

US historian : Millions of Turks suffered during Ottoman Empire's collapse

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A map prepared by Justin McCarthy, professor of history at the University of Louisville in the United States, shows that the breakup of the Ottoman Empire set thousands upon thousands of forlorn refugees on the move — including Ottoman Muslims.

Since most Western chronicles of this era focus only on those of the Christian faith who suffered, the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA), which is based in Washington, D.C., has published an annotated map displaying the travels of 5 million Ottoman Muslims who were displaced from the Balkans, the Caucasus and Crimea from 1770-1923. The map also records and provides historical context for the 5 million Ottoman Muslims who died from 1864-1922 in the wars that were fought to dismantle the Ottoman Empire.

Prepared by McCarthy, the map is a powerful visual tool for both the historian and the casual viewer who seeks to better understand the cataclysm that affected so many millions, Muslim and Christian alike, during the final years of the Ottoman Empire. "The peoples of the Ottoman Empire suffered some of the worst disasters in history. They were forced from their lands — never to return — and died in great numbers. All groups suffered, but those who suffered most were the Muslims, especially the Turks. I hope that this map will demonstrate the disastrous fate of all those peoples," said Professor McCarthy. TCA President Lincoln McCurdy said there are few Turkish families that do not include a grandmother or grandfather from those distant lands, from Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Crimea or the Caucasus or a story of internal displacement due to the Anatolian wars.

"The founding fathers of modern Turkey urged the ravaged people of the young republic to look forward, rather than back. Sadly, other communities have turned their tragic moments into an unquenchable enmity toward Turks. This map is a positive step in overcoming the bigotries inherent in accounts that ignore or dismiss Muslim losses as the Ottoman Empire was dismantled," McCurdy said.

Sources

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