

### The Armenian Massacre

In 1915, the world reacted with equal horror as news emerged from the Ottoman Empire about the destruction of over a million Christian Armenians. The Turks blamed the Armenians for losing important WWI battles and were considered a threat to Turkish unity.

*"All rights of the Armenians to live and work on Turkish soil have been completely cancelled, and with regard to this the Government takes all responsibility on itself, and has commanded that even babes in the cradle are not to be spared."*

The fate of the Armenians was ethnic cleansing from the lands of Turkey, the razing of their towns and churches, the mass slaughter of their menfolk, and the massacre of their women and children. Tens of thousands of Armenian women -- often after mass rape by their Turkish guards -- were left to die of starvation with their children. The few men who survived were tied together and thrown into the river. The Turks would fire a bullet into one of them and his body would drag the rest to their deaths.

The deliberate nature of this slaughter was admitted by the Turkish leader, Enver Pasha. Arnold Toynbee, who worked for the Foreign Office during the war, was to record,

*The "atmosphere of horror" which lay over the abandoned Armenian lands in the aftermath of the savagery was horrific. Men had been lined up on bridges to have their throats cut and be thrown into rivers; in orchards and fields, women and children had been knifed. Armenians had been shot by the thousand, sometimes beaten to death with clubs.*

Thousands of Armenians had been driven into caves and Turks lit bonfires at the mouths of the caves. The smoke was blown in and the men were asphyxiated. The caves were the world's first gas chambers.

After the war the people responsible were put on trial for their crimes. Many of those responsible for the genocide were sentenced to death. This brought attention to the horrors that can occur during a war. These horrors would soon be replicated by many other ruthless leaders. And it was not until much later that something was done to prevent these atrocities.

1. Why were the Armenians massacred by the Turks?
2. Describe some of the ways people were massacred.
3. How did this massacre affect the world?