

GÖRAN
GUNNER



GENOCIDE OF ARMENIANS

Through Swedish Eyes



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Genocide of Armenians

– Through Swedish Eyes



THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE MUSEUM-INSTITUTE

Göran Gunner is a researcher at Church of Sweden Research Unit.

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PREFACE

What did you know? Hitler Germany's concentration camps were not unknown even on the eve of World War II. They were written about in the Swedish press, albeit often in limited publications such as those of the Swedish Ecumenical Council and other Christian media. Many people knew but few wanted to know.

After the Holocaust, the world community adopted a Convention to prevent genocide and punish those who contributed to it. It was hoped that what happened during World War II would not happen again. Yet we know that genocide has been and is being committed in various parts of the world. Historically, countries designated as Christian, as well as a number of churches, have been involved in the implementation of genocide. But genocide has also hit Christian peoples, including the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church, not least in 1915 when Armenians and Syrians/Assyrians were subjected to systematic deportation and killing that claimed the lives of between 1 and 1.5 million people. What happened to Armenians then has been regarded as the first genocide of modern times and as a prototype for subsequent genocides.

Church of Sweden is involved in several important dialogues with, for example, representatives of Islam and the Oriental

Churches. A common concern is how we in Sweden can together with confidence build a society that includes different faiths. The dialogue is important and needs to be deepened and continued. But its participants must be honest.

For Armenians, Assyrians/Syrians and other Christian minorities with a past in the Ottoman Empire, the genocide of 1915 is still a painful part of their identity. As long as present-day Turkey does not recognize that the genocide took place, we all need to be reminded that it continues to sustain tensions and confrontations.

The Swedish Parliament's (Riksdagen) decision on March 11, 2010, can be seen as a recognition of the 1915 genocide of, in particular, Armenians and Assyrians/Syrians. It can be part of an acknowledgement of survivors in Sweden, especially for Armenians and Syrians/Assyrians living here today.

There have been calls for more research on the genocide and processing of archived material. This book by Göran Gunner belongs to the research issuing from the Church of Sweden Research Unit. Gunner provides evidence of the knowledge that existed in Sweden at the time of the genocide. He scrutinizes diplomatic correspondence, accounts from missionaries, with Alma Johansson as an important eyewitness, media reports and information gathered by committed people such as Olga Moberg, Natanael Beskow and Hagbard Isberg. Based on the Swedish material, a picture is composed of the genocide of Armenians and other Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire.

Silence is not conducive to understanding. Göran Gunner's book provides the knowledge and perspective that have not been widely known. That of course must in turn be assessed in other contexts.

Uppsala, January 2012

Anders Wejryd, Archbishop Dr., Church of Sweden