

AMERICAN EMBASSY*
CONSTANTINOPLE

No. 532

October 16, 1915

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the information of the Department, copy of a despatch from the American Consul at Bagdad in regard to the measures applied to certain Armenians at that place.

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

[Signed] Morgenthau

Enclosure:

Copy of despatch E. 387 dated September 10, 1915, entitled "Bagdad Conditions".

* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/205

AMERICAN CONSULATE*

No. E. 387
DUPLICATE

Bagdad, Turkey, September 10, 1915

Subject: Bagdad Conditions

The Honorable
Henry Morgenthau,
American Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary,
Constantinople, Turkey.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer the Embassy to this Consulate's despatch No. E. 372 of August 29, 1915, regarding the persecution of the Armenians in this city and to state that during the week of August 29, 1915 there were 16 more Armenians here arrested. Of these arrested two were brothers of this Consulate's dragoman and one a brother-in-law. Two others were brothers-in-law of this Consulate's second dragoman.

No reason was assigned why these men were arrested, except for political reasons. These men were not tried and they were never given the slightest opportunity to in any way show that they were innocent of any charges. Although a martial court exists here, and these men desired to have an opportunity to go before it, no such opportunity was given them. It was merely the rule of an absolute despotism. The men, some of them, are very wealthy and all are perfectly respectable.

On September fourth nine of the sixteen were released but the seven remaining included the two brothers of the Consulate's dragoman and the two brothers-in-law of the second dragoman. Many men had been to see the Acting Governor-General about all sixteen and after the release of the nine, many more attempts were made to have the remaining seven released, but in the cases of these seven, no success was attained. Absolutely no reason was given for the deportation of these men by the Government, except, perhaps that the dragoman of this consulate was told his brothers had spoken against the government. The Acting Governor-General was asked that the brothers might confront their accuser and have the charge tried, but

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the Acting Governor-General refused. This is a most serious affair for these men as they are sent away without knowing where they are to go and in view of the treatment accorded Armenians up north, they left here with considerable concern as to their ultimate safety.

As for the two brothers-in-law of the second dragoman, no reason whatsoever seems to have been assigned. It has been said that only those born near the scene of the Armenian troubles would be sent away and some people thought that the seven sent (they were all sent from Bagdad on September 6, with first destination Mosul) were born in the north and had emigrated from the north to Bagdad but one of the brothers-in-law of the second dragoman was born in Bagdad and the other was born in Mosul. I feel most clearly that in the cases of these two men, the action of this Government is most despotic and unjust. If the Government had a good and sufficient reason, why not let it be known. There is a martial court here, why not let these men have an opportunity to defend themselves. Why not let the evidence be shown. These were respectable men, as I have said, and I have heard no one state that any one of the seven sent were mixed in politics of any kind. Although there may have been troubles in the north, these men have remained loyal to the Ottoman Government and it would seem therefore the more unjust to treat these men so.

The remaining three men were very inconspicuous people. One is a local tailor with practically no income. He leaves a wife and six children. He had no money to obtain a carriage and the two brothers of the dragoman, having engaged two carriages, allowed him to ride in their baggage wagon.

The remaining two men, one came from Diarbekir about a year ago to Bagdad to settle an account and remained here. The other was a small merchant whose family came from near Diarbekir some years ago.

Previous to the departure of these men, the government sent mounted gendarmes with the men expelled. This time, in addition to the heavy burdens imposed upon those expelled, they were compelled to permit the gendarmes to ride in the carriages which they themselves provided. During the nine days imprisonment, these men were most strictly confined in the local prison as common criminals.

It is, perhaps, impossible to lay properly before the Embassy the unjust, I was going to say the outrageous, conduct of affairs in this city since the arrival and assumption of charge by the present acting Governor-General. It is needless to add that many of the people are very much afraid, not that they are guilty, but that they see from the treatment of others, it is only necessary for some person to lodge a complaint against them and, without trial of any kind, they will be sent from Bagdad and suffer such things as may befall them. If the Embassy can do anything to have some small amount of justice meted out to the innocent people in this city, they surely will be most grateful.

In this connection, I have heard it reported that one of the reasons why the brothers of the dragoman have been treated so badly is that they were firm friends of the late Governor-General of Bagdad, Suleiman Nathief Bey. I am also informed that

Suleiman Nathief Bey is in Constantinople and the Dragoman of this Consulate has asked me to request the Embassy to inform him of the treatment of his two brothers in the hope that Suleiman Nathief Bey may be able to obtain some amelioration in their condition. When the Embassy is bringing this matter to the attention of Suleiman Nathief Bey, I should like to have them speak of the two brothers-in-law of the second dragoman also.

The names of the brothers-in-law of the second dragoman (who is also clerk of this consulate) are:

Melkon Shamlian (born in Mosul)

Yousif Ibrahim (born in Bagdad)

The names of the two brothers of the dragoman are:

Karnik Agob Kouyoumdjian

Mardiros Agob Kouyoumdjian

In connection with this despatch, I have to refer the Embassy to this Consulate's despatches Nos. E. 388, 389 and 390.

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

Charles F. Brissel.
American Consul