

AMERICAN EMBASSY*
CONSTANTINOPLE

No. 566

October 26, 1915

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to transmit herewith translation of a despatch from the American Consular Agent at Samsoun, dated August 26, 1915, relative to his trip to Marsovan and the general situation at that place, with special reference to the deportation of Armenians in his district.

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

[signed] Morgenthau

Enclosure: as stated.

* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/220

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE*
SAMSOUN TURKEY

Translation

No. 257

August 26, 1915

Excellency:

Confirming my report of the 12th instant. I have the honor to state that, as I already telegraphed on the 14th instant, I started again for Mersifoun from where I returned on the 24th.

As already wired, on the 10th instant, that is immediately after my departure, the Turkish Government carried away in 31 ox carts, part of the Armenians of the College and the Hospital.

These gentlemen had been instructed by me not to allow these people to start voluntarily, and as you will see it in Dr. White's letter, they were taken by force. Besides, 63 persons were taken from the Girls School.

As stated in Dr. White's letter, the lawyer of the College said that these people could perhaps be released if a sum of 2/300 Ltq. was given to the Caimakam and the Gendarmerie Commander. But as I could not approve such proceedings on the part of the College, I sent you a telegram on the 13th instant, reporting on the actions of the Merzifoun authorities.

It seems that the Caimakam, the Gendarmerie Commander and the Beledie-Reis could not agree on the sharing of the sum, so that the Caimakam dared not accept the money from the Americans and meanwhile the girls were sent away.

The conversion of these girls to Islamism was attempted, but as they refused to change their religion, they were sent towards Amassia. Miss Gage, Willard and Dr. White went with them to Amassia. There they were not allowed to enter the city and had to camp in the open air.

The Americans were forbidden by the Mutessarif to go further than Amassia on the pretext that the Vessikas which they had taken at Mersifoun were without value. They came back to Mersifoun. I told them that they could have asked the Caimakam for a vessika for Sivas stating that they had to work for the American Mission at that place. On the 16th instant this was tried, but the Caimakam did not believe the reason given and he said that only the Mutessarif of Amassia could decide about the

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departure. Miss Gage and Miss Willard then started again for Amassia on the 16th inst.

At Amassia they could not first manage to see the Mutessarif, so they called at his Harem where he came later; they succeeded in obtaining from him the promise that he would ask the Vali of Sivas for that permission. Thus was the journey finally permitted.

Miss Gage and Willard will arrive at Sivas the same time as the 63 girls and they will try to obtain from the Vali permission to accompany them.

These girls are accompanied by a servant from the College and [who will] inform telegraphically of their arrival in each place.

I doubt that Miss Gage and Miss Willard ever succeed in obtaining that permission from the Vali because these girls are all from 12 to 18 years old and they will be surely distributed among the Turkish families of Sivas, Malatia etc.

Only fifty-two persons are left in the College and the Hospital. I gave a list of their names to the Caimakam (copy is herewith enclosed) requesting him to deliver them vessikas so that they may not be troubled. The Caimakam sent that list to the Vali of Sivas and he told me before I left that these people would in any case be allowed to stay. I am convinced, however, that the contrary will happen, because this is a European institution, and life is made very hard for these people. They were already to be sent away on the 18th or 19th, but my presence prevented that action.

I telegraphed yesterday requesting you to obtain permission for the remaining Armenians to keep their positions, because otherwise Dr. Warden would be obliged to close the hospital because he can't do without an apothecary or without nurses.

My opinion is that, owing to the Government's proceedings, no foreign mission will now be able to carry on its work in Turkey because they can't do without the Christian element.

The Americans are convinced that if all the Armenians working with them are sent away, they will also have to leave for America, and in that case they ask who would be guarantee for their property. I told them, as said in the enclosed copy of my letter to Merzifoun, that two families at least would have to remain to survey the whole since more than Ltq. 75,000 are invested in those institutions. In any case I requested these gentlemen to send an inventory to both you and I.

If these people really mean to go to America, will you please let me know what will become of the College and of the Hospital and if I have to appoint 4 or 5 guardians or what formalities are to be accomplished. I suppose that the Americans will abandon that institution, in any case I would like to be instructed on the subject. Without the College the Hospital could not carry on its work because both work for the same end.

Referring to my telegram of the 12th instant, I beg to report that Enver Pacha telegraphed the same thing to Emin Bey of Merzifoun (this is strictly confidential) asking him to follow the matter and to give him information immediately. Emin Bey

got information from the College and took from three Armenians who were still there, and who had given their share to the Ltq. 275, the following receipts:

Mihran Daderian Ltq. 15
Boghos Piranian " 5
Missak Ispirian " 5

The other Armenians who had given money, namely, Prof. Mannissadjian, Prof. Dahlian, Nizarlian, Hagopian, Mirakian, Kotschayan, Nerse, Gurekian, were no longer there and had all been sent to the Interior.

Emin Bey took receipts from other persons and telegraphed accordingly to Constantinople. As the Ltq. 275 were paid by the Armenians I telegraphed to ask you to wait for my letter of this day, because in my report of the 12th instant I had written that the Americans had advanced that money, and that was a mistake. Besides, I request that you should not mention the name of Emin Bey who gave me all this information, but if a commission is sent, he is ready, just as usual, to confirm these facts. Emin Bey declared also that the Mufti and Takahout Bin Bachi are also ready to say all they know in case a commission be appointed.

There still remains in Merzifoun a few more Armenians who are hiding themselves, also those who have embraced Islamism, but these will surely be deported after they are taken of all that they possess.

I called on the Caimakam the last day and he was very kind to me. As reported on the 12th instant, I went also to Attabey.

I know from a reliable source that nothing disagreeable happened to the Armenians from Samsoun to Amassia. The Mutessarif was very kind and gave the gendarmes strict instructions threatening them with severe punishment in case the Armenians were ill-treated. He even asked the Commander of Gendarmerie, Latif Bey, to accompany them to Kavak. The latter was very kind to the Armenians and these are very grateful both to him and the Mutessarif.

In Amassia, the women were separated from men, these were bound in groups of five and carried away at night, no one knows where.

Near Amassia there is a well which must contain from 50 to 60 corpses; heaps of torn clothes, fez, papers were found near there, part of these papers were gathered; enclosed you will find three fragments which will be a good evidence. Not far from Amassia there must also be a common grave for about 400 corpses.

An inspector of the Public Debt, a certain Arditti, who travelled in the interior, gave me confidentially the following details on the subject:

1) Samsoun, Amassia, Merzifoun people, all arrived to Amassia. Then all men were taken, bound and some of them killed between Amassia, Tokat and Turchal. All those who arrived to Tokat were directed toward Tchiflik or Gishgischa and murdered. Women and children were taken in ox-carts to Scharkyeschla then they were sent to Malatia and finally thrown in the Kyrk Gos or Euphrates.

2) Tokat. The same thing as above with the difference that all pretty women and all children were taken in the Turkish houses.

3) Erbaa, Nizar, Messoudieh. The men were bound during the night and then thrown in part in the river Kelkit. The others were murdered near Tokat. Women and children, via Scharkyshla, Malatia same fate as in No. 1.

4) Scharkyshla, Gemereck, Azizieh, Gorun, Derendeh, all sent on foot to Malatia, same fate.

5) Sivas, Divrik, Kangan in ox-carts to Kangan, then all on foot to Malatia, men murdered en route, same fate.

6) Agin, Arabkir, Keban, Kharpout, Malatia, same fate.

7) Karahissar, Souchehri, Zahra, Chavik, all murdered.

8) Erzingian, Kamch part murdered, the rest thrown in the Euphrates.

Bands of Kurds from Tersim are at work in Malatia. All Armenians have been killed, according to the Inspector. I believe that all men have been killed, but that the women and children have been distributed among the Turkish families of the Interior. Not one Armenian is to be seen.

I wanted very much to go to Attabey and Amassia so as to see myself what was happening but the Caimakam had his eye on me. I do not know that one can believe everything one is told, and it seems rather curious that none of my friends from the interior have reported these things to me.

Mme. Ohannassian pretends to be an American subject. Her husband lives since 20 years in Haverhill, Mass., 20 Locust Street. As she has no papers, I requested you to ask the Ministry to send instructions to the Mutessarif here so that she may be given a vessika and thus be enabled to start for America.

Expenses for the journey to Merzifoun—Will you please let me know whether my expenses are to be charged to the College of Merzifoun or to the Department of State?

I am, etc. etc.

signed W. Peter.

Exchange of Telegrams.

Merzifoun August 17, 1915.

American Embassy—Constantinople.

Confirm my report twelve concerning college and hospital before taking any steps wait for my telegram from Samsoun on my return.

Peter

Merzifoun August 23rd 1915.

American Embassy—Constantinople.

Am leaving for Samsoun today.

Peter

Samsoun 25 instant

Came back yesterday stop Caimakam Merzifoun possesses list of Armenians remaining in college and hospital has asked authorization from Vali of Sivas to let them free as they are necessary please take steps because otherwise Dr. Marden will be obliged to close hospital stop Madame Ohannasian Samsoun whose husband lives 20 Locust Street Haverhill Mass declared she is an American subject has no passport please have the minister of interior instruct the Mutessarif Samsoun to deliver to her vessika for Constantinople from where she will go to America.

Samsoun August 26th

Confirm telegram seventeenth from Merzifoun concerning report twelve wait for my letter of this day.