The decision to implement the crime of genocide against the Armenian people was made by the Committee of Union and Progress, also known as the Young Turks, the political party that ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1908 to 1918. In addition to the overt actions of Young Turk officials with armed elements of the Ministry of War and the Ministry of the Interior, Turkish authorities created a secret unit called the Special Organization (Osmanlı Milletleri) whose primary function was to carry out the deportation and mass slaughter of the Armenians.

In the early hours of April 24, 1915, the Turkish government placed under arrest over 300 Armenian community leaders in Constantinople (now Istanbul), the capital of the Ottoman Empire, and elsewhere. Subsequently, over 1000 political, cultural and spiritual leaders of the Armenian community in the Empire were taken into custody and summarily executed.

The decapitation of the Armenian leadership on April 24, 1915, is commemorated as the symbolic and official date of the Armenian Genocide. For Armenians dispersed worldwide, this date is also the symbol of a crime that intended to destroy an entire civilization and the disappearance of a major portion of their...