

## Chapter 1 : Prof. Yair Auron

*The genocide of Armenians by Turks during the First World War was one of the most horrendous deeds of modern times and a precursor of the genocidal acts that have marked the rest of the twentieth century.*

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Robert Melson *The Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide*, by Yair Auron. Auron, a senior lecturer at the Open University of Israel and the Kibbutzim College of Education, was trained at the Hebrew University and the Sorbonne, where he received his doctorate. He is the author in Hebrew of *Sensitivity to World Suffering: The facticity of the Armenian Genocide* has been denied by recent Turkish governments and by some historians who are sympathetic to its views. Unfortunately, most Ottoman documents, with rare exceptions, have not been made available to researchers. What Auron has done, therefore, is single-handedly to discover and bring to light new and important sources on the events, namely documents from the Yishuv and the Zionist archives. His is a pioneering work in revealing new sources of documentation and new venues for research on a traumatic and crucial period of recent history. But his study seeks to move beyond documentation to interpretation: To what extent did the Zionist movement and the early Jewish pioneers respond to the plight of the Armenians? Did they try to warn the world about the disaster? Did they try to rescue fleeing refugees? Or did they turn their back on the plight of the Armenians, as so many did when twenty-five years later Jews were fleeing for their lives? His answers are complex, showing that individual Jews and some organizations like the Nili group did care and did try to reach [End Page ] out to the doomed, while other Jews and Jewish organizations remained silent and inactive. Significant figures in the Yishuv, especially those in Nili, were well aware of the Armenian Genocide. It comprised 40 members, most of whom were descendants of first Aliya pioneers, those who had come between and Nili archives demonstrate that the group was well aware of the Armenian Genocide and tried to get the British to intervene. Some, like Sarah Aaronsohn, one of the leaders of Nili, had witnessed the results of the genocide at first hand and feared that the nascent Jewish community in Palestine would suffer the same fate as the Armenians. In no small part Nili turned itself into a pro- British spy-ring and alerted the British to the Armenian Genocide in order to forestall the destruction of the Yishuv. In their view, the future of the Yishuv lay in a federated Ottoman Empire that would emerge following hostilities. Hence they supported the Ottoman side and hoped that the Yishuv would be rewarded for its loyalty. Later, after the Balfour Declaration, which placed the British squarely on the side of the Yishuv and a Jewish homeland in Palestine, Ben-Gurion and Ben-Tzvi supported the British and the Entente against the Germans and the Turks, but by then most of the Armenian Genocide had run its course and, presumably, they had little to add. The tragedy of the Armenians during the First World War became emblematic of their own fate You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

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