

Why Assyrian Genocide is Less Known in Comparison with the Armenian Genocide

Fred Aprim

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There are many books and articles on the Assyrian genocide. Some addressed it extensively and in-depth while others wrote about it in passing or in general without providing comprehensive details. A list of such books was compiled by this author. See a list in the link below:

https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2020/Books_on_Assyrian_Genocide.pdf

While books on the Armenian Genocide exceed those on the Assyrian genocide; however, several books on the Armenian genocide bring attention to the Assyrian Genocide. While Assyrians wrote about the genocide over 100 years ago, but many have been published more recently. One of the most important publications on the Armenian Genocide is “*The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*”, (Blue Book) by Lord James Bryce. The Blue book has been criticized by many Turkish and Kurdish denialists and labeled as a British propaganda to build up support for the Great War. However, we know that James Bryce had submitted his work to scholars for verification before its publication.

But many ask, why the Assyrian genocide did not receive wide attention similar to that of the Armenian considering that the two genocides took place concurrently. I found the following 4-points argument by George N Shirinian’s, “*Introduction to Genocide in the Ottoman Empire: Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks 1913-1923 (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017)*” to be helpful:

1. Owing to the fact that many Armenians had settled in Western countries by the late 1970s, their efforts at cultural preservation were informed by the languages and cultures of such places as Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, where there was a strong political and academic tradition. The Armenians found a fertile environment in those places for their political and academic activities, organizing political parties and lobby groups, and by the 1980s they had invested in Armenian Studies chairs and departments in several universities. The Armenians were thus able to start producing a body of political activity and scholarly work that promoted awareness and understanding of the Armenian Genocide. The influence of the Armenian terrorist movement in the 1970s to the mid 1980s must also be taken into account in this regard.

That movement did garner coverage in the international press, but also caused the Turkish state to escalate its genocide denial efforts, which, in turn, only further motivated Armenian efforts to produce scholarship countering it. Despite the lack of greater political success in genocide affirmation, the Armenians, along with non-Armenian scholars, have been effective in establishing a solid, academic basis for the acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide through the fields of Armenian Studies, Genocide Studies, and Comparative Genocide Studies. The Assyrians and Greeks had to deal with such post-genocide problems as well, but did so differently. Few Greek historians in the diaspora have pursued the study of the destruction of the Ottoman Greeks. There are important studies produced in Greece, but they remain inaccessible to those who do not know the Greek language, and, moreover, the Greek government has not been supportive of promoting awareness of this subject. Some feel it is because it exposes errors in Greek foreign policy at the time; others feel it is so as to not strain already difficult relations with neighboring Turkey, which is also a NATO partner, with all the political considerations that entails. There are still only a handful of studies in Western languages on the Assyrian experience of genocide. Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the Assyrians have suffered repeated persecution in Turkey, Iraq, and elsewhere in the Middle East. They are now in the process of

reorganizing in the diaspora and some fine scholarly work is being produced on their history by both Assyrian and non-Assyrian scholars.

2. The Legacy of the British “Blue Book”

One contributing in some measure to the genocide of the Christian minorities being identified primarily with the Armenians was the publication in 1916 of the influential British parliamentary “Blue Book,” *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915–16: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon by Viscount Bryce*. It reproduced, among its many documents, reports from the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian [Assyrian] Relief. Yet, while the massacre of Assyrians is reported in the book, the Assyrians were omitted from the book’s title. Bryce’s original title of the book was “*The Treatment of Armenians and Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire*”. Dr. Nicholas Al-Jeloo asserted that when the book was presented to 1st Viscount Grey of Fallodon, better known as Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign policy maker during First World War, the latter removed the Assyrians from the title of the book and accepted it as “*The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*”. Another book by Bryce, titled “*Treatment of Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire*”, was prepared but never published. In fact, Al-Jeloo stated that the chapter in the Blue Book dealing exclusively with the massacres of Assyrians in the Urmia region was removed from the French edition and many later editions of the book.¹

3. The Influence of Raphael Lemkin

It is worth noting that Raphael Lemkin, the man who coined the term “genocide” and made its study and prevention his life’s work, had extensive notes for a separate publication on the Armenian Genocide and spoke publicly about it. He also planned significant chapters for his magnum opus on the Assyrians and Greeks, but it is likely that one of the reasons he did not write on the Assyrians or Greeks by the end of his life was the lack of material available in the languages he knew.

4. The Availability of Published Information in Western Languages

A substantial body of primary source material and secondary literature on the Armenian Genocide has been published in the major languages of Western scholarship. This is much less the case for the Assyrian and Greek Genocides. One of the objectives of this book is to help redress this imbalance and to view these three related cases through a single lens, as a shared experience.

One more note, Prof. Hannibal Travis explained that two potential explanations for the ongoing concealment of the Assyrian and Greek genocides are that there was little writing on Ottoman mass killing in general prior to the 1970s, or that recent scholarship made the Assyrian and Greek genocides prominent within genocide studies. Neither of them holds water, because there was abundant documentation of the Ottoman Christian genocide before the allegedly forgotten Armenian genocide began to be remembered, and very recent scholarly works minimize or completely ignore Assyrian and Greek victims.²

For more information on Assyrian Genocide, visit:

<https://www.atour.com/holocaust/>

<https://seyfocenter.com/category/english/>

<https://www.fredaprim.com/books.php>

1 <https://mirrorspectator.com/2010/04/21/armenians-and-assyrians-shared-experiences-though-the-ages/>

2 Hannibal Travis, “[Constructing the 'Armenian Genocide': How Scholars Unremembered the Assyrian and Greek Genocides in the Ottoman Empire](#)”. Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press (2013)