

AMERICAN EMBASSY\*  
COPENHAGEN

No. 936

July 3, 1916

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to transmit to the Department a statement of Dr. J. K. Marden, —supported by that of two other missionaries just returned from Marsovan. Dr. Marden can be addressed at the office of the American Board of Foreign Missions. I send the statement just as it was taken from his lips by the stenographer of this Legation.

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

[Signed] Maurice Francis Egan  
American Minister.

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\* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/292

[STATEMENT FROM DR. J. K. MARDEN]\*

Our situation is in Marsovan in the province of Sivas about sixty miles north [sic] of Samsoun. The American Board of Foreign Missions has a college and a girls' school and a hospital valued at some \$250,000. The college has four-hundred boys and the girls' school two-hundred and fifty girls and the hospital averaged about seventy to eighty patients.

On the 28th of June, the Armenian young men of the city were corralled by the police during the night and some fifteen-hundred put in prison. No one knew the cause, but within a day or two it was announced that they were to be deported. As some of our men were included, I went to the Commandant and as a special courtesy on the ground that I had business with some of these men, he promised to send them in the last batch of deported. On the next day (Monday morning) the houses of our professors were entered by soldiers and the men were seized and carried to prison. They were in groups of four with their arms tied behind them and their deportation began with perhaps one-hundred or two-hundred in a batch. As we afterward learned they were taken about twelve miles across the plains to the foothills, stripped of their clothing and in front of a ditch previously prepared, were compelled to kneel down while a group of villagers with knives and axes quickly disposed of them. For a week, every night, this was repeated until twelve hundred and thirty of the leading Armenian men had been disposed of. Then began the deportation of the women and children and the old men who survived. The country was ransacked for ox-carts and one cart was given to a family. From two to five-hundred families were moved daily under military escort by the by-paths, avoiding the main roads and the cities, and almost no opportunity to obtain provisions was given. In fact, when the Greeks attempted to assist them with provisions they were forbidden to do so, and as soon as they left the city the girls and the women were given the opportunity to become Mohammedans and marry Turks or to continue their journey and be robbed and abused at the will of the gendarmes and the armed chatas. They were taken supposedly to Mosul. Many died by the way; others were thrown into the river. Women and children were carried off. Mothers, in sheer exhaustion, left their babies by the wayside and, as we afterwards learned through reliable sources, in two or three months the remnant reached the province of Aleppo, having lost all their possessions and eking out an existence by begging. Typhus and dysentery carried off the majority of this remnant.

On the 10th of August, although we had received a telegram from our Ambassador, Mr. Morgenthau, stating that the mission compound was not to be touched, that our professors, teachers and students were exempt, the Government sent sixty wagons to our compound and took from the hospital, the college and the girls school, the families of the professors, our people, our servants and helpers. When

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I showed the telegram to the Governor and begged that he should respect the promise of the Minister of the Interior to our Ambassador, he replied, "I care nothing for this telegram. We have our own instructions." But, as a special favor, the girls in the school were not taken that day. Two days later, however, fifteen carriages were sent and every girl was obliged to enter the carriages and to leave in spite of everything that the missionaries could do. After great effort, permission was secured for the lady principal and her friend, Miss Gage, to follow these girls in the hope of being of some assistance to them. They were not allowed to come in touch, however, with the caravan, but, on reaching Sivas, after an interview with the Governor-General, they got permission for the girls to return under their care.

The official orders given for the deportation of the Armenians in Asia Minor was reasonable. Their life and their property was to be respected, but secret orders in every town had prepared the way for this brutal annihilation of the Armenians in the interior. Some of the leading business men and artisans in some towns were given the privilege of becoming Mohammedans and so being saved from deportation. In the town of Marsovan, from 13,000 Armenians, over 11,500 were deported and about 1,500 accepted Mohammedanism as an alternative to sure death.

For a year the school and the college and the hospital continued its work among the Greeks and the girls who had been returned to us. On the 10th May 1916, our compound was surrounded by gendarmes and the Governor and his staff came up and informed us that the property was to be requisitioned and that the Armenians were immediately to leave, the excuse being that an order had come from the general commanding the first army corps to this effect. The only explanation that the Governor could give was that he supposed that war had been declared between Germany and the United States for such a summary order to be given. Many of the buildings were immediately sealed; the safe was taken over, but as a special courtesy and in view of the fact that we had children in our circle and that it was necessary to prepare for such a long journey overland, we were allowed to wait until next day in our own houses. The following morning officials went up to make inventory of our possessions, but it was done in a very hasty manner and was very incomplete. For six days the Governor said that the matter was under consideration with the higher authorities, but on the sixteenth carriages were sent up and we were told to leave immediately, the final form of the order being that the general had decided that all foreigners in the war zone must leave the city. The property had been but partially inventoried, but no time was given for completing the work. Our houses were left open and we were compelled to deliver the keys to the Kommandant. Under military escort we left the city and said good-bye to our patients and helpers and those girls who had been left in our care before leaving; however, the girls had been placed in the homes of friends and acquaintances as far as possible and the Government had ordered the boys to leave for their homes. The hospital was taken over by the military doctors and they said the whole compound was to be used for hospital purposes. We sent a special messenger to our consular representative at Samsoun and succeeded in

getting a telegram through to the Embassy. All of our telegrams and letters were not allowed to pass the censor so that we were helpless and at the mercy of the Government.

After eight days of travel, our American group reached Constantinople. Our Chargé d'Affaires, Mr. Philip, telegraphed to the State Department, giving not only the facts with reference to Marsovan, but Sivas and Caesarea, which missions had received quite similar treatment and the Embassy was working on the problem of securing the rights of American citizens in the interim when we left. Part of our group remained behind in the hope that they might still be able to do something for those girls who had once been rescued from deportation. These same two ladies had an interview in Constantinople with Talaat Bey, the Minister of the Interior and got his consent to bring these girls to Constantinople with a view of taking them to America, but the result of it is as yet unknown to us.

In this connection we would like to call the attention of the Minister to the needs of the Armenians who still remain in the Interior as Mohammedans. Their situation is very difficult and precarious. Among these are several of our young professors who have been educated in Germany, men of high standing and character, and although the Government promised to give certain privileges to the Protestants in some cities deferred their exportation, yet finally they received the same treatment as the Armenians. One of our professors and the pastor of the church received traveling papers to go to Constantinople after the first deportation. The professor was a naturalized American citizen and the Minister of War had sent special orders guaranteeing his safe passage, but, on reaching Angora, he, with the pastor, was separated from their families and from the best information we were able to obtain, they were murdered in Angora. The deportation has been in process now for almost a year and still individuals are being taken from the coast and some of the coast towns,—which have not yet received the same treatment as the interior. In Constantinople and Smyrna there are some 300,000 Armenians and we understand about 200,000 escaped over the Russian frontier and are in the Caucasus. According to the best information we could get in Constantinople 600,000 or 800,000 Armenians have been deported from their homes and have died either directly or indirectly from this deportation. Their property has been taken over by the Government, but has been so plundered by gendarmes and local officials that little remains after the claims brought against these people by the Mohammedans. The Governor and the Gendarmes-Commandant of Marsovan made some TL 8,000 or TL 10,000 apiece from the bribes they received from the Armenians who were obliged to give this amount to be saved from the deportation and become Mohammedans. The Governor of the Province came to our region a few days before the deportation and to a group of Mohammedans he said, "You have no hesitation about killing a chicken; can you have any hesitation about killing these people,—the enemies of your country? They do not deserve the consideration that a chicken does." A boatman, fleeing with his family from Trebizond, met with a storm, lost his

property and his family and barely escaped himself to Samsoun in a half crazy condition, where he ran through the streets crying, "See the way the Lord takes revenge? Last year I drowned scores of Armenians in the sea at Trebizond."

\*<sup>\*</sup>

August 2, 1916

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

Sir:

There is enclosed herewith, for your confidential information, a copy of a statement of Dr. K. Marden, relative to the conditions at Marsovan, Turkey, transmitted to the Department with a despatch, dated July 3, 1916, from the American Minister at Copenhagen.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

For the Secretary of State:  
[Stamped] William Phillips  
Third Assistant Secretary.

Enclosure.  
867.4016/292  
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