

Armenian Atrocities and Genocide in and around Van

The massacres and atrocities perpetrated in Van and its environs by Armenians constitute a painting of shame in front of history like other atrocities committed in other towns of Anatolia.

Let us make some quotations from the report by the Commander of Gendarmerie Regiment at Van concerning the savagery and atrocities of Armenians:

"When Russians attacked the Ottoman borders, the Armenians living at Van, convinced that the opportunity that they had been waiting for had come, rising up here and there, started a movement of rebellion. Putting into effect a program prepared long before, they quickly began attacking defenceless muslim villages, travellers and post carriages and plundering the provisions sent for the Army by waiting in ambush at certain points of the itinerary. The Armenian bands guiding Russians slaughtered the headman of the village of Mirgehi, Molla Hasan, and other villagers all their entreaties being in vain. Out of the 58 inhabitants of the village, 8 men, 12 women and 18 children were martyred and the remaining virgins and brides were taken away by Armenians.

Many told that at the village of Charikser a child was roasted on fire like a lamb and the incident has been confirmed as I observed the remaining of the corpse myself. At a place between the villages of Ahurik and Avazerlik corpses of four villagers were found, their hands having been thrust into their abdomens and genital organs into their mouths.

When, at the village of Kavli, a seven-year-old girl, Fatma, and a nine-year-old girl, Gьlnaz, were carried in, they were in a state of infirmity since they had been violated in both ways. These two innocent girls are living evidences of the savagery and violence of Armenians.

... At the village of Ahtucu, while the wife of a person named Kemo, Zeliha, was busy baking bread at the furnace, her six-month-old baby was cooked before her eyes and she was told to eat it. As she refused to do so, they thrust one of her legs into the furnace and burnt it pitilessly.

It is understood from the corpses that in the same village innocent children were burnt in dung fires.

At the village of Herite, after they killed someone called Han Osman under torture, they violated his three young daughters and two daughters in law in a manner which cannot be described neither in words nor in writing and the victims committed suicide afterwards out of deep sorrow.

... It is understood from the still fresh corpses in the village of Bozdođan that Armenians committed every kind of wickedness, that they first forced the villagers to abandon their homes and then massacred them all.

... Some three hundred jews trying to escape from Akaridan were captured at the village of Sil and cut into pieces. Then they stacked the corpses. All of the mosques in Van were destroyed, the muslim quarter burnt down. Van and its environs are in ruins.

The whole story of the savagery and atrocities committed by Armenians in and around Van would fill volumes of book. The foregoing is based on the statements of those victims who were rescued somehow." (op. cit., pp. 298-309.)

A foreigner, Rafael de Nogales, recorded the atrocities and genocide of Armenians at Van as follows:

"As soon as the combats started, the Deputy for Erzurum in the Assembly, Garo Pastırmacıyan, went to Russia together with almost all of the Armenian officers and soldiers in the Third Army. Soon after coming back with them, he began putting fire to villages and pitilessly killing every innocent muslim he could get in hand.

We learned that, after the Governor for Van, Cevdet Bey, abandoned Van, the Armenians became master of the town and slaughtered every muslim, regardless of whether they are men, women, children, or aged people. Such savagery has not been seen anywhere." (Rafael de Nogales: *Four Years Beneath the Crescent*: New York, 1926, p. 45. (Translated into Turkish: *Hilal Altında Dört Sene ve Buna Ait bir Cevap*. Translated by Kaymakam Hakki. İstanbul, 1931.)

This is the observation made by Clair Price in connection with the Armenian massacres:

"The Armenian bands occupied Van at the end of April and, after subjecting the Turkish people to massacres, handed over the remainder of the town to Russians in June." (Clair Price: *The Rebirth of Turkey*. New York, 1923, pp. 86-87.)

Yet another foreign writer, Felix Valyi records that

"Armenian revolutionaries took control of the town of Van in April. They established an Armenian General Staff under the command of Aram and Vardan and on May handed over the province of Van to Russian forces, after making it cleaned of all muslims." (Felix Valyi: *op. cit.*, pp. 233-234.)

The Armenian newspaper "Gochnak", published in America, reported, in its issue of May 24, 1915, with great pride that "only 1500 Turks remained at Van" after the Armenian atrocities and genocide.

The document (BOA. HR. SYS. HU, kr. 110, dos. 12-2, nr. 114-116 (See: Annex-17) kept in the Ottoman Archives testifies before history to the atrocities and genocide committed by Armenians in Van

"that Armenians and Russians treated very cruelly the muslim inhabitants of Van and its environs, that according to the testimony of Firdevs, from the Abbas Agha quarter of Van, the occupants savagely massacred the muslim population regardless of whether they are men or women, young or aged, that they opened up the womb of a pregnant woman and took out the foetus and cut off its head, that they tortured the people in the houses they had entered by force for hours and then killed, that they undressed a lad of 16 years and cut off his genital organ; that the women and girls taken to the American institution were violated, that they opened the graves and took out corpses already buried and dug holy places and filled them with dirt."

Another document (BOA. HR. SYS. HU, kr. 110, dos. 12-2, nr. 101-102 (See: Annex-18) concerning the Armenian atrocities committed in the village of Ashnak in the district of Reshadiye, Van underlines that "The Armenians and Russians attacking the village of Ashnak treated people cruelly, burnt women and children alive, gouged the eyes of young and old people and savagely violated the young women, separated some 15 muslim women and girls and shut them in a room and, while entertaining themselves on the evening, forced them to undress and said to them "Come on pray, let us see how you pray" and at length killed them after violation."