

The Armenian Genocide: The Trial of Tehlirian

Lesson Overview:

In 1921, six years after the extermination of the Armenian peoples in Turkey, an Armenian survivor by the name of Soghomon Tehlirian murdered former Ottoman Grand Vizier Talaat Pasha on the streets of Berlin. The Grand Vizier had been instrumental in the genocide committed against the Armenian peoples, a genocide Tehlirian had witnessed (and survived) firsthand. What followed was a two day trial in which Tehlirian was acquitted.

Students in this lesson participate in a mock trial of Tehlirian. Students are assigned different roles--witnesses, attorneys, court personnel, and jury members. After going through testimonies and managing the evidence, students must decide if the assassination of Talaat Pasha is justified.

Selected Essential Question(s):

- What is justice?
- Is violent retribution ever justified?

Primary Concepts: justice, genocide, historiography of genocide, retribution

Lesson Objectives/Learner Outcomes:

- ESWBAT describe the action of Soghomon Tehlirian against Talaat Pasha and be able to explain the motives of what happened and the consequences.
- ESWBAT create and defend arguments based on interpretation of sources and specific points of view other than their own.
- ESWBAT demonstrate public speaking skills.

Materials:

- Introductory document
- Role assignments sheet (for teacher)
- Witness biographies and role documents

Developmental Sequence:

Anticipatory Set

- Have students raise their hands if they have ever done something bad in retribution for something someone else did. Ask them to keep their hands up if they were caught for that action and punished for it.
- Do they think it is fair that they were punished, but the person who “started it” was not?
- How bad does the “starting” action need to be to justify retribution?

Body of Lesson

Note: Mock trials can be run in any number of different ways. Students can be given scripts to scaffold the event or left to their own creative devices. This lesson plan is deliberately “bare bones” in order for each teacher to use the materials in the way that best suit their classrooms’ needs.

- The Trial
 1. Start by having all students read the introductory document.
 - *It is suggested that teachers scaffold the Armenian Genocide prior to using this lesson. Students will do best if they have some content knowledge through other lessons or a documentary film.*
 2. Split students up into their roles using the supplied Role Assignments document.
 - Note on the Jury: The Jury serves two roles. They first serve as the jury throughout the trial, and decide the end verdict. However, they can also be free

- agents that can take the place of any of the other roles if those students are sick or otherwise not able to fulfill their obligations.
- The jury should also be split up to read the document with the witnesses, to both help the witnesses read and understand the documents, and to assist in their secondary role.
3. All students read their assigned roles documents.
 - The documents are all held and organized by witness in the “Trial Documents” document. They are a mix of primary and secondary sources ranging from one page to two pages in length. Assign the more difficult documents to higher performers.
 4. Conduct the Trial
 - a. Judge reads the sentence and introduces the defendant.
 - *Note: Although the actual sentence is whether or not Tehlirian committed the murder. The Teacher should try to frame the trial (like they did in the actual trial) around whether or not Tehlirian should be guilty of murder given the atrocities of the man who he killed. The actual verdict was innocence due to aggrieved mental state (what would later be known as temporary insanity). The defense argued that Tehlirian was temporarily driven insane due to seeing the man who killed his entire family.*
 - b. Opening arguments of Prosecution.
 - c. Opening arguments of Defense.
 - d. Prosecution calls their witnesses.
 - Each is examined by the prosecution.
 - Each is examined by the defense.
 - e. Defense calls their witnesses.
 - Each is examined by the prosecution.
 - Each is examined by the defense.
 - f. Closing arguments of Prosecution
 - g. Closing arguments of Defense.
 5. Jury debates and decides the verdict for the defendant.
- Share with the class the actual outcome of the real trial.
 - Tehlirian was given a verdict of “not guilty” due to temporary insanity. In short, the court ruled his murder of Talaat justified.
 - Wrap-up
 - Ticket out of class:
 - “Do you think the jury and the class made the right decision, why or why not? Use evidence from the trial to defend your argument”.
 - Ask students to reflect on the famous words of Raphael Lemkin (the inventor of the term “genocide”): "Why is a man punished when he kills another man? Why is the killing of a million a lesser crime than the killing of a single individual?"

Document 1:

The Armenian Genocide: Trial Background

“Turkey is taking advantage of the war in order to thoroughly liquidate [exterminate] its internal foes, i.e., the indigenous Christians, without being thereby disturbed by foreign intervention. What on earth do you want? The question is settled. There are no more Armenians”

--Talaat Pasha in a conversation with Dr. Mordtmann of the German Embassy.

Background:

On the Morning of March 5, 1921, the Charlottenburg district of Berlin was shaken by a gunshot. Citizens turned to see a man with a gun towering over the fallen body of another man. As the murderer turned to run, an angry crowd confronted him and proceeded to beat him while he shouted in poor German “I am not a German! He is not a German! We are foreigners!” The man being beaten by the mob was Soghomon Tehlirian. He had just murdered Talaat Pasha.

The trial of Tehlirian was the trial of the decade. This was not due to the actual murder however, but rather was because of the circumstances of the murder. Talaat was targeted for assassination because of his role in what has now become known as the Armenian Genocide. Talaat was one of the three men in charge of the Ottoman Empire during the first World War -- one of the “three Pashas.” During the war these men instituted a program of mass exile and murder against the Armenian Population in what is now Eastern Turkey. Starting in 1915 the Ottoman deportations and murders would leave over 1 million Armenians dead from starvation, exposure, and executions. Among those dead were 85 members of Soghomon Tehlirian family.

The Ottoman Empire claimed that the Armenian population had risen in revolt in support of a Russian invasion, and used this as justification for its attempt to kill the entire population. The government of Turkey to this day denies the term “genocide” when referring to the Armenians. The Armenians claim that the Ottoman Empire, lead by men such as Talaat, made up the revolution as an excuse to take their land and exterminate their people. Indeed, most historians agree that the murder of one million Armenian Christians constituted a genocide.

Regardless, Tehlirian saw this murder of his family and his people as reason enough to track down Talaat and murder him on the streets of Germany. The question is, was he justified in his murder? The German jury debated whether or not Tehlirian had temporary insanity (and was thus innocent), now it is up to you to ask the same question.

The Charges:

Soghomon Tehlirian is charged with (1) The murder of Talaat Pasha, and (2) Unlawful Vigilantism [taking the law into his own hand].

Document 2:

In-Class Mock Trial Role Assignments

	Direct Examination	Cross Examination
<u>Attorneys</u>		
Prosecution #1	a _____	b _____
Prosecution #2	a _____	b _____
Prosecution #3	a _____	b _____
Defense #1	a _____	b _____
Defense #2	a _____	b _____
Defense #3	a _____	b _____

Witnesses

- Doc#1: (Pros. Witness) Shahon Natalie _____
- Doc#2: (Pros. Witness) Enver Pasha _____
- Doc#3: (Pros. Witness) Nicholas Jessen _____
- Doc#4: (Pros. Witness) Mustin McCarthy _____
- Doc#5: (Def. Witness) Henry Morgenthau _____
- Doc#6: (Def. Witness) Christine Terzeibashian _____
- Doc#7: (Def. Witness) Armin Wegner _____
- Doc#8: (Def. Witness) Johannes Lepsius _____
- Doc#9: (Defendant) Soghomon Tehlirian _____

Court Personnel

Judge (teacher): _____

Bailiff/Clerk: _____

Jury: _____

Document 1: Witness for the Prosecution, Shahon Natalie

Introduction: Shahon Natalie was the leader of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's *Operation Nemesis*, which sought to assassinate leading figures of the Ottoman regime that committed the genocide. The following is from his biography.

This document cannot be reproduced here due to copyrights content. The document can be accessed here (modification might be necessary):

Shahon Natalie: A Biography. *Shahon Natalie Family Foundation Inc.* Retrieved from <http://www.snff.org/about/shahan-natalie/>

Notes and Definitions

Document 2: Witness for the Prosecution, Enver Pasha (Ismail Enver).

Introduction: Enver Pasha was one of the “three Pasha’s” controlling the Ottoman Empire at the time of the Genocide. Here are several different quotes where he describes what happened and who he thinks is at fault.

“We can then use **Platonic means** to quiet Armenians and Greeks, but in time of war we cannot investigate and negotiate. We must act promptly and with determination. I also think that the Armenians are making a mistake in depending upon the Russians. The Russians really would rather see them killed than alive. They are as great a danger to the Russians as they are to us. If they should form an independent government in Turkey, the Armenians in Russia would attempt to form an independent government there.”¹

“The Armenians had a fair warning of what would happen to them in case they joined our enemies. Three months ago I sent for the Armenian Patriarch and I told him that if the Armenians attempted to start a revolution or to assist the Russians, I would be unable to prevent mischief from happening to them. My warning produced no effect and the Armenians started a revolution and helped the Russians. You know what happened at **Van**. They obtained control of the city, used bombs against government buildings, and killed a large number of Moslems [Muslims]. We knew that they were planning uprisings in other places. You must understand that we are now fighting for our lives at the **Dardanelles** and that we are sacrificing thousands of men. While we are engaged in such a struggle as this, we cannot permit people in our own country to attack us in the back. We have got to prevent this no matter what means we have to resort to. It is absolutely true that I am not opposed to the Armenians as a people. I have the greatest admiration for their intelligence and industry, and I should like nothing better than to see them become a real part of our nation. But if they ally themselves with our enemies, as they did in the Van district, they will have to be destroyed. I have taken pains to see that no injustice is done; only recently I gave orders to have three Armenians who had been deported returned to their homes, when I found that they were innocent. Russia, France, Great Britain, and America are doing the Armenians no kindness by sympathizing with and encouraging them. I know what such encouragement means to a people who are inclined to revolution. When our Union and Progress Party attacked Abdul Hamid, we received all our moral encouragement from the outside world. This encouragement was of great help to us and had much to do with our success. It might similarly now help the Armenians and their revolutionary programme. I am sure that if these outside countries did not encourage them, they would give up all their efforts to oppose the present government and become law-abiding citizens. We now have this country in our absolute control and we can easily revenge ourselves on any revolutionists.”²

Notes and Definitions

Platonic Means:
Diplomacy and negotiation.

Van was a city in the Empire that had a large Armenian population.

The British had also invaded Turkey by landing a force in the Dardanelles at Gallipoli.

¹ https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Ambassador_Morgenthau%27s_Story.djvu/412

² https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/%C4%B0smail_Enver

Document 3: Witness for the Prosecution, Nicholas Jessen & Boleslav Dembicki

Introduction: This document comes from the court transcript of the trial of Tehlirian. What follows are the witnesses actual words. They witnessed the murder of Talaat by Tehlirian.

“Witness Nicholas Jessen (a merchant from Charlottenburg District of Berlin, Protestant, 40 years old)

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Were you an eyewitness?

JESSEN — Yes.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Would you relate to us what you saw?

JESSEN — On Tuesday, March 15th, at 11:00 o'clock in the morning, I was walking along Hardenbergstrasse going toward Wittenberg Square to see various customers. I am a representative of a meat packing company. Ahead of me, a man wearing a gray Ulster coat was walking slowly. All at once this defendant passed me going at a brisk pace. He put his hand in his pocket

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Where were you going? Were you walking on the right-hand sidewalk?

JESSEN — Yes, I was going toward the zoo.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — During that time, did the defendant walk past you on the sidewalk?

JESSEN — Yes.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Did he take the revolver out of his pocket? Which pocket?

JESSEN — I am not certain of the details. I believe he took the revolver out of his right breast pocket. In any case it was a revolver. He took it out of his pocket and fired at the victims head, at close range, from behind. The victim immediately fell forward, hitting the ground and cracking his skull. The defendant threw the revolver aside and tried to escape. A woman was walking a little way ahead of the victim; she also fell unconscious. First I lifted the woman up, thinking she too was injured. Then I started running after the defendant and I apprehended him on Fazanenstrasse. Naturally a crowd gathered and the people started mercilessly hitting the defendant. One man, in particular, kept hitting the defendant's head with a key. Others were shouting, “Catch the murderer”. I took the defendant to the police station next to the zoo. There the defendant asked for a cigarette. A crowd also formed at the police station and began to beat the defendant.”³

“Witness Boleslav Dembicki (a servant from Charlottenburg District of Berlin, 32 years old)

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Were you walking on the sidewalk?

DEMBICKI — Yes, the defendant reached me three or four steps away from the victim. All of a sudden I heard an explosion. I thought a tire had blown out nearby. But then I saw a man fall down in front of me and another began to flee.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Did he start to flee right away?

DEMBICKI — Yes, immediately. And, I started to run after him. The defendant entered Fazanenstrasse from the left side but a number of people were in front of him in the street and he could not escape. The witness who just testified was the one who apprehended him. From there we took the defendant to the precinct station next to the zoo.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Are you sure that the man who passed you was the defendant?

DEMBICKI — Yes.”⁴

Notes and Definitions

³ “Trial of Soghomon Tehlirian-First Morning.” Retrieved from http://www.armeniapedia.org/wiki/Trial_of_Soghomon_Tehlirian-First_Morning

⁴ “Trial of Soghomon Tehlirian-First Morning.” Retrieved from http://www.armeniapedia.org/wiki/Trial_of_Soghomon_Tehlirian-First_Morning

Document 4: Witness for the Prosecution, Justin McCarthy

Introduction: This document comes from a writing of Justin McCarthy sent to the Turkish Daily News Newspaper. It was again published by the Assembly of Turkish American Associations. In here he argues for a different interpretation of the Armenian conflict.

This document cannot be reproduced here due to copyrights content. The document can be accessed here (modification might be necessary):

McCarthy, Justin. "Let Historians Decide on So-called Genocide." Turkish Daily news. 11 April 2001. Retrieved from <http://www.ataa.org/reference/historian-carthy.html>

Notes and Definitions

Document 5: Witness for the Defence, Henry Morgenthau.

Introduction: Henry Morgenthau was the US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during WWI and the Armenian Genocide. These are some of his thoughts on what happened.

This document cannot be reproduced here due to copyrights content. The document can be accessed here (modification might be necessary):

“Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (1913-16).” Armenian National Institute. Retrieved from http://www.armenian-genocide.org/statement_morgenthau.html

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There are also the 10 commandments released by the Ottoman Empire. They are as follows, and show that the Empire itself is responsible for the Atrocities:

This document cannot be reproduced here due to copyrights content. The document can be accessed here (modification might be necessary):

“Memorandum by the Committee of Union and Progress outlining the strategy for implementing the Armenian Genocide, 1914-1915.” Armenian National Institute. <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/br-cup-memo-text.html>

**Notes and Definitions**

**Document 6: Witness for the Defense, Christine Terzibashian.**

**Introduction:** This document comes from the transcript for Tehlirian’s murder trial. Christine Terzibashian was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, and was brought on to show the court whether or not the events the Tehlirian spoke of were true.

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| <p><b>“Witness Mrs. Christine Terzibashian (wife of the preceding witness, 26 years old) takes the oath. Not related to the defendant by blood or marriage. Interrogation with the help of an Interpreter.</b></p> <p>The police officers and city officials first informed the <b>well-to-do Armenians</b>. They were told that it was necessary to evacuate the city as it was in direct line of military operations. The well-to-do Armenians were informed eight days before the evacuation. The rest heard about it an hour before it happened. We soon found out that this was a lie and that the Armenians were the only ones who were being evacuated. All together there were 500 families. My immediate family consisted of twenty-one persons, only three of whom survived.</p> <p>We put as many of our possessions as possible in three ox carts we had rented. We took food and money with us as we thought we were going to Erzinga. There were my father and mother; my three brothers, the oldest of whom being 30 years old; three boys, the youngest one being six months old; one of my married sisters with her husband and six children, the oldest of whom was 22 years old. I saw with my own eyes how they all died. Only three of them managed to escape death. I swear to you that the orders to deport the Armenians came from <b>Constantinople</b>.</p> <p>As Soon as we left the city limits and were in front of the gates to the Garin fortress, the <b>gendarmes</b> came and looked through all our belongings for arms. They took knives and umbrellas and other things. We marched on to the next city, Papert. When we were at the city limits, we were forced to march over corpses of people who had recently been killed. My legs were covered with the blood of the corpses I stepped on.</p> <p>They separated about 500 of the boys in their teens. One of them was my brother - But he slipped away from the group and came to us. We dressed him up as a girl so he could stay with us. The other youths were massacred. After they tied them all together, they pushed them into the river. I saw it with my own eyes.</p> <p>The current was so strong that they all drowned or were swept along by it. We all shouted and cried. We did not know what to do. But they would not even allow us to cry. They pushed us all forward sticking <b>bayonets</b> in our backs.</p> <p>We carried whatever we could with us until we came to Malatia. There they took us up a mountain and separated the men from the women. They took the men a distance of ten meters from the women, so that we could see with our own eyes what was happening to them. They were killed with axes and thrown in the river. Only the men were killed this way. They split open my brothers head. My mother dropped dead upon seeing this. A Turk came toward me and wanted to take me as his woman; because I would not consent, he took my son and killed him.</p> <p>I noticed smoke in the distance. I walked toward it and there I found my brother and his pregnant wife who was having labor pains. They told us we had to leave that night. My brother and I were forced to leave his wife there because she was pregnant.</p> <p><b>Talaat Pasha</b> was the one who gave the orders and the soldiers forced us to kneel and cry out Long live the Pasha, because the Pasha had permitted us to live.”<sup>5</sup></p> | <p><b>Notes and Definitions</b></p> <p>Wealthy and educated Armenians were often the first killed.</p> <p><i>Constantinople</i> was the capital of the Ottoman Empire, if the orders came from there it means the government was responsible for the Genocide.</p> <p><i>Gendarms</i>: Armed policemen</p> <p><i>Bayonets</i>: Knives on the end of guns.</p> <p>Talaat Pasha was the man Tehlirian Killed.</p> |
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<sup>5</sup> “Trial of Soghomon Tehlirian-First Afternoon.”  
[http://www.armeniapedia.org/index.php?title=Trial\\_of\\_Soghomon\\_Tehlirian-First\\_Afternoon](http://www.armeniapedia.org/index.php?title=Trial_of_Soghomon_Tehlirian-First_Afternoon)

**Document 7: Witness for the Defense, Armin Wegner**

**Introduction:** Armin Wegner was an outspoken critic of the Ottoman Treatment of the Armenians. What follows is a letter he wrote to the President of the United States: Woodrow Wilson, and two of the pictures he took recording the genocide.

This document cannot be reproduced here due to copyrights content. The document can be accessed here (modification might be necessary):

Wegner, Armin T. "An Open Letter to the President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, on the Mass Deportation of the Armenians into the Mesopotamian Desert." *Journal of Genocide Research* 2.1. 2000. Pp. 127-132.

**Notes and Definitions**

**Document 8: Witness for the Defence, Johannes Lepsius**

**Introduction:** This document comes from the transcript for Tehlirian's murder trial. Christine Terzibashian was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, and was brought on to show the court whether or not the events the Tehlirian spoke of were true.

**“Expert Witness Professor Dr. Johannes Lepsius (author, 62 years old, Protestant) takes the oath.**

The plan for the deportation of the Armenians was decided upon by the **Young Turk Committee**. On this Committee were Talaat Pasha as the Minister of the Interior and Enver Pasha as the Minister of War. Talaat gave the orders and, with the help of the Young Turk Committee, implemented the plan. Already by April 1915 the deportation or general exile had been decided upon. It affected the entire Armenian population in Turkey with a few exceptions, about which I shall testify later. Just before the war, the Armenians in Turkey numbered 1,850,000. There is no such thing as an absolutely accurate demographic census in a country like Turkey; however, this figure corresponds to the statistics of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople.

By order of the highest officials of the Turkish government, the total Armenian population of the areas I have just described was deported to the northern and eastern edges of the Mesopotamian desert: Deir-ez-Zor, Zor, Rakka, Meskene, Ras-ul-Ain, and as far as Mosul.

Approximately 1,400,000 Armenians were deported. What is the significance of this deportation?

In a document signed by Talaat Pasha we find the following statement: "The destination of the deportation is annihilation." These orders were carried out to the letter.

Pursuant to this order, of all the Armenians who were deported from Eastern Anatolia southward, only ten percent reached their destination; the remaining ninety percent were killed, except for women and girls who were sold by the gendarmes or were abducted by the Kurds or died of exhaustion and hunger.

Of those Armenians who were driven to the edge of the desert from Western Anatolia, Cilicia, and northern Assyria, a sizable number, reaching into the hundreds of thousands, was assembled into camps. These groups were systematically starved and periodically massacred.

When more groups of Armenians were brought to the stations and there was no room to keep them, they were taken in groups into the desert and slaughtered.

The Turks indicated that they learned this system from the British, who proceeded in a similar way with the Boers of South Africa. They would segregate all the Boers in various locations and keep them apart from the rest of the population.

The official government explanation for the deportation was that these were precautionary measures. However, authoritative individuals blatantly declared that their purpose was to annihilate the whole Armenian population.

What I have just said is supported by the official documents of the German Foreign Office, as well as the documents of the German Embassy in Constantinople and documents of German Consuls. I have published all of this in a book.”<sup>6</sup>

**Notes and Definitions**

The Young Turks were the group who were in charge of the Ottoman Empire at the time of the Genocide.

<sup>6</sup> “Trial of Soghomon Tehlirian-First Afternoon.”

[http://www.armeniapedia.org/index.php?title=Trial\\_of\\_Soghomon\\_Tehlirian-First\\_Afternoon](http://www.armeniapedia.org/index.php?title=Trial_of_Soghomon_Tehlirian-First_Afternoon)

**Document 9: Witness for the Defence, Soghomon Tehlirian**

**Introduction:** This document comes from the transcript for Tehlirian’s murder trial. This is Tehlirian’s account of the events and his killing of Talaat. Here Tehlirian is the Defendant.

“PRESIDING JUSTICE — How did your parents die?

DEFENDANT — While we were being **plundered**, they started firing on us from the front of the caravan. At that time, one of the gendarmes pulled my sister out and took her with him. My mother cried out, "May I go blind." I cannot remember that day any longer. I do not want to be reminded of that day. It is better for me to die than describe the events of that black day.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — However, I want to point out to you that, for this Court, it is very important that we hear of these events from you. You are the only one that can give us information about those events. Try to pull yourself together and not lose control.

DEFENDANT — I cannot say everything. Every time I relive those events... They took everyone away... and they struck me. Then I saw how they struck and cracked my brother's skull with an axe.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Your sister, the one whom they pulled and took with them, did she return?

DEFENDANT — Yes, they took my sister and raped her.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Did she return?

DEFENDANT — No.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Who cracked your brother's skull with an axe?

DEFENDANT — As soon as the soldiers and the gendarmes began the massacres, the mob was upon us too and my brother's head was cracked open. Then my mother fell.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — From what?

DEFENDANT — I do not know, from a bullet or something else.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Where was your father?

DEFENDANT — I did not see my father; he was in another group ahead of us, but there was fighting going on there too.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — What did you do?

DEFENDANT — I was struck on the head and fell to the ground. I have no recollection of what happened after that.

PRESIDING JUSTICE Having fallen, did you remain at the site of the massacres?

DEFENDANT — I do not know how long I stayed there. Maybe it was two days. When I opened my eyes, I saw myself surrounded by corpses. All the members of the caravan had been killed. Because of the darkness I could not distinguish everything. At first I did not know where I was then I began to realize that I was surrounded by corpses.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Among the dead, did you find the bodies of your parents, brothers, and sisters?

DEFENDANT I saw my mother's body; she had fallen face down. My brother's body had fallen on top of me. I could not ascertain anything more.”<sup>7</sup>

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“PRESIDING JUSTICE — Tell me, please, is it true that prior to this you had already verified that Talaat Pasha was living in Berlin?

DEFENDANT — Yes. About five weeks before I had seen him.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Where?

DEFENDANT — On the street. He was coming from the vicinity of the zoo with two or three other men. I heard they were speaking Turkish. They referred to one of their number as Pasha. I looked back and saw that the man was Talaat Pasha. I followed them until I came to a movie theater. From the entrance to the theater I saw one of them depart but, prior to doing so, he kissed the hand of Talaat and called him Pasha. The other two entered a house.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Did you intend to kill Talaat Pasha at that moment?

DEFENDANT — No, I did not. But I felt bad. I entered the theater and, while watching the movie, all I

Notes and Definitions

Plundered: Being robbed.

⁷ “Trial of Soghomon Tehlirian-First Afternoon.”

http://www.armeniapedia.org/index.php?title=Trial_of_Soghomon_Tehlirian-First_Afternoon

could see were the pictures of the massacres. I left the theater and went home.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — How did it come about that you committed this homicide? Did you see him leave the house?

DEFENDANT — First I saw him on the balcony of his apartment. Then, he left the house... Talaat, the man who was responsible for the deaths of my parents, my brothers, and my sisters.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Then what did you do?

DEFENDANT — The minute I saw him step out of the house, I took my pistol, ran after him, and shot him.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — When you went outside, did you see Talaat on the opposite sidewalk?

DEFENDANT — Yes, he was walking in the direction of the zoo. I ran along the same side of the street as my apartment building. When I caught up to him, I crossed the street and was upon him.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Did you see his face? Did you talk to him?

DEFENDANT — I did not speak to him. I walked past him on the sidewalk and then I shot him.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Did you hold the barrel to his head?

DEFENDANT — Yes.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Then what happened?

DEFENDANT — I only know this much. I cannot be any more specific. Talaat Pasha fell to the ground, blood gushed from his face, and a crowd was standing all around him.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — What feeling did you have, seeing Talaat Pasha dead before you? What were your thoughts?

DEFENDANT — I do not know what I felt immediately after the incident.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — But after a while you must have realized what you had done.

DEFENDANT — I realized what I had done after they brought me to the police station.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — Then, what did you think of what you had done?

DEFENDANT — I felt a great satisfaction.

PRESIDING JUSTICE — How do you feel about it now?

DEFENDANT — Even today, I feel a great sense of satisfaction.”⁸

⁸ “Trial of Soghomon Tehlirian-First Afternoon.”

http://www.armeniapedia.org/index.php?title=Trial_of_Soghomon_Tehlirian-First_Afternoon

Witnesses for the Prosecution

DOCUMENT #1

**Shahan Natalie
(1884-1983)**



9

- Born and Raised in an Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire
- Member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF)
- Planned “Project Nemesis,” which was the ARF’s plan to assassinate the leaders of Ottoman Turkey who carried out the Armenian Genocide.
- Recruited Tehlirian to murder Talaat Pasha.
- College educated in the United State.

DOCUMENT #2

**Enver Pasha
(1881-1922)**



10

- Turkish Minister of War during WWI and the Armenian Genocide
- Helped lead the “Young Turk Revolution” prior to WWI.
- Exiled from Turkey after its defeat in WWI, but later returned to lead a rebellion.
- Died fighting the Russian Red Army during the Turkish War of Independence.

DOCUMENT #3

**Nicholas Jessen (Age
40) and Boleslav
Dembicki (Age 32)**

- Merchant from the Charlottenburg district in Berlin.
- Witnessed the Murder of Talaat by Tehlirian.
- Servant from the Charlottenburg district in Berlin.
- Also witnessed the murder.

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahan_Natalie#/media/File:Shahan_natalie.jpg


¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enver_Pasha#/media/File:Enver_Pasha_1911.jpg

DOCUMENT #4

<p>Justin McCarthy (1945-)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● United States Historian on the Ottoman Empire.● Professor at the University of Louisville in Kentucky.● Views the Armenian Genocide as a “Civil War” where equal numbers of Armenians and non-Armenians were killed.● Believes the Ottoman Empire was justified in its use of force because of the threat from Russia.● Raised and educated in Turkey.● Has received the Order of Merit award in Turkey● Education chairman of the Turkish American Friendship Council.
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Witnesses for the Defense


DOCUMENT #5

<p>Henry Morgenthau (1856-1946)</p>  <p>11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during WWI● Detailed and reported the atrocities being committed towards the Armenians and tried to push to U.S. to intervene.● Raised money and lead efforts to help survivors of the Armenian Genocide.● Also supported an effort to grant the Jewish people a homeland to prevent their persecution in between WWI and WWII.
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DOCUMENT #6

<p>Mrs. Christine Terzeibashian (Age 26)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Survivor of the Armenian Genocide.
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DOCUMENT #7

<p>Armin Wegner (1886-1978)</p>  <p>12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● German soldier stationed in the Ottoman Empire during WWI (Germany was allied with the Ottoman Empire).● Witnessed the Armenian Genocide.● Took dozens of photographs to document the killings. These stand as the best proof of the genocide.● Later spoke out against the Nazi treatment of the Jews, personally writing a letter to Hitler stating that "There is no Fatherland without justice!"● Had to flee Nazi Germany to Rome during WWII.
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¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Morgenthau_Sr./media/File:Henry_Morgenthau_crop.jpg

DOCUMENT #8

**Johannes Lepsius
(1858-1926)**



13

- German Protestant Missionary
- Published multiple narratives and accounts of the Armenian Genocide.
- Distributed his work throughout Germany to raise support against the Ottoman treatment of Armenians.
- Tried unsuccessfully to get the German government to pressure the Ottoman Empire.

DOCUMENT #9

**Soghomon Tehlirian
(1896-1960)**



14

- Assassinated Talaat Pasha on the streets of Germany in 1921.
- Born and raised in a small Armenian village in the Ottoman Empire
- Well educated in the Empire's capital Constantinople, and went on to study in Germany.
- Joined the Russian army in fighting against the Ottomans hoping to win a homeland for the Armenian people.
- The Genocide took 85 members of his family, including his mother, three sisters, his sister's husband, his two brothers, and his two year old niece.
- Joined the ARF's Operation Nemesis in 1921 to seek revenge.

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armin_T._Wegner#/media/File:Armintwegner1890s.jpg

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Lepsius

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soghomon_Tehlirian#/media/File:Soghomon_Tehlirian_1921.jpg