



AMERICA WE THANK YOU

An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief

FACT SHEET

The Armenian Genocide

The Armenian Genocide (1915-1923) was the Ottoman government's systematic extermination of its peaceful Christian Armenian subjects from their historic homeland within the territory constituting the present-day Republic of Turkey. As a result of the state-ordered and implemented campaign of genocide, the Ottoman Empire killed 1,500,000 Armenian men, women, and children, exiled the Armenian nation from its historic homeland, and destroyed and deported hundreds of thousands of its other Christian citizens. The slaughter began on April 24, 1915, when Ottoman authorities, specifically the "Young Turk" government, rounded up and arrested some 250 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople, followed by mass deportations and death marches in the interior of the country, in what came to be known as the Armenian Genocide.

An Unprecedented Movement of American Citizen Philanthropy

Founded in 1915, the currently-named Near East Foundation (formerly known as Near East Relief or NER) is the United States' oldest Congressionally-sanctioned non-governmental organization which for the first time in American history expressed the collective generosity and humanitarianism of the American People. The NER served as a model upon which future philanthropic organizations, including the U.S. Peace Corps and USAID, and future calls for overseas relief efforts known as "citizen philanthropy" were modeled.



"Orphan City" 30,000 Armenian orphans in NER's largest orphanage in Alexandropol. (1923)

The highly successful Near East Relief (NER) movement literally saved the Armenian nation from total annihilation. As a tribute to this effort, Armenian-Americans, most of whom are direct descendants of Armenian orphans and refugees rescued by NER, have initiated the "America, We Thank You" project to express our collective gratitude to the American people for the benevolence which allowed our nation to survive and thrive out of the ashes of destruction.

U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's Role in the Humanitarian Campaign

The global response to the genocide of Armenians was sparked by a cablegram sent by U.S. Ambassador to Constantinople, Henry Morgenthau to the Secretary of State in Washington, DC on

September 6, 1915, stating, "**Destruction of the Armenian Race in Turkey is progressing rapidly**" and suggesting that Cleveland H. Dodge, Charles Crane, John R. Mott, Stephen Wise and others form a committee to raise funds and provide means to save some of the Armenians who had survived.

The Extraordinary Success of Near East Relief

Upon receiving Ambassador Morgenthau's urgent plea for assistance, President Woodrow Wilson called upon his advisor Cleveland H. Dodge to form the "American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief" (ACASR), specifically to help Armenians and other Christian minorities who were being forcibly deported from their homes and starved or killed in a systematic premeditated campaign of genocide launched under cover of World War I by the Young Turk government of the Ottoman Empire. On September 16, 1915, under the leadership of James L. Barton and Cleveland H. Dodge, the ACASR was officially launched in New York.

In order to facilitate the best possible response to the crisis, the Committee was granted unprecedented access to all U.S. government files and communications describing the religious, social and physical conditions of non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, specifically the native Armenian population.

Over a period of 15 years from 1915 to 1930, the NER (renamed as such upon the Committee's incorporation by Congress), mobilized the entire American nation, and indeed the world, into a well-organized and well-funded relief effort which successfully saved over 1,000,000 refugees and 132,000 orphans of the Armenian Nation and other Christian minorities half a world away. Despite its initial fundraising goal of \$100,000 which was later raised to \$30 million, the NER ultimately raised **\$117 million**, the equivalent of \$2.7 billion in today's dollars! NER built over 400 orphanages, food and clothing distribution centers, medical clinics and hospitals, and vocational training schools throughout the Near East to house and care for the survivors. More than **1,000 volunteers worldwide** left their comfortable lives to travel across ocean and land to dedicate themselves to the relief effort.



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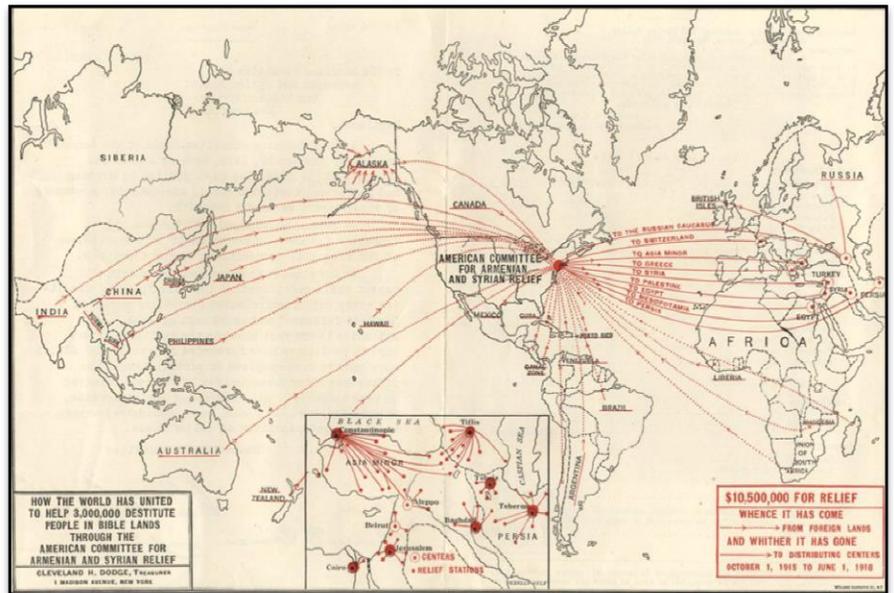
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The Golden Rule Sunday

“Golden Rule Sunday,” was spearheaded by NER. Observers were encouraged to substitute their hearty Sunday dinner with a modest orphan meal and donate the difference of cost to help feed the starving orphans.

The American-led campaign soon became an international objective, with 50 countries taking part in the relief efforts, as well as business, church, agricultural, commercial, fraternal, labor, educational, youth, and women’s associations. It secured over 133 national endorsements from prominent organizations around the globe in securing observance of international “Golden Rule Sunday,” representing more than 73 million participants worldwide who donated food, money and clothing for the Armenian orphans and refugees.



The U.S.-led effort became international in scope, with countries on every continent sending aid to Armenian survivors through NER

The Children’s Crusade

All segments of American society were mobilized into action. While government officials and even Congress called upon the American People to heed the call of NER, Armenian orphans were adopted by famous American families, including Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, Mrs. Oliver Harriman (widow of President Warren Harding), and Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt (American women’s suffrage leader). Celebrities such as child actor Jackie Coogan (later known as Uncle Fester of The Addams Family) toured across the U.S. and Europe on a “Children’s Crusade,” enlisting the help of The Scouts of Los Angeles and other children’s organizations, and raising more than \$1 million in clothing, food, and other contributions. American religious, labor, and other organizations led collection efforts for NER. Offices and donation centers were opened in all 48 American states, as well as Hawaii and Alaska.

SAYS BAKU ARMENIANS FACE EXTERMINATION

Allied High Commissioner’s Message Tells of Azerbaijan Moslems’ Crimes.

The Armenian inhabitants of Baku face extermination at the hands of the Azerbaijanians, according to Colonel William N. Haskell, Allied High Commissioner to Armenia, in a message made public yesterday by Charles V. Vickery, Secretary of the Near East Relief. The message was received through the American Relief Administration and says:

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Turks and Azeris Joined Forces to Annihilate Armenians

On May 3, 1920 The New York Times published a story with the headline, “Says Baku Armenians Face Extermination,” which included reports from Allied High Commissioner to Armenia, Colonel William N. Haskell detailing the killings of Armenians by Azerbaijanians, made public by Near East Relief Secretary Charles V. Vickery.

Colonel Haskell recounted, “The Near East Relief guard on one train reports that Armenians were dragged from the train and butchered before his eyes. Travelers by train point out the Armenians to Azerbaijan Muslims at a thousand rubles a denunciation.” Haskell warned, “The Armenian inhabitants of Baku face extermination...although they are peaceful and law-abiding.”

For more than 100 years, Christian Armenians have been victims of massacres and ethnic cleansing in the Turkish Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey, and the independent Republic of Azerbaijan. The Near East Relief was critical in rescuing survivors from 1915-1930, but even today, Armenians continue to be attacked in Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.



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