

Forceful Islamization During and Before Genocide: Religious Conversion of Armenians

Аванесов Овик Сергеевич

Выпускник (магистр)

Ереванский государственный университет, Факультет истории, Ереван, Армения

E-mail: hovik-avanesov@yandex.com

The problem of forceful Islamization is a less studied sphere in the Armenian studies. The Ottoman governors employing the policy of forceful Islamization formed a list of target groups to start their policy with. Those target groups were: 1. Armenian children 2. Girls and women. 1. The most suitable targets for forceful religious conversion were children, who were Islamized in their early ages, when their national and religious identity was not still completely developed. This was the logic employed by the long-lived and popular Institute of child-recruitment (Devşirme) in the Ottoman Empire.; the one that was also called “blood tax”[1]. Child recruitment reached its high levels in the years of 1915-1923; the years of Armenian Genocide, which was realized in two levels: state and wide groups of civilians. 1.1 The state's direct involvement in the policy of forceful Islamization of the Armenian children is proved by the official order on June 10, 1915, in which it is stated: “the Islamized Armenian orphan children should be given to welfare Muslim families in the villages and boroughs, where there are no Armenians. ” 1.2 During the Genocide the Turks and Kurds kidnapped many Armenian children and Islamized them [2]: 2. Armenian girls and women: Another target for forceful religious conversion were Armenian girls and women, the islamization of whom also reached its high levels during the years of Genocide. However, examples of reconversion of women in the following years were also observed. According to my personal viewpoint by the islamization of Armenian women and children the Ottoman governors solved their two main objectives. 1. To decrease the number of the Armenians, as Christian population, in the Armenian populated places of Western Armenia and Turkey. 2. To refresh their gene pools, as at that time the marriage between relatives was common in Turkey. In biology it is scientifically proved that children born from these marriages are physically and mentally infantile[3]. The process of Turkishizing was vividly expressed in the forceful Islamization of the Armenians. It consisted of three phases: first between 16 and 17 centuries, second from 18 to the second half of 19 century and third, from the end of 19 century to the second half of 20 century. Thus the policy of forceful Islamization coincides with the 5th point, “the transfer of children from one human group to another”[4] of the UN Convention on the “Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” adopted on December 9, 1948[5].

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