

AMERICAN*
DIPLOMATIC AGENCY AND CONSULATE-GENERAL

Cairo, Egypt

Subject: The Persecution of Armenians in Turkey

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose herewith copy of a letter which I have received from the Bishop of Armenians in Egypt who enclosed with his letter a copy of a translation of a communication (sent from Constantinople) dated July 13th, 1915, addressed to the Armenian Prelate in Bulgaria from the Armenian Archbishop in Phillipopolis, Bulgaria, regarding the persecution of the Armenians in Turkey.

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

[signed] Olney Arnold
Agent & Consul-General

Enclosure as above
File No: 848

* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/158

Copy.*

Cairo, 23rd, August 1915

Sir:

I beg to enclose the translation of a letter dated under 13th, July from Constantinople, addressed to the Armenian Prelate in Bulgaria, a copy of which his holiness has forwarded to me.

On receipt of same I deemed most expedient to convoke a general assembly of all Armenian notables residing in Egypt, to the effect of calling their attention to the contents of the said communication.

It was decided by an unanimous majority to submit contents of this letter by cable to the consideration of neutral powers, including the Government of the United States, and invoking their kind intervention on the score of humanity and justice, to put an end to this horrible state of things, reigning actually in Armenia, details of which will be found in the enclosed translation.

We sincerely hope that your Excellency will take all necessary measures to transmit the same letter to the Under Secretary of the United States or Foreign Office.

The Armenian Community has full and implicit confidence in your benevolent feelings towards the nation, and is sure and certain that your Excellency will spare no effort to call the immediate attention of his Government, in this most critical moment of the nation where the question of life and death is simply a matter of hours.

Tendering my most heartfelt thanks in anticipation, I beg to remain, Sir,

Yours respectfully,
(signed) Evêque Thorgom

Bishop of Armenians in Egypt.

Olney Arnold, Esq.
Diplomatic Agent and
Consul General of United
States of America
Cairo.

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Copy.*

Translation of letter addressed from Constantinople,

13th, July 1915

To His Eminence
Archbishop Ghevont Tourian,
Philipopolis, Bulgaria.

Since the 25th of May last the events have succeeded each other in a precipitate manner, and the condition of the Armenian nation has reached the most miserable state that can be ever imagined. Up to that date we know that only the inhabitants of some towns and villages in Cilicia were driven out of their homes, and led to the desert, south of Aleppo. Now, it appears, this ruinous measure applied for Cilicia has become a general one for the whole of Armenia.

We know on most reliable authority that the inhabitants of Erzeroum and the districts, as well as Armenians residing in Samsoun, Kerassunde, Trebizonde, Sivas, Cesarea, Harpout, Bitlis, Van, Diarbekir and Ourfa, including children, women and men of all ages have been also driven to the desert of Mesopotamia, extending from the south of Aleppo to Mosoul and Bagdad. The motto of the present Turkish Government is "Armenian without Armenians". The lands, houses and properties of Armenians have already been handed over by the Turkish authorities to the Moslem "Mohagirs".

It is evident that the expelled Armenians are not allowed to carry any object of value or property with them; moreover, no means of transport being available, all occupied by military Authorities, Armenian immigrants are obliged to walk for months, in order to arrive at the desert which has been destined to be their grave.

We have already heard that all along the way leading to the desert and the Euphrates, are full of corpses of the miserable immigrants, the rest of which are condemned to death owing to lack of shelter or food. This is a new plan to annihilate the Armenians, and although apparently not a general massacre, it is nevertheless the most unheard of outrageous crime ever perpetrated by any Turkish regime that history has recorded.

It is a sad fact that all men from 29-45 years of age are enrolled, and young men of 15-20 and men of 45-60 years old are employed by the Government for the military transport service. Those who have paid the military exemption fee (Badali-Askerieh) are all the same exiled or imprisoned, and consequently Armenian

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immigrants are composed of old men, women and small children, who are forced to march through such a wild country which has never been safe for traveling even in time of peace.

Both the Turkish “chatas” and Kurdish brigands, also the gendarmerie and the government officials are left a free hand to rob, violate and rape Armenian women and girls. Moreover we heard from various sources that some of the people are obliged to embrace Mohammedanism as the only way to save their lives.

The martial courts act in the same hideous way everywhere, without any distinction. No doubt you must have been informed through the press that 20 Henschagists were hung in Constantinople. The sentence of death has been pronounced devoid of any legal plea within Turkish jurisdiction. On the same day 12 persons were hung in Cesarea on the pretext that they have obeyed to the secret Henschagist and Tashnagist Committees convoked at Bucarest. Besides 32 others are condemned to imprisonment and hard labor, varying from 10-13 years, most of whom are honest merchants and peaceful people. Twelve others are hung in Cilicia. Sentence of death upon hundreds of innocent people is of daily occurrence. Any sort of arms, books, pictures etc. found in Armenian houses are sufficient reasons to justify all these crimes.

Many have been killed under the lash, 13 men in Diarbekir, 6 in Cesarea, etc. Some are killed on their way before being handed to the military courts. For instance, 13 men from Shabin-Karahissar, and the priests of the Purk village residing at Sou-Shehir, together with their five followers, all with their hands tied behind their back, were killed by their guards on the way to Sivas, where they were taken to be tried. To enumerate the tortures committed everywhere under the pretext of searching for arms and revolutionists is beyond description. Every single house, prelates, churches and schools are searched. Hundreds of women, even young girls and boys are suffering in prison. All the churches and monasteries are robbed, destroyed and profaned. Even the prelates are not spared. The following are imprisoned and handed to military courts: Rev. Barkev Tanielian (bishop of Brussa), Rev. Kevork Tourian (bishop of Trebizonde), Rev. Khosrov Behrigian (bishop of Cesarea), Rev. Vaghinag Torigian (bishop of Shabin-Karahissar), and Rev. Kevork Nalbandian (bishop of Tcharsanjak).

Rev. Megerditch Chilgadian, bishop of Diarbekir, has been killed under the lash in prison. We have no news from the remaining prelates, probably all of them are subject to the same fate.

Some forty villages in Bitlis and Van provinces are wiped out from the face of the earth, and in hundreds of others incendiarism, pillage, wholesale massacre and violations are committed in cold blood, by broad daylight. In the beginning of the present month a massacre took place in Shabin-Karahissar, where it is said scarcely few children were spared. Unfortunately the details are missing.

All Armenians are actually prisoners in Turkey. All correspondence and telegraphic communications are prohibited.

It is evident that Armenians in Turkey are living their last days. They have no means to avoid death. If Armenians abroad are unable to secure the intervention of neutral powers in order to put an end to the present critical situation, there is no doubt that in a few months' time from a million and a half Armenians in Turkey very few will be left.

(signed) Evêque Thorgom
Archbishop of Philipopolis, Bulgaria

Certified true and correct to the original
Evêque Thorgom
Bishop of Armenians in Egypt.