Deportations of Armenians. The man in the front is a “gendarme,” a member of the security organization of the Ottoman Empire. Photo from the book “Ravished Armenia: The Story of Aurora Mardiganian, the Christian Girl who Lived Through the Great Massacres,” by Aurora Mardiganian. Published by Kingfield Press in 1918.

Editor’s Note: Before World War I, there were 2 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. After the war, the empire became the country of Turkey. By 1923, about 1.5 million of the Armenians were dead. Others had been deported to neighboring countries like Syria, Greece and Egypt.

Today, the Turkish government still claims the killings took place as part of World War I. What happened should not be considered genocide, it says. Genocide is the mass killing of a group of people, particularly an ethnic or religious group. It is carried out with the purpose of exterminating or wiping out that group of people.

Almost all historians do consider the Armenian killings genocide, however.

The roots of the genocide can be traced to the mixed character of the Ottoman Empire. The empire had a Muslim government but contained other religious and ethnic groups. One of these groups was the Armenians, who were Christian.
By the time World War I started in 1914, the empire was falling apart. Many people had become much poorer than before. The Armenians were seen as a well-off group of merchants and businessmen who took advantage of others. While this was mostly untrue, it made many people angry with them.

In addition, the Ottoman government did not trust Armenians to be loyal, because of their religion. It feared they might side with Russia against the Ottoman Empire. At the start of World War I, Russia was still a Christian nation.

The New York Times often wrote about the Armenian genocide. In 1915, it published 145 articles on the genocide. Below is an article published on December 15, 1915.

**Report Says Deaths Are Intentional**

**MILLION ARMENIANS KILLED: POLICY OFextermination**

The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief issued a statement yesterday. It detailed further horrors carried out by the Turks against the Armenian people.

The committee's statement provides more proof that the recent killings are not random. Instead, they reflect a goal of exterminating the Armenian people.
Professor Samuel T. Dutton is the committee's secretary. "Of the two million Armenians in Turkey a year ago, at least one million have been killed," Dutton said. Others have been forced to flee the country.

The number of victims is constantly increasing, Dutton said.

Yesterday's statement reports that 30,000 Armenian deportees have died in the Caucasus alone. Another 180,000 remain there as refugees.

The statement also quotes a letter from a missionary stationed in the city of Konia. The missionary had visited a train station at Kachin Han. A group of desperate deportees had gathered there, hoping to flee to safety.

The missionary found around 100 people lying about the station in a terrible condition. They had been waiting there for three days. Most had eaten up all the food they had and looked tired and weak.

**People Are Out Of Options**

"The train from Konia arrived while we were there," the missionary reported. The desperate deportees then "dragged themselves to the cars in an effort to get on board." However, they were pushed back by the police, "partly because they had no tickets and partly because there was no room."

The crowd was "forced to turn back to where they had been sitting or lying about the station."
"Among the hundred people there were not half a dozen tents," the missionary wrote. "Most of the people were lying out in the open day and night, many of them without even blankets or quilts."

"Half a mile from the station I found two old women," the missionary wrote. They were "crawling off on hands and knees too weak to walk." A driver had promised to take them to a nearby village. However, once out of sight of the police, he had simply dropped them in a field along the way.

The unfortunate people he saw at Kachin Han had no future ahead of them, the missionary wrote. All would soon starve to death, he predicted.