

AMERICAN CONSULATE*

No. 38

Mamouret-ul-Aziz (Harput), Turkey
July 11, 1915.

Subject: Transmitting copy of a report to the American Embassy at Constantinople about the expulsion of the Armenians from this part of Turkey.

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose herewith a copy of a report which I am sending the Embassy at Constantinople in regard to the expulsion of the Armenians from this part of Turkey.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

[Signed] Leslie A. Davis
Consul

Enclosure:
As indicated.

840.1

* NA/RG59/867.4016/127

A Copy for Department of State
AMERICAN CONSULATE*

Mamouret-ul-Aziz (Harput), Turkey
July 11, 1915.

Honorable Henry Morgenthau,
American Ambassador,
Constantinople.

Sir:

I have the honor to supplement my report of June 30th (File No. 840. 1) in regard to the expulsion of the Armenians from this region, as follows:

On July 1st a great many people left and on July 3rd several thousand more started from here. Others left on subsequent days. There is no way of obtaining figures but many thousand have already left. The departure of those living at Harput was postponed, however, and many women and children were allowed to remain temporarily. People began to hope that the worst was over and that those who remained might be left alone. Now it has just been announced by the public crier that on Tuesday, July 13th, every Armenian without exception, must go.

If it were simply a matter of being obliged to leave here to go somewhere else it would not be so bad, but everyone knows it is a case of going to one's death. If there was any doubt about it, it has been removed by the arrival of a number of parties, aggregating several thousand people, from Erzeroum and Erzingan. The first ones arrived a day or two after my last report was written. I have visited their encampment a number of times and talked with some of the people. A more pitiable sight cannot be imagined. They were almost without exception ragged, filthy, hungry and sick. That is not surprising in view of the fact that they have been on the road for nearly two months with no change of clothing, no chance to wash, no shelter and little to eat. The Government has been giving them some scanty rations here. I watched them one time when their food was brought. Wild animals could not be worse. They rushed upon the guards who carried the food and the guards beat them back with clubs hitting hard enough to kill them sometimes. To watch them one could hardly believe that these people were human beings.

As one walks through the camp mothers offer their children and beg one to take them. In fact, the Turks have been taking their choice of these children and girls for slaves, or worse. In fact, they have even had their doctors there to examine the more likely girls and thus secure the best ones.

There are very few men among them, as most of them have been killed on the

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road. All tell the same story of having been attacked and robbed by the Kurds. Most of them were attacked over and over again and a great many of them, especially the men, were killed. Women and children were also killed. Many died, of course, from sickness and exhaustion on the way and there have been deaths each day that they have been here. Several different parties have arrived and after remaining a day or two have been pushed on with no apparent destination. Those who have reached here are only a small portion, however, of those who started. By continuing to drive these people on in this way it will be possible to dispose of all of them in a comparatively short time.

Among those with whom I have talked were three sisters. They had been educated at Constantinople and spoke excellent English. They said their family was the richest in Erzeroum and numbered twenty-five when they left but there were now only fourteen survivors. The other eleven, including the husband of one of them and their old grandmother had been butchered before their eyes by the Kurds. The oldest male survivor of the family was eight years of age. When they left Erzeroum they had money, horses and personal effects but they had been robbed of everything, including even their clothing. They said some of them had been left absolutely naked and others with only a single garment. When they reached a village their gendarmes obtained clothes for them from some of the native women. Another girl with whom I talked is the daughter of the Protestant pastor of Erzeroum. She said every member of her family with her had been killed and she was left entirely alone. These and some others are a few survivors of the better class of people who have been exiled. They are being detained in an abandoned schoolhouse just outside of the town and no one is allowed to enter it. They said they practically are in prison, although they were allowed to visit a spring just outside the building. It was there that I happened to see them. All the others are camped in a large open field with no protection at all from the sun.

The condition of these people indicates clearly the fate of those who have left and are about to leave from here. I believe nothing has been heard from any of them as yet and probably very little will be heard. The system that is being followed seems to be to have bands of Kurds awaiting them on the road to kill the men especially and incidentally some of the others. The entire movement seems to be the most thoroughly organized and effective massacre this country has ever seen.

Not many men have been spared, however, to accompany those who are being sent into exile, for a more prompt and sure method has been used to dispose of them. Several thousand Armenian men have been arrested during the past few weeks. These have been put in prison and each time that several hundred had been gathered up in that way they were sent away during the night. The first lot was sent away during the night of June 23rd. Among them were some of the professors in the American college and other prominent Armenians, including the Prelate of the Armenian Gregorian Church of Harput. There have been frequent rumors that all of these were killed and there is little doubt that they were. All Armenian soldiers have likewise been sent away in the same manner. They have been arrested and confined in a building at one end

of the town. No distinction has been made between those who had paid their military exemption tax and those who had not. Their money was accepted and then they were arrested and sent off with the others. It was said that they were to go somewhere to work on the roads but no one has heard from them and that is undoubtedly false.

The fate of all the others has been pretty well established by reliable reports of a similar occurrence on Wednesday, July 7th. On Monday many men were arrested both at Harput and Mezreh and put in prison. At daybreak Tuesday morning they were taken out and made to march towards an almost uninhabited mountain. There were about eight hundred in all and they were tied together in groups of fourteen each. That afternoon they arrived in a small Kurdish village where they were kept over night in the mosque and other buildings. During all this time they were without food or water. All their money and much of their clothing had been taken from them. On Wednesday morning they were taken to a valley a few hours' distant where they were all made to sit down. Then the gendarmes began shooting them until they had killed nearly all of them. Some who had not been killed by bullets were then disposed of with knives and bayonets. A few succeeded in breaking the rope with which they were tied to their companions and running away, but most of these were pursued and killed. A few succeeded in getting away, probably not more than two or three. Among those who were killed was the Treasurer of the American College. Many other estimable men were among the number. No charge of any kind had ever been made against any of these men. They were simply arrested and killed as part of the general plan to dispose of the Armenian race.

Last night several hundred more men, including both men arrested by the civil authorities and those enrolled as soldiers, were taken in a different direction and murdered in a similar manner. It is said this happened at a place not two hours' distant from here. I shall ride out that way some day when things become a little quieter and try to verify it for myself.

The same thing has been done systematically in the villages. A few weeks ago about three hundred men were gathered together at Itchme and Haboosi, two villages four and five hours' distant from here, and then taken up into the mountains and massacred. This seems to be fully established. Many women from those villages have been here since and told about it. There have been rumors of similar occurrences in other places.

There seems to be a definite plan to dispose of all the Armenian men, but after the departure of the families during the first few days of the enforcement of the order it was announced that women and children with no men in the family might remain here for the present and many hoped that the worst was over. The American missionaries began considering plans to aid the women and children who would be left here with no means of support. It was thought that perhaps an orphanage could be opened to care for some of the children especially those who had been born in America and then brought here by their parents and also those who belonged to parents who had been connected in some way with the American Mission and

schools. There would be plenty of opportunity, although there might not be sufficient means, to care for children who reached here with the exiles from other Vilayets and whose parents had died on the way. I went to see the Vali about this matter yesterday and was met with a flat refusal. He said we could aid these people if we wished to do so, but the Government was establishing orphanages for the children and we could not undertake any work of that nature. An hour after I left the Vali the announcement was made that all the Armenians remaining here, including women and children, must leave on July 13th.

The evident plan of the Government is to give no opportunity for any educational or religious work to be done here by foreign missionaries. Some Armenian women will be taken as Moslem wives and some children will be brought up as Moslems, but none of them will be allowed to come under foreign influences. The country is to be purely Moslem and nothing else. Some of the missionaries think they would like to remain here and try to work among Moslems. I not only think it would be very dangerous for them to undertake it but do not believe they will be allowed to do anything along that line. I shall not be surprised, as I have said before, if all the American missionaries are ordered to leave here in the near future. If they are not, they will be so effectually prevented from doing any kind of work that it will be entirely useless for them to remain here. Furthermore, they will be annoyed in many ways by the local officials. I do not think for a moment that they will be allowed to open any of the schools again and it's quite probable that the hospital may be ordered closed. It is very probable also that both the school and the hospital buildings may be seized by the Government. It seems certain that there will not be any work for them to do here and that they will not be permitted to do any work.

Under the circumstances, I think the only wise and safe thing for them to do is to consider the matter of leaving here, temporarily at least, as soon as it may be possible. I realize that it is a serious matter for them to abandon their work but the present situation is serious too and I fully believe there is nothing else for them to do. It would probably not be best for all of them to leave together, but I am going to advise that some of them leave as soon as it may be safe to go. In the meantime I earnestly recommend that the Embassy bring to the attention of Mr. Peet and the board the possible necessity of all of them leaving here.

I do not think that any of them should go now. In fact, some of them have been quite firmly of the opinion that someone should go at once for the purpose of trying to raise a relief fund for these unfortunate people. To go now would be almost certain death, with bands of Kurds awaiting travelers on every road. I asked the Vali, however, if it would be all right for one or two of the Americans to leave here now to go to Constantinople and then to America and he said very plainly that it would not be safe. He said that no matter how much a guard he gave them it would be dangerous for them to travel at the present moment and advised waiting a few weeks. This confirms the general fear as to the fate of those who are sent away from here. It also indicated that perhaps the authorities do not wish any real harm to befall the

Americans. On the other hand, the Vali intimated that possibly the Americans might not be permitted to leave here. Some of them think that we know too much about what is happening in the interior of Turkey and the authorities do not intend to let any Americans leave here alive to tell about it. I do not think that, but I do think the life of every American here is in danger and that the danger is increasing. If all of the missionaries can get away safely I shall feel greatly relieved. It is not only that the present situation is very critical, but they are constantly doing things that are more or less imprudent. The entire colony may suffer for the imprudence of one person. It is quite natural that they should sympathize with the people among whom they have been working and want to aid and protect them, but there is great danger of carrying their zeal too far and getting into trouble themselves.

With reference to the need of funds for the relief of these exiles, which I mentioned in my telegrams of June 27th and 28th and my dispatch of June 30th, I am inclined to believe that there will be no occasion for raising funds. It looks as though there were not going to be any people who can be helped. All who are sent away will probably be killed or die on the road within the next few months and the women and children who are left will probably have to become Moslems.

My attention has just been called to the fact that the post office at Mamouret-ul-Aziz has refused to pay out money to the Americans that has been sent them from Erzeroum and Erzingan for the exiles who have come here. It is probable that the Government will confiscate this money. I do not know whether the Embassy would care to take any measures about this or not. The money is addressed to the Americans, but it is intended for the Armenian exiles.

Embassy's telegrams Nos. 19 and 20 have been received. I have seen the Vali about the naturalized American citizens and their children and about the consular staff. He said he had received no instructions about them, as I telegraphed this morning. I have now just received word that the consular staff and two or three women whose husbands are in America may stay here for the present. There seems to be nothing very definite about any of it. I shall be very glad to have these women leave as soon as it is reasonably safe for them to go. I hope it can be arranged for the employees of the Consulate, however, to remain here permanently, or at least as long as there may be a Consulate. It would be impossible to find any one to take their place.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

[signed] Leslie A. Davis
Consul.