

2nd Place Middle School Category

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According to the definition at Merriam-Webster Online, genocide is the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group. People kill mass numbers of people and most of the time, no one in the world seems to know or care. In the 20th Century, many genocide acts took place. This essay discusses genocide that affected the Armenians in Ottoman Turkey and the Ukrainians in the Soviet Union. Millions of people died at the hands of people filled with hatred.

Genocide in the 20th Century included the annihilation of the Armenians from 1915-1923. Three major groups of people involved in this conflict were the Young Turks, the Armenians and the Muslims. After the Young Turks took over the Ottoman Empire, three individuals gained total power. Mehmet Talaat, 1915 Minister of the Interior and Grand Vizier (like a Prime Minister) in 1917; Ismail Enver, Minister of War; and Ahmed Djemal, Minister of the Marine and Military and Governor of Syria. They wanted to expand Turan, the empire they hoped to create from Turkey. Unfortunately, the Armenians were in the way, so they were completely eliminated. The Young Turks turned other Turks against the Armenians by launching false propaganda campaigns to prove the religious, cultural, economic and political differences between the Turkish and Armenian people. This way, Turkish people would not object when millions of Armenians were killed. During World War I, Armenians were arrested and kidnapped. They were jailed and tortured briefly before being shot or hanged. An alternate murder tactic was tying men together and leading them out their towns to shot by soldiers or decapitated by local Turks. Women, children, and the elderly were told to gather their belongings because

they were going to be relocated to a safer setting. Little did they know that they were being taken on death marches in Syria that lasted until every Armenian was dead. The Young Turks created a Special Organization made up of criminals that could kill and rape people whenever they saw fit. Eventually, the Armenians were wiped out successfully, and the three Young Turks who were in power fled. But where were the US and the United Nations? Shouldn't they have come to the aid of the Armenians sooner? Instead of helping the defenseless Armenians, they wrote news articles about the horrors of what was happening in Turkey. They waited until most of the population was dead until trying to help, but to no avail.

Mass genocide also occurred in the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union at the time, severely penalized the Ukrainians when they desired freedom from his rule. The conflict was dubbed Stalin's Forced Famine and it occurred from 1932-1933. After the previous leader of the Soviet Union passed away, the Ukrainians were developing a free spirit that Stalin didn't appreciate. Scientists, doctors, teachers, and religious leaders were falsely accused of planning a revolt. They were executed immediately or sent to isolated Russian prison camps. Kulaks were wealthy farmers that Stalin believed would cause uprisings. Consequently, they were called enemies of the people by false propaganda campaigns. Kulaks were killed or sent to the Siberian wilderness to work as slaves on industrial projects. Then, farms were collectivized and the farmers were made factory workers. Special police squads arrived to scare the Ukrainians into submission. When that didn't work, Stalin prevented any food supplies from getting into the Ukraine. Some food was sold and the profit was used to benefit Stalin's Five Year plan to update the Soviet Union and to maintain his growing military. People lay dead in the streets and their bodies were carelessly dumped into mass graves. A year later, all of the Kulaks had been wiped

out and millions had died. During the ordeal, Stalin and his followers ensured no one acted upon the atrocities that were occurring. Carefully planned pictures and tours were distributed to ease suspicions. Many had the false impression that nothing inhumane was occurring. A widely publicized false trial was enacted to divert the focus of the world from the famine. Many politicians in the West were aware of what was happening but decided to carry on as if nothing out of the ordinary was happening.

These two sobering events are similar and different in many ways. Both events involved false propaganda to turn two groups against each other so the public would not be upset when the victims were murdered. Both also had leaders that were known for their brutal and merciless tactics. In both situations, the West and the UN could have stepped in, but didn't. This is frustrating and saddening because the purpose of the UN is to solve problems such as these. The two conflicts were different as well. The Armenian issue involved land and power, and the Ukrainian famine had to do with food and freedom. The time periods were also different. The Armenian incident was in the early 1900's and Ukrainian forced famine occurred in the 1930's. Stalin went to much greater lengths to hide his actions than the Young Turks. Though the genocides had similarities and differences, they were both terrible acts.

Because of hatred, power, money, and selfishness, genocide continued to occur in the 20th Century. People were abandoned and left to die. It appears the United Nations has only been moderately effective in keeping peace or addressing genocide concerns. Perhaps if we focused more on respecting all genders, ethnicities, and races and carefully monitored interracial conflicts, the United Nations could spend less time discussing war. Most of the wars that have occurred in our world's history have involved race, religion, land, power, and money. With more forward thinking, courage,

world partnering, and love for all people, we can prevent mass genocides such as Stalin's Forced Famine and the Armenians in Turkey. We can save the lives of millions of innocent people. Why can't we be friends?

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