

CHAPTER 9

Long Shadows—The Great War, Australia and the Middle East

From the Armenian to the Yazidi Genocide

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This essay is based on the exhibition ‘Long Shadows—The Great War, Australia and the Middle East’, displayed at the University Gallery of the University of Newcastle (Australia) from 5 September to 11 November 2018.⁴⁹⁶ The essay synthesises the exhibition’s main content and focus, and adds reflection. ‘Long Shadows’ made a connection between Australia’s military operation on the Gallipoli peninsula and what would come to be known as the Armenian Genocide, and presented detailed information on the persecution of the

⁴⁹⁶ A website has been established to make the exhibition online accessible. See ‘Long Shadows – The Great War, Australia and the Middle East’, The University of Newcastle Art and Museum Collection, accessed February 7, 2019, <https://gallery.newcastle.edu.au/pages/longshadows>. We acknowledge the work of our colleagues Dr Kate Ariotti, Gillean Shaw and the whole team of the University Gallery. In the following, content will be drawn from the physical exhibition as well as its online attribution. For an exhibition review see Burcu Cevik-Compiegne, ‘Long Shadows: The Great War, Australia and the Middle East’, *History Australia* 16, no. 1 (2019): 210–11.

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Armenian population. ‘Long Shadows’ implicitly suggested that a fair public memory of the night of 24 to 25 April 1915, must address both the Australians’ (Anzac) and the Armenians’ (Armenian Genocide) trauma. France—whose soldiers fought alongside Britain and Australia in 1915—has recently decided to do so: it named 24 April a national day of genocide commemoration.⁴⁹⁷

The exhibition in Newcastle drew long historical lines from the 1910s to the 2010s and provided an unusually broad context to the Armenian Genocide. It highlighted a genocide that targeted Armenians primarily, but also other Ottoman Christians and minorities, and the impact on all for generations to come. Also, it shed light on lesser-known traumatic experiences of Anzac soldiers at Gallipoli or during captivity. Furthermore, ‘Long Shadows’ joined dots not only between Gallipoli and genocide in Ottoman Turkey in 1915, but also between this genocide during the Great War and the recent genocide of Yazidis, and between patterns of violence in the Middle East then and now. Finally, it connected stories of persecuted people and the efforts of Australian humanitarian organisations then and now. Although not all problems in today’s post-Ottoman region can be directly traced back to the decade of 1911–22, many major issues have important historical connections there, such as radical Islamism, the Kurdish question and several instances of mass violence that have remained unrecognised. Ethno-religious stigmatisation, extreme violence and human trafficking were common during the decade of the Ottoman war; many of its patterns have since re-emerged in recent years in Syria and Northern Iraq (although the number of civilian victims was much higher a century ago). In short, the Great War casts long shadows of violence, trauma and unresolved conflicts over current times.

While the Great War was physically undertaken in one geographic region, its consequences and memory have affected and still affect international diplomacy and countless individuals belonging to migrant communities all over the world. In this essay, the focus will be on the shared war experience of two regions: Australia and the Middle East. As in the exhibition, the essay will weave from Australia to Gallipoli, to Asia Minor, Syria and Northern Iraq, from 1915 through to 2018.

I

Every year on 25 April (since 1916), Australians and New Zealanders come together to commemorate their servicemen and women. While this day offers

⁴⁹⁷ ‘Macron fait du 24 avril la journée nationale de commémoration du génocide arménien’, *Le Figaro*, accessed February 6, 2019, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2019/02/05/01016-20190205ARTFIG00309-macron-fait-du-24-avril-la-journee-nationale-de-commemoration-du-genocide-armenien.php>.

honour and respect to Australians and New Zealanders who served their country in any conflict or peacekeeping mission, it has its origins in the Gallipoli campaign of 1915. At the time, World War One was already underway, but somewhat in a deadlock. To contain the Central Powers (Germany and its main allies Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire), to lessen the pressure on certain fronts (for example, the Caucasus), and foremost to connect with Russia through the Bosphore, British strategists decided on a new front against the Ottoman capital. The Gallipoli peninsula seemed to be the ideal location. A successful attack would eventually ease the way for Allied forces to capture Ottoman's capital Constantinople (today's Istanbul), which would knock the Ottomans out of the war and allow for Allied control of the Dardanelles, a waterway linking the Black and Mediterranean seas. After a British/French naval attack failed on 18 March 1915, a joint offensive of British, French and Anzac soldiers launched a few weeks later. This campaign would come to play a fundamental role in Australia's national memory and identity.

In the early morning hours of 25 April 1915, the first Anzac troops landed on the Gallipoli peninsula. From the very beginning, the troops faced enormous challenges. The terrain, with its steep cliffs, deep gullies and thick scrub, proved difficult to conquer and the Ottomans were determined in their resistance. Less than a month after the landing on the peninsula, and following a strong counter-offensive by the Ottomans, the fighting stalled. The Australians and New Zealanders managed to occupy a little ground around the beach and on the ridges above, but life on the peninsula was hard. In extreme heat, the soldiers had to carry their own supplies from the beach to higher ground, the trenches were overcrowded, sanitation was limited, lice and fly plagues were present and sniping and bombing were incessant. The Anzac soldiers became more and more exhausted. In fact, more men suffered from sickness than were wounded. Anzac soldiers had to be evacuated *en masse* for medical reasons. To counteract this harsh reality, in early August 1915 an 'all or nothing' offensive was launched. This led to high losses and only little ground gained. With no real prospect for improvement and the need for more troops in Europe, the decision was made to withdraw the Anzac soldiers from the Gallipoli peninsula. Without a single casualty, all Anzacs were safely evacuated by 20 December 1915. Ironically, the safe removal of the troops was the most successful aspect of the campaign. All forces involved—Allies and Ottomans—endured great losses. Australia suffered 26,000 casualties, including over 8,700 dead. Furthermore, 67 Australians were taken prisoners of war by the Ottomans.⁴⁹⁸ Joined by light horsemen and members of the Australian Flying Corps captured in Mesopotamia, the Sinai Desert and Palestine, these POWs were used for forced labour and many died in captivity. However, some also became

⁴⁹⁸ For further information on Australian Prisoners of First World War see Kate Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs. Australian POW's of the Ottomans during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

witness to atrocities committed by the Ottomans against the Armenians and other ethnic minorities (Christian Assyrians and Pontus Greeks) in the Empire.

Writing about the Armenian Genocide while in captivity was risky, but there are several eyewitness accounts from captive Anzacs. John Wheat, a captured member of the Australian submarine AE2, would write the following in his diary: 'At Afyonkarahissar ... officers had houses to live in. The owner of these houses had been taken away "somewhere" ... driven into the desert, and were numbered among the victims of the Armenian atrocities'.⁴⁹⁹ What John Wheat refers to as 'the Armenian atrocities' is today known as the Armenian Genocide. The genocide started in the evening of 24 April 1915, in Constantinople, just a few hours before the Anzac landing on Gallipoli and in close proximity to the peninsula. Signs of an extermination policy could be observed earlier, but on that evening approximately 300 Armenian intellectuals, clergy and community leaders were taken into custody. The systematically implemented genocide started by first depriving the Ottoman Armenian community of its leaders.

II

The Ottoman Armenian population had achieved advanced self-organisation, welfare and educational institutions by the late nineteenth century, and was increasingly vocal in its claims for equality. The Armenian community was under the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909) when it became the target of social envy and violence, including large-scale massacres carried out in 1894–96. At the time, the Ottoman Empire faced domestic crises and began to crumble. Dissatisfaction with the ruling sultan led to the rise of a broad underground opposition movement of the so-called Young Turks. The group's strongest organisation was the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which was formed by young army officers and comprised students and state functionaries. In the hope for a better, more democratic future, the main Armenian party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), entered into an alliance with CUP in 1907. In July 1908, supported by ARF, the Young Turks initiated a constitutional revolution to overthrow the despotic regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Constitutional rule was restored, the Ottoman parliament reopened and elections took place in the same year. The revolution ultimately led to an 'Ottoman Spring', a short phase in which a more democratic collective Ottoman identity was emphasised. This period, however, did not last long, and Armenian hopes for equal rights and the end of violence against minorities in the Empire were soon destroyed. The aims of the ARF and the CUP diverged with the Young Turks' desire to restore imperial power and create a homogeneous Turkish

⁴⁹⁹ John Wheat, Diary, August 18, 1915, 3DRL/2965, AWM, in Vicken Babkenian and Peter Stanley, *Armenia, Australia and The Great War* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016).

identity. In 1909, the Armenians once again became victims of massacre, this time in Adana.

Adding fuel to anti-Christian sentiments and a warmongering attitude within the CUP were the Balkan Wars (1912–13). With the rise of ethnic nationalism and the simultaneous increase in dissatisfaction among diverse population groups, non-Muslim as well as Muslim, the situation within the Empire became increasingly tense. The Balkan Wars emerged both from unresolved problems in Ottoman Macedonia and the irredentism of young post-Ottoman Balkan states. The Ottomans were defeated and lost almost all their territory west of Istanbul. The Balkan Wars resulted in several peace treaties, mainly the Treaty of Constantinople in September 1913. This was the first treaty in a long series of similar agreements in the twentieth century that foresaw population exchanges with the aim of an ‘ethno-religious un-mixing’ (in contrast with future treaties, however, this one was not compulsory).

The two Balkan Wars had severe consequences: approximately 500,000 soldiers plus an unknown number of civilians lost their lives, the Ottomans lost massive amounts of territory, and about 300,000 Muslims became refugees. During the turmoil of the First Balkan War, the CUP—which had temporarily lost power in July 1912—launched a successful *coup d’état* on 23 January 1913. It then established a dictatorial single party regime in the Ottoman Empire. Interior Minister Mehmed Talaat Bey, later the mastermind of the Armenian Genocide, evolved to become the strongest, most influential figure in the Empire.⁵⁰⁰ His aim was not only to restore by means of coercion and violence the sovereignty and territory of the Ottoman Empire, but also to build a centralised Turkish-Muslim state based in Asia Minor. The Balkan Wars were a catalyst for this policy, and thus for World War One in the Middle East and for the Armenian Genocide.

III

The main events of the Armenian Genocide lasted from April 1915 to September 1916 and killed more than a million Ottoman Christians. When Mehmed Talaat gave the order to arrest hundreds of members of the Armenian elite on that night of April 24 1915, and to question, torture and eventually murder most of them as well as those arrested in provincial towns, the first phase of the Armenian Genocide began. Provincial and military authorities, as well as party commissaries were sent to the provinces to spread propaganda about supposedly treacherous Armenian neighbours, accusing them of stabbing the Empire in the back by changing sides and helping the enemy. Some

⁵⁰⁰ For further information on Talaat Pasha, his rise to power and his role in the Armenian Genocide see Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Talaat Pasha. Father of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Armenians had indeed turned to the Russians, yet the Armenian community in general had been one of the most loyal to the constitutional state. Nevertheless, the Armenians became a useful scapegoat for CUP's broader problems. Attacks on Armenians and other Christians and minorities involved massacres, deportations, death marches and concentration camps. The genocide was carried out in gender-specific ways: men were often killed on the spot, while many women and children were abducted and enslaved, either trafficked or forcibly married and converted. Thousands were forced to march through the desert to squalid concentration camps in Northern Syria. They were either transported in railway cattle wagons or on foot. Many were massacred in their home provinces or died *en route* to the camps. The ones who were able to escape fled to the Caucasus, Northern Iran, the Sinjar mountains of the Yazidis in Northern Iraq and into the Alevi-Kurdish province of Dersim in Eastern Anatolia.

Based on CUP policies and correspondence, including a letter sent in May 1915 from Mehmed Talaat to another CUP member, Grand Vizier Said Halim, it is clear that Talaat's ultimate goal was the almost total elimination of the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire. He argued that the Armenian 'trouble occupies an important place among the vital problems of the Sublime [Ottoman] state' and that now 'means were prepared and considered to remove this trouble in a radical, fundamental and comprehensive way'.⁵⁰¹ Furthermore, Cavid Bey (Talaat's party friend and unofficial finance minister) wrote in his diary in September 1915: 'Ottoman history has never known before such monstrous murder and enormous brutality. ... I am of the opinion that Talaat was involved in this [extermination] with full conviction'.⁵⁰² Talaat ordered the relocation of more than a million Armenians, of whom more than half a million arrived in Syria. Here, the survivors of the deportation faced the next phase of the genocide. The conditions in the camps led to hundreds of thousands of deaths from starvation, disease and exposure. In a final massacre between August and September 1916, tens of thousands were killed.⁵⁰³ On the initiative of Syria governor Cemal Pasha, many more Armenians were forcibly converted to Islam and resettled further in the South, including in Palestine. Although

⁵⁰¹ Talaat, from the interior Ministry's Directorate for Resettlement of Tribes and Migrants, to the grand vizier, Ottoman State Archives: BOA BEO, 4357-326758.

⁵⁰² Mehmed Cavid Bey, *Meşrutiyet Rûznamesi* (Ankara: TTK, 2015), 3:136–37.

⁵⁰³ See notably Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Taner Akçam, *Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide* (Cham [Switzerland]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Kieser, *Talaat Pasha*; Khatchig Mouradian, *The Resistance Network: The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria, 1915–1918* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, forthcoming in 2021).

their individual lives were saved, the policy of forced assimilation effectively contributed to the destruction of the Ottoman Armenian Christian community.

The plight of the Armenians was well known in wartime Australia. In addition to the POWs who witnessed atrocities against the Armenians, wounded and sick Australian servicemen, who were sent to Egypt for treatment and recovery, also became aware of the Armenians' desperate situation.⁵⁰⁴ In September 1915 a large refugee camp was established in Port Said in Egypt. Around 4,000 Armenians found refuge there, employed by the Allies to make, for example, army shirts and fishing nets.

Humanitarian relief efforts were crucial for the survival of Armenian refugees. Underground networks, in which Western missionaries were also involved, had already helped rescue Armenians via Dersim in 1915. These and other networks were partly built on existing humanitarian groups that had been established in Europe, the United States of America and Australia after the 1894–96 massacres. Together with workers from neutral countries still resident in the Ottoman Empire, they formed the active nucleus of the Near East Relief that started in late 1915. Australia had its first fundraising campaign for the Armenians in mid-late 1915. It was a success. Several organisations were involved in arranging collections, which grew over the years with heart-breaking reports from overseas. The fundraising efforts also helped to open an orphanage in Antelias in Lebanon, which took in about 1,700 genocide survivors. Australian aid to the Armenians lasted well into the 1940s, despite the official denial of the Armenian Genocide by the Turks and the push for healthy diplomatic relations with Turkey after the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The aid provided to the Armenians is considered to be Australia's first major international relief effort and set the path for Australia's future worldwide humanitarian efforts. Despite this, the aid had limited impact on the overall suffering of the Armenians. In hindsight, a successful Gallipoli campaign could have prevented or at least mitigated the Armenian Genocide.

The suffering of the Armenians did not end with the war; expropriation and cultural suppression continued. Many Armenians deal with transgenerational trauma even today. The first commemorations of the Armenian Genocide took place in the Ottoman capital on 24 April 1919, but ceased abruptly in 1923 when the occupation of Istanbul by the Allies ended. It was not commemorated again until 1965, its fiftieth anniversary, when protests in Yerevan and among the Armenian Diaspora revitalised this day of remembrance. Until 1991 Armenians did not have a state of their own, which made it difficult to create a platform to advocate for justice.⁵⁰⁵ The struggle for recognition and

⁵⁰⁴ For further information on encounters between Australians and Armenians see: Babkenian and Stanley, *Armenia, Australia*.

⁵⁰⁵ Harutyun Marutyan, 'April 24: Formation, Development and Current State of the Armenian Genocide Victims Remembrance Day', in: *Remembering the Great War in the Middle East: From Turkey and Armenia to Australia*

commemoration of the Armenian Genocide continues to date in the face of Turkish Government denial.

One critical aspect that created a long-lasting problematic political matrix was the Treaty of Lausanne. Initially, another peace treaty was concluded between the Allied forces and the Ottoman Empire, the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. The Turkish nationalists (also named 'Kemalists' after their leader Mustafa Kemal, later Atatürk), who had founded a counter-government in Ankara, refused the stipulations in the treaty that foresaw the prosecution of war criminals and included financial and military restrictions. Also, the Sèvres Treaty planned to attribute parts of Asia Minor to Greeks, Armenians and Kurds. Ankara's victory in the Greco-Turkish war led to the renegotiation of the treaty. The new Treaty of Lausanne—a compromise between the nationalist leaders in Ankara and imperialist Britain and France—came into force in 1923.

From the very beginning, this treaty was highly criticised by international lawyers, scholars and humanitarians. It not only withdrew provisions for minorities, but also offered impunity for crimes against humanity—a term that was first used on 24 May 1915, in relation to the Ottoman authorities' atrocities against the Armenians. Ultimately, this meant that members of the Ottoman Empire who were responsible and active actors in the genocide were not prosecuted. Moreover, the treaty endorsed compulsory mass population exchanges. The treaty ended the conflict, but not without long-term consequences for ethnic minorities living in the region, and for a political culture that allowed for impunity. Finally, the treaty defined the borders of Turkey and, as a result, in October 1923 the Republic of Turkey was internationally recognised. The Lausanne Treaty not only shaped the modern Middle East, but established a seminal international paradigm of conflict resolution that consisted in 'un-mixing peoples' for the sake of unitary, authoritarian, ethnic nation states.⁵⁰⁶

In the following years the Turkish government was confronted with Kurdish insurrections. Initially the Kurdish had fought on the side of the Kemalists

and New Zealand, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser and Thomas Schmutz (London: I.B. Tauris, forthcoming in 2021).

⁵⁰⁶ For further information on the Treaties of Sèvres and Lausanne see Eric D Weitz, 'From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions', *American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (2008): 1313–43; Roland Banken, *Die Verträge von Sèvres 1920 und Lausanne 1923. Eine völkerrechtliche Untersuchung zur Beendigung des Ersten Weltkrieges und zur Auflösung der sogenannten „Orientalischen Frage“ durch die Friedensverträge zwischen den alliierten Mächten und der Türkei* (Berlin: LIT-Verl, 2014); Renée Hirschon, ed., *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange Between Greece and Turkey* (New York: Berghahn, 2008); Umut Özsü, *Formalizing Displacement. International Law and Population Transfers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

during the wars for Asia Minor against non-Muslim competitors (1919–22), as they had alongside CUP in World War One. However, they soon realised that the Turkish government intended to implement a radical Turkish-nationalist agenda. There was no room for other languages or cultural autonomy, and all religious expression was subjected to strict state control. In the interwar period several rebellions took place, which led to massacres such as the one in Dersim in 1937–38. Overall, these resulted in the death and displacement of hundreds of thousands of Kurds. Since the mid-twentieth century, violence and conflict in the Middle East have led to much higher death tolls than in continental Europe. For several decades, the Israel-Palestine conflict has taken centre stage, while other domestic and interstate wars have occurred such as the Lebanese civil war, the Iran-Iraq war, the anti-Kurdish Anfal campaign, Kurdish guerilla wars in Turkey, the Persian Gulf War, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the civil war in Syria and the war in Yemen. These conflicts claimed millions of lives and resulted in the displacement of many more people. New elements of warfare were combined with patterns of violence, genocide and human trafficking present in World War One. Most recently, the shadows of the past have been cast over Syria and Northern Iraq by the so-called Islamic State (IS) and its treatment of minorities—Christians, Shi'a Muslims and especially the Yazidis.

IV

Almost 100 years after the Armenian Genocide began, the Yazidis were confronted with genocide in their homeland around Mount Sinjar, where they had offered asylum to fleeing Armenians a century earlier. The Yazidis are an ethno-religious minority with their own distinct religion. As heterodox non-Muslims, they have been regularly persecuted, and there are testimonies of Yazidi survivors of attacks by Ottoman rulers during the Armenian Genocide. They were viewed by IS and other non-Yazidis as heathen infidels and, therefore, 'fair prey for conquest'.⁵⁰⁷

The so-called Islamic State's roots can be traced back to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and much earlier.⁵⁰⁸ After loosening its ties with the Islamist

⁵⁰⁷ IS produced several documents for propaganda purposes and for the distribution of instructions and guidelines for its supporters. For instance, it released an official propaganda magazine to promote the recruitment of new soldiers, its attempt to legitimate an IS Caliphate ('Khilafah'), the promotion of slavery and to encourage worldwide atrocities and individual terror attacks.

⁵⁰⁸ For further information on IS, its ideology and rise, see, for example Robert Manne, *The Mind of the Islamic State* (Carlton: Redback Quarterly, 2016); Patrick Cockburn, *The Rise of Islamic State. ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution* (London: Verso, 2015).

terror organisation Al-Qaida, IS proclaimed itself a caliphate in June 2014 in Mosul and promised the worldwide establishment of an Islamic order. The implementation of the genocide launched in August 2014 against the Yazidis has many parallels with the Ottoman attacks against Armenians: displacement, dispossession and massacre, enslavement and sexual violence against women and girls, and the brainwashing of children.

On 3 August 2014, IS launched its attack by invading the area from various locations: Mosul and Tal Afar in Iraq, and Al Shaddadi and Tel Hamis region in Syria. The Yazidis had little chance to escape. They were given no evacuation orders beforehand, nor could they display any significant resistance themselves. Many Peshmerga soldiers, who were supposed to defend and protect the Yazidi population, reportedly left their posts when IS approached—without warning the Yazidis.⁵⁰⁹ Tens of thousands of Yazidis fled to Mount Sinjar Plateau where they remained for several days surrounded by IS fighters, with no belongings, water, food or heat protection, and with no escape route. Within a matter of days after the initial IS attack, thousands of Yazidis were killed—murdered by IS fighters or perishing on their escape. Many more were taken captive by IS members and the whole community of the region was displaced. The atrocities committed by IS fighters against the Yazidis have been recognised as genocide by the United Nations and other authorities, including the Australian Parliament.⁵¹⁰ It is a genocide that is still ongoing as the United Nations' expert body in this matter argues: "Thousands of Yazidi men and boys remain missing and the terrorist group continues to subject some 3,000 women and girls in Syria to horrific violence including daily rapes and beatings."⁵¹¹

IS sought to destroy the Yazidis via multiple strategies. Their actions were planned, and the genocide systematically conducted by strict 'rules'. The systematic nature can be seen in the categorisation of Yazidis into groups, which

⁵⁰⁹ "‘They came to destroy’: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis', UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, June 15, 2016, accessed March 20, 2019, 6–7, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/A_HRC_32_CRP.2_en.pdf.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 1; 'House Debates, 26 February 2018, Motions Yazidi People', Open Australia, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.openaustralia.org.au/debates/?id=2018-02-26.195>; Susan Hutchinson, 'The Pain of Hearing: Australia's Parliament Recognises Yazidi Genocide', The Lowy Institute, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/pain-hearing-australia-parliament-recognises-yazidi-genocide>.

⁵¹¹ 'ISIL's "Genocide" Against Yazidis is Ongoing, UN Rights Panel Says, Calling for International Action', *United Nations News*, accessed February 7, 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/08/562772-isils-genocide-against-yazidis-ongoing-un-rights-panel-says-calling>; the exact number of captives is hard to establish as many might have been killed while in captivity by IS, allied airstrikes, etcetera.

occurred consistently across different locations, clearly indicating the planned nature of the attacks. These are the fates of the captives.⁵¹²

Men and women were immediately separated. Men and boys who had reached puberty were often immediately massacred, shot into mass graves. Others were forced to convert to Islam and killed if they refused. In some cases, family members were forced to watch the executions or were taken later to see dead bodies lying on roadsides.⁵¹³ The bodies of the Yazidi men and boys were often left *in situ*. Most killings were groups that consisted of two to 20 captives, but there are several documented and yet to be documented sites of bigger mass killings. The Yazidi men and boys who converted to Islam were transferred to different sites in Syria and Northern Iraq, where they were put to forced labour such as construction projects, digging trenches, and cleaning streets. They were also forced to pray, to grow their beards and hair, and to follow other religious 'rules'. Attempted escape resulted in immediate execution. It has to be highlighted that even converted Yazidis were by no means equal to IS fighters, nor were they protected. Male Yazidis, even boys around the age of 12, were often beaten and verbally abused, called '*kuffar*' (infidel), and forced to commit heinous acts of violence against each other.

Yazidi women and girls aged nine and above suffered severe sexual abuse, frequent rape, enslavement, physical violence, human trafficking, starvation and verbal and mental abuse. Once separated from the men, the women and girls were themselves categorised into groups of married or unmarried, with children or without, with young, unmarried girls being the most 'valuable'. After weeks or sometimes months of living in poor conditions, where basic human needs were barely met, the women and girls were sold, mainly to IS fighters. Some were sold in slave markets, which would later become accessible online. Once sold, the fighter held the woman captive in his home, where she was raped, sometimes several times a day, and forced to do housework for the fighter's family. Most of the Yazidi women and girls were sold and trafficked several times. The younger children could stay with their mothers, and

⁵¹² For more detailed information on the treatment of the captive Yazidis and the Yazidi Genocide in general see inter alia: "'They came to destroy": ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis', UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, June 15, 2016, accessed February 7, 2019, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/A_HRC_32_CRP2_en.pdf; 'An Uncertain Future for Yazidis: A Report Marking Three Years of an Ongoing Genocide', Yazda, accessed February 7, 2019, https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/92f016_230c3d32aa44498db557326046ad5ca7.pdf.

⁵¹³ For further information on genocidal acts that specifically target the family unit see Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, 'The Devil in the Details: "Life Force Atrocities" and the Assault on the Family in Times of Conflict', *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 5, no. 1 (2010): 1–19.

were also treated poorly, including having to watch their mothers being raped. Any attempt to escape had severe consequences. The women and girls were the property of the buyer, which meant he could do to them whatever he wanted. Already pregnant women were sometimes subjected to forced abortion. Some Yazidis who were forcibly married to IS fighters were confronted with forced pregnancy, others with the use of forced contraception to facilitate ongoing trafficking. Some were gifted from one IS fighter to another. Ownership rights reflected in purchase contracts were yet another indication of the rigid system, hierarchy and official governance of the treatment of captive Yazidis.

Furthermore, captive female Yazidis and children were not allowed to practise their own culture and religion. Boys under the age of puberty were considered to have a pliable identity, able to be converted to Islam and trained in IS ideology. Thousands of boys were brought into 'schools' and taught how to pray, fight and kill. The boys were registered, had to convert to Islam and were given Islamic names. From that moment on, the boys were treated as IS recruits. The boys had to attend daily indoctrination of IS ideology, Quran lessons and military training sessions. Furthermore, they were forced to watch propaganda videos of armed battles, beheadings and suicide missions. If the boys performed poorly in training sessions or could not remember Quranic verses, they were beaten. IS did everything to erase the boys' past. Instead, a new identity was forcibly imposed on the boys, the identity of an IS fighter. They were taught to hate their own community. One boy said: "They told us we had to become good Muslims and fight for Islam. They showed us videos of beheadings, killing and battles. My instructor said "you have to kill kuffars even if they are your fathers and brothers".⁵¹⁴ After weeks or months in the training camps, the boys were distributed according to IS's needs: some became fighters on the battlefield; others had to perform duties including suicide attacks.

For the Yazidis who fled towards Mount Sinjar, limited international efforts were initially made, including humanitarian airdrops by the US government, which were announced by then President Obama while acknowledging the risk of an imminent genocide. Australia was one nation that launched an air-drop with much needed supplies.⁵¹⁵ For Australia, this was one of the most complex humanitarian operations in more than a decade. However, the overall international intervention was extremely limited. Further action could have

⁵¹⁴ "They came to destroy": ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis', UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, June 15, 2016, accessed February 7, 2019, 18, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/A_HRC_32_CRP.2_en.pdf.

⁵¹⁵ 'Recent History of Air Force Humanitarian Assistance', Royal Australian Air Force, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.airforce.gov.au/operations/humanitarian-support/recent-history-air-force-humanitarian-assistance>.

prevented many more deaths and saved thousands of women and children from abduction. Australia is continuing its assistance for the Yazidis to date.⁵¹⁶

V

IS's actions against the Yazidis, which include the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and human rights abuses, have had dire short-term as well as long-term consequences for the Yazidi community. Already faced with individual, collective and transgenerational trauma, the Yazidis have lost their homeland. There are approximately 350,000 Yazidis living in camps for internally displaced people in Northern Iraq. A small number of Yazidis have found refuge in Europe as well as in the United States of America, Canada and Australia, but several thousand are still missing or captive. So far it has almost been impossible for Yazidis to return to their homeland. Approximately 80 to 85 per cent of cities in the region have been destroyed. IS has officially been defeated, but ongoing geopolitical conflict between the Kurdish and Iraqi authorities complicate any rebuilding of the area.⁵¹⁷ Poor safety and infrastructure, including uncleared landmines, make resettling difficult. The lives of the Yazidis drastically changed on 3 August 2014 and they continue to suffer enormous daily challenges.⁵¹⁸

The suffering of the Armenian Genocide survivors did not end with the atrocities—some scholars even recognise the ongoing denial as the last stage of the genocide.⁵¹⁹ The genocidal strategies of Ottoman forces such as massacres of local Armenian men, forcible transfer and brainwashing of children, enslavement, forced marriages and sexual violence against women and girls, trafficking, forced conversions and cultural, biological and social destruction, had severe long-term consequences for the Armenian community. The gendered nature of the Armenian Genocide proved to be a central tactic of the

⁵¹⁶ For example Nathan Morris, 'Yazidi Refugees Fleeing Northern Iraq Arrive in Toowoomba to Write a New History in Australia', ABC, accessed February 7, 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-21/yazidis-write-a-new-history-in-toowoomba/9889238>.

⁵¹⁷ For further information on the on-going conflict between different groups in the region see 'An Uncertain Future for Yazidis: A Report Marking Three Years of an Ongoing Genocide', Yazda, accessed March 20, 2019, 32–42, https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/92f016_230c3d32aa44498db557326046ad5ca7.pdf.

⁵¹⁸ For more information on the Yazidis' trauma, see for example several works from Jan Ilhan Kizilhan.

⁵¹⁹ For example Fatma Müge Göçek, *Denial of Violence. Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence against the Armenians, 1789–2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11.

genocide itself, and continued to have an impact in the aftermath.⁵²⁰ Rescued or escaped Armenian women and children who were sexually abused had to deal with long-lasting stigma; re-integration was often difficult. Turkification and Islamisation processes of orphaned children, and assimilation in general, could often not be reversed and had severe consequences for individuals and the whole community.⁵²¹ The aim was not only to destroy the Armenian population, but also its heritage: identity, history and culture. As a central policy, the Armenian Genocide displayed mainly a race-based social Darwinist character that is comparable to exterminatory patterns of the Holocaust. Yet, in many provinces, religion-based Islamist ideology prevailed.

Similar Islamist strategies are now being reinforced by IS in their treatment of the Yazidis. Knowing what the Armenians had to face after the genocide—stigma, problems around re-integration, trauma and re-traumatisation, hidden or permanent loss of Armenian identity—reflects the situation of the Yazidis today. Many Yazidi boys who return from captivity have forgotten their identity and language, Kurmanji. They suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. The women and girls have to live with the stigma from sexual violence, despite statements from Yazidi leadership that welcomed them back into community (although not their children born of rape). They are severely traumatised. Some male Yazidis have a hard time dealing with their perceived failure to protect women and children. Many Yazidis have lost their lives and the fate of many others remains unknown. Combined with all the existential challenges, this is an unbearable situation. All of this should awake the international community and call for more concrete action.

However, despite everything known about the Yazidi Genocide, the first prosecution of an IS member for crimes against Yazidis only began in April 2019, in Germany.⁵²² The lack of accountability for perpetrators is seemingly repeating the history of the Armenian Genocide. This fact highlights the need for a joint international effort to bring IS fighters to justice. Future coexistence in the region is impossible without justice. The survivors of the Yazidi Genocide bear

⁵²⁰ For detailed information on the gendered nature of the Armenian and Yazidi Genocide, especially on the enslavement of women and its long-term consequences see Nikki Marczak, 'A Century Apart: The Genocidal Enslavement of Armenian and Yazidi Women', in *A Gendered Lens for Genocide Prevention. Rethinking Political Violence*, eds. M.M. Connellan and C. Fröhlich (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 133–62.

⁵²¹ For more information on the treatment of Armenian children in orphanages see for example Selim Deringil, "Your Religion is Worn and Outdated" Orphans, Orphanages and Halide Edib During the Armenian Genocide: The Case of Antoura. *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 12 (2019): 33–65.

⁵²² 'German IS Member on Trial for War Crimes in Munich,' *Deutsche Welle*, April 9, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-is-member-on-trial-for-war-crimes-in-munich/a-48259664>, accessed April 22, 2019.

witness to the atrocities of IS and are willing to fight for justice. Nadia Murad, Human Rights activist, United Nations Goodwill Ambassador and Nobel Peace Prize winner, stated: 'It never gets easier to tell your story. Each time you speak it, you relive it ... Still, I have become used to giving speeches, and large audiences no longer intimidate me. My story, told honestly and matter-of-factly, is the best weapon I have against terrorism, and I plan on using it until those terrorists are put on trial'.⁵²³ Murad highlights the importance of raising awareness through the honest telling of peoples' experiences, despite the challenges. Descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors still recount their stories today, and memoirs of descendants of Islamised Armenians are finally being published.⁵²⁴ This aspect of the genocide—the secret Armenian grandmothers in Turkish or Kurdish families—was for generations a taboo topic in Turkey. Turkey's continued denial of the Armenian Genocide, and decades of passive or active support from Western partners for this position, are a major stumbling block against any credible accountability for mass violence in the post-Ottoman Middle East.

A principled international stand and, in the current case of the Yazidis, significant action, would help in preventing repeated patterns of violence that burden the political cultures in the region. Sadly, patterns of demographic and economic engineering, enslavement and dispossession, common during the last Ottoman decade, have once again taken centre stage in the Middle East of the 2010s.

Conclusion

The Armenian Genocide casts to this day a particularly long and dark shadow, both in the region it occurred, and indeed globally. It is the unnamed black spot in the Lausanne Treaty and represents a continued, even reinforced culture

⁵²³ Nadia Murad, *The Last Girl. My Story of Captivity, and my Fight against the Islamic State* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017), 306; for further accounts also see Farida Khalaf, *The Girl Who Escaped ISIS. Farida's Story* (London: Vintage, 2016); Shirin with Alexandra Cavelius and Jan Kizilhan, *Ich bleibe eine Tochter des Lichts. Meine Flucht aus den Fängen der IS-Terroristen* (München: Knaur, 2017); Jinan mit Thierry Oberlé, *Ich war Sklavin des IS. Wie ich von Dschihadisten entführt wurde und den Albtraum meiner Gefangenschaft überlebte* (München: mvv Verlag, 2016).

⁵²⁴ See for example Fethiye Çetin, *My Grandmother: An Armenian-Turkish Memoir*, trans. Maureen Freely (London: Verso Books, 2012); Ayşe Gül Altınay and Fethiye Çetin, *The Grandchildren. The Hidden Legacy of 'Lost' Armenians and Turkey*, trans. Maureen Freely (Somerset: Taylor and Francis, 2014); Kemal Yalçın, *Hayatta Kalanlar* (Istanbul: Birzamanlar Yayıncılık, 2006); İrfan Palalı, *Tehcir Çocukları: Nenem Ermeniymiş* (Istanbul: Su Yayınevi, 2005).

of impunity for the most serious collective crimes of genocide during the twentieth century. As a consequence, the foundation for human rights in the juridical systems of the post-Ottoman states was weak from the start. The Lausanne Treaty had implicitly accepted the CUP's demographic engineering, even completing it through the agreement on the so-called Greek-Turkish population exchange. Also, it endorsed the single-party rule of the Kemalists, the successors of the CUP single-party regime, and its unitary, ultra-nationalist rule over Asia Minor.

The CUP's legacy has marked Turkey and the Ba'ath regimes of Syria and Iraq. Most post-Ottoman countries followed, one way or another, in the footsteps of the warring Young Turk regime; its rule was a paradigm for post-Ottoman power struggles: for military coups; leader centrism; deep states (within states); partisanship instead of meritocracy; and use of religion and propaganda against scapegoats. All this was and is incompatible with constitutional rule and comprehensive social contracts. As a consequence, lasting social peace has remained elusive.

Visitors to the Australian War Memorial who possess some knowledge of World War One in Ottoman Turkey, are struck by the omission from this large exhibition of the slightest allusion to the extermination of the Armenians, which constituted a major chapter of the Ottoman Great War and evolved simultaneously with the Anzac landing on Gallipoli. In fact, for the CUP rulers, one was logically connected to the other in a total war that they directed against domestic groups declared enemies as well as official foreign enemies. Any comprehensive exhibition on World War Two without inclusion of the Holocaust would be seen as entirely unacceptable. After 1945, Europe could only be rebuilt based on the explicit rejection of the former criminality of the German single-party rulers and their allies in Europe. Analogous reasons are valid for World War One and the post-Ottoman world.

Both the Armenian Genocide and the Anzac experience had in common the deep trauma that they left among Armenians and Australians. In Australia, both traumas, however, are remembered entirely separately, although it was for different reasons that they were not addressed in Australian public history or collective memory for generations. On the one hand, the reason was diplomatic convenience and partly historical ignorance; on the other, it was based on the need for national heroism to make sense out of great loss. In Australia, the Gallipoli campaign is held up as an event signalling the 'birth' of the nation and used by politicians to invoke a sense of patriotic pride and military virtue. But for many soldiers and their families it was, and remained, a profound trauma that they were largely left alone to deal with—as were Armenian survivors.

In contrast to this genre of memorial framing, the exhibition 'Long Shadows' exposes links between the Armenian Genocide and the Gallipoli campaign, as well as between past and current patterns in the Middle Eastern region—especially between the Armenian and Yazidi Genocides. With images, maps, texts,

artefacts and songs, the visitors of the exhibition are taken from 1915 Australia to Gallipoli, and with witness accounts of Anzac POWs they are introduced to the Armenian Genocide. After a section on the Armenian Genocide, 'Long Shadows' introduces the public to knowledge of Australian aid sent to Armenians. Reflecting on the fatal consequences of the Lausanne Treaty and violent events in the Middle Eastern region since, it then leads visitors to the Yazidi Genocide, again highlighting Australian aid to the targeted group. The last wall of the exhibition shows a selective timeline on violent conflicts in the modern Middle East. Past events join contemporary events and have long-term consequences for people around the globe. No longer looked at separately, they must be connected in authentic ways without national or diplomatic strings and constraints.

In 1985, an official memorial exchange between Turkey and Australia took place: the site of the Anzac landings was renamed 'Anzac Cove' by the Turks and a memorial to Atatürk was built close to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Furthermore, every year on Anzac Day thousands of Australians make a pilgrimage to Turkey to commemorate their ancestors.⁵²⁵ Turkey has threatened the cancellation of these events should Australia formally recognise the Armenian Genocide. Understanding the linkages in this history, it becomes easier to explain the Australian humanitarian efforts on behalf of the Armenians and Australia's simultaneous inability to face the reality of the Armenian Genocide. It touches on deep ambivalences and hypocrisies in politics and diplomacy. Because of Turkey's political weight, several Western states still do not recognise the atrocities against the Armenians as genocide, preferring a diluted vocabulary like 'tragedy' or 'catastrophe'. Australia is one of those states. It is certainly time to cast off the shadows.

⁵²⁵ See also Nikki Marczak, 'Armenian Genocide Forgotten in ANZAC Commemorations', The Lowy Institute, accessed March 20, 2019, www.loyy.institute.org/the-interpretor/armenian-genocide-forgotten-anzac-commemorations.