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**Publications**

# THE EVENTS OF 1915

A brief history of the  
Turkish - Armenian Conflict



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***The events of 1915 is a debated issue. But it is also a tool for the Armenian Lobby all around the world to secure funds from the governments and fulfil their hatred against the Turkish people living in these countries.***

*The reason why we have prepared this information booklet is to provide a summary of unbiased views about the events of 1915 and to historically challenge the allegations of the “Genocide Lobby”. Pointing to the serious shortcomings of the genocide claim does not mean the Armenians did not suffer terribly and in great numbers. In fact, numbers are not the primary issue; even the smallest number of innocent deaths is tragic. Nor does the death of millions of Ottoman Muslims in the same era, so often ignored in Western historiography, constitute a reason for condoning or belittling the deaths of so many Armenians. But insisting on genocide as the only way to describe the Armenian experience, while ignoring Turkish losses, is not a proper way to honour the memory of those who lost their lives, nor does it correctly reflect the historical record.*

## NO CONSENSUS



*the 100th Anniversary of the ANZAC Day is around the corner. It is also a day to commemorate the world famous example of reconciliation and the friendship between Turkey and Australia.*

The events of 1915 are still a debated issue. There is no legal or academic consensus on it. Countless reconciliation efforts of the Turkish side have always been turned down by the Armenian Government due to pressure from the Diaspora.

### ***An identity based on hatred***

Armenian communities living in Western countries are often represented by well-organised nationalist

associations that have chosen to build an Armenian identity fixated on having the events of 1915 internationally recognised as genocide. Consequently, the Armenian national narrative has been widely circulated in a series of aggressive public relations campaigns, creating the impression that there is widespread acceptance and even a consensus on the Armenian view of history.



*Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance Ltd (ATA-A) is an umbrella organisation founded by many Australian Turkish Associations. ATA-A advocates on behalf of the interests of the Turkish community. One of its many roles is to advocate against turning foreign historical issues into a political football in Australia.*  
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# What is “Genocide” ?

This term refers to a well defined crime, the definition of which has been given in an international convention made after the Second World War: “the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” , approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution of December 9, 1948 and which went into effect on January 11, 1951, a convention which Turkey signed and ratified.

## 3 Elements of Genocide :

### 1- National, Ethnic or Religious Group :

In the convention the definition of the crime of genocide consists of three elements: for one thing, there has to be a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.

### 2- Being Subjected to the Listed Acts :

This group has to be subjected to certain acts listed in the Convention. The “murder of the members of the group, and forced transfer of the children of one group into another group and subjecting the members of a group to conditions

which will eventually bring about their physical destruction” come within the range of actions listed in the said convention.

### 3- There has to be “an intent of destroying” :

The third element is the most important: there has to be “an intent of destroying” the said group in part or in entirety. Political intents are therefore not included, because then all wars would be regarded as “genocides”.

*This key-description helps to differentiate between genocide and other forms of homicide, which are the consequences of other motives such as in the case of wars, uprisings etc.*

*Homicide becomes genocide when the latent or apparent intention of physical destruction is directed at members of any one of the national, ethnic, racial or religious groups simply because they happen to be members of that group.*

*The concept of numbers only becomes significant when it can be taken as a sign of such an intention against the group. That is why, as Sartre said in speaking of genocide on the occasion of the Russell Tribunal on the Viet-Nam War, that one must study the facts objectively in order to prove if this intention exists, even in an implicit manner.*

#### No SCHOLARLY Consensus

Alongside many scholars who lean towards the Armenian view, there are quite a few non-Turkish historians who disagree with the genocide thesis. They do not deny the Armenian suffering. But they just do not think genocide is a correct description of the events of 1915.

#### No POLITICAL Consensus

There have only been a handful of countries, approximately 20 where parliaments have made declarations, mostly of a non-binding nature, supporting the Armenian view of history. Not surprisingly, these are all countries where the Armenian Diaspora is very active, and there were always numerous parliamentarians who voted against these pro-Armenian bills.

#### No LEGAL Consensus

It is often forgotten that genocide is a specific crime which is defined by the international law. The 1948 Convention specifies what genocide is and how it may be ascertained: a competent international tribunal can determine if an event is genocide. Such a court decision exists for the Holocaust, for Rwanda and for Srebrenica. But no such decision exists for 1915. So nothing close to a legal consensus exists on the issue.

Background

Even before the War the Ottoman Empire had begun to decline continuously as a result of the penetration of European colonialism, nationalism and corresponding warfare. The Russian expansionism and the winds of nationalism that blew from the West resulted in the disintegration of the Western provinces of the Empire and led to the in- evitable weakening of the ailing Ottoman State structure. Nearly 4.5 million Ottoman Muslims perished from 1864 to 1922 and many more dead were never counted. Moreover, around 5 million Ottoman citizens were driven away from their ancestral homes in the Balkans and the Caucasus during the period of the Empire’s disintegration and found shelter in Anatolia and

Istanbul. Armenians, as all the other people that made up the Empire, also suffered immensely. The loss of so many innocent lives and departure from ancestral lands was a common fate. Even today traumatic consequences of the 1915 events continue to distress Turks and Armenians. Competing and hitherto irreconcilable narratives on the 1915 events erode the mutual empathy and self-critical assessment that is needed for reconciliation. What is required is to try to examine objectively how this tragedy happened and reveal its true historical context, including the dynamics of cause and effect, so as to reconcile Turkish and Armenians views of history.

Ottoman refugees from the Balkans entering Istanbul 1913.(top) Ottomans in Crete waiting to be deported. 1912 (middle) Refugees from Balkans walked great distances. 1911 (bottom)



How many lost their lives ?

The figure of how many Armenians lost their lives changes dramatically depending on the sources. While Armenian sources claim the numbers to be around 1.5 million, the Turkish side usually claim it to be around two hundred thousand.Prof McCarthy says the actual figure is between five and six hundered thousand. But we should emphasise that millions of Muslim Ottomans lost their lives in World War I and afterwards.

Numbers of Armenian deaths

Kevork Aslanian	1.8 million
ANC Australia	1.5 million
K. J. Basmadjian	1.4 million
Dr Taner Akcam	800 thousand
Prof Justin McCarty	600 thousand
Prof Stanford Shaw	300 thousand
Dr Hikmet Özdemir	200 thousand
Prof Kemal Çiçek	200 thousand

Armenian Population in Ottoman Empire before WWI

Sources	Claimed Armenian Population
Vahan Vardarpet, 1886	1,263,000
Vital Cuinet, 1914	1,475,011
Marcel Leart (real name Krikor Zohrap) , 1912	1,018,000
Ludovic de Constenson, 1913	1,400,000
H. F. D. Lynch, 1914	1,325,246
Christopher Walker	1,500,000
Clair Price	1,000,000
Official Ottoman census statistics for 1914	1,294,851
Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1910 edition (British Author)	1,500,000
Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1953 edition (Armenian Author)	2,500,550
The Armenian National Committee at the Paris Peace Conference	2,380,000

# *This issue is a matter of legitimate scholarly debate, with reputable historians on both sides.*

*Giving absolute priority to uncompromising Armenian anti-Turkish views, even when reflecting well-intended attitudes to show solidarity with a group that has experienced suffering, does not do justice to the grievances that were experienced by so many different populations. Compassion becomes problematic if it is selective. It is misleading to believe that there is a “political consensus” on this issue. In fact, there have only been a handful of countries, approximately 20 where parliaments have made declarations, mostly of a non-binding nature, supporting the Armenian view of history. Not surprisingly, these are all countries where the Armenian Diaspora is very active and even then there were always numerous parliamentarians who voted against these pro-Armenian bills.*

## ***What happened ?***

This section provides a summary of unbiased views about the events of 1915 and aims to historically challenge the allegations of the “Genocide Lobby”. Here is the timeline of events, before and after 1915..

***1850 : Armenian groups started to join the invading Russian Army against the Ottoman Empire to create an ethnically homogenous Armenian homeland.***

Czarist Russia sought to weaken and divide the Ottoman Empire and hence supported Armenian separatist activities and revolts. This led to the further radicalisation and militarisation of nationalistic Armenian groups in the territories where Ottoman Muslims constituted the majority. Consequently, significant numbers of armed Armenian groups joined forces with the invading Russian army to create an ethnically homogenous Armenian homeland.



***Armenian irregulars fighting along with Russian army to capture the Turkish city of Van (1915)***



***Armenian armed rebel group under Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) flag. Text in Armenian reads : “Liberty or Death”***



## ***1915: Armenians near war zones were ordered to be relocated.***

In response to Armenians fighting against them, the Ottoman Government ordered in 1915 the Armenian population residing in or near the war zone to be relocated in southern Ottoman provinces away from the supply routes and army transport lines on the way of the advancing Russian army. Some Armenians living away from the front, who were nevertheless reported or suspected of being involved in collaboration, were also included in the compulsory transfer.



***The Relocation Act 1915  
in the Ottoman Archives.***

## ***1915 - 1916 Atrocities happened during relocations***

While the Ottoman Government clearly planned that those who had to be moved should be cared for, protected, and fed adequately, most of the Armenians suffered immensely. War-time conditions, exacerbated by internal strife; local groups seeking revenge; banditry; famine; epidemics and the general lawlessness of a collapsing state apparatus all combined to produce a painful tragedy that was beyond any contingency expectation. There were also some unruly Ottoman officials who committed offences against Armenian convoys.

## ***1916 - Ottoman Government prosecuted and executed the responsible army officials.***

Historical documents prove that the Ottoman Government not only did not intend these outrages to take place but actually prosecuted the perpetrators. Officials/civilians who disobeyed the instructions of the Government to carry out the relocation in an orderly and secure manner were court-martialed and those found guilty were sentenced to capital punishment by the Government in 1916, long before the end of the First World War.

## ***1918-1970: Even after the war there weren't any significant problems.***

Despite the tragedy of 1915 and the wars between Turkish and Armenian armies between 1918-1920, relations between the two people continued without any significant problem until the 1960s. However, the dynamics of cold war politics exploited bitter memories and grievances on the Armenian side. This fuelled the radicalism of certain nationalist Armenian groups, resulting in violent anti-Turkish activities.

# Armenian Terrorism

Following the Lausanne Treaty, the 'Armenian Question' of creating an ethnically homogenous Armenian Homeland ceased to exist. However, the Armenians of Diaspora, clinging firmly to their allegations, unleashed a series of terrorist attacks on Turkish diplomatic missions abroad from 1970 onwards. All these attacks were masterminded by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA). Under a mask of independence, ASALA carried out ruthless and dastardly attacks. Psychologically and logistically supported by the Hinchaks, ASALA engaged in acts of terror against Turkish diplomats, representation offices and other organisations. **Armenian terrorism is a result of hatred preached against Turks in the Armenian Diaspora.**

## 1970-1989 : Armenian Terrorism against Turkish Diplomats (in Sydney, Melbourne, London, Los Angeles, Paris, Lisbon etc.. )

Painful for all Turks to remember, terrorism became a tool to get the attention of world public to Armenian claims. Over 40 Turkish diplomats and their family members were killed in terrorist attacks from 1975



*Consul-General of Sydney Mr Sarik Ariyak was assassinated in the eastern suburbs of Sydney on December 17th 1980 by Armenian terrorists.*

onwards by Armenian terrorists. This included the first terrorist attack on Australian soil with loss of life, the assassination of Mr Sarik Ariyak, Consul General of Turkey in Sydney and his security officer Mr Engin



*ASALA terrorists took over Turkey's consulate in Paris in 1981 killing a Turkish guard, wounding the Turkish Consul and taking 56 people hostage, including 8 women and a 3-year-old child*

Sever by the Armenian terrorist organisation called Justice Commandoes for Armenian Genocide (JCAG) on December 17, 1980 in Sydney and car bombing of the Melbourne Consulate in 1986 by the Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) terrorists. During Armenian Terrorism period 1970 -1989, the Armenian view and the genocide thesis started to be widely disseminated, at times using forged documents and photos. Significant parts of the pro-Armenian literature rested upon a highly questionable methodology for explaining population figures. Some dubious memoirs were used and repeatedly cross-referenced in order to build up a case for genocide recognition.

# *Facts about the Events of 1915*

***FACT 1:*** *Demographic studies prove that prior to World War I fewer than 1.5 million Armenians lived in the entire Ottoman Empire. Thus, allegations that more than 1.5 million Armenians from eastern Anatolia died, must be false.*

Figures reporting the pre-World War I Armenian population vary widely, with Armenian sources claiming far more than others. British, French and Ottoman sources give total figures of 1.05-1.5 million. Only certain Armenian sources claim a pre-war population larger than 1.5 million. Comparing these to post-war figures yields a rough estimate of losses. Boghos Nubar, head of the Armenian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1920, noted that significant numbers survived the war. He declared that after the war 280,000 Armenians remained in the Anatolian portion of the occupied Ottoman Empire while 700,000 Armenians had emigrated to other countries. Historian and demographer, Dr. Justin McCarthy of the University of Louisville, calculates the actual losses as slightly less than 600,000. This figure agrees with those provided by British historian Arnold Toynbee, French missionary, Monseigneur Touchet, and others.

***FACT 2:*** *Over 2.5 million Muslims died during the same period from similar causes.*

Armenians suffered a high mortality. But one must likewise consider the number of non-Christian deaths. The statistics tell us that more than 2.5 million Anatolian Muslims also perished. Thus, the years 1912-1922 constitute a horrible period for humanity, not just for Armenians. Documents of the time describe intercommunal violence, disease, and famine as causes of death.

***FACT 3:*** *Armenian Australian evidence of genocide is derived from dubious and prejudicial sources.*

Armenian Australians purport that the wartime propaganda of the enemies of the Ottoman Empire constitutes objective evidence. Oft-quoted Ambassador Henry Morgenthau stated in correspondence with President Wilson that he intended to uncover or manufacture news that would goad the U.S. into joining the war, and thus he sought to malign the Ottoman Empire, an enemy of the Triple Entente. Moreover, Morgenthau relied on politically motivated Armenians; his primary aid, translator and confidant was Arshag Schmajonian, his secretary was Hagop Andonian. Morgenthau professed that the Turks were an inferior race. Thus, his accounts can hardly be considered objective.



#### ***FACT 4: The Armenian deaths do not constitute genocide.***

**A.** Boghos Nubar addressed a letter to the Times of London on January 30, 1919 confirming that the Armenians were indeed belligerents in World War I. He stated with pride, "In the Caucasus, without mentioning the 150,000 Armenians in the Russian armies, about 50,000 Armenian volunteers under Andranik, Mazarbekoff, and others not only fought for four years for the cause of the Entente, but after the breakdown of Russia they were the only forces in the Caucasus to resist the advance of the Turks...."

Between 1893 and 1915 Ottoman Armenians in Eastern Anatolia rebelled against their government -the Ottoman government -- and joined Armenian revolutionary groups, such as the notorious Dashnaks and Hunchaks. They spearheaded a massive Russian invasion of Eastern Anatolia. On November 5, 1914, the President of the Armenian National Bureau in Tblisi declared to Czar Nicholas II, "From all countries Armenians are hurrying to enter the ranks for the glorious Russian Army, with their blood to serve the victory of Russian arms." In the service of the Russians, traitorous Armenians massacred over 60,000 Muslims in the city of Van alone.

**B.** The allegation of genocide is illogical. In the words of eminent historian Bernard Lewis, speaking to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz on January 23, 1998, "The Armenians want to benefit from both worlds. On the one hand, they speak with pride of their struggle against Ottoman despotism, while on the other hand they compare their tragedy to the Jewish Holocaust. I do not accept this. I do not say that the Armenians did not suffer terribly. But I find enough cause for me to contain their attempts to use the Armenian massacres to diminish the worth of the Jewish Holocaust and to relate to it instead as an ethnic dispute." (translation)

**C.** None of the Ottoman orders commanding the relocation of Armenians, which have been reviewed by historians to date, orders killings. To the contrary, they order Ottoman officials to protect relocated Armenians. Unfortunately, where Ottoman control was weak, Armenian relocatees suffered most. The stories of the time give examples of columns of hundreds of Armenians guarded by as few as two Ottoman gendarmes. When local Muslims attacked the columns, Armenians were robbed and killed. These Muslims had themselves suffered greatly at the hands of Armenians and Russians. Conversely, where Ottoman control was strong, Armenians went unharmed. In Istanbul and other major Western Anatolian cities, large populations of Armenians remained throughout the war, their churches open.

**D.** The term "genocide" did not exist prior to 1944. It was later defined quite specifically by the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide. The standard of proof in establishing the crime of genocide is formidable given the severity of the crime, the opportunity for overlap with

other crimes, and the stigma of being charged with or found guilty of the crime. While presenting the Convention for ratification, the Secretary General of the U.N. emphasized that genocide is a crime of "specific intent," requiring conclusive proof that members of a group were targeted simply because they were members of that group. ***The Secretary General further cautioned that those merely sharing political aims are not protected by the convention.***

Under this standard of proof, the Armenian Australian claim of genocide fails. First, no direct evidence has been discovered demonstrating that any Ottoman official sought the destruction of the Ottoman Armenians as such. Second, Ottoman Armenian revolutionaries confessedly waged war against their own government. Under these circumstances, it was the violent political alliance of Ottoman Armenians' with the Russian forces, not their ethnic or religious identity, which rendered them subject to relocation.

***FACT 5: The British convened the Malta Tribunal to try Ottoman officials for crimes against Armenians. All of the accused were acquitted.***

In 1919 The British Embassy in Istanbul, utilizing Armenian informants, arrested 144 high Ottoman officials and deported them to the island of Malta for trial on charges of harming Armenians. While the deportees were interned in Malta, the British appointed an Armenian scholar, Mr. Haig Khazarian, to conduct a thorough examination of the Ottoman, British and US archives to substantiate the charges. Though granted complete access to all records, Khazarian's corps of investigators discovered an utter lack of evidence demonstrating that the Ottoman officials either sanctioned or encouraged killings of Armenians. The British Procurator General exonerated and released all 144 detainees after two years and four months of detention without trial. No compensation was ever paid to the detainees.

***FACT 6: Despite the acquittals by the Malta Tribunal, Armenian terrorists have engaged in a vigilante war that continues today.***

In 1921, a secret Armenian network, named Nemesis, took the law into its own hands and hunted down and assassinated several former Ottoman Ministers, among them Talat Pasha and Jemal Pasha. Following in Nemesis' footsteps, during the 1970's and 1980's the Armenian terrorist groups ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) and JCAG (Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide) committed over 230 armed attacks, killing 71 innocent people, including more than 40 Turkish diplomats and their family members, and seriously wounding over 520 people in a campaign of blood revenge.

## ***FACT 7: The Holocaust bears no meaningful relation to the Ottoman Armenian experience.***

1. Jews neither demanded the dismemberment of the nations in which they had lived nor did they kill their fellow citizens. By contrast, Ottoman Armenians openly agitated for a separate state in lands in which they were numerically inferior. With determination they committed mass treason, and took up arms against their government. They also massacred local Muslim and Jewish civilians.

2. The guilt of the perpetrators of the Holocaust was proven at Nuremberg. By contrast, those alleged to have been responsible for the maladministration of the relocation policies were exonerated at Malta by the World War I victors.

3. Hitler did not refer to the Armenians in plotting the Final Solution; the infamous quote is fraudulent. For this reason it was rejected as evidence by the Nuremberg tribunal.

4. Armenians collaborated with the Nazis, forming the 812th Battalion of the [Nazi] Wehrmacht, and its successor, the Armenian legion. Armenians published Anti-Jewish, pro-Nazi propaganda in the Armenian-language Hairenik daily and the Armenian weekly journal.

The depth and volume of scholarship on the Holocaust is tremendous. By contrast, much about the late Ottoman Empire has yet to be learned and many conclusions have yet to be drawn.

## ***Hope for reconciliation ?***

Turks and Armenians should work to rebuild their historical friendship without forgetting the difficult periods in their common past. It needs to be remembered that, despite the events of World War I, until the Armenian assassination and PR campaigns began in the early 1970s, Armenians and Turks were very close to each other socially and that they still are in some expatriate communities.

### ***Turkish PM offered condolences for the atrocities***

On April 24th, 2014 for the first time in the history of the Republic of Turkey a Prime minister has extended condolences to the grandchildren of Armenians who lost their lives in 1915. While the West and Armenians in Turkey have welcomed the statement, Armenia and the extremist Armenian Lobby did not seem satisfied. The statement was made in 8 languages which included Armenian. Armenian National Committee of Australia called the historic statement "genocide denial in action" and continued with its anti-reconciliation views.

### ***Proposal for joint commission :***

Believing that this is possible, Turkey also proposed the establishment of a joint

commission composed of Turkish and Armenian historians, and other international experts, to study the events of 1915 in the archives of Turkey, Armenia and third party countries. The findings of the commission might bring about a fuller and fairer understanding of this tragic period on both sides and hopefully contribute to normalisation between Turks and Armenians.

### ***Armenian Lobby does not want "debate" or "talks"***

Individual Turks and Armenians share a common Anatolian and Ottoman heritage and most aspects of its culture and even language. This may be the reason why today's Armenian radical opponents of Turkey insist on not having contacts of any sort with Turks or Turkey:

they are trying to sever this heritage of mutual acceptance and shared heritage.

### ***Reconciliation is a "must"***

But in an endeavour to overcome historical and political bitterness, all sides must be honest and open-minded. A process of true dialogue, learning to respect through familiarity and empathy may well be possible. Could that not help Turkish and Armenian narratives come closer around a "just memory"?



*Investing for the future:  
Armenian-Turkish Youth  
Joint Basketball Program*

***“... In the beginning of fall 1914, when Turkey had not yet entered the war but was preparing to, Armenian volunteer groups began to be organized with great zeal and pomp in Trans-Caucasia. In spite of the decision taken a few weeks before at the General Committee in Erzurum, the Dashnagtzoutune actively helped the organization of the aforementioned groups and especially arming them against Turkey.***

There is no point in asking today whether our volunteers should have been in the foreground.

Historical events have a logic of their own. In the fall of 1914 Armenian volunteer groups were formed and fought against the Turks. The opposite could not have happened, because for approximately twenty years the Armenian community was fed a certain and inevitable psychology.

This state of mind had to manifest itself and it happened...”

**Hovhannes Katchaznoui , First Prime Minister of the Independent Armenia 1918-1919**

*The issue is not whether the massacres happened or not, but rather if these massacres were as a result of a deliberate preconceived decision of the Ottoman Government, there is no evidence for such a decision.*

On the contrary, there is considerable evidence of attempt to prevent it, which were not very successful. Yes there were tremendous massacres, the numbers are very uncertain but a million may well be likely, and that because of this and other significant differences between the Armenian massacres and the Holocaust, parallels are rather absurd.

**Prof Dr Bernard Lewis , Princeton University**

*Diaspora Armenians claim that ‘historians’ accept the genocide case. There is some preposterous organization called ‘association of genocide scholars’ which does indeed endorse the Diaspora line, but who are they and what qualifications do they have? Knowing about Rwanda or Bosnia or even Auschwitz does not qualify them to discuss Anatolia in 1915, and the Ottoman specialists are by no means convinced of the ‘genocide’.*

There is in fact an ‘A’ team of distinguished historians who do not accept the Diaspora line at all. In France, Gilles Veinstein, historian of Salonica and a formidable scholar, reviewed the evidence in a famous article of 1993 in L’Histoire. Back then the Armenian Diaspora were also jumping up and down about something or other, and Veinstein summed up the arguments for and against, in an admirably fair-minded way. The fact is that there is no proof of ‘genocide’, in the sense that no document ever appeared, indicating that the Armenians were to be exterminated. There is forged evidence.

**Prof Dr Norman Stone, Oxford University**

#### **Cheap Politics damage reconciliation**

The parliaments should not be the places to legislate what happened 100 years ago. However parliaments can advice for reconciliation and provide the grounds for an academic debate about the disputed issues. Our efforts for reconciliation and debate have been consecutively rejected by the single-minded Armenian Lobby.



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