



## 1915 IS GENOCIDE, A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

We came here once more to commemorate the prominent members of the Armenian community of Istanbul who were arrested on Saturday, 24th April 1915.

This old building, which serves now as the Turkish Islamic Arts Museum, is in fact the Ibrahim Pasha Palace which was used for long years as a prison.

This is the place where those arrested during the 24th April 1915 round-ups were kept before being sent to Haydarpasha train station to be taken into the inlands of Anatolia and from there to their death.

Today the websites of government departments, of the General Staff and other organisations loyal to the state tell a different story with exactly the same wording as if all were written by the same person. They say those arrested on the 24th of April were Armenian “Komitacis”, i.e. outlaws who were engaged in subversive activities against the state.

They all lie.

The vast majority of those who were arrested in Istanbul were the most brilliant leaders of the Armenian community, politicians, writers, poets, journalists, doctors, scientists. Among them was a monumental figure, Gomidas Vartabed, who collected and scored thousands of Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian folk songs travelling throughout Anatolia village by village.

Let’s remember some of these great Armenian intellectuals:

**Armen Dorian** – A graduate of Sorbonne university, poet, 23 years old.

**Yervant Chavoushian** – University professor, writer journalist

**Roupen Zartarian** – Poet, writer, teacher and translator.

**Diran Kelekian** –Professor of Political Sciences, writer, publisher, translator, chief editor of the Turkish daily Sabah.

**Yervant Sirmakeshanlian** – pedagogue, translator, journalist.

**Roupen Sevag Chilingirian** – Poet, doctor.

**Nazaret Dagharvarian** – Sivas milletvekili, hekim, ziraat mühendisiydi

**Levon Kirishchian** –Poet, translator, writer, university professor.

**Taniyel Varujan** – Great Armenian poet. Eđitimciydi, büyük Ermeni řairiydi

**Siamanto (Atom Yercanian)** – One of the biggest poets of the Armenian literature.

But there were also ordinary people, like the butcher Agha Arabed, who couldn’t even find the time to take off his apron and steel knife sharpener, without closing his store, leaving his day’s earning in the drawer. A penniless, illiterate Artin Asaduryan, who earned his life by collecting street dogs and was paid “3 kurush” for each of them was also among the arrested.

The arrests were carried out with great care, paying utmost attention not to cause the families to get excited and warn the others on the list who were not yet arrested. The watchword was: "It's nothing important, you will be released within a few minutes." Most of the victims believed and there were ones who came with their night attire, without socks or slippers.

Those who were brought to police stations in Pangaltı neighbourhood and elsewhere were put in red fire brigade vehicles to camouflage the arrests and taken to Ibrahim Pasha Palace which was that time used as the "central prison". There they were welcomed by "Chetebashi" Ibrahim who was to be later well-known for the atrocities he committed in Adapazari, filling the church with Armenians and torturing them for long days there. He was one of the criminals released from prisons to join the "Special Organisation" – Teskilati Mahsusa – to organise the massacres during the deportations.

One of the few survivors of the 24th April arrests was Aram Andonian, historian and writer, who narrated in detail what the detainees experienced in this building, the Mehderhane, the courtyard where there had the chance to meet and communicate, the Subyan Mektebi, where the infant prisoners were kept and the guardians who sought to profit from the situation by charging high prices for daily needs of the prisoners such as blankets and mattresses.

Around 220 prisoners were then taken to Sarayburnu where they were taken to Haydarpasha train station by boat. They were not told where they were taken to. After spending one night in Eskishehir they were sent to Ayash and Chankiri. Of the 70 taken to Ayash 58, of the 150 taken to Changiri the majority were killed or sent into further exile.

This was the beginning of the extermination of all Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire together with its historical heritage, economic and social existence which was decided by the Committee of Union and Progress and organised by their Special Organization – a band of killers. They did not only took the lives of Armenians but they also usurped their wealth, their property, their land, their memories and their history.

A civilization was uprooted and wiped away from their homeland of many thousands of years.

Alongside with Armenians other non-muslims such as Greeks, Assyrians, and Ezidis fell victim to the Genocide as well.

We, as the Human Rights Association Istanbul Branch voice the same demand since 2005. We declare that denial of Genocide is the continuation of the genocidal process. We call for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Today we repeat what we always say: "Confess the crime and accept all its legal consequences. Only then the graveless dead bodies floating on the rivers, piled up in gorges, thrown into precipices, drowned in the sea can be buried in the dignified manner they deserve. Only then their spirits will rest in peace. Only then justice will be served."

**HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION, TURKEY  
COMMITTEE AGAINST RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION**