

AMERICAN EMBASSY*
CONSTANTINOPLE

No. 1421

June 12, 1916

CONFIDENTIAL

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the information of the Department, a copy of a report from Doctor Clark of Sivas relative to the situation at that place prior to his departure.

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

[Signed] Hoffman Philip

Enclosure:

As stated.

* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/288

[Dr. C. E. Clark's Report, Sivas]*

While on our return journey from Erzurum in April 1915, we learned that in some villages between Enderess and Erzingan, the Government had recently been demanding with threats and in some cases beatings, all arms and ammunition of Armenians. When we reached Sivas, we found that here too similar demands were being enforced. The Armenians were apprehensive of massacre.

A few weeks later it was reported by persons coming from Erzingan, that all of the Armenians of that city with the exception of two houses only had been exiled. It was also said that some of the Armenian villages near Sivas had also been similarly emptied. About the first day of July Mlle. Elverse (German) and Mlle. Wedel (Norwegian) reached Sivas from Erzingan where they had been engaged in Red Cross work at the German Hospital and reported that they had been expelled from Erzingan for protesting against the treatment they had seen of women and children. They had tried to bring with them ten small boys, but these had been taken away from them by the Government. They told of stories told by Gendarmes of their driving away thousands of women and children and the putting out of the way those who hindered the march, also of their seeing many dead bodies by the road-side as they passed.

We constantly heard stories of the bringing in of men bound to the prisons of the city and of their being sent out again, this always taking place in the night, also of trenches near the city where these men were buried after they were killed. The gendarmes who took men from the city returned with loads of clothing and with the stories of how they killed the men. It was the same also regarding the men who were later imprisoned in Sivas. No word from them ever came back either, in their person, or by letter, or by messenger, despite the fact that their wives and children and friends had all been left in the city.

The latter part of June (beginning June 16, 1915) the principal Armenian men of the city were arrested without warning and within two days perhaps 1,000 were imprisoned. One of our College teachers was among the number. A guard was placed at the door of the college yard. When we complained to the Vali that we were being hindered in entering and leaving our grounds by the guard, he said that there was no reason for this, that the guard was for our protection. After this we had no difficulty in this respect. The head carpenter in the college shop at this time jumped over the wall of the College grounds and hid in the wheat field. He was found there by patrols and taken to prison, but on our representations he was released. It was said that any Armenian complained of by any Turk was arrested. A few days later a large number more of the men of the city were imprisoned. Some said that as many as 2,000 were in prison at this time. One day while I was in the city, police came to the hospital and arrested one of the soldiers who had been acting as one of our Red Cross nurses, and

* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/288

who happened to be out in the yard at the time. We tried to have him freed but did not succeed and never heard from him again, except that two or three days later he sent word from the prison begging our assistance.

On or about July 2nd, 1915, orders were issued in all of the districts of the city that the Armenians prepare to leave the city on the following Monday July 5th. In spite of protests and prayers, on Monday from one section of the city all the Armenians with a few exceptions, old and young, sick and well, were put upon wagons and started off perhaps two hundred houses a day with 3 or 4 gendarmes on the Malatia road.

We obtained of the Vali special permission that the Protestants and our school children and teachers should leave all together and Miss Graffam went with them, having obtained similar permission, as far as Malatia. (Her report covers this journey).

At about the same time, perhaps in July 1915, we received to the hospital two young Armenians who had been formerly soldiers. One of them had a cut across the back of his neck through the muscles leaving a gaping wound about 4 x 2 inches and an inch deep. This I sutured and the man recovered. He reported that he in company with a number of other Armenian soldiers and a similar number of Turkish soldiers were being taken about a week before from Sivas to Gurun, three days journey away by gendarmes. On the way, the gendarmes demanded of the Armenians 30 liras, about \$135.00. This they got together, and gave the gendarmes. They then said "If we allow you to escape you will report our robbery". They then took them into a narrow cavern, and the gendarmes standing at each end of the line ordered the Turkish soldiers to kill the Armenians with their knives or otherwise. This they proceeded to do to such effect, that of about ninety, only ten escaped at the time; and three of those were left for dead on the ground later got away to neighboring villages. Of these latter, our patient was one. He worked in the Hospital several weeks after his recovery until he died later of typhus fever. At about the same time another young man came to us with high fever, covered with vermin, and with hemorrhage from the kidneys. We admitted him to the Hospital like the other and after a few days his fever fell and he gradually recovered. His story, which was confirmed by several others whom I saw later, who had been with him, was about as follows: He had been working as a scribe in the laboring company near the town of Kepru near the Black Sea. One day the Armenians were all called to the city and placed in prison and after three days he in a company of 310 of these Armenians (soldiers) were started for Sivas, accompanied by about 20 gendarmes. As they left the town, the inhabitants followed them, hooting and yelling, and beating and stoning them. On the road they were given nothing to eat, but some carried with them bread, and at times they were allowed to get water, though frequently this was not allowed; and at times they were allowed to buy bread.

When they reached the inn at night, they were searched for weapons, even pocket knives being taken away, and for money, under threats of death if they should secrete

it. Afterwards under the pretext that they were to be transferred to another place for the night, they were called and in groups of four began to go out of this place with gendarmes. As nothing further was heard from those taken out, the others began to be suspicious that there was foul play going on, and they refused to follow their companions, and then began the howl and yell. Upon this the guards tried to quiet them, and ceased taking them out. The following morning those remaining were bound by fours and these lines bound together, and again started out on the road. It was midsummer, they were allowed no water and no rest, and were driven with clubs and gun stocks by the gendarmes. If one could not keep up, he was beaten the more, and if he fell the gendarmes drove on the rest and compelled them to drag him. Later when he was nearly senseless, they would cut the ropes from his arms, take him one side, and kill him by a rap on the head or by cutting his throat, and then throw his body down the bank. Thus the terrible journey continued, and at night they were placed in another inn; and when they were called to go again the next day, they refused. Then the gendarmes began to shoot through the windows at them, and killed and wounded many. Later being assured by the guard that if they would submit nothing more would be done to them, they consented to again be bound, and to start out as before. Those who could not walk were left to die in the inn.

The next evening they reached a big stone building, with an old plank door and high windows, and they were put into this. No water had been given them during the day but by bribing the guard they were able to purchase a little from persons about the building. (Some had been able to secrete a little money).

The next day they refused to leave the building at the order of the gendarmes, and some who wished to do so were threatened by the others. Some began to tie white cloths about their heads, signifying that they were ready to accept Islam, and become Turks. However, others said "We cannot succeed in saving our lives in this way. Unless we stick together we are lost". A gendarme entered the building to force them into submission, but he was fallen on by the captives with such fury that he fled from the place. Then the gendarmes began to fire through the cracks in the door, and to climb up on the outside of the building and fire through the windows at them. Meantime those inside watched the windows, and pelted those who appeared there with stones. Others climbed up into the rafters, and some onto the roof, but there these were detected and driven down. Others dug several feet into the ground with plates, spoons, or their hands in search of water, but found none. They stayed thus in this building without water for three days, and even soaked up the urine from the ground with handkerchiefs, and drunk that.

The third day someone said that he saw an army officer approaching. The narrator of the story then climbed out into the roof, and jumped to the ground. His foot was injured and when he fled the gendarmes soon caught him and brought him back beating him with their gun stocks over the head and back. He was seated by them outside the khan and being recognized as a leader, was beaten the more severely. Later the army officer approached and he begged to be allowed to get a little water

and went and drank and washed the blood from his face. The officer asked the gendarmes if they had been ordered to kill these men, and told them they had better take them along to Sivas. Next day when they were started, he accompanied them. The narrator was driven and dragged along scarcely able to walk, beaten by the gendarmes. Later, the officer seeing his sorry plight, put him onto a passing ox-wagon and thus he was brought along to another inn where he was allowed to stay with a gendarme for three days until he could be carried on to Sivas. Thus he finally reached in the condition I have described. About 150 of the original 310 reached Sivas. I saw several of these and was told that scarcely a score of them were left able to walk. These two instances of treatment of Armenian soldiers are given to show the laxness of the Government at the time of the exile in its protection of Armenians.

When the exile of Armenians began, considerable money was brought to us for deposit and also some jewelry, etc. On some of this we advanced money for immediate needs. We also advanced nearly 1,000 liras Turkish as relief on our own responsibility, in the special emergency.

After Miss Graffam's return from her journey to Malatia with the exiles, she began relief work for the soldiers working in the city and exiles in other places. This was continued until about the first of March of this year, when some 25 Armenian soldiers were arrested on their way to or from our grounds and soldiers were told that they must not come to us. For a time no one dared to come to our grounds even for medical treatment. Later, however, any except soldiers seeking relief, were allowed to come and go freely.

A short time before the exile of the Armenians of Sivas, physicians of the military hospitals in the city asked if we could admit a few Russian prisoners to the hospital for surgical treatment. I replied that we should be glad to do so. However, the matter was postponed by them a few days and nothing further was said about it until the day of the issue in the city of the order for the deportation of the Armenians on or about July 1st. That day the chief physician of the military hospitals in the city came to the hospital and again spoke to me about the matter. I spoke to him regarding the question of a guard for these prisoners, and said that as all of our assistants were Armenians, and they were much frightened, I should prefer a delay of a few days again, so that it might not be necessary to have a guard on the grounds just at this time. He said "All right," and the matter was dropped. That night or the next after dark four soldiers appeared at the gate and demanded admission saying that we had some Russians in the hospital. I refused them admission and told them that there were no such men in the hospital. Later, the chief physician of the hospitals apologized for their coming.

Until this time, the military authorities had been sending soldiers regularly to us for care. The authorities had requested that we admit no soldier even though he had his chart, unless he brought a special note requesting his admission to the American hospital. After this with a few exceptions no more soldiers were assigned to us and for a time the hospital had very few patients. The Government asked us to receive some

of the aged Armenians left in the city at the time of the exile. We also admitted a few boys or others who occasionally after going out returned sick. Several times, the Government sent the police to take the names of all the patients in the hospital.

A little later, we began to admit soldiers who had leave of absence from the Army who were unable to leave the city or who were not comfortable in their barracks. Frequently these brought requests from their commanding officers that the American hospital admit them.

About February 1, 1916, the military authorities told us that they did not wish us to admit any soldier or gendarme without their special instructions, and after this we never admitted soldiers except when they sent them which occurred only in four or five cases. The evening of the day after the military authorities told us not to receive soldiers again without special permission, the commander of the troops in Sivas, came to hospital after midnight, apparently somewhat intoxicated, and after hanging at the gate and demanding admission, when I opened the door, said he was going to the hospital. I had already told the authorities that they were free to come to the hospital at any time. So I took him to the hospital, and he began taking down the names of all of the patients, soldiers or civil. The following day the chief physician for the military hospitals came and looked over all the soldiers and later all who were able to leave were taken to their regular military hospitals, except those who had "change of air".

Of about 25,000 Armenians formerly in Sivas, probably less than 1,000 have been left in families. There are about 4,000 men remaining in the labor gangs of the army, their families having been deported. These receive only their food. Those remaining in families have nearly all accepted Islam. Their position is still very precarious. From a very few of the women and children deported, news has come, always with a plea for financial aid, in their distress. It has been extremely difficult to transfer funds to them. It seems to us that the Government intends that they starve.

Signed: C. E. Clark, M.D.
Constantinople, May 31, 1916.

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July 20, 1916

The Reverend James L. Barton,
14 Beacon Street,
Boston, Massachusetts.

Sir:

There is enclosed herewith, for your confidential information, a copy of a report from Dr. Clark, of Sivas, relative to the situation at that place prior to his departure, transmitted by the American Embassy at Constantinople in a despatch dated June 12th.

It is probably unnecessary to call your attention to the extremely confidential character of this report, particularly of the last paragraph thereof.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

For the Secretary of State,
[Stamped] ALVEY A. ADEE.
Second Assistant Secretary.

Enclosure.
367.4016/288

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