

**Statement of Professor Bernard Lewis
Princeton University
Distinguishing Armenian Case from Holocaust**

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Question: “The British press reported in 1997 that your views on the killing of one million Armenians by the Turks in 1915 did not amount to genocide and in this report in the Independent of London, says that a French court fined you one frank in damages after you said there was no genocide. This obviously triggered a debate in Israel where this quoted article (Moderator cuts in and asks him to ask his question as their running out of time). My question is, sir, have your views changed on this whether the killing of one million Armenians amounts to genocide and your views on this judgment?”

Bernard Lewis responds: “This is a question of definition and nowadays the word "genocide" is used very loosely even in cases where no bloodshed is involved at all and I can understand the annoyance of those who feel refused. But in this particular case, the point that was being made was that the massacre of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was the same as what happened to Jews in Nazi Germany and that is a downright falsehood. What happened to the Armenians was the result of a massive Armenian armed rebellion against the Turks, which began even before war broke out, and continued on a larger scale.

Great numbers of Armenians, including members of the armed forces, deserted, crossed the frontier and joined the Russian forces invading Turkey. Armenian rebels actually seized the city of Van and held it for a while intending to hand it over to the invaders. There was guerilla warfare all over Anatolia. And it is what we nowadays call the National Movement of Armenians Against Turkey. The Turks certainly resorted to very ferocious methods in repelling it.

There is clear evidence of a decision by the Turkish Government, to deport the Armenian population from the sensitive areas. Which meant naturally the whole of Anatolia. Not including the Arab provinces which were then still part of the Ottoman Empire. There is no evidence of a decision to massacre. On the contrary, there is considerable evidence of attempt to prevent it, which were not very successful. Yes there were tremendous massacres, the numbers are very uncertain but a million nay may well be likely.

The massacres were carried out by irregulars, by local villagers responding to what had been done to them and in number of other ways. But to make this, a parallel with the holocaust in Germany, you would have to assume the Jews of Germany had been engaged in an armed rebellion against the German state, collaborating with the allies against Germany. That in the deportation order the cities of Hamburg and Berlin were exempted, persons in the employment of state were exempted, and the deportation only applied to the Jews of Germany proper, so that when they got to Poland they were welcomed and sheltered by the Polish Jews. This seems to me a rather absurd parallel.”