

AMERICAN CONSULATE*

No. E. 452

Bagdad, Turkey, November 10, 1915

Subject: Expulsion of Christians and Jews from Bagdad

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

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to this Consulate's telegram No. 111 dated November 10, 1915 reading as follows:

“American Ambassador, Constantinople.
111 Your number eightyseven annulled. Brissel.”

It is impossible for this Consulate to send through telegrams giving details or giving too much clear information and I hoped by sending this telegram to have the Embassy understand that Protestants and Catholics are being sent from Bagdad.

Although this letter will not be sent for some time, I wish to place on record the event of last week so that perhaps, in the future, the real condition of Bagdad may be known.

On the evening of Tuesday, November 2, 1915, the local police began to arrest a number of the leading Christians and Jewish gentlemen in this city. It appears that a long list was prepared including the names of many of the most respectable men in this city and this was submitted to the Commander-in-Chief in Sulman Pack (where the Turkish army now is) and that he sanctioned it. Report has it that all of the men whose names were placed on the list were suspected of being British spies. Among the men arrested were the two British subjects here Messrs. Walker and Levack and this Consulate's Dragoman, (See the separate despatches regarding these men) as well as the Ottoman subject, Mr. Yaghchi, who is the representative of the American firm here of Messrs. Macandrews and Forbes Company. For these four men I know that any such accusation against them is entirely and utterly false. As for the great majority of the others arrested, I feel firmly convinced that they are absolutely innocent.

These men were all collected in the offices of the British firm of Messrs. S. Lynch & Company which place is now used as the principal police station in this city, and

* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/350

were then taken to the prison in the Serai (Government House). It is stated that about seventy men were thus arrested. The government failed to arrest one of the men on their list for when the police came to his house for him, he was so shocked that he fell over dead.

These men who are wealthy and very respected gentlemen, were not allowed to see any one and were only allowed to receive some food from the outside and to buy such little things as they could. Many had no money with them when arrested and could not obtain any. It is perhaps useless to detail the indignities to which these men were subjected but the Embassy may be assured that they were most severe and most humiliating.

The following day, that is on the Wednesday November 3, 1915 these men were taken across the Tigris river to the railroad station and were sent to Samara and I understand that from Samara they have been sent on towards Mosul with the possible destination of Dersim. The Embassy may be able to judge of the plight of these men when it is known that they had almost no food, many had no money (though some had considerable), and all of them were dressed in their ordinary clothes which here are only medium thick this time of year while at Mosul it is now much colder. The Government provided the train for these men but aside from that nothing.

In this connection it should be pointed out that there were practically no Mohammedans among all these men. I have been informed that there were no Mohammedans but as I do not know all who were sent I cannot prove that there were no Mohammedans sent.

The conditions of these men are certainly bad but I invite the attention of the Embassy to the conditions of the women and children left behind. In some houses there are now no men left. In many of the houses there are none to provide for the women and children left behind and from present indications it looks as those who are here will be compelled to sell (doubtless at a very great sacrifice) much of their personal property in order to buy food and thus these deportations will be not only exile for the men but also a method of confiscation of their property and will, at the same time, entail a great deal of suffering upon the women and children. It should be remembered clearly, that in not a single case was one of these men proved guilty of any crime. Is it any wonder then, that many people consider this action as religious persecution?

I am informed that both the Austrian and German Consuls used their good offices to prevent the deportation of these men but apparently without success.

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

[no signature]
American Consul.