



**AMERICA  
WE THANK YOU**  
An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief



An ANCA WR Initiative

May 4, 2016

Mr. Gerard Baker  
The Wall Street Journal  
1211 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10336

**RE: Armenian Genocide Denialist Ad on April 20, 2016**

Dear Mr. Baker,

This letter is written in response to *The Wall Street Journal's* publication of a full-page ad that ran on April 20, 2016. The ad, which read "Truth = Peace" featured a hand with a Turkish flag making a peace sign sandwiched between two hands, one with the Russian flag and the other with the Armenian flag, both hands displayed with their fingers crossed. As if the distorted illustration on the ad was not misleading enough, the ad directed your readers to a website that is wrought with Turkish denialist propaganda and provides a grossly distorted view of history. In sum, the ad attempts to lead your viewers to believe that the Armenian Genocide never took place. Shockingly, this advertisement ran four days prior to April 24, a day when Armenians worldwide would commemorate the 101<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and what has come to be known as the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We find it irresponsible for *The Wall Street Journal* to print such an advertisement making the publication complacent with genocide denial. We implore your publication to reconsider its policies and refrain from printing advertisements that promote such propaganda.

During and after the Armenian Genocide, American newspapers, including *The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)*, in addition to *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, among countless others, became filled with stories and editorials condemning the genocide and urging its readers provide aid to the destitute victims overseas by way of condensed milk, food, warm clothing, medical supplies and financial assistance. On February 3, 1919 the *WSJ* donated a full page and made a direct appeal to its readership when it ran an ad with the headline, "TURKS ARE STILL MASSACRING their Syrian, Armenian and Greek Subjects." Your paper's full-page appeal, enclosed herein for your ease of reference, unequivocally alerted the world that "[N]early a million have been brutally murdered or massacred" and that "[F]our hundred thousand children are orphaned." **This appeal was not paid for by any pro Armenian-interest organization, or any lobby group.** In fact, the heading of the appeal clearly stated that "This space donated by Dow, Jones & Co., at the Request of Team No. 3." We understand that the *WSJ* is the flagship publication of Dow Jones & Company. It is shameful and ironic that the same publication that came to aid a massacred people would turn its back on its own record of humanitarian philanthropy and would further a denialist view nearly 100 years later.

The Armenian-American community is outraged by the *WSJ*'s dishonorable act of profiting from genocide and advancing what scholars agree is the "last stage of genocide": denial. Throughout the years, many credible news sources such as the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* have instituted a policy of denying a public forum to those who seek to deny the Armenian Genocide. Just last week, ABC terminated a journalist and profusely apologized for the disparaging remarks against the Armenian people in connection with the Armenian communities' commemoration of the Armenian Genocide (see attached statement from ABC7). It is time for the *WSJ* to similarly adopt a policy to refrain from providing genocide denial a cloak of legitimacy in your publication.

Although advocating the denial of genocide is offensive to all of humanity, it is particularly hurtful to the millions of Armenian people living throughout the world who are direct descendants of genocide survivors. Whether the *WSJ* knowingly published these lies, or did so unknowingly, does not excuse the recklessness and irreparable damage caused by the decision.

In a statement to the Huffington Post, and in defense of running the ad, your paper stated:

"We accept a wide range of advertisements, including those with provocative viewpoints. While we review ad copy for issues of taste, the varied and divergent views expressed belong to the advertisers."

This response is not only insufficient, but further insulting to the millions of descendants of the victims of the genocide whose wounds are not yet healed. Turning a blind eye to your advertisement pages is both irresponsible and unfitting for a paper with a circulation as wide as the *WSJ*. Running an advertisement that denies the occurrence of the Armenian Genocide and leading your viewers to information that is full of revisionist storytelling is not a "provocative viewpoint." The ad is nothing short than the dissemination of lies and the *WSJ* has a responsibility to censure hate speech.

New York State is one of 44 U.S. states (in addition to numerous countries) that have officially recognized the Armenian Genocide as historical reality. In addition, the great state of New York is the birthplace of the U.S.'s oldest Congressionally-sanctioned non-governmental organization which for the first time in American history expressed the collective humanitarianism of the American people as a result and in response to the Armenian Genocide – the Near East Relief. As alluded to earlier, the *WSJ*, in addition to many other major newspapers at the time, joined the national public relations and fundraising campaign to call attention to and rally aid for the orphans and refugees of the Armenian Genocide.

Since the day the ad was published, we have received thousands of emails and messages on social media from Armenians and non-Armenians alike, who have expressed their disgust with the *WSJ*'s advertising policies and who, as a result, have canceled their *WSJ* subscriptions. While we fully understand and relate to their outrage, we also see this as an opportunity to educate your paper, as well as hopefully your readers, about the facts of the Armenian Genocide.

The Armenian Genocide (1915-1923) was the Ottoman government's systematic extermination of its peaceful Christian Armenian subjects from their historic homeland within the

territory constituting the present-day Republic of Turkey. As a result of the state-ordered and implemented campaign of genocide - which is well documented in official government records as well as in newspapers around the world, including yours - the Ottoman Empire killed 1,500,000 Armenian men, women, and children, exiled the Armenian nation from its historic homeland, and destroyed and deported hundreds of thousands of other Christian citizens. The Armenian Genocide took place under the guise of the First World War, conveniently providing Turkey a scapegoat to claim that the Armenian deaths were simply casualties of war.

In fact, it was our very own nation, the United States of America, which stood tallest in the fight against Ottoman Turkey's inhumanity and came to the aid of the millions of innocent Armenians during and after the Armenian Genocide. Had it not been for America's leading and exemplary role in this humanitarian endeavor, via the establishment of the Near East Relief, Ottoman Turkey's objective of annihilating the Armenian people as a whole would very well have been realized.

At the time, U.S. Ambassador to Constantinople Henry Morgenthau was stationed on the ground and witnessed the atrocities committed against the Armenians firsthand. Outraged by what he saw, on September 6, 1915, he sent a cablegram to the Secretary of State in Washington, DC, stating "Destruction of the Armenian Race in Turkey is progressing rapidly." That cablegram sparked the global response to the Armenian Genocide, wherein he urged a strong U.S. response to the crime and suggested that a committee be formed to raise funds and provide means to save those Armenians who had survived. Upon receiving Ambassador Morgenthau's urgent pleas for assistance, President Woodrow Wilson called upon his advisor Cleveland D. Dodge to form the "American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief" (ACASR), specifically to help Armenians and other minorities who were forcibly being deported from their homes and starved or killed in a systematic premeditated campaign of genocide. The ACASR was officially launched ten days later in your home state of New York, establishing the Near East Relief (NER) headquarters and national offices at 151 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY. Thus, the sad story of the Armenian Genocide is also the birthplace of American humanitarian aid with the *WSJ* playing a major role.

Over a period of 15 years from 1915 through 1930, the NER (renamed as such upon the Committee's incorporation by Congress), mobilized the entire American nation, and eventually the world, into a well-organized and well-funded relief effort which successfully saved over 1,000,000 refugees and 132,000 orphans of the Armenian Nation and other Christian minorities half a world away. The NER ultimately raised \$117 million, the equivalent of \$2.7 billion in today's dollars, and built over 400 orphanages, food and clothing distribution centers, medical clinics and hospitals, and vocational training schools throughout the Near East to house and care for the survivors. The work of the NER spanned three U.S. administrations and was staunchly supported by Presidents Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921), Warren G. Harding (1921-1923), and Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929).

This is precisely how tall and proud America stood nearly 101 years ago. The enclosed copies of your newspaper's appeals are further examples of just how tall the *WSJ* stood almost 97 years ago. Unfortunately, the ill-advised decision to run a denialist ad in your paper on April 20, 2016 is a sad deviation from your newspaper's own history and reputation of good journalism.

Regrettably, instead of standing with the Armenian people as it did a century ago, it seems that the *WSJ* has turned its back on our community.

Objective articles or full-page advertisements in the realm of journalism cannot be at the expense of truth. The decision to run this ad had nothing to do with your paper's desire to present diverse viewpoints or to pursue unbiased journalism, but instead had everything to do with willful ignorance. Had the ad promoted the denial of the Holocaust, or any other genocide in history, it is very unlikely that the advertisement would have made it to print.

The Armenian Genocide is not a public relations battle to be waged in the pages of your publication. Rather, it is a historical fact –one that the *WSJ* reported on and provided humanitarian aid for its relief. This recent advertisement not only offends the Armenian community, but also disgraces the historic efforts of the *WSJ* and the exemplary American response to the Armenian Genocide.

We hope that you consider rectifying the damage done and staying true to your paper's history of disseminating accurate information, whether it is through an editorial or an advertisement for money. For the reasons set forth above, the Armenian community is profoundly disappointed with the *WSJ* and we are certain that Armenian-Americans and others will continue to unsubscribe to your paper unless the *WSJ* issues an apology to the Armenian-American community and changes its advertising policies. For your further discernment, we have also enclosed some additional information regarding the Armenian Genocide as well as more detailed information regarding the NER.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with members of your staff to discuss this further and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,



Vanna Kitsinian, Esq.



Hermineh Pakhanians

Co-Chairs

America We Thank You: An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief

An initiative of the ANCA-WR