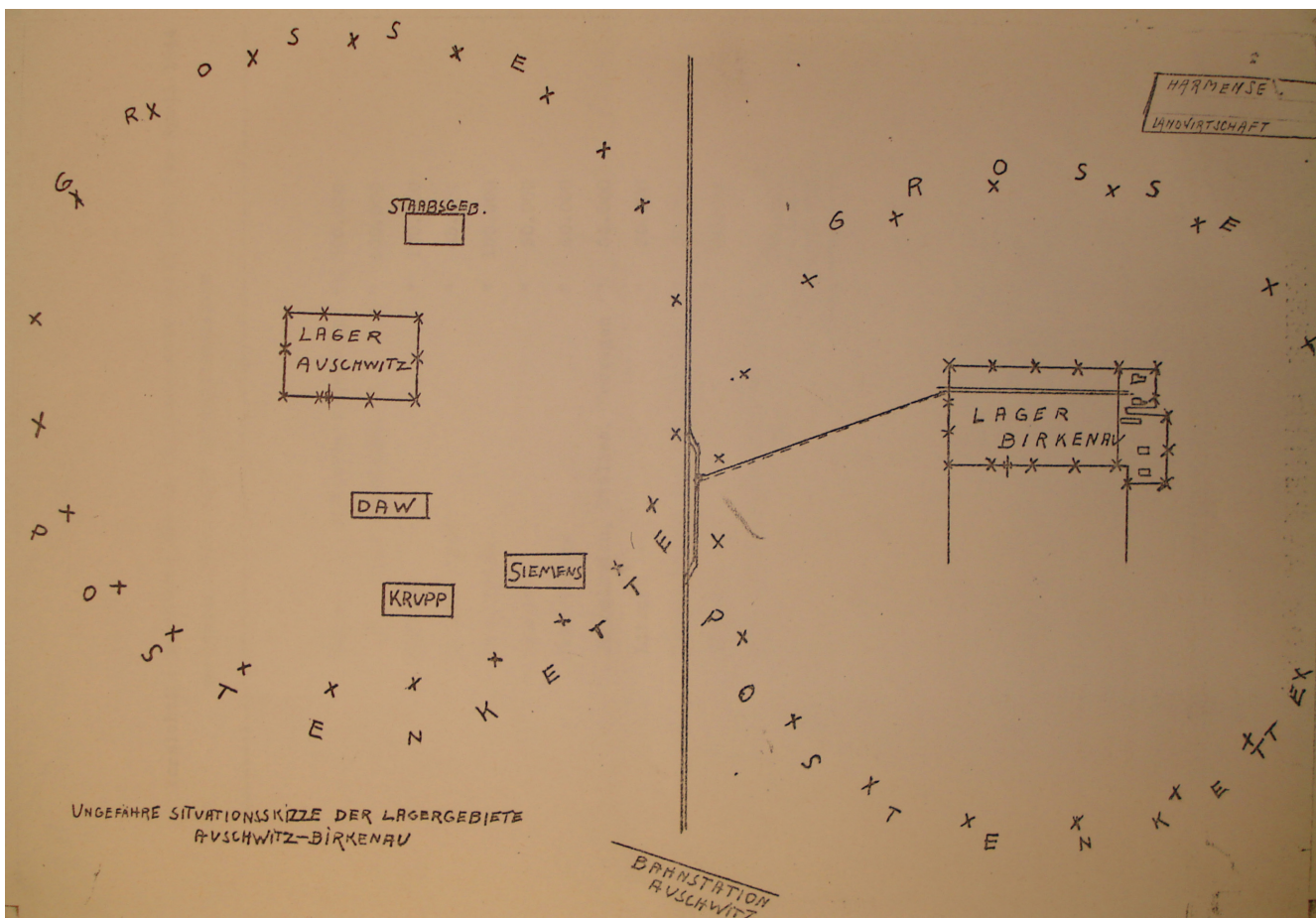


Source: Armenian National Institute (<http://www.armenian-genocide.org/us-7-16-15.html>)

1944 VRBA-WEZTLER REPORT



Source: Ground plan of crematoria sketched by Vrba and included in the Vrba-Wetzler Report, 1944. (Rudolph Vrba, "I Escaped from Auschwitz," 2002)



Source: Page from Vrba-Wetzler Report illustrating the locations of guard towers surrounding Auschwitz and Birkenau, 1944.

READING

RUDOLF VRBA

In March 1942, rebelling against anti-Semitic decrees in his home country, 17-year-old Rudolf Vrba tore the Star of David off his clothes and fled Czechoslovakia by taxi with virtually no money in his pocket. Intending to join the Czech army in Britain, Vrba was intercepted by border guards and detained in a number of concentration camps. He escaped Nováky camp, but was recaptured and deported to Auschwitz at the end of June.

As one of the prisoners responsible for unloading railcars, Vrba was able to keep track of the number and origin of arriving trains, and discern how little Jews knew of their fate. Believing Nazi promises of relocation, many brought with them suitcases full of provisions and valuables. These possessions were confiscated and housed in an area known as Kanada. While working there, Vrba had access to food, soap and clothing, as well as increased mobility throughout the camp.

A fellow inmate from Vrba's hometown, Alfred Wetzler, worked as a mortuary clerk in Auschwitz. When he and Vrba noted the construction of a new railway spur and heard talk of the impending arrival of Hungarian Jews, they decided to make their escape in order to warn the Hungarian Jewish authorities before the deportations began.

After having observed other failed attempted escapes, Vrba devised a clear plan. Auschwitz II (Birkenau) was being expanded and the new area was poorly guarded. For three days, he and Wetzler hid there under a pile of lumber until the search for them was dropped. As an added precaution, the men covered the pile in gasoline-soaked tobacco to put the dogs off their scent. On April 7th, 1944, they fled for the woods. Vrba and Wetzler were two of only five Jewish prisoners to successfully escape Auschwitz-Birkenau.

On April 24th, Vrba and Wetzler reached Zilinia in northern Slovakia, where they disclosed what they knew to the local Jewish council. Their account, which came to be known as the Vrba-Wetzler Report or the Auschwitz Protocols, was a 60-page document that included maps of Auschwitz, diagrams of the crematoria, and estimates of prisoner deaths. "The strength of the Final Solution was its secrecy, its impossibility," Vrba told the Ottawa Citizen in an interview in 2005. "I escaped to break that belief that it was not possible. And to stop more killings."

The Vrba-Wetzler Report was the first eyewitness account of Auschwitz to reach the outside world and be considered credible. It was distributed to the Swiss, British and American embassies, as well as the Red Cross and the Vatican. Jewish agencies in Geneva, Istanbul and Hungary received copies. After the report reached Admiral Miklos Horthy, the leader of Hungary, he ordered a halt to deportations on July 7, 1944. Although more than 437,000 Hungarian Jews had already been deported, close to 200,000 were spared by this order.

Vrba spent the final months of the war as a partisan fighter in Czechoslovakia, for which he was awarded the highest medal of bravery. After the war, he received his doctorate in chemistry and biochemistry. As part of a scientific delegation to the west, he defected to Israel in 1965, before immigrating to Canada in 1967. He became a professor of pharmacology at the University of British Columbia and a renowned scientific researcher. Vrba also contributed greatly to Holocaust education through his testimonies at war crimes tribunals, lectures and writings.

Vrba passed away in Vancouver in 2006 and is survived by his second wife, Robin, daughter Zuza, and two grandchildren.

From In Defiance: Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust, an exhibit produced by the VHEC, 2008.

APPENDIX: GENOCIDE

APPENDIX: GENOCIDE

The term genocide was first coined by Raphael Lemkin, a legal scholar, in 1943. Lemkin formed the word by combining the Greek *genos* (race or tribe) with the Latin *cide* (to kill). Lemkin proposed the following definition for this new term:

Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.

- Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944)

This definition was inspired by Lemkin's study of the massacres of Armenians during World War I and of the Assyrians in Iraq in 1933. It was adopted as one of the legal bases for the Nuremberg trials, where Nazi leaders were tried by the international community following World War II.

With Lemkin's encouragement, the newly established United Nations passed a resolution criminalizing genocide. The UN adopted the following definition:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;*
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;*
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;*
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.*

- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article II (1948)

Scholars and activists continue to debate the term. Many criticize the UN definition’s exclusion of “political groups” as a category of possible victims. One notable proposed definition states:

Genocide is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator.

- Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn: The History and Sociology of Genocide (1990)

THE EIGHT STAGES OF GENOCIDE

In 1996 Gregory Stanton, the president of Genocide Watch, proposed that genocide develops in eight stages. At each stage, he argues, preventative measures can be taken to avoid genocide from occurring. He presented this paper to the US Department of State.

STAGE	CHARACTERISTICS	PREVENTATIVE MEASURES
1. Classification	People are divided into “us and them”.	The main preventative measure at this early stage is to develop universalistic institutions that transcend divisions.
2. Symbolization	Physical features or traditional dress become a way of distinguishing members of a group. In later stages, members of a group may be forced to wear markers, such as a yellow star.	To combat symbolization, hate symbols can be legally forbidden, as can hate speech.
3. Dehumanization	One group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of the victim group are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases.	Local and international leaders should condemn the use of hate speech and make it culturally unacceptable. Leaders who incite genocide should be banned from international travel and have their foreign finances frozen.
4. Organization	Genocide is always organized. Special army units or militias are often trained and armed.	The U.N. should impose arms embargoes on governments and citizens of countries involved in genocidal massacres, and create commissions to investigate violations.

Continued...

5. Polarization	Hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda. Moderates are silenced.	Prevention may mean security protection for moderate leaders or assistance to human rights groups. Coups d'état by extremists should be opposed by international sanctions.
6. Preparation	Victims are identified and separated out because of their ethnic or religious identity.	At this stage, a Genocide Emergency must be declared.
7. Extermination	It is "extermination" to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human.	At this stage, only rapid and overwhelming armed intervention can stop genocide. Real safe areas or refugee escape corridors should be established with heavily armed international protection.
8. Denial	The perpetrators deny that they committed any crimes.	The response to denial is punishment by an international tribunal or national courts.

Source: www.genocidewatch.org

TIMELINE OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

1894–1896

Sultan Abdul Hamid II's policies result in the deaths of more than 100,000 men, women and children. The move cripples Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

1896

The great massacre of Constantinople; for two days, at the Turkish Government's bidding, Armenians are killed indiscriminately in the streets.

1908

JULY 24 The Young Turks remove Sultan Hamid II from power and reestablish a constitutional monarchy. A liberal government is installed, but a more militarist faction, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) gains increasing support from the army.

1909

A counterrevolution briefly returns Hamid II to power. In the unrest that follows, between 15,000 and 30,000 Christian Armenians are killed in Adana province.

1914

FEB 21 A boycott of all Armenian businesses is declared.

MAR 2 Parliamentary elections are held; only candidates approved by the CUP win seats.

AUG 1 Germany declares war on Russia, beginning World War I.

AUG 2 A secret treaty of alliance is signed between Turkey and Germany virtually placing the Turkish armed forces under German command.

AUG 5 Censorship of all telegraphic communication is imposed.

AUG 18 Looting and vandalism of Armenian businesses occurs in the city of Diyarbekir and elsewhere.

AUG 22 All men between 20 and 45 are drafted to the military.

NOVEMBER The Ottoman Empire enters World War I on the side of the Central Powers, allying with Germany, The Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Bulgaria.

Convicts begin to be released from prison to form the *Special Organization*, which will later be responsible for the deportations of the Armenians.

1915

JAN 5	The CUP accuses Armenian bakers of poisoning bread; a false charge intended to spark riots.
FEB 25	Armenian members of the army are demobilized and transferred to unarmed labour battalions.
MAR 31	Mass deportations of the Armenian population begin.
APR 1	Mass arrests of Armenian political leaders in Sivas province.
APR 20	Resisting calls for conscription, the Armenian community of Van clashes with the army.
APR 24-25	Red Sunday. 600 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders are arrested across the Empire, 250 in Constantinople. They were later executed <i>en masse</i> .
MAY	The Temporary Law of Deportation is passed, authorizing the government and military to relocate anyone considered a threat to national security. Deportations of Armenians begin throughout the Empire. Ethnic Turks are resettled into formerly Armenian regions.
MAY 6	<i>The New York Times</i> reports that the Turks had adopted a policy to annihilate the Armenians.
SEPT 13	The Temporary Law of Expropriation and Confiscation is passed, stating that all property owned by Armenians is to be confiscated by the authorities.
SEPT - DEC	Hundreds of thousands of Armenians are deported from cities and villages throughout the Empire.
OCT 13	An announcement in Berlin claims that reports of the Armenian massacres are an Allied fabrication.
OCT 31	Instructions are issued advising that the special measures taken against the Armenians be conducted in places beyond the view of foreigners and especially the American consuls.
DEC 14	Orders are issued for the killing of Armenian priests.
DEC 15	A circular telegram clarifies that the purpose of the deportations is annihilation.
DEC 22	Orders are issued forbidding the acceptance from any Armenian of an application of exemption from the deportations.
DEC 25	Orders are issued for the deportation of all children except those who do not remember their parents.

APRIL In April, Wegner is sent to the Middle East as a member of the German Sanitary Corps. In July and August, Wegner spends his leave investigating rumors of Armenian massacres and detention camps. He photographs what he sees and, disobeying orders, smuggles these photos to Germany and the United States.

1916

JAN 11	Instructions are sent to prevent foreign officers from photographing dead Armenians.
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1916 | continued...

JAN 13	U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, during his farewell visit with Talaat Pasha is told of the pointlessness of speaking about the Armenians.
JAN 23	The governor-general of Aleppo informs Talaat that only 10% of the Armenian deportees remain alive, and that measures are being taken to dispose of them as well.
JAN 23 - MAR 10	During this period of 47 days, of 486,000 Armenian deportees, 364,500 are reported to have been killed by the Turks or to have died because of the hardships of the deportations.
FEB 14	50,000 Armenians are reported murdered at Intille (Intili) and another 50,000 deportees are reported at Ras-el-Ain (Ras ul-Ain).
FEB 16	An American application to send relief to the Armenians is rejected by Turkey.
APR 16	The New York Times reports that German Catholics place the number of massacred Armenians at 1,000,000.
MAY 24	The New York Times reports that 80,000 Armenians had died of starvation around Damascus.
JULY 6	The Russian Army occupies Bayburt and Erzinjan in the eastern province of Erzerum.
JULY 19	The U.S. House of Representatives adopts the resolution introduced in the U.S. Senate establishing a day of commemoration for the Armenian victims.
SEPT 5	The Turkish government orders all Armenian orphans to be given Turkish names.
OCT 4	Wilhelm Radowitz reports to the German Chancellor Theobald von Bethman Hollweg that of the two million Armenians in Turkey, one and half million had been deported. Of these 1,175,000 were dead; 325,000 were still living.
OCT 5	The Turkish government confiscates by a provisional law all the real estate of the Armenians.
OCT 8 & 9	U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, acting on the resolution of Congress, proclaims these two days "Armenian Relief Days."

In November, Wegner is reassigned to work in Cholera wards in Constantinople. He takes with him photonegatives of the atrocities hidden in his belt. By the end of the year, he is recalled to Germany.

1917

JAN 4	Mr. Goppert of the German Embassy, visits Enver, Talaat and Foreign Minister Halil to convey that forcible Islamization had no connection with military necessity or the security of the state and must be stopped immediately.
MAR 11	Allied forces occupy Baghdad.

1917 | continued...

APR 20 Turkey breaks off diplomatic relations with the United States.

DEC 9 Allied forces occupy Jerusalem.

1918

MAR 12 Enver orders the killing of all civilian Armenians over five years of age and remaining Armenians in the Turkish military within 48 hours. The Germans attempt to stop the Turks from committing this massacre.

OCT 1 Allied forces occupy Damascus.

OCT 8 Allied forces occupy Beirut. The CUP Cabinet of Enver, Jemal, and Talaat resigns. All three prepare to flee the country.

OCT 8 An armistice is signed between Turkey and the Allies. The armistice agreement makes provisions for Armenian internees to be released and allows Armenian deportees to return to their homes.

NOV 11 A general armistice is signed between the Allies and the Central Powers.

DEC 11 Enver, Jemal, and Talaat are summoned by the Turkish Parliament to appear for an inquiry within ten days.

1919

Wegner's eyewitness account of the Armenian Genocide is published as *The Way of No Return: A Martyrdom in Letters*.

On February 23, Wegner's open letter to US President Woodrow Wilson is published in the *Berliner Tageblatt* Newspaper.

1933

JAN 30 Adolph Hitler elected Chancellor of Germany

Armenian National Institute: <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/chronology.html>

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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Akçam, Taner. *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*. London: Zed Books, 2004.

Akçam contextualizes the genocide within Turkey's transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. He investigates the effects that the genocide has had on contemporary Turkey, arguing that Turkey will never be a truly democratic nation until it confronts its past.

Balakian, Peter. *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*. New York: Harper Collins, 2003.

A thorough overview of the genocide and America's response to the humanitarian crisis. Balakian notes that America's failure to recognize the genocide today starkly contrasts with its emphatic humanitarian response at the time.

Graber, G.S.. *Caravans to Oblivion: The Armenian Genocide, 1915*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996.

Graber focuses on the Turkish state's organization of the genocide, demonstrating the extent to which it was centrally planned.

Hovannisian, Richard G., ed.. *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1986.

An early collection of essays approaching the genocide from different perspectives, this remains a lucid introduction.

Miller, Donald E. and Lorna Touryan Miller. *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999.

Interviews with over 100 survivors illustrating themes such as the imprisonment of Armenian leaders, life in orphanages, and the continued psychological trauma plaguing survivors.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

[20 Voices](#)

http://www.zovoices.com/events_high.html

A video introduction to the Armenian Genocide.

[The Armenian National Committee of Canada](#)

<http://www.anccanada.org/>

An organization dedicated to the concerns of the Canadian Armenian community on a broad range of issues.

[The Armenian National Institute](#)

www.armenian-genocide.org/index.html

A website dedicated to the study, research and affirmation of the Armenian genocide.

[The Forgotten: The Armenian Genocide](#)

<http://www.theforgotten.org/>

Includes a timeline, biography and gallery of Armin Wegner, as well as survivor testimonies.

[The Genocide Education Project: Armenian Genocide Resource Library for Teachers](#)

<http://www.teachgenocide.org/>

A portal to teaching resources about the Armenian Genocide.