

**THE DECISION OF THE OTTOMAN GOVERNMENT ON THE
DEPORTATION OF ARMENIANS
(May 30, 1915)**

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The secret report of Interior Minister and the leader of the Central Committee of the Young Turks party, Mehmet Talât to Sadriazam Said Halim Pasha, was discussed in the Ministerial council meeting of May 30, 1915. The deportation of Armenians was approved, which had been already taking place, and a relevant resolution was passed. It was signed by seven members of the government: sadrazam Said Halim Pasha, Minister of Internal Affairs, Talât, Minister of War Enver Pasha, Minister of Social Affairs, Abbas Halim Pasha¹, Minister of Education Ahmed Şükrü², Minister of Commerce Ahmed Nesimi³ and Minister of Justice, Pirizade Ibrahim Hayrullah⁴.

The next day the original text of the “Resolution” without the “Brief description” section was officially copied for the purpose of sending to respective ministries. One of those copies which is kept in the Archive of the General Headquarters of the Department of Military history and strategic research and General inspectorate, was included in the collection of documents published by General Headquarters of the Turkish armed forces⁵.

The original document being published by Turkish historians, has been widely used as a proof of a hypothesis of the Turkish official historiography as if the purpose of the deportation was only the deportation of the Western Armenians and not their massacre. It mentions all the “dangers” as if coming from Armenians, a number of resettlement problems connected with the deportees. At the same time, special attention was paid to their life’s organization in the new places of their settlement, as well as questions of abandoned property in their native places of habitation, etc. A lot of provisions of the Resolution obviously did not pursue the goal of having a real influence

¹ Said Halim Pasha's brother.

² Later he took the surname Bayındır.

³ Later he took the surname Sayman.

⁴ See the original text of the resolution Meclis-i Vükelâ Müzâkerâtına Mahsûs Zabıtname: Hülasâ-i me’âlî, 17 Mayıs 1331. – BOA. Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbatası, 198/163. –

http://www.devletarsivleri.gov.tr/assets/file/1915_Olaylari/resim/2600belge/1198.PDF

⁵Arşiv belgeleriyle ermeni faaliyetleri, 1914–1918 Cilt I (1914–1915), Genelkurmay ATASE ve Genelkurmay Denetleme Başkanlığı yayınları, Ankara, 2005, s. 427.

on the deportation process by imparting to it a seemingly “organized” character outwardly or just formally. According to Talât and his accomplices, it had to create a “legal” ground that would give them an opportunity to elude the responsibility of committing the extermination of the Armenian nation under the deportation cover.

But the expression, “to fully exterminate and liquidate” (imhâ ve izâlesi kat’iyyen muktezî) reveals not only the real purposes of the highest authorities of the Ottoman empire and the Young Turks leaders, but also, in the framework of modern conceptual approaches of Genocide studies, gives an opportunity to reveal its intent⁶ to commit genocide under the deportation cover.

Realizing that danger the Turkish authors resort to a number of tricks the purpose of which is to conceal the meaning of the above-mentioned expression and to delude the reader by distorting it. Thus, for example, the “classics” of official Turkish historiography, Bayur and Gürün, and the representatives of the new generation unanimously avoid translating the expression “imhâ ve izâlesi kat’iyyen muktezî” into modern Turkish accurately and do not hesitate sometimes to use translations of the Ottoman words incomprehensible for those who know modern Turkish⁷.

Such a trick can certainly be described as rather “delicate”. But the Turkish authors that carry out an official order are not limited to it. The authors⁸ of the collection of documents published by the General Headquarters of the armed forces go even further and turn to evident falsification. This collection includes modern Turkish and English translations of the copy of the “Resolution”. Its translators have tried to “mitigate” the meaning of the expression. In the modern Turkish translation the expression, “etkili bir şekilde bertaraf edilmesi mutlak surette gerekli olup” is used, which may be translated as “it is a total necessity to neutralize effectively”. It is evident that the authors⁹ of this translation have avoided reproducing exactly the meaning of the expression of the original text, “imhâ ve izâlesi”- “exterminate and liquidate”.

⁶ See Սաֆրաստյան Ռ., Օսմանյան կայսրություն. ցեղասպանության ծրագրի ծագումնաբանությունը (1876-1920 թթ.), Երևան, 2009, էջ 20-43:

⁷ See, e.g. Bayur Y.H., Türk İnkılâbı tarihi. Cilt: III: 1914 -1918: Genel Savaşı, Kısım III: 1915-1917 vuruşmaları ve bunların siyasal tepkileri, Ankara, 1983, s. 41-43; Gürün K., Ermeni dosyası. İkinci baskı, Ankara, 1983, s. 214-215; Akgündüz A., Ermeni katliamı mı? Ermeni Tehciri mi?, Yeni Türkiye, 2001, ocak-şubat, yıl 7, sayı 37; Ermeni Sorunu özel sayısı I, s. 361-362; Demirel M., Ermeni tehciri ve alınan tedbirler, Yeni Türkiye, 2001, ocak-şubat, yıl 7, sayı 37; Ermeni Sorunu özel sayısı I, s. 400-401.

⁸ Among them is, e.g. Yusuf Halaçoğlu, the notorious falsifier of the history of the Armenian Genocide, former president of Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu).

⁹ The names of the translators are mentioned in the collection, but it isn't specified who exactly is the translator of the Turkish translation of the original.

The English translators who obviously made use not of the Ottoman original text, but the modern Turkish translation, unhesitatingly shortened the above-mentioned expression and presented it as: “ought to be eliminated effectively”. Thus they went further from the original.

Let us compare the Ottoman original of the “Resolution” passed by the Ministerial council with the English translation. It is mentioned in the original: “to fully exterminate and liquidate” and in the English translation we read: “ought to be eliminated effectively”. The change of meaning is obvious; it was falsified.

Thus, it is clear that by publishing the original text of the “Resolution” of the Ministerial council, the Turkish historians try to make its real meaning difficult to understand for the non-specialists in every possible way. By publishing that document they try not to throw light on the poorly studied pages of the history of the Armenian Genocide, but to use it as an additional “argument” for substantiating the false hypothesis that the Ottoman authorities “showed concern” towards the Armenian people during the deportation.

Summing up, it should be mentioned that the atmosphere of uncertainty and fraud created around just one archival document by the representatives of official Turkish historiography arouse doubts and urges one to think that the practice of such methods can be applied in many other cases of official publications of the Ottoman archival documents in Turkey.

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