

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES TO THE ARMENIAN MASSACRES 1894–1896

BABKENIAN V.

vbab124@gmail.com

Genocide Studies is a discourse strongly associated with mass death and destruction. Other than in relation to the Holocaust, historian Paul Bartrop observes that “Little work has been done in respect of goodness during genocide.” He adds that “one might despair at the predominance of evil in the world over the relatively few chronicled acts of goodness”¹. During the Holocaust, a small minority of individuals mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values by rescuing Jews from almost certain death. Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded the Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation. Similarly, there are many instances of goodness during the 1915 Armenian Genocide and the preceding massacres, but it remains largely understudied.

In the years 1894 to 1896, a series of massacres were carried out against the Christian Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire under the guidance of the reigning sultan Abdul Hamid II. Tens of thousands of Armenians were killed and at least half-a-million were left destitute. The Hamidian Massacres, as they became known, have been overshadowed by the genocide beginning in 1915, but they were by any measure a major crime and tragedy. Scholar Daniel Goldhagen observed that “the massive eliminationist assault against the Armenians from 1894 to 1896 would rightly be called the Armenian Genocide – had an even more massive mass murder ... not followed twenty years later”².

News of the Hamidian Massacres sparked a global humanitarian relief effort that drew interest from a broad range of activists. Tens of thousands of Armenians

¹ **Bartrop P.**, “Righteousness in the Face of Evil”, In Colin Tatz, ed., *Genocide Perspectives IV: essays on Holocaust and Genocide*, Sydney, UTS Press, 2012, p. 465.

² **Goldhagen D.J.**, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*, Public Affairs, New York, 2009, p. 302.

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were saved as a result of these efforts but their stories remain largely untold. This article explores the international humanitarian response to the Armenian massacres of 1894 to 1896 which became a dress rehearsal for the much larger response during the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

The Armenian Question

The Armenians are an ancient people who have inhabited the highlands of today's eastern Turkey since at least VI century BCE. Situated on the land bridge between Europe and Asia, Armenia lay in the path of conquerors: Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mongols, Byzantines, Ottoman Turks and Russians. Yet the Armenians always managed to preserve their identity, carving out unique religious institutions, language, literature and architecture.

“The Armenian Question” emerged as an issue in international politics towards the end of XIX century. The Ottoman Empire, which had ruled the largest portion of historic Armenia since XVI century was in a state of decline, becoming known among western diplomats as ‘the sick man of Europe’. Like other non-Muslim minorities in the Ottoman Empire, Armenians suffered inequality, including special taxes, the inadmissibility of legal testimony, and the prohibition on bearing arms³.

In XIX century Armenians began to see themselves as a nation once again instead of just an inferior minority. An intellectual awakening influenced by the Western and Russian ideas and a new interest in the Armenian history, created a sense of secular nationality among many of the population. A major source of this enlightenment came from the American Protestant missionaries. With the conversion of Muslims seen as a capital offence, they focused their evangelising on the Armenian subjects of the empire. As the Armenians were already Christian, the missionaries sought to ‘reform’ their Christianity, which they considered to have become a very dark glass through which to see Christ's teaching with its superstitions, traditions and dogmatism. Through XIX century, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) established a network of congregations and schools throughout the Ottoman Empire and became important

³ Quataert D., *The Ottoman Empire 1700–1922*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 2–6.

actors of social change. They helped instil Western values and ideals among many Armenians which were diametrically opposed to the ideas of the Ottoman rulers⁴.

Relations between Armenians and their Muslim neighbours differed in each locality, and there seems to have been no general pattern beyond the inferior position of Armenians and other minorities, such as Greeks and Assyrians. Armenian peasants were generally under the local rule of landlords and sometimes Muslim tribal leaders, often Kurds, and often had to pay tributes in money and in kind (by accommodating nomads, for example). Imposing a great financial burden on individual households, also led to widespread theft and assaults, notably rape of Armenian women. Later in the century *muhajirs* (Muslim refugees) arrived from the Caucasus and the Balkans, and many settled in Armenian areas. The *muhajirs*, bitter over their treatment at the hands of Orthodox Christians in their former lands, competed for land, leading to tension and a growing sense of insecurity on the Armenian part⁵.

Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Turkish war of 1878, the European powers pressed the Ottoman government to carry out a series of reforms in the Armenian-inhabited regions of the empire. Abdul Hamid II, the sultan of the Ottoman Empire, was determined to assert Islamic hegemony and defied European calls for reforms. Shortly afterwards, a revolutionary movement developed among the Armenians in opposition to the institutionalised discrimination applied to Christians in the empire. Armenian demands for social justice were met with repression from the Ottoman authorities.

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This explosive mix finally ignited in 1894 in the Turkish Armenian village of Sasun (Batman province, in south-eastern Anatolia), when the Ottoman officials and the Kurdish tribes tried to impose double taxation on the Armenians. Villagers, influenced by armed Armenian revolutionaries, at last resisted the unfair taxing. Sultan Abdul Hamid II dispatched his forces and they destroyed many villages and killed thousands of Armenians – most of whom had played no role in the uprising⁶.

⁴ **Kieser H.-L.**, “Mission as Factor of Change in Turkey (nineteenth to first half of twentieth century)”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol 13, no 4, 2002, p. 391.

⁵ **Bloxham D.**, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p. 42

⁶ **Petersen M.**, *Starving Armenians: America and the Armenian Genocide 1915–1930 and after*, University of Virginia Press, Virginia, 2005, p. 23

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In the words of H. S. Shipley, a British delegate of a commission that followed these events, for a period of some three weeks the Armenians “were absolutely hunted like wild beasts”, being “killed wherever they were met”. He concluded that the object of the Sultan’s policy was “extermination, pure and simple”⁷. In early 1895 foreign pressure forced the Sultan to appoint a commission to investigate the atrocities but it turned out to be “sham enquiry” – a vehicle that attempted to prove the Sultan’s version of events⁸.

The Sasun crisis revived the European call for Armenian reforms and a joint British, French and Russian delegation submitted a plan to the Sultan in May 1895. As before, European intercession unsustained by force only compounded the troubles of the Armenians. In response to foreign diplomatic pressure, the Sultan announced the implementation of a reform scheme in July 1895. If the Sultan seemed to be handing out reform and justice with his right hand, with his left he was dealing murder and atrocity on a massive scale. A series of massacres later occurred in almost every major Armenian-inhabited town in the Ottoman Empire’s eastern provinces. The majority of impartial observers, including British consuls, noted official complicity. A succession of massacres became a drawn-out calculated brutality.

In the south-eastern Ottoman city of Urfa, the cruellest of the outrages occurred in December 1895. About 3000 Armenian men, women and children had taken refuge in their cathedral, but troops soon broke in. After shooting down many unarmed victims, a mob outside collected straw bedding, poured kerosene on it, and set it alight. The British Consul Gerald Fitzmaurice who visited the city shortly afterwards described the atrocity:

The gallery and wooden framework soon caught fire, whereupon, blocking up the staircases leading to the gallery with similar inflammable material, they left the mass of struggling human beings to become the prey of the flames. During several hours the sickening odour of roasting flesh pervaded the town, and even today, two months and a half after the massacre, the smell of

⁷ Walker Ch., *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 141.

⁸ Gooch G.P., *History of modern Europe 1878–1919*, New York, H. Holt & Co., 1923, p. 234.

*putrescent and charred remains in the church is unbearable.*⁹

The Ottoman government alleged that the Armenians were in revolt and could legitimately be suppressed. While some agitators did exist among the Armenian communities, in most cases the attacks upon the Armenians were unprovoked. Facts established by consular reports revealed the procedure was almost the same everywhere. The men were segregated and killed, women were raped, children were abducted, shops and homes were plundered and their property confiscated. German Pastor Johannes Lepsius, the son of a famous Egyptologist Karl Lepsius, travelled to the region in 1896 and meticulously investigated the atrocities. He reported how in many cases, the massacres were announced by a bugle call or other signal and called off at an appointed time. In 2500 towns and villages, Lepsius estimated that over 100,000 Armenians had been killed and another 500,000 made destitute¹⁰.

Armenian revolutionaries met violence with violence, resolving to force intervention by European powers who had signed the Berlin treaty. In August 1896, a group of armed Armenians seized the Ottoman Bank in Constantinople and threatened to blow it up unless their political demands were met. They gave in after holding the bank for thirteen hours; all they obtained was free passage out of the country. As they left, another massacre of Armenians occurred on the streets of the capital, under the noses of the foreign ambassadors. In the two days of killing between 5,000 and 6,000 Armenians were estimated to have died in Constantinople alone.¹¹ With this dramatic incident the Hamidian massacres at last ended.

Humanitarian activism abroad

The story of the atrocities was dramatic, newsworthy and emotionally appealing. Richard Wilson and Richard Brown emphasise that as “an ethos, humanitarianism has a strong narrative and representational dimension that can generate humanitarian constituencies for particular causes”¹². Reports of the

⁹ **Walker Ch.**, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, p. 164.

¹⁰ **Lepsius J.**, *Armenia and Europe: An Indictment*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1897, p. 18.

¹¹ **Walker Ch.**, *Armenia*, p. 168.

¹² **Wilson R. & Brown R.**, *Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilization of Empathy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, front page.

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Armenian anguish were widely disseminated by the press throughout the English speaking world. The visual and literary images of “suffering Armenians” captured the imagination of many, and a parallel movement of political activism and relief for the Armenians emerged in the US and British Empire. The narratives highlighted the group connection between the Anglo-American world and Armenians as “fellow Christians”. Research suggests that people are most generous toward those who they believe are part of their group identity¹³. The movement encompassed religious, liberal and secular elements; however, much of the grassroots support came from members of the evangelical churches and missionary societies¹⁴.

In Britain and its white dominions, the public’s understanding of the plight of the Armenians was largely shaped by Victorian-era liberals who had supported the British intervention on behalf of Ottoman Turkey’s Christian minorities since the time of the Bulgarian Atrocities in 1876¹⁵. At public meetings, Armenian relief funds were inaugurated and friendship societies were formed. Many of these groups lobbied their government to take action on the Armenian question and engaged in charity work to assist the Armenian population. Organisations included the Anglo-Armenian Association founded in 1893 and the Grosvenor House Association headed by the Duke of Westminster (Earl of Grosvenor)¹⁶.

The Armenian relief movement coincided with the rising tide of the women’s movement and western women were increasingly propelled into internationalism by new transnational organisation and strong sisterly identification with victimised women elsewhere. Drove of western women were irresistibly drawn towards the humanitarian crusade as many had come to see the Armenian Question as a corollary of the Woman Question. What stirred many women to action, historian

¹³ Whether humanitarian action due to group identities is ultimately altruistic or egoistic action remains a point of much debate. Jerome Wakefield, *Is Altruism Part of Human Nature? Toward a Theoretical Foundation for the Helping Professions*, *Social Service Review*, vol 67, no 3, 1993, p. 434.

¹⁴ **Wilson A.**, “In the name of God, civilization, and humanity: The United States and the Armenian massacres of the 1890s”, *Le Mouvement Social*, Avril-Juin, 2009, p. 28.

¹⁵ The Bulgarian Atrocities was the brutal suppression by the Ottoman army and irregulars of a Bulgarian uprising in April 1876. An estimated 30,000 Bulgarians were massacred and the event led to a huge public outcry in Europe and America.

¹⁶ **Kirakossian A.**, *The Armenian Massacres 1894–1896: British Media Testimony*, The Armenian Research Center, Dearborn Michigan, 2007, p. 57.

Ian Tyrrell asserts, was “the way the experience of the Armenians seemed to highlight the clash of their own civilization’s progress on the issues of women’s emancipation and the allegedly circumscribed position of women in the non-western world”¹⁷.

Many leading British women embraced the moral and humanitarian principles of Prime Minister William Gladstone, who had championed the cause of the oppressed Ottoman Christians. Prominent among these women were Lady Lucy Cavendish and Lady Isabella Somerset, who were at the helm of the Armenian relief movement. Somerset was the head of the British Women’s Temperance Association (BWTA) and a campaigner for women’s rights. She was the only woman to speak on the platform during the national protest against the Armenian massacres held at St James’s Hall, London, in May 1895 – an event that brought immense publicity to the cause. In what the *Brisbane Courier* described as the “most dramatic speech” at the event, Somerset told of how one young Armenian wife had “her baby torn from her arms and hacked to pieces on the bayonets of the soldiery”¹⁸. Such narratives compelled Somerset with a call to action and she used her paper, the *Woman’s Signal*, to demand that ‘the extermination of these people’ be stopped and for the formation of an Armenian rescue fund.¹⁹

A pioneer of women’s education and Gladstone’s niece, Cavendish became the president of the International Association of the Friends of Armenia (IAFA) committee in 1896 with Somerset as secretary.²⁰ The IAFA committee sent Cambridge University professor of palaeontology Rendel Harris and his wife, Helen, on a fact-finding trip to the massacre sites. They arrived at Constantinople in March 1896. Apart from their investigative role they conducted relief work among Armenians and Assyrians between Alexandretta and Samsun before returning home in September 1896. Another fund, the Women’s Armenian Relief Fund, brought together prominent British women. The fund sent money to the

¹⁷ **Tyrrell I.**, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire: the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in international perspective, 1800–1930*, UNC Press Books, North Carolina, 1991, p. 106.

¹⁸ “Great Britain and Japan”, *Brisbane Courier*, 2 July 1895, p. 3.

¹⁹ **Tusan M.**, *Smyrna’s Ashes: Humanitarianism, Genocide and the Birth of the Middle East*, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2012, p. 36.

²⁰ **Nassibian A.**, *Britain and the Armenian Question: 1915–1923*, Croom Helm, London, 1985, p. 40.

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largely Armenian populated cities of Van, Diarbekir and Zeitoun; it raised and disbursed more than 16,000 pounds²¹.

In the US, much of the sentiment emanated from the near century-long American Protestant missionary presence among the Armenians²². In 1894, the ABCFM in the Ottoman Empire employed over 150 missionaries, who in turn operated 112 churches, 15 mission stations, and 268 outstations, and attended to an estimated following of 47 000²³. The missionaries provided the main source of vivid, on-the-scene accounts of the massacres that were channelled to the international press. Historian Anne Wilson notes that three essential messages emerged from these narratives. The first was the narrowly religious nature of the conflict. The second was the notion that Armenians deserved American sympathy for being Christians and Western in their cultural orientation. Finally, the message flowed from missionary pens that Armenian women were uniquely victimised by a social order that left them vulnerable to sexual molestation by their rulers²⁴. Support for the Armenian cause came from many quarters including former abolitionists, woman suffragists and evangelical ministers.

A number of Armenian relief committees were formed throughout the United States. They were supported by many 'habitual humanitarians' including William Lloyd Garrison junior, the son of prominent abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Local Armenian relief committees in the Midwest and East formed a confederation in November 1895 called the National Armenian Relief Committee (NARC). It was headed by the Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court, David J. Brewer, and the executive committee included James Barton, secretary of the ABCFM. Barton would later become one of the founders of the American Committee of Armenian and Syrian Relief (later renamed Near East Relief) that helped save the lives of hundreds of thousands of Armenians during the Armenian Genocide and its aftermath. The NARC's operations centred at the Bible House in New York and the Wall Street bankers Brown Brothers and Company served as treasurers. The national committee gave directions on how to form local committees and raise funds. The NARC published a monthly periodical *The Helping Hand Series* which

²¹ **Kirakossian A.**, *The Armenian Massacres*, p. 58.

²² **Tyrrell I.**, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010, p. 106.

²³ **Wilson A.**, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 34.

often contained articles about the relief work among the orphans in the various ABCFM stations²⁵. A women's auxiliary committee of the NARC formed in March 1896 in New York. They sent an appeal to 1000 prominent women through the United States for \$100 each, and within weeks, over 100 women sent the requested amount²⁶.

The *Christian Herald*, the most widely circulated religious paper in the English-speaking world, organised its own campaign and in a short time raised some \$73,000²⁷. They sent an agent, William Willard Howard, to the Ottoman Empire in 1896 to superintend the distribution of funds. He visited the region shortly after the Sasun massacres as a newspaper correspondent and was familiar with the country. His trip in 1896 ended abruptly just before he entered the Ottoman border from Persia after being warned by the American missionaries that his presence among the Armenians may result in further massacres. He also learnt that there had been a price set on his head due to his news reports on the Sasun massacres²⁸.

American women suffragists and social reformers were especially important in providing support for the Armenian relief movement. The National Council of Women passed a resolution in 1895 which stated:

That we deplore the outrages committed upon the Armenians, and record our appreciation of the unflinching heroism of our Armenian sisters in sacrificing their lives in defense of their honor and freedom of conscience, and we earnestly urge our sisters in Great Britain and other countries of Europe to use their Influence with their governments that they take immediate action to establish security of life, honor and property in Armenia²⁹.

Individual feminists and social reformers championing the Armenian cause included Julia Ward Howe of the American Women's Suffrage Association and

²⁵ **Daniel**, *American Philanthropy in the Near East: 1820–1960*, Ohio University Press, Athens, 1970, p. 117.

²⁶ “Escaped Many Dangers”, *New York Times*, 19 March 1896, p. 5.

²⁷ **Daniel**, *American Philanthropy*, p. 116.

²⁸ “Escaped Many Dangers”, *New York Times*, 19 March 1896, p. 5.

²⁹ **Louise Barnum Robbins**, *History and Minutes: National Council of Women of the United States*, E. B. Stillings & Co., Boston, 1898, p. 242.

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Frances Willard of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). In the minds of these women and many others, as historian Wilson notes, "the humanitarian imperative to defend and protect – while often expressed in universalist terms – remained closely tied to the defense of "Christendom" and the protection of "noble races""³⁰. In a book of Armenian poems translated and edited by Boston feminist and social reformer, Alice Stone Blackwell, in 1896, she claimed "that the nation for which we plead is a cultivated one, with not only a history, but still living and productive literary power"³¹.

Under Willard's leadership, the WCTU championed a variety of social issues including women's suffrage, temperance, labour rights and moral reform. A master strategist, Willard encouraged the internationalisation of the organisation as the World's WCTU, enabling it to become the largest women's social reform organisation in the world. Willard was one of the first to recognise the Armenian massacres as a "colossal crime against humanity" and she did not cease "with pen and voice, to plead for the Armenian sufferers"³². Willard's rhetoric mixed issues of women's rights with sexual fears, and evoked the idea that Ottoman Muslims exercised total power over Christian women – as "the unwilling slaves" in a "harem". The WCTU, in particular, made the Armenians a cause *celebre*. Members of the organisation viewed the plight of the victims as representative of the struggle of men and women to achieve Christian domesticity amid the polygamy of the Ottoman Muslims. Armenians were idealised for "their loyalty to a pure home" and as standard bearers for companionate marriage in a struggle for the "home against the harem"³³.

The official organ of the WCTU, the *Union Signal*, argued that the "American spirit and example" had "stimulated the Armenian spirit of independence" that led to their repression. It was therefore an American "duty" to provide aid to the Armenians³⁴. Through its transnational networks, the WCTU arguably did more to internationalise the Armenian relief movement than any other organisation. Willard lobbied the US government to use 'its moral and material influence for the relief of Armenia'. Willard also directed criticism towards the European powers for their

³⁰ Wilson A., op. cit., p. 40.

³¹ Tyrrell I., *Reforming the World*, p. 106.

³² Lady Henry Somerset, "Frances E. Willard", *Outlook*, 27 June 1896, p. 1189.

³³ Tyrrell I., *Reforming the World*, p. 106.

³⁴ Ibid.

lack of action to stop the killings due to what she called were “vested interests”. She denounced the male-dominated western statesmen as being “craven cowards” for not having the “wit, wisdom, or will to save a single life, shelter a single tortured babe, or supply a single loaf of bread to the starving Armenians”³⁵. Drawing on discourses of maternalism, Willard asserted the role of women in alleviating human suffering and in so doing bringing credit to themselves. She called upon the American public and Union members across the world to show practical support for Barton’s relief work and to unite their “tears and prayers” with those of their “Armenian brothers and sisters”³⁶. Members of the WCTU responded generously to Willard’s humanitarian appeal, contributing US\$7300 to the Armenian relief fund which was more than any other single organisation³⁷.

By 1897, the British and American groups had collectively raised over £100,000 and US\$1,100,000 in relief funds respectively³⁸. The latter sum included a donation from the West Central Africa mission, Chisamba Church, which sent fifteen dollars for Armenian relief³⁹. It represented the contributions made by Ovimbundu people. This was unusual – the Ovimbundu were normally the recipients of mission funds. Their donation suggested how widely the awareness of the Armenian cause had spread.

Eyewitness accounts of countless women, children and men being butchered, raped and abducted became part of a continuing narrative. The popular press in Britain published graphic accounts of the atrocities, reports re-printed in Australia. Their sensationalist depictions are reflected in article headings: “Armenian Horrors – Fearful Holocaust”, “Horrible Massacres – children buried alive” and “Eight Thousand Butchered – Three Thousand Roasted Alive”⁴⁰. Suzanne Moranian best

³⁵ **Gordon A.**, *The Beautiful Life of Frances E. Willard*, Women’s Temperance Publishing Association, Chicago, 1898, pp. 258–69.

³⁶ Minutes of 1896 Annual Convention of the WCTU of South Australia, in the WCTU of South Australia Annual Reports, vol 1893-1896, National Library of Australia (NLA), p. 27.

³⁷ **Tyrrell I.**, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire*, p. 144.

³⁸ **Robert L. Daniel**, *American Philanthropy in the Near East: 1820-1960*, Ohio University Press, Athens, 1970, p. 120.

³⁹ *Eight Seventh Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, Published By the Board, Congregational House, Boston, 1897, p. 26.

⁴⁰ “Armenian Horrors-Fearful Holocaust”, *Argus*, 20 May 1896, p. 5, “Horrible Massacres-children buried alive”, *West Australian*, 23 October 1896, p. 5, “Eight Thousand Butchered – Three Thousand Roasted Alive”, *SMH*, 20 May 1896, p. 7.

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describes the way the media expressed the humanitarian narrative during this period:

The reports and commentaries were gripping. They seized the heart and were high human drama. The plot repeated in the American media for years was a basic one: good versus evil. The press championed the underdog fighting the oppressor, who naturally hated his prey. The Armenians were portrayed as the innocent martyred Christians whom the ... Turks victimized. Americans identified with the Christian Armenians⁴¹.

Like their counterparts in the United States and Britain, Churches in Australia held meetings of protest and passed resolutions to be conveyed to colonial governors⁴². Responding to appeals by Willard and Somerset, Australian members of the WCTU were “touched with tenderest pity and stirred with intense indignation at the story” of the suffering of their “fellow Christians in Armenia”. Established in New Zealand and Australia in the 1880s, the Women Christian Temperance Union became one of the largest and most vocal organisations for women’s equality and social reform. A WCTU appeal noted that Australian women who had “banded together for the protection and uplifting of other women” were “roused to a sense of shame at such barbarities”, and were “joining in the demand of Christendom for action on the part of the Great Powers of Europe, and are sending relief to the heart-broken sufferers”⁴³.

Across the Tasman Sea, New Zealand poet and WCTU member Jessie Mackay appealed to the people of her country “to spare a few shillings over and above home charities” during Christmas “and to remember Armenia, the most woeful of countries”⁴⁴. Otago settler, James Adam, established an Armenian Relief Fund in New Zealand in May 1896⁴⁵. Funds were channelled to an Armenian hospital in Constantinople through Madame Hagopian, the treasurer of the Armenian Relief

⁴¹ **Moravian S.**, *The American Missionaries and the Armenian Question: 1915–1921*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994, p. 210.

⁴² **Vicken Babkenian** and **Peter Stanley**, *Armenia, Australia and the Great War*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2016, p. 30.

⁴³ Minutes WCTU.

⁴⁴ “For Armenia”, *Otago Witness*, 6 August 1896, p. 41.

⁴⁵ “The Armenian Relief Fund”, *Otago Daily Times*, 9 May 1896, p. 6.

Fund in Cairo. By January 1897, the New Zealand Committee had sent over £250 to the hospital⁴⁶.

Humanitarianism on the ground

While British and American activists succeeded in mobilising a large number of humanitarian donors at home, direct relief was only possible by those who travelled or lived in the devastated region. Apart from some 100 American missionaries, there was only one American consul, Henry Jewett, in the Asiatic provinces of Turkey when the massacres began in 1894. Jewett was stationed in the Armenian city of Sivas. There were British consuls at Van, Erzerum, Trebizond, and Sivas⁴⁷.

After the outbreak of atrocities in 1894, Ottoman officials warned the missionaries to leave the country to save themselves from danger. Strong statements were made by Ottoman officials to the effect that the missionaries could not be protected unless they abandoned their posts in the interior for the coastal towns or to Constantinople. The missionaries understood the danger of remaining at their posts and maintaining the established institutions. Refusing to abandon their posts, the American missionaries provided relief to the Armenians in distress. Some twenty mission stations and schools became centres that provided shelter and distributed relief supplies to the terror-stricken, defenceless refugees.

In Erzerum, a city near the Russian border region of eastern Turkey, American missionaries Dr. Ruth Parmelee and William Chambers assisted some 8,000 survivors of the massacres which began there on 30 October 1895⁴⁸. About 400 kilometres west of the city, in Sivas, missionaries Henry Perry and Miss Mary Brewer were in the midst of the dreadful scene when the city was attacked on 12 November. About 7,000 houses and shops were burned and 3,000 Armenians massacred. With the assistance of the United States Consul Jewett, Perry and Brewer helped distribute relief to some 20,000 survivors made destitute⁴⁹. In Urfa, the burden of relief all rested upon the shoulders of missionary Miss Corrina Shattuck who was the only American in the city during and after the burning of the

⁴⁶ Ibid, 16 February 1897, p. 8.

⁴⁷ ABCFM, *Our heroes in the Orient: Their Faith; Their Needs*, Published by the Board, Boston, 1896, pp. 3–4).

⁴⁸ *Eight Sixth Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, Published By the Board, Congregational House, Boston, 1896, p. 47.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 46.

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cathedral in December 1895. In the immediate aftermath of the massacres, she helped establish the Industrial Institute of Urfa that taught orphans trades such as carpentry, cabinet-working, iron-making, tailoring and shoe making⁵⁰.

In November 1895 the massacres swept across Harput province, engulfing cities and villages, with an estimated 40,000 Armenians killed and about 8,000 wounded⁵¹. In the city of Harput, the mission premises were sacked and all but four of the buildings burned, including the church. Eighty-eight thousand dollars' worth of missionary and mission property was stolen and destroyed. Two American missionaries at Harput, Caleb Gates and Mr. Barnum survived the destruction. By March 1896, they helped distribute relief money to 45,000 Armenians in one hundred and sixty villages from funds sent by the ABCFM headquarters in Constantinople⁵². In the same month in Aintab, a town in the south east of Turkey, some 10,000 Armenians, a quarter of the city's population, were killed. Many of the survivors were cared for by missionaries Dr Caroline Hamilton and Miss Trowbridge in the mission's hospital. They recorded 3,987 patients, with 15,038 treatments⁵³.

In the Ottoman city of Van, near the Persian border, massacres occurred in June 1896. An American missionary physician in the city, Grace Kimball, estimated that fifty villages between Van and the Persian frontier had been "pillaged in the space of two weeks and their inhabitants driven out helpless and naked"⁵⁴. Kimball provided medical help and established a weaving relief scheme by employing refugees by paying them daily rations of food. By the winter of 1896, Kimball had employed over 1,000 refugees. Relief which entailed self-reliance, she believed, was far better than "gratitude charity".⁵⁵

The British and Americans were not the only ones who responded to the Armenian massacres. Protestant Christians in Germany and Scandinavian

⁵⁰ **Maksudyan N.**, "Being Saved to Serve": Armenian Orphans of 1894–1896 and Interested Relief in Missionary Orphanages', *Turcica*, 42, 2010, p. 47–88.

⁵¹ **Bliss Ed.**, *Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities*, H.L. Hastings, Boston, 1896, p. 445.

⁵² **Caleb Frank Gates**, *Not To Me Only*, Princeton University Press, N.J., 1940, pp. 122–123.

⁵³ ABCFM, 1897 Report, p. 51.

⁵⁴ **Balakian P.**, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*, Harper Collins, New York, 2003, p. 89.

⁵⁵ **Ibid**, p. 90.

countries formed part of the broader international humanitarian impulse. In Germany, they organised rallies and made appeals amassing well over 600,000 marks by January 1897⁵⁶. Johannes Lepsius established a relief organisation (later known as the German Orient Mission) for Armenia in 1895. It consisted of orphanages, medical clinics, and a carpet factory in Urfa, Turkey, to provide employment. Women from Germany, Denmark, Norway and Sweden joined the mission and travelled to the region to provide aid to the sufferers.

Roman Catholic missionaries also took part in the relief effort. At the time of the massacres there were several groups of Catholic missionaries in the Ottoman Empire. They included the Lazarists, Jesuits, the Franciscans, the Capucins, the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, the Sisters of Notre Dame of Sion, the Dominicans, the Carmelites and others. The missions had already established many orphanages in the Armenian populated provinces before the massacres but they were too small to accommodate the large influx of orphans. The missionaries instead pursued a strategy of transferring as many orphans as they could to the larger Catholic orphanages in Constantinople, Beirut and Jerusalem. They also appealed to Catholic families to foster Armenian orphans⁵⁷.

Clara Barton's relief expedition

As sympathy and outrage poured from all corners of the world, Clara Barton, the founder and first president of the American Red Cross (ARC), was called upon by the ABCFM to assist in providing practical relief to the sufferers. The ABCFM had recognised the ARC as the most appropriate agency to deliver and distribute relief supplies from America. The *Union Signal* claimed that Barton stood for the "great international principle" of the Geneva Convention to which the United States had given assent. The Ottoman Empire had sanctioned its own Red Crescent movement linked to the international Red Cross and it was expected that Ottoman officials would allow the American affiliates' emissaries free passage.

With four assistants, Barton arrived in Constantinople in February 1896. Angered by Anglo-American press reports of the massacres, the Ottoman government declined to give her permission to proceed with her relief mission. Barton met with Tewfik Pasha, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and

⁵⁶ **Maksudyan N.**, "Being Saved to Serve": Armenian Orphans of 1894–1896 and interested relief in Missionary Orphanages', *Turcica*, 42, 2010, p. 52.

⁵⁷ **Maksudyan**, "Being Saved to Serve Armenian Orphans", pp. 55–56.

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emphasised that the plight of the Armenians “had aroused the sympathy of the entire American people until they asked, almost to the extent of a demand, that assistance from them should be allowed to go directly to these sufferers.” Ultimately, Clara Barton used her diplomatic skills to convince Tewfik Pasha that her object was “purely humanitarian” and “free from all racial or religious feelings or alliances”⁵⁸. Tewfik eventually yielded and granted permission for Clara and her assistants to carry out their work without obstruction.

In March, Barton launched five separate relief expeditions from her headquarters in Constantinople. Three distributed seed, cattle, and farming implements to destitute people among Armenian communities in the major towns of the Ottoman Empire’s Armenian provinces, while the other two recruited local doctors to treat victims of smallpox, typhus, and dysentery in the communities of Zeitun and Marash. Field agent Dr Julian Hubbell arrived in Marash to find the town “filled with refugees since the November massacres” and large numbers of dwelling houses “burned and plundered”. Typhus, dysentery and smallpox were spreading as a result of the crowded state of the city. Medicines were left and funds furnished for a native doctor educated in America (who himself had just recovered from typhus) who was put in charge of the local hospital⁵⁹.

In Harput province alone, ARC field agents Edward Wistar and Charles Wood distributed three thousand articles of clothing and bedding, and the same number of ploughs, scythes, shovels, saws, pickaxes, and other implements among the fifty-eight villages and the city. Assistance was also afforded for the purchase of some six hundred work-cattle, and for the rebuilding of several thousand destroyed homes. They supplied 150 widows with wool, cotton and spinning wheels to help them become self-supporting. Scores of other women were employed daily at the ARC headquarters cutting out garments and bedding, or spinning thread. Three hundred artisans were re-established into their usual vocations. The ARC repaired the water-way to the destroyed quarter of the city which helped prevent the threat of disease⁶⁰.

By the end of Barton’s mission, some US\$26,000 worth of relief supplies had been expended and the lives of an estimated fifty thousand Armenians were saved.

⁵⁸ **Barton Cl.**, *America’s Relief Expedition to Asia Minor Under the Red*, The Journal Publishing Company, Conn, 1896, p. 8.

⁵⁹ **Barton**, Report, pp. 60–61.

⁶⁰ **Ibid**, pp. 87–88.

It was one of the organisation's first major international missions, giving rise to what historian Peter Balakian calls the modern era of American international human rights relief⁶¹.

Bulgaria and Marseille

The Constantinople massacres of August 1896 resulted in a great exodus of some 30,000 Armenians from the city – many fleeing to neighbouring Bulgaria and France. A cycling vacation by WCTU leaders Frances Willard and Lady Somerset in northern France was cut short at news that hundreds of Armenian refugees had landed in the southern port city of Marseilles. The two women travelled to the city where they attempted a rescue effort on their own, taking over an unused hospital ward in an abandoned monastery that provided temporary shelter for the refugees⁶². They were assisted by an American missionary Katherine Fraser who had been on her way home from relief work in the Ottoman Armenian city of Van.

At the end of October 1896, the British Vice-Consul of Varna, Bulgaria, Charles Brophy reported to his superiors in Britain that between 14,000 and 15,000 “panic-stricken Armenians had landed” there⁶³. With the support of the Duke of Westminster a scheme developed to resettle the refugees in Bulgaria⁶⁴. The Armenian relief fund in Britain contributed 8,000 pounds to the cause⁶⁵. The Harrises, who had earlier been on a fact-finding mission in the Ottoman Empire, conducted relief work among the Armenian refugees in Varna. They were joined by Fraser who arrived on the scene from Marseille on 4 November. During her time there, Katherine and the Harrises helped establish two schools, two industrial workshops that employed about 150 women and three factories employing 100 men⁶⁶.

A Dress Rehearsal for humanitarianism during the Armenian Genocide

Two decades after the Hamidian massacres, during World War One, the Young Turk leaders of the Ottoman Empire embarked on larger and more

⁶¹ **Balakian**, *The Burning Tigris*, p. 64.

⁶² **Gordon A.**, *The Beautiful Life of Frances E. Willard*, Women's Temperance Publishing Association, Chicago, 1898, pp. 258–269.

⁶³ *The Illustrated London News*, 28 November 1896, p. 707.

⁶⁴ “The Relief of Armenian Refugees”, *Glasgow Herald*, 3 November 1896, p. 6.

⁶⁵ **Merle Curti**, *American Philanthropy Abroad: A History*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1963, p. 130.

⁶⁶ ABCFM, 1897 report p. 39.

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systematic effort to destroy the Armenian people. The Armenian Genocide, as it is known today, triggered another round of international humanitarianism. Armenian relief committees were resurrected and new ones formed in many parts of the world. American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire found themselves again at the forefront of humanitarian relief work on the ground. Although restrained from large-scale relief by Ottoman suspicions, the missionaries were able to provide limited relief to the Armenians during the war.

Responding to an urgent request to help the Armenians made by the US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, an organisation called the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR) was established in the United States by prominent American civic, religious and political leaders in September 1915. James Barton, the Foreign Secretary of the ABCFM, became the organisation's first chairman. Incorporated by an Act of the US Congress in August 1919 and renamed Near East Relief (NER), it became the officially endorsed American agency for relief work among the Armenians. Armenian relief committees established in China, Japan, Korea, Cuba, New Zealand, Australia and the Philippines became affiliated with the NER.

In the course of about 15 years, the NER raised more than US\$110 million dollars (about 2.7 billion dollars in today's terms) and had helped save the lives of at least half-a-million Armenians including over 120,000 orphans who were housed, fed and educated in over 200 American run orphanages. More than a thousand American relief workers had volunteered for service in NER operations in the Middle East and Greece. It was an unsurpassed achievement at the time, remarkable even by present standards, accomplished through the use of philanthropic methods – many developed in the 1890s – and new techniques such as films and celebrity humanitarianism that continue to be used today. This humanitarian effort literally helped save a people from complete destruction.

ՄԱՐԴԱՍԻՐԱԿԱՆ ԱՐՁԱԳԱՆՔԸ 1894–1896 ԹԹ. ՀԱՅՈՑ ՋԱՐԴԵՐԻՆ

ԲԱԲԿԵՆՅԱՆ Վ.

Ամփոփում

1894–1896-ի համիդյան ջարդերի արդյունքում ի հայտ եկան անհատներ, որոնց արտասովոր քաջության և մարդասիրության շնորհիվ հազարավոր հայեր փրկվեցին մահից: Աշխարհի տարբեր հատվածներում նախաձեռնող անհատները համախմբվելով իրենց համաքաղաքացիների հետ՝ տեղում մարդասիրական գործունեություն ծավալեցին, որի շնորհիվ հալածված հայ բնակչությունը որոշակի օգնություն ստացավ: Հայերին օժանդակելու ձգտման հիմքում ընկած էր քրիստոնեական համախմբվածության զգացումը: Այս մարդասիրական շարժման կողմնակիցները գտնում էին, որ այստեղ խոսքը վերաբերում է մարդկային իրավունքների ունահարմանը: Մարդասիրական գործունեության այս ձևը հետագայում պետք է կիրառվեր ավելի դժվար պատմական իրադարձությունների ժամանակ, երբ Առաջին աշխարհամարտին արևմտյան մարդասիրական կազմակերպությունները պետք է ցեղասպանությունից փրկեին հազարավոր հայերի: Մարդասիրական այս օգնությունը միջազգային բարի կամքի դրսևորումներից է, որը գրեթե մոռացվել է, սակայն ցեղասպանագիտության անբաժան մասն է կազմում:

ГУМАНИТАРНЫЙ ОТКЛИК НА РЕЗНЮ АРМЯН В 1894–1896 ГГ.

БАБКЕНЯН В.

Резюме

В 1894–1896 гг., после гамидовской резни, тысячи армян были спасены благодаря гуманитарной поддержке и беспримерной отваге отдельных личностей, которые, в разных точках планеты объединившись со своими согражданами, развернули гуманитарную деятельность, в результате чего подвергавшемуся гонениям армянскому населению была оказана посильная помощь. Эта гуманитарная поддержка была основана

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на чувстве христианской консолидированности. Сторонники гуманитарного движения считали, что в данном случае речь идет о защите общечеловеческих прав. Данная модель гуманитарной деятельности была задействована и во время событий, имевших место в годы Первой мировой войны, когда западным гуманитарным организациям суждено было спасти от геноцида тысячи армян. Подобная гуманитарная помощь являлась проявлением международной доброй воли, которая на сегодняшний день почти предана забвению, но при этом освещение рассматриваемой проблемы составляет неотъемлемую часть геноцидологии.