



# Armenian National Committee of America

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## Early Christianity in the Lands of Present-Day Turkey:

The Ottoman Empire, during its World War I-era genocide against Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians, systematically destroyed its ancient Christian population and wiped out nearly all of their ancient religious and cultural heritage on its territory - much of it dating back to the time of Christ. Its successor state, the Republic of Turkey, has continued this process through acts of destruction, desecration, and disregard - imperiling the very existence of Christian communities and the remaining legacy of early Christianity on these Biblical lands.

According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the serious limitations on freedom of religion that the Republic of Turkey continues to impose, "threaten[s] the continued vitality and survival of minority religious communities in Turkey."

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The following are key points about the rich legacy of early Christianity on the territory of present-day Turkey:

- The territory of present-day Turkey, encompassing the biblical lands of Anatolia and Mount Ararat - the famed landing-place of Noah's Ark - is home to many of Christianity's pivotal events and holy sites. This legacy long predates the arrival of Turks in Anatolia.
  - The Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew traveled to Armenia and throughout the surrounding region to preach and establish communities of faith in the 1st Century.
  - In 301 A.D., Armenia, inspired by St. Gregory the Illuminator, became the first Christian nation.
  - The first foundational councils of the Christian Church, such as the Council of Nicea, were convened on the very territory of present-day Turkey, long before Turkish armies invaded these Christian lands.
  - It was in the city of Antioch, on the Mediterranean coast, in which followers of Jesus were first called Christians.
  - The Seven Churches of the Apocalypse, cited in the Book of Revelation, are located in modern-day Turkey.
  - The city of Tarsus, now in south-central Turkey, was the birthplace of the Apostle Paul, whose Epistle to the Ephesians, the 10th book of the New Testament, was addressed to believers in Ephesus, a city on present-day Turkey's Mediterranean Sea coast.
  - The Catholic Church recognizes Ephesus, in present-day Turkey, as the city to which the Apostle John took the Virgin Mary to spend the last years of her life.
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