

The Spilled Blood tells the long overdue account of the heinous atrocities and mass murder committed by the Young Turks and their Kurdish accomplices against the indigenous peoples of eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia, the Assyrians and Armenians, ensuing their Genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Being non-Muslims and ethnically non-Turks, the Assyrians suffered unspeakable atrocities and frequent massacres that turned them into the shadow of what they once were. From 1914-1918 only, in addition to the one and a half million Armenians, two-thirds of the Assyrian population; totaling over a quarter of a million, were systematically wiped out by the radical elements of the Young Turks, namely the semi-secret organization known as Committee of Union and Progress. They persisted in enforcing their policy of a mono-cultural Turkey with violence; one language, Turkish, one ethnic identity, Turkish, and one religion, Islam. Thus, they propagated the alleged loyalty of the Christian natives to the West, merely for being co-religionists of the 'then' western nations. While this Genocide is so far recognized by over 26 countries, the Turkish government persists in her denial that it ever took place.

The Spilled Blood discloses a part of an ugly chapter of the modern history; the second Genocide of the twentieth century following Namibia's. Unfortunately, this chapter has been overlooked by the civilized world for political reasons and commercial interests. Also, despite the facts, it has been shamefully contested and desperately justified by some renowned historians from "prestigious" Western Institutions, not to mention politicians, to suit their personal interests and ideological inclination. Who should be condemned!



ABD-MSHIHO NE'MAN D'KARABASH
(Abdil-Masih Karabashi)

The Spilled Blood

A HISTORY AND A DIARY

**Torments, Sufferings, Massacres
and the Subsequent 1915-1918
Genocide of the Assyrian/Syriac People
at the Hands of the Ottoman Turks
and their Kurdish Accomplices
in Mesopotamia**

Translated from Classical Syriac by
Emmanuel J. Solomon

Edited by

Dolour A. Daoud MA/ESL & Linguistics

Seyfo Center Publications 2019

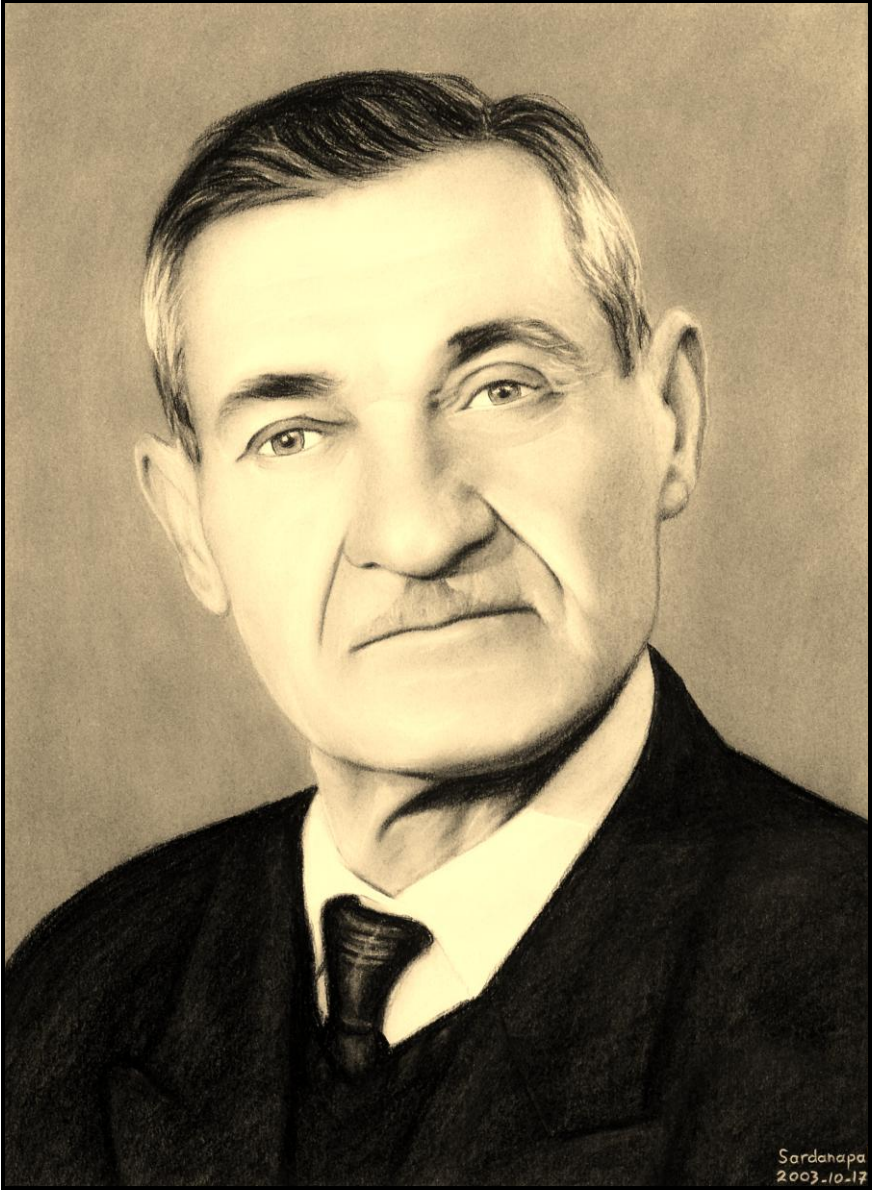
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THE SPILLED BLOOD

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DEDICATION

This translation is dedicated to the countless Assyrian (Syriac/Chaldean) martyrs who were consumed by the raging fire of religious fanaticism and ethnic bigotry, in the most barbaric means, yet they martyred so dearly adhered to their faith and ethnic identity.

Emmanuel J. Solomon

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Acknowledgement

The publication of this book could not have been possible without the efforts and assistance of a number of people whose names may not all be enumerated. Their contributions are sincerely appreciated and gratefully acknowledged.

However, Seyfo Center would like to express its deep appreciation and indebtedness particularly to the following individuals:

Mr. Emmanuel Solomon, who devoted himself and spent a long time in the translation of the published Syriac account and in checking and editing the translation against the author's original manuscript; Mr. Dolour Daoud, who also dedicated his precious time in the editing of the English translation; Mr. Sardanapal Asaad, who painted the portrait of the author and granted us permission to use it in this book; and Mr. Vasili Shoumanov, who designed the cover and took upon himself the strenuous task of formatting this book; making it ready for print.

Duly, Seyfo Center would also like to express its overdue gratitude to Drs. John and Christine Michael, Dr. Samir Johna, from "Doctors without Borders"; Dr. Ramina Jajoo, M.D., Mr. Firas Jatou, Messrs. Semir and Fikri Sezkir, and to the Swiss Assyrian Association for their generous support for Seyfo Center.

To all friends who in one way or another shared their support, either financially or morally, we sincerely say, "thank you."

Sabri Atman, SEYFO Center
March 20, 2019

The Translator's Foreword

At the request of my fellow compatriot Mr. Aphraim Aziz Qawmeh, a sincere friend and devoted Assyrian advocate, I translated this account which contains a synopsis of the major persecutions of the Christians throughout history. In addition, it contains the author's daily and personal record of the massacres of the Christians throughout the southeastern part of the Ottoman State, particularly in the districts of Diyarbakir and Mardin during WWI (1914-1918). As stated by the author, what he has recorded is merely a glimpse of the colossal carnage that had actually been committed. His account is tantamount to a side show in the much broader scene of the simultaneous and systematic decimation of the Christians by the Turks¹, Kurds, and the Afshars of Anatolia and the Iranian Azerbaijan, from the Persian Province of Urmia in the East to the Mediterranean Sea in the West, and from the Black Sea in the North to the Syrian Desert in the South. With that being said, it should be mentioned that not all the Kurds or even Turks participated in the genocide, for, in some cases, few of them helped and saved some Christians. Likewise, though the genocide was carried out by a call for *Jihad*, the majority of the Muslim Arabs in the Ottoman State, did not participate in the massacres, on the contrary, some of them helped, provided safe haven and victuals, and protected many Christians of which a few are mentioned in this book.

The author confidently pointed out the Germans' position on the aforesaid genocide as well as their aspiration. Evidently, among other commonalities, the deportation caravans of the Christians in Turkey during WWI ended up with their gradual

¹ The Young Turks, namely the semi secret organization called the Committee of Union and Progress. — The translator.

Genocide, analogous to the Jewish deportations by the Nazis during WWII that ended up with their slow, but sure *Holocaust*. One may wonder whether the Germans instructed the Turks to use that cowardly method of extermination or actually the Nazi Germans adopted that method from their Turkish allies! The answer, however, makes no difference, for their abominable cruelty might have differed in degree, but not in nature.

Moreover, the author praised the Ezidis, particularly their Chief Prince Hamo Shiru, and expressed gratitude for their generous hospitality as well as their human and material sacrifices while protecting the Assyrian/Christian refugees. Nonetheless, like those of many old and contemporary Eastern and Western writers, a great deal of the information provided by the author with regards to the Ezidis' sacred books and social organization is fragmented, based on myths and unreliable sources.

In his preface, the author used the words “*time*” and “*generations*” elliptically to denote the perpetrators of the Genocide as he literally writes, “*I wrote these annals so that they be a reminding sound that resonates in the ear of the generations etc.*” and, “*if time returns to its senses etc.*” In both cases, the connotation is pretty clear, for the sentences that follow the above two quotations conclusively denote the perpetrators.

The language that the author has used to describe the perpetrators may, in some instances, sound dysphemistic, yet it must be taken in the context of the author's age, time, and culture, let alone the horrific massacres that he witnessed. It is noteworthy that since time immemorial, the Semitic literature had been and still is characterized by hyperbole when

describing a catastrophe or a defeat, a blessing or triumph etc., while conclusions attributed to supernatural intervention are often undertaken as a last resort in a state of desperation and uncertainty. All of which conclusions I have italicized and some commented on. Nonetheless, perhaps, besides emphasizing the real situation, the author's overstatement in a few incidents was an attempt to be heard in a time when the appeals of his oppressed people were falling on deaf ears, while the assumed heavenly intervention answered to the uncertainty in a time of hopelessness, because, like the majority of his contemporaries, he believed that, "*The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed; a refuge in times of trouble.*" (Psalm 9:9).

In spite of the author's young age, his Syriac writing is perfect, his vocabulary is proper and broad, and his writing style is classical, yet extremely crisp. In fact, *Malphono*² Abdil-Masih Karabashi grew up to become one of the most learned men in Syriac language and literature; an eloquent man of letters of the twentieth century.

Abdil-Masih Karabashi was born in 1903 to his father, Hanna Ne'man and his mother Manoush, in the township of Karabash of the district of Diyarbakir, Turkey. In 1911, while still a child, he was admitted to the clerical school of *Mor Hanania Monastery* which is better known as the *Saffron Monastery*. There, he studied Syriac, Arabic, and Turkish language under the renowned Assyrian/Syriac scholar the late Metropolitan Archbishop Youhanon Dolabani. In 1921, he left the monastery and went back to his town. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Beirut-Lebanon and lived there until 1937. He then left Beirut and went to Bethlehem and lived

² *Malphono* is the Syriac word for teacher, master, doctor, used as a title for the learned persons and church fathers. — The translator.

there until 1951. In that same year, he decided to move to Syria and settle in the city of Qamishli³ with the intention of teaching Syriac language at the prestigious schools of the Syriac Orthodox Church in that city. It was in Qamishli that, within a short period of time, he contributed a curriculum for teaching Syriac language; third grade through gymnasium; reading, grammar, and literature. However, in 1972 he returned to Beirut to be his final destination until his death in June 23, 1983.

Malphono Abdil-Masih Karabashi is celebrated in the Assyrian/Syriac literary circles for his linguistic skills and literary contribution. He had dedicated all his time to studying the written treasures of the Fathers and to writing his own works. He contributed more than thirty valuable works to the Syriac library, including text books, fables, poems, as well as Syriac translations of a number of glamorous Arabic literary works. In my opinion, his poems, with themes, hardly ever written about in classical Syriac, such as Love, Wine, and Patriotism as well as their profound imagery, metaphors, similes, musical rhythms, perfect rhymes, and physical form have no match in the entire old Syriac literature. I consider myself blessed to have received a part of my elementary lessons of Syriac language under him.

Through the course of the translation of the published manuscript, I ran into a few ambiguous sentences and unseemly punctuations. I, therefore, obtained a copy of the author's original manuscript against which I checked my translation and made corrections accordingly. Furthermore, while checking the published

³ Qamishli is situated in the northeastern part of Syria across the border with Turkey overlooking the southern ruins of the ancient Assyrian city of Nisibin.
— The translator.

version against the original manuscript, I found, in three different places, text that is missing in the published version. Therefore, I translated and added them to the book respectively, printed in italic.

I translated this book almost verbatim and maintained the tenses as used by the author in his diary. In addition, I footnoted the corrections, clarifications, comments, and the missing text, whereas, most of the parentheses throughout the book are of the author himself.

I am indebted to my sincere friend Mr. Dolour A. Daoud for investing his precious time; editing the translation of this book. His remarks and comments provided valuable guidance and linguistic skills for which I am much obliged. Also, I sincerely thank Mr. Michael An'gileo, who reviewed the entire manuscript and helped in the editing of the final draft.

Finally, I would like to express my profound gratitude to *Malphono* Habeeb Aphraim for providing me with a copy of the author's published memoirs, without which this translation could not have been possible.

Emmanuel J. Solomon
Chicago, Illinois
November, 2019.

Foreword

During the summer of 2013, I was on a research trip in Southeastern Turkey. I was researching and documenting the Assyrian townships and cultural landmarks in the region which were confiscated by the Turkish government and resettled by Kurds, Arabs, as well as the Muslim Bulgarians who were expelled from their homeland during WWI.

The Tur-Abdin heartland was relatively an easy task. However, the region of Diyarbakir proved to be a rather challenging task for me and my colleague, Eliyo Eliyo, owing to two factors:

I) in that year, we started our research trip with the notion that we were to mainly document the core areas of Tur-Abdin. We had no clues that the project funders wanted us to include the Diyarbakir region in our 2013 documentation. Thus, we did not intend to document the Diyarbakir region for that particular summer. As a matter of fact, we did not research the area thoroughly in order to know what villages and landmarks we needed to document.

II) Unlike the Tur-Abdin region, Diyarbakir is almost cleansed of its Assyrian population. The Chaldean church, Rabban Pithyon, is now the housing of its Kurdish key-taker. He is living there in lieu of caring for the relics of the church whose parishioners were almost wiped out during Seyfo. As for the famous Mriam Anna (Virgin Mary's) church of the Syriac Orthodox, it has lately become the abode for its parish priest, Fr. Yusuf Akbulut, whose parishioners are no more than five families. All these families are originally from Tur-Abdin heartland and have recently settled in Diyarbakir. In the final analysis, we were not fully prepared and with little knowledge of the Assyrian community in that locality. Caught with this predicament, Eliyo and I visited Fr. Yusuf Akbulut

of Mariam Anna church. It is noteworthy that, in October 2000, Fr. Akbulut was arrested by the Turkish authorities and indicted for multiple charges, including treason and inciting racial hatred, simply, for making an off-record statement in an interview with a Turkish newspaper: *“Not only the Armenians, but the Assyrians as well were subjected to genocide in 1915.”*

I asked Fr. Akbulut if he had kept a baptismal record prior to the Genocide, he positively answered, YES. Our intention was to use the record to research the Assyrian townships of the Diyarbakir region, for it is the conventions to mention the birth place of the baptized baby in the baptismal record. In fact, these records did help us learn about many of the Assyrian villages in the Diyarbakir region. Furthermore, we made a shocking discovery. We noticed a distressing anomaly in the records: there was a great contrast between the high number of baptisms from the period before Seyfo and a sharp decrease in the number following Seyfo’s aftermath. In fact, since April 1915 there hadn’t been any baptism record until October 1917. Prior to Seyfo, the Assyrian villages, in which the baptized babies were born, were numerous, whilst the villages mentioned after Seyfo were much fewer and far in between.

This little baptismal record has manifested the total devastation and horrific consequences of Seyfo on the Assyrian people in a way we could never have expected! Why had there been such a small number of baptisms after Seyfo? Was there a sudden change in the local Assyrian community’s attitude towards family planning? Or could it be attributed to the mass slaughter of the local Assyrian population? What has happened to all those Assyrian villages and why are there so few of them mentioned after Seyfo?! Is it possible that the

people suddenly decided to sell their properties and migrate to better pastures! Or that the neighboring Kurds were given a free pass to slaughter them and be rewarded with the properties of their victims?

One of the villages that we documented was Karabash, the village of the author: the famous *Malphono* Abdil-Masih Karabashi. As we got there, we noticed a row of high standing towers resembling mosque minarets. Once in the village, we asked the residents about its history and they told us in Kurdish: “*av gund ne gunde fala bu*” (this village was not a Christian village), and they based their narrative on the presence of the aforementioned towers. They insisted that, since time immemorial, this was a pious Muslim village and these minarets are the remains of the numerous mosques that the village once had. As the crowd gathered to satisfy their curiosity, the youngest and most educated among them said: “*aréh ba xudé bari farman av gundé armaniya bu, Armani bun levera*” (By God, before the genocide this was an Armenian village, Armenians were here). Suddenly, we saw an elderly man making his way towards us whilst struggling on his walking stick. The old man told the whole crowd that this was indeed an Assyrian village. In fact, he emphasized that this is the village of one of their most revered men of letters named Abdil-Masih Karabashi. We soon learned that the old man now lives in the very house of *Malphono* Abdil-Masih Karabashi and even had met the author. We documented everything we could come across and then left the village

When I returned to Cambridge, I found a gift on my desk and this was the memoirs of *Malphono* Abdil-Masih Karabashi sent to me by a friend from Sweden. Going over the memoirs, I found out that the towers which the current Kurdish

inhabitants of Karabash claimed to be minarets built by their forefathers were merely the pigeon turrets that the author has mentioned in his memoirs. In fact, the Assyrians of Karabash were known for trading in pigeon manure. They used these towers as turrets to collect the pigeon droppings and make a good living on selling the manure to the local farmers.

Having read that, I could not help it but contemplate on two particular thoughts: Firstly, Seyfo is not a tragic incident of the past and it still continues in the form of ethnic cleansing and culturcide manifested in the official state policies and the attitude of the local Kurdish population as an attempt to eradicate any trace of the Assyrian presence in the region. The rewriting of history and the exploitation of the Assyrian landmarks to that end: are daily testimonies of Seyfo continuity. Secondly, I was astonished that Abdil-Masih Karabashi's fame has remarkably journeyed far beyond the reach of his people and even is revered by the local Muslim population as a man of letters.

Thus, it is no surprise that this man of letters would record the terrifying events he bore witness to. Nevertheless, the importance of this testimonial account is not limited to the fact that it has been recorded by an eyewitness, but in fact this eyewitness was wholly cognizant of the importance of what he was recording; adding another important chapter to the Genocide Studies.

I often have participated in intellectual gatherings at which the importance of translating this book has been the topic; however, no one would take the burden of translating this important work. It is not easy to translate such a significant work whose contents are of paramount importance.

It has been said: a good translation should be rendered by someone who is equipped with solid linguistic skills in both languages. Therefore, finding someone that has a good command of the English language has never been a daunting task; however, finding someone that enjoys equal comfort in English as well as Syriac and having a broad knowledge of the subject matter can only be found in persons like, Mr. Emmanuel Solomon. Reading through the book, one feels this is not a translation, but rather a book that has originally been written in English. And if the reader has a command in Syriac and has read the first hand Syriac document, they would acknowledge how Mr. Emmanuel Solomon has managed to convey the Syriac nuance and semantics so accurately into sound English. The editorial touch of Mr. Dolour Daoud has further enhanced the translation through guidance and linguistic skills. The ability for the translator and the editor to work in unison and understanding is evident through their collaboration and teamwork on this book. Their work is indeed worthy and commendable.

Nineb Lamasu
Independent researcher
April 24, 2019

The Author's Preface

The memoirs that I have recorded are a glimpse of the sufferings and torments which resulted from the cruel atrocities, persecutions, and banishment that were unjustly incited against the Christians in 1915. They were incited by the well known cruel savages; that is to say, the Kurds and Turks against the Christians in the Middle East, particularly against our Assyrian (Syriac/Chaldean) people, in Mesopotamia and beyond its northern and southern frontiers for four years.

These memoirs may appear disorganized or not listed in chronological order. This is because, in the course of the events, the sword of cruelty was drawn; shedding the blood of the oppressed Christian multitudes every day without mercy, old, young, and even infants. Hence, terrible grief devastated every Christian village and city, and bitter wailing was over heard in every Christian household.

Based on what I witnessed every day and heard from the few wounded survivors of the carnage; to be precise, herein, I am only demonstrating one per thousand of the facts. I did not care about the order or the literary style of my writing. However, I was only concerned about gathering information and recording the events as they took place. I am not skilled in the writing of such accounts, for I am a student at the clerical school of Saffron Monastery, the Patriarchal See of the Syriac Orthodox Church, and I have not yet completed the fifteenth year of my life.

I began recording these memoirs in early 1914, and continued till 1918, the year in which the swords were returned to its sheath. The persecution and slaughter were

ceased, the stream of blood dried up, as well as famine and pestilence from which most of the survivors perished were over. Only a small number of them survived; naked, hungry, and thirsty. Most of their scars and wounds that were inflicted by swords or bullets are yet to heal, for no one is taking care of them.

I did not document these annals for a political objective, neither to press charges or complain against anyone, nor to demonstrate to the civilized world the savagery of the malevolent criminals which rises above that of the beasts of prey. I am convinced that our deceitful era only serves the tyrants' interest. The world is unjust and shows no sympathy towards the defenseless peoples. Justice does not pay attention to the helpless and broken peoples, for I am convinced that this is what the civilization of the twentieth century demands; a fake civilization where its vices transcend its virtues. *We have only God to call for help; God, whose patience may lead man into despair.*

Nevertheless, I wrote these annals so that they would be a reminding sound that would resonate in the ears of the perpetrators when their ears are finally open, to hear the appeals of the oppressed. Also, to render as a scene that flashes back before their eyes and make them regret and feel the prick of conscience. These memoirs may as well become a clear reflection before the eyes of the children of this oppressed nation when they are at ease, breathing freely.

Personally, these memoirs are my precious reminder and whenever I review them and contemplate their brutality, my sorrow haunts me back and my grief is stirred up. I sigh and weep for the terror, mistreatment, anguish, and assaults that our people sustained. Yet, I weep even more for the savage

and shameless manners by which our mothers were violated and the lascivious behavior through which the pure young girls were ravished! Therefore, I shed my tears unceasingly; releasing sighs that break the strings of my heart since their blood was spilled for no folly, but for the love of the pure blood that was spilled for their sake on the Cross at Golgotha.

If the perpetrators return to their sense and are condemned by their own conscience for their evil deeds, they regret and show compassion towards the survivors of this bloody deluge; turning their victims' distress into relief, their torment into appeasement, and their fear into assurance. Perhaps then, the survivors may open their eyes to the bright side of life and liberty. They might eventually come across these memoirs, read and brood over them, and see the horrible scenes of the torment and agony which resulted from the ruining atrocities that their parents and brethren endured without grievance or complaint, but rather, passive like lambs being led to their slaughter. Only then, they might release sighs of grief for their innocent martyrs and ask God to have mercy upon their pure souls; those who departed in hopes of the Divine Vengeance that does not forget the appeals of the miserable ones.

The Author: Abdil-Masih Ne'man D'Karabash
Saffron Monastery, Thursday, September 5, 1918

THE AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The Dawn of Christianity and its Spread

Before I start writing about the atrocities of 1895 and 1915, I would like to present a brief account on the inception of Christianity in Mesopotamia, its growth and prosperity as well as the painful calamities and sufferings that Christianity endured, generation after generation. Then, as much as possible, on the cruel massacres that we have recently endured.

Christianity flourished first in the holy city of *Jerusalem*, where the voice of the very teacher, our Lord Jesus, echoed and his innocent blood was shed for the salvation of the world. Also, where the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) descended upon the holy apostles and filled them with power and wisdom that they preached the Gospel in *Jerusalem* and baptized many Jews.

It was from *Jerusalem* that Christianity spread out by the apostles in the entire *Judea*, *Samaria*, and *Galilee*. Therefore, the number of the believers increased, and churches were erected in all the cities of Palestine and the Mediterranean coastal line. Later, the Evangelists went out from *Caesarea*, *Tyr*, *Sidon*, and *Beirut*. They preached the Gospel in the northern highlands, including *Damascus* and *Antioch*, and proselytized multitudes to the Christian flock.

Damascus became renowned for its Christian faith a few months after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the holy apostles and after St. Hanania the Evangelist was sent to *Damascus*. There, he preached the Gospel and proselytized

many people to the Christian faith. In the year 34 A.D., the Christian community in *Damascus* had increased so much that the zeal-consumed Saul⁴ requested letters from the Jewish high priests; permitting him the persecution of the Christian believers in *Damascus*. Our Lord, notwithstanding, appeared to him on the way, guided and sent him to St. Hanania in *Damascus* to teach him the mysteries of the Christian faith. As soon as Saul became a disciple, he began preaching in the synagogues about our Lord Jesus Christ; assuring the Jews that he is the awaited Messiah. Thus, Christianity became renowned in *Damascus* and all the Syrian cities, from the coastline of the Mediterranean to *Aleppo* and *Mabbough*.⁵

The Church of *Antioch* is the second foremost after the Church of *Jerusalem*. It is the source of the term “Christianity” and its true foundation in the entire East. It was founded in the year 34 A.D. wherein St. Stephanus (Stephan) the Martyr was stoned to death and the Evangelists fled *Jerusalem* and scattered hither and thither. Some of them arrived in *Antioch* and were only calling on the Jews to the Christian faith. They were accompanied by disciples from *Cyprus* and *Cyrene* who preached the Gospel among the Greeks, proselytized and baptized many of them. In 37 A.D., St. Peter went to *Antioch* to visit his associates, the Evangelists. There, he preached and baptized many and established his Apostolic See which precedes all the major Apostolic Sees. The Patriarchs of the Syriac Orthodox Church are successors to the Antiochian Apostolic See since its foundation by Peter, the head of the Apostles.

⁴ Later he was known as St. Paul. – The translator.

⁵ Mabbough: called Manbij in Arabic is a city to the northeast of Aleppo Governorate, thirty kilometers west of Euphrates River. – The translator.

Christianity in Edessa and the Rest of Mesopotamia



Ruin of ancient Edessa

All the territories of *Mesopotamia*, *Media*, and *Persia* were predisposed to embrace Christianity prior to sending Addai the Evangelist to *Edessa* to fulfill our Lord's promise. It is known that, when our Lord Jesus was begotten in *Bethlehem*, the Magi came from the East following a star and offered him gifts: gold, myrrh, and incense.

It is also known that many Jews from *Media*, *Persia*, *Parthea*, and *Elini*, as well as from the inhabitants of *Mesopotamia* were present in *Jerusalem* on the day of Pentecost, in 34 A.D. They knew about the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the holy apostles and heard Saint Peter's teaching. They, as well, saw the multitudes that believed and were baptized, and they carried the amazing news to their countries.

Also, when Apostle Thomas headed towards India, he passed through Mesopotamia and on his way he preached and converted many nations to Christianity.

However, at that time, *Edessa*, the very Assyrian city, was the mother of all the districts of Mesopotamia. It was the court of a small kingdom ruled by a dynasty known as the *Abgarids* and a satellite of the Roman Empire at that time. When its king, Abgar V, nicknamed Abgar Oukama/Oukomo, heard the news of our Lord Jesus Christ and of all the miracles and healings that he was performing during his redeeming dispensation, he sent envoys to Jesus pleading him to come and heal him from leprosy he was inflicted with. The envoys carried a letter from the king to our Lord which said:



Abgar is one of the first Christian kings in history.

From Abgar Oukama, the head of the state, to Jesus the good Savior who has appeared in Jerusalem:

Greetings,

“I have heard about you and the miracles and healings which you perform without medicine or herbs... Therefore, I beseech you to take upon yourself the trouble of coming to me and heal me from the disease I am

suffering from. Also, I heard that the Jews are complaining against you and willing to harm you. I have a beautiful city that is big enough for the two of us.”

Because of his profound faith, King Abgar ordered his envoys by all the means to bring him the image of Jesus on a plank, so he can see his image, should Jesus decline to come with them.

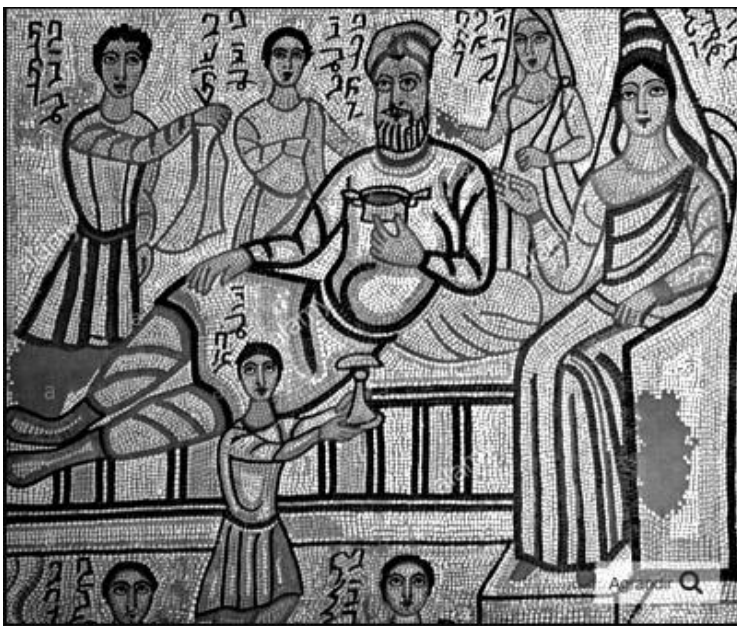
When the envoys arrived in *Jerusalem* and gave the letter to Jesus, He read it and replied immediately as follows: *“Blessed is whoso believes in me though he has not seen me yet. Since you wrote to me to come and see you, first, I must fulfill everything here and then ascend to the One who sent me. As soon as I have ascended, I shall send you one of my disciples to heal you from your disease, grant you liveliness, and bless your town so that the Parthians shall not rule over it.”*

Being the knower of the unseen, Jesus asked for water and washed his face, then he took a towel to wipe his face and, instantly, the exact image of his face got imprinted on the towel. He handed King Abgar’s envoys the towel along with his response and they returned to *Edessa*.

Saint Thomas fulfilled the promise of our Lord and sent his brother, Addai, to *Edessa* who healed the king from his disease and taught him the way to salvation. He baptized him and his courtiers in the year 50 A. D.

Later, Addai went out and overtly began preaching the Gospel in *Edessa*. He traveled to many regions in Mesopotamia and evidently, evangelized in the city of *Diyarbakir*, in the northern regions of *Arzon*, and in the eastern gorges of *Tigris River*, as well as in *Adiabene*, *Beth-Zabdai* and their outskirts.

Later, he returned to *Edessa* and erected a church there. He also established a clerical school and became the first bishop of *Edessa* and died there. After his death, he was succeeded by his disciple Aggai, whom he had sent to preach the Gospel in the region of *Qardu*⁶ and *Beth-Zabdai*. Consequently, Christianity spread and flourished in all the regions of the East.



Funerary Couch Mosaic, 218-238 CE. Mosaic. Edessa.

⁶ Kurd's territory, also known as Judi: a mount south of Lake Van. — The translator.

Christianity in the Lands of Cush (Ethiopia)

In the year 316 A.D., Mirobius of *Tyr*, accompanied by two young brothers, Edesius and Frumentius,⁷ sailed along the coastline of *Abyssinia*. The Abyssinians (Ethiopians) attacked their ship and killed everyone except the two young brothers whom they brought and offered as a gift to their king. The king entrusted Frumentius to serve as his secretary and at the hour of his death, he ordered him to foster and educate his son, the heir apparent of his crown, who was still a little child. Therefore, the two brothers began preaching Christianity in those regions.

Later, Edesius returned to *Tyr* and was ordained as a priest. Frumentius, however, went to *Alexandria* to meet Saint Athanasius the Apostolic carrying the good news of the readiness of the Abyssinians to accept the Christian faith and asked him to send a bishop for them. Then, the holy Athanasius told him, “Who would deserve this rank more than the glorious evangelist who proselytized them to the flock of the Lord Jesus Christ?”⁸ In the year 341 A.D., Saint Athanasius ordained Frumentius as a bishop and sent him back to *Abyssinia*. Bishop Frumentius was received by the king and the entire Abyssinian nation with great honor. Thus, they believed and became followers of the Christian faith. Consequently, *Abyssinia* became a Christian kingdom ever since and to this day.⁹

⁷ They were the sons of Mirobius’ brother. – The translator.

⁸ Bishop Athanasius meant Frumentius himself. –The translator.

⁹ At present, the Christians constitute only a little over 60% of the population, the rest are Muslims and others. – The translator.

Christianity in the Kingdom of Iberia ¹⁰

In the first half of the fourth century A.D., a captive girl named Nino (Nina)¹¹ made it to the Royal Court of *Iberia* and was joined with the servants of Median, the king of that country. It happened that the son of the king became ill, so Nino prayed and beseeched God for him and he was healed. She did the same for the queen and she too was healed. When Nino was asked about her faith, she related to them about Christianity. King Median was delighted in Christianity. Then, Nino advised him to send a message to the Roman territories and request priests. For that reason, he wrote to King Constantine who sent ambassadors and priests to the king of *Iberia*, and they taught the Christian faith to the Iberians, baptized the king and the queen, as well as all the people. Consequently, *Iberia* became a Christian kingdom.

The Kingdom of Sheba (Yemen)

Around the middle of the fourth century A.D. some evangelists went to the lands of *Sheba (Yemen)*. There, they preached the Gospel and proselytized the inhabitants to Christianity. At this epoch, Christianity flourished significantly in *Hirta* (Southern Iraq) and *Parthia* owing to the preaching days of Addai the Evangelist, and his disciple Aggai. They built churches and founded schools from which holy bishops and renowned scholars rose and exalted the Christian faith to a very high level.

¹⁰ What was the Eastern part of today's Republic of Georgia. Not to be confused for the Iberian Peninsula in South-Western Europe. – The translator.

¹¹ She is known as the Virgin Nino of Cappadocia. She was the only daughter of a widely respected and honorable couple. Her father was a Roman army chief by the name of Zabulon, and her mother, Sosana. – The translator.

Christianity grew and flourished greatly by the prevalence of the monastic life in the countries of the East. Many monasteries were established and became famous for their teachings and knowledge. Pagan temples were brought down and churches were erected on top of their debris.

Many church historians affirmed that Christianity prevailed in Mesopotamia and flourished since the middle of the second century A.D.

In his famous book titled '*namousi d'athrawatha = the laws of the countries*', Bardaisan¹² the well known Assyrian scholar, who died in the year 222 A.D., states the following: "*What should we say about our new Christian nation which our Lord Jesus Christ founded in every country, and which indeed spread in Parthia, Persia, Midea, and Edessa.*"

The above information is also affirmed by the Christian scholar, Tertullian, who said, "*All the following nations believed in Jesus and embraced Christianity: the Parthian, the Persians, the Elamites, and the inhabitants of Mesopotamia.*" In Egypt and in the western Roman territories, Christianity spread by the holy apostles, that is to say, in Egypt, by Apostle Mark; in Rome by the Apostles Peter and Paul, following Damascus and Antioch. The Apostolic See of Alexandria was established in the year 61 A.D. and that of Rome in the year 68 A.D."¹³

¹² Bardaisan, Latinized as Bardesanes, was an Assyrian/Syriac gnostic and founder of the Bardaisanites. He was a scientist, scholar, astrologer, philosopher and poet. — The translator.

¹³ The correct date is the year 67 A.D. when Saint Peter suffered martyrdom. — The translator.

Major Persecutions and Massacres of the Christians throughout History

Whoever peruses the chronology of Christianity thoroughly and studies its history closely will find out that the pathway of Christianity had been and still is wet with blood. This situation began from the day when the innocent blood of its master, the Lord Jesus Christ, was shed on Golgotha. As a matter of fact, the Christians suffered unspeakable persecutions including slaughter and brutal torture that no one could have endured except those who were redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ from which they received encouragement and strength.

Persecutions Instigated by the (Zealot) Jews¹⁴ against the Christians

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead brought shame and reproach to the Jewish zealots, that their Rabbis and High Priests were filled with rage and envy. They spewed the venom of their rage against the Christ's disciples and followers. They instigated terrible persecutions and harsh sufferings against them intending to wipe them out.

In the year 33 A.D. after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the holy apostles, the Jewish leaders found out that many Jews believed on our Lord Jesus. Therefore, they captured the apostles and threw them in jail; promising them bitter treatment. *Thus, at night, the angel of the Lord opened*

¹⁴ Although those persecuted were Jewish converts, the author uses the word Jews indiscriminately. Therefore, in order to avoid generalization, I used 'Jewish zealots' or 'Jewish leaders' instead. – The translator.

the doors of the jail, set Peter free, and encouraged him to preach the living Word.

In the year 34 A.D. after the apostles had selected the Seven Ministers, the Jewish leaders realized that the number of Christians was growing rapidly every day and many Jewish priests were also joining them. Consumed by ferocious anger, their *Sanhedrin* (council) condemned Saint Stephan wickedly and stoned him to death. They also incited horrible persecution against the Christians in *Jerusalem*, and as a result, they fled and scattered all over *Judea* and *Samaria* aside from the apostles who stayed behind in *Jerusalem* while attesting and suffering martyrdom.

In the year 43 A.D., the Jewish leaders once again incited severe persecutions against the Christian church and killed many believers. In this very persecution, King Herod Agrippa killed Apostle James, the son of Zebedee, and imprisoned Peter to appease the zealot Jews. They menacingly chased Apostle Paul and took an oath to deprive themselves from eating until they had killed him. Every time they tried to ambush him, God intervened and saved him. Being unable to capture Paul, around 51 A.D., they pacified their fury by killing Jacob the brother of our Lord. They threw him off the wing of the temple to the ground, then stoned him to death and crushed his skull with a mallet.

The Jews came close to destroying all the Christian believers, had it not been to the wrath of God that befell them through the destruction of *Jerusalem* by Titus,¹⁵ in 70 A.D.;

¹⁵ He was the son of Emperor Vespasian. – The translator.

suppressing their power and turning their wickedness against themselves.

Consequently, six hundred thousand Jews perished from famine, let alone those who died in pits, water pools, and on the roadside without burial. Thousands were killed in the war as well, and more than one hundred thousand were taken into captivity. As for the few remnants, they were sold as slaves and scattered all over the Roman Empire. Thus, *Jerusalem* was reduced to mounds of ruins to fulfill that which was said by the Prophets, or rather, by the Lord of the Prophets Who said, “*And (they) shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*” (*Luke 19:44*)

During that calamity, the small number of Christians who were in *Jerusalem* witnessed the sign of the destruction which was set up before Jehovah and realized that *Jerusalem* will inevitably be destroyed in accordance with the prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, they left the city and took shelter in a pagan village called *Pella* on the northern bank of *Jordan River*. They lived austerey on the little provisions they had obtained.

The Roman Persecution of the Early Christian Church

The Church of Christ not only endured persecutions and sufferings at the hands of the Jewish zealots, but by pagan nations as well. They endured severe local and global persecution. The bitterest of all were the ten persecutions that were carried out by the Roman Empire throughout the first three centuries and the beginning of the fourth century A.D.

The reasons behind those persecutions were: Some for peculiar reasons and others for political and social concerns.

Some of the peculiar reasons were:

- a. The disgraceful customs of the pagans which were contrary to the Christian teachings that encourage good behavior, excellent manners, and Christian virtues.
- b. The economical interest of the pagan priests, makers of the idol statues, and their sellers. All of them suffered great losses and were deprived of their income owing to the spread of Christianity. Thus, they were agitating the masses and inciting them to harm the Christians, intending their annihilation.

Of their political concerns:

- c. The king, his court, and the nobility, being fearful of any nationwide schism that may occur due to the faith change.

- d. The Christians' incomppliance with the strict orders of the Roman emperors who coerced the people to worship them as if they were gods. Since it was impossible for the Christians to succumb to such an order and worship other than God, the emperors acted furiously and ordered their persecution and slaughter.
- e. Decrease in the slave trade which was common earlier all over the world, for Christianity banned slavery, anathematized anyone who dealt with it, and taught that all men are equal under God, for everyone has the right to call God 'our father'.

The First Persecution (under Nero 64-68 A.D.)

This persecution was incited by the tyrant Roman Emperor, Nero. In July 18, 64 A.D., Emperor Nero set Rome on fire which consumed most of the city. Stemming from his extreme hatred towards the Christians, and perhaps by advice from his zealot Jewish followers, he accused the Christians of arson and ordered their annihilation. They wrapped some of them with fresh animal skin and shoved them to wild dogs, others were crucified, yet some others were covered with tar and set on fire to generate light at night. In this very persecution, the heads of the apostles, Peter and Paul, suffered martyrdom. This persecution continued till 68 A.D., the year in which Nero died.¹⁶

¹⁶ He was declared an enemy of the people by the Senate and forced to commit suicide. – The translator.

The Second Persecution, 94 A.D.¹⁷

This persecution was incited by Emperor Domitian¹⁸, the son of Emperor Vespasian and the brother of Titus. Because the Christians refused to declare him *god*, he ordered for their slaughter and killed a great number of them. In this persecution, St. Dionysius the Areopagite, bishop of *Athens*; as well as St. Antipas and St. Barbati martyred. Emperor Domitian threw St. John the Apostle in a caldron full of boiling oil. However, by the Devine Intervention he came out unharmed.¹⁹ Consequently, he was exiled²⁰. Finally, the persecution ceased at the death of Domitian in 96 A.D.

The Third Persecution, 100 A.D.²¹

This persecution was fueled up by Emperor Trajan who thought that the Christians were a threat to the Roman Civilization. He ordered the persecution and slaughter of the Christians, presumably intending to complete the passion of Jesus Christ²². He ordered the crucifixion of St. Simeon, bishop of *Jerusalem* in 106 A.D.²³ and burned St. Fucca to death in 104 A.D. Also, in 105 A.D., and using a saw, he had St. Sharbel and his sister, Beebéh, decapitated in *Orhai* (*Edessa*); and in 107 A.D., he hurled the blessed St. Ignatius

¹⁷ Under Domitian the correct date is 81-96 A.D. – The translator.

¹⁸ Who deified himself, assuming the title “lord and god”. – The translator.

¹⁹ This is another Christian myth. – The translator.

²⁰ He was exiled to the small Greek island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. – The translator.

²¹ Under Trajan the correct date is 108 A.D. – The translator.

²² That in Trajan’s ruthless mind was not sufficient. – The translator.

²³ In other sources: 107 or 117 A.D. – The translator.

to be devoured by lions. From this point forward, persecutions and sufferings continued unceasingly; mitigating at times and intensifying at others.

The Fourth Persecution 124 A.D.

This persecution was incited by Emperor Hadrian²⁴ in reaction to a letter he received from Lucian Granius, the Roman Ambassador to Asia, in which he said, “It is namely the Romans that are killing the followers of the Christ’s faith.” In this letter, Lucian intended to denounce the conduct of the Romans who were persecuting Christians. Nonetheless, the emperor replied shortsightedly and wrote, “Whoever is accused of violating any of the laws shall be punished.” From that time forth, cruel persecutions were directed against the Christians. Countless number of renowned fathers of the church, as well as bishops and laymen were slaughtered. In 134 A.D., after killing thousands of Jews and subduing the remnant in *Jerusalem*, he devastated the entire city. He rebuilt *Jerusalem* and called it ‘*Aelia Capitolina*’ and ordered the building of a temple for Zeus on top of the ruins of King Solomon’s Temple. Also, he built a temple for Adonis near the cave of *Bethlehem*. He had the opening of the Savior’s tomb at Golgotha filled with dirt and built on top of it a temple for (goddess) Aphrodite Cythera. The persecutions did not cease until his death in 138A.D.

²⁴ Born Publius Aelius Hadrianus. No source mentions any major persecution of the Christians by Hadrian; instead, Hadrian persecuted the Jews and banned the observance of Judaism. – The translator.

The Fifth Persecution 162 A.D.²⁵

This persecution occurred during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. In the year 162 A.D., many destructive earthquakes occurred aside from the failure of harvests which led to famine. Meanwhile, the emperor became afflicted with a serious disease. Provoked by a slander invented by some evil people, the emperor determined that those trials (calamities) resulted from sins committed by Christians. He, then, issued a very strict order to severely persecute them. In 166 A.D., particularly, in the regions of Asia Minor, he ordered the mutilation of some Christian prisoners by scourging them to death, and had others laid naked on sharp firestone chips and anchored to the ground to bleed and suffer a slow death. In this persecution St. Policriphus, the beloved of St. John the Evangelist, was martyred.²⁶ In 177 A.D., another persecution of the Christians was carried out in the city of Lyon in France, in which Pothinius, the first bishop of Lyon was martyred along with numerous clergymen and laymen. After burning their corpses, they threw their ashes in Rhine River.

The Sixth Persecution 202 A.D.²⁷

This persecution occurred during the reign of Emperor Septimius (Severus). At the beginning of his reign, Severus was tolerant towards the Christians and had entrusted many of

²⁵Listed as the forth persecution in most other sources.

²⁶ An obvious mistake has been made here by the author. Neither John the Apostle, nor John the Evangelist, was alive at that time. He may have confused Policriphus for St. Eustinus, the philosopher from Nablus, who was martyred in 167 A.D. – The translator.

²⁷ The correct date is 192 A.D. and is listed as the fifth persecution in all other sources

them administrative positions in his Imperial Court. Nonetheless, in 202 A.D.,²⁸ as he saw the Christians growing in number day by day and progressing in every field and means, particularly in their ecclesiastic order that gathered and united them, he then had a different view of them. Consequently, he issued an edict prohibiting any Roman from converting to Christianity or Judaism, otherwise be killed. Later, he began forcing the Christians to worship idols and eat from sacrifices offered by pagans, and whoever disobeyed, suffered merciless persecution. Huge numbers of believers were slaughtered in *Alexandria* and their churches demolished. The renowned scholar, Athenagenos, was burned to death along with the brave soldier Basilidos, Leonid Orignos' father. The persecution spread to include Asia, Africa, and the lands of the Franks, where multitudes of Christian believers were annihilated. This persecution ceased by the death of this ruthless emperor in 211 A.D. Until that time, the Christians congregated and prayed in caves and cemeteries at the pitch darkness of the night.

The Seventh Persecution 235 A.D.²⁹

After Emperor Maximus had assassinated Emperor Alexander Severus, the moderate emperor who sympathized with the Christians, he usurped the throne and found out that the Christians had greatly increased in number. Because Alexander loved them, Maximus was determined to put all the church fathers and scholars to death. He targeted Alexander's companions, then, the persecution spread out to include all the Christians. Their churches were burned down to the ground and their possessions plundered. Among the victims of his

²⁸ The persecution started in 192 A.D. – The translator.

²⁹ It is listed as the sixth persecution in most sources.

persecution were: St. Pontianus, the bishop of Rome, and St. Hippolytus, who was also a bishop. Both of them were exiled to the Island of Sardinia, which was inflicted with plague, and both martyred there.

The Eighth Persecution 250 A.D.³⁰

This persecution was ordered by the tyrant Emperor Decius who despised the Christians. In 250 A.D., he issued a strict order for the bloodshed of all the Christians. From that time on, the persecution intensified as other means of bitter torture were adopted. Some were imprisoned and tortured to death, others thrown in boiling pitch or mutilated with sharp-edge stakes, while others were rent into pieces by hungry lions. Despite its short duration, this persecution was extremely harsh and bitter. It had spread throughout Europe, Africa, Greece, Asia Minor, Pontus, and other regions.³¹ Countless believers martyred, and among the renowned ones were: St. Fabian, the bishop of Rome; Alexander the presbyter, bishop of *Jerusalem* with his honorable grey hairs; the zealous apostle St. Babyla, the Patriarch of *Antioch*; the celebrated scholar Dionysius, the Patriarch of *Alexandria*; Ambion, the holy priest of *Smirna (Izmir)*; and Bishop Cyril of *Tagrit (Takrit)*. Also, Eurogenus the wise was taken captive. During this time, the Eight Young Men, known as “the people of the cave” fled from Ephesus and took shelter in a cavern near the city. Soon after the emperor was informed of their hideout, he ordered that the entrance of the cavern be blocked up with dirt. *God cast on them a deep sleep where*

³⁰ The correct date is 249 A.D. and is listed as the seventh persecution in most sources.—The translator

³¹ Decius was the pioneer of the first Empire-wide Persecution. – The translator.

*they slept hundred eighty years then woke up in the days of Theodosius the Younger.*³²

The Ninth Persecution 257 A.D.³³

This persecution occurred during the reign of Emperor Valerian acting on the evil advice of his counselor Marciano who misled him and had him issue two cruel edicts. In the first, he warned the Christians not to assemble in the cemeteries or caverns for prayer. He mandated that all clergymen be compelled to offer oblations for the Roman idols; otherwise be exiled. In the second, he decreed that the Christians who were holding official positions in the palace, be subjugated to torture, their movable and immovable possessions seized and their hierarchy killed; however, the Christian laymen not to be harmed. He thought that if their prelates were eliminated and their properties as well as those of their churches seized, their union would dissolve, they would get deranged, and revert to paganism. In this persecution, St. Cyprian, the archbishop of *Carthage*, was exiled³⁴ and nine bishops, numerous priests, deacons, and laymen were sentenced to hard labor in some mine. Also, they were branded on their foreheads with heated iron and had half of their hair cut so that they would be easily identified should they attempt to escape. Nevertheless, in the last days of his reign, (God) punished Emperor Valerian, because he was occupied with many wars and later captured by King Shapur I who confined him to a dungeon until he died in 262 A.D.

³² Theodosius II, commonly surnamed Theodosius the Younger, or Theodosius the Calligrapher, was a Byzantine Emperor from 408 to 450 A.D. The above story is merely a traditional Christian myth.—The translator

³³ It is listed as the eighth persecution in most other sources.—The translator

³⁴ By Valerian's order, St. Cyprian was not exiled but rather executed among others, including Xystus (Sixtus II) bishop of Rome. — The translator.

King Shapur I had Valerian skinned, his skin dyed with red color and hanged on the interior wall of one of his temples.³⁵

This persecution continued even during the reigns of Emperors Gallienus and Claudius. At times, the persecution would cease and at others would intensify until the year 275 A.D. in which Emperor Aurelian died³⁶, the very emperor who occupied the Kingdom of *Palmyra*, captured Queen Zenobia and took her to Rome hand-shackled with gold chains.

The Tenth Persecution, 303 A.D.³⁷

Owing to its long duration, various torments, and the colossal number of the martyrs, this persecution is considered the biggest, the cruelest, and the harshest of all previous persecutions that were carried out against the Christians.

In the year 303 A.D., the ruthless Galerius promulgated four edicts issued by Emperor Diocletian commanding the destruction of the Christian churches and setting all their holy shrines on fire. He also decreed for the confiscation of their possessions, and mass slaughter of all the Christians who refused to revert to paganism. Because the Christian hierarchy and the (Christian) noble courtiers preferred death over paganism, the blood of many Christians was shed throughout the Empire. Countless churches were leveled to the ground, yet the Christians refused to hand over their sacred books,

³⁵ “The temple of fire, to have a miserable after-life,” according to the Persian beliefs then. However, no one actually knows what happened to him after his capture and the above is merely a rumor among many others. — The translator.

³⁶ Aurelian was assassinated by a group of officers of the Praetorian Guards who had allegedly been deceived by Aurelian’s secretary into believing themselves being marked for execution.— The translator.

³⁷ It is listed as the ninth persecution in most other sources. — The translator.

except for a few who apostatized and went back to their pagan deities; surrendering their Christian books to be burnt.

This persecution spread throughout the Empire and became harsher and harsher as the ruthless emperors were inventing new methods of fatal torture. In Mesopotamia, they would crucify the Christians upside down. In Syria, they would roast them on open fire. In the territory of Pontus, they would insert sharp reed pens beneath their finger nails then pour melted lead into them. In Egypt, they would rip off their flesh with sharp ceramic fragments. In *Phrygia*,³⁸ they set an entire city with its inhabitants on fire and turned it into ashes because they could not find a single person who would revert to paganism. In some countries, they gouged out the right eye of every martyr and amputated his left leg. This persecution spread and continued until the year 306 A.D. in which Diocletian died and Maximian rose to power in the East when he was only twenty years of age. Maximian, in his turn, intensified and continued the persecution until 313 A.D.³⁹, the year in which Constantine the Great who believed in Jesus Christ reigned. Constantine promoted Christianity and issued his edict of Milan wherein he granted the Christians religious freedom. He further proclaimed himself the protector of the Christians wherever they existed, and began spreading Christianity triumphantly via the construction of churches and his generous gifts. He, as well, exempted the clergymen from taxes, allocated salaries for them, included Christians in the service of the Imperial Court, and decreed Sunday as a holiday. By honoring the Holy Cross, he decreed that criminals sentenced to death no longer be executed by crucifixion. As he gained power and dominance in the West

³⁸ Phrygia is misspelled as Phrydia in the published Syriac version. – The translator.

³⁹ The correct year is 311. – The translator.

and the East, he ordered the demolition of all the pagan temples and erected churches on top of their ruins; paving the road for Christianity to flourish tremendously.

The Persecution of Christians under Emperor Julian 361-363 A.D.

Emperor Julian⁴⁰ was a cruel-natured young man who practiced Paganism and directed brutal persecution against the Christians. He issued an edict for the termination of the Christians from the imperial court and offices and ordered their schools be closed. He humbled the clerical order and denied them their salaries. He liberally showered the pagans with gifts, reinstated their idols, and rebuilt their temples out of the Christians' fortunes. He moved all the elegant church chattels, vessels and goods to the said temples. The churches were looted, holy shrines desecrated, relics of the Saints tampered with and ruined, as well as many clerics and laity mercilessly slaughtered: bishops, monks, and nuns, including Basileus, bishop of *Anycra*,⁴¹ and Domitian the Ascetic.

He reached such a level of impudence that he dared to restore the great temple of *Jerusalem* to refute our Lord's prophecy who said, "..., and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another..." (*Luke 19:44*). He allocated large amounts of money for his daring venture and sent workers and many masons to the site. Meanwhile, a great number of Jews volunteered and started digging to set the foundation on foot. As they began laying down the foundation, they were surprised by a strong earthquake that filled up the dug

⁴⁰ Flavius Claudius Julianus, called Julian "The Apostate" by the Christians. – The translator.

⁴¹ Today's Ankara, the Capital of Turkey. – The translator.

foundation with dirt, dispersed their tools and killed many of them. When the rest of the workers went back to work, the ground erupted and spewed lava all over. The workers were hurled with stones and their tools melted down. Many were bewildered by this miraculous incident which made a significant number of those Jews believe in Christ and stop rebuilding the temple.

While those occurrences were taking place, the wicked Emperor, Julian, was preparing for an attack against the Persians. Saint Basilus along with other bishops went to admonish him. When he saw the bishop, he angrily asked, “What do you want?” the bishop replied, “We want a virtuous emperor who will rule over us justly.” Emperor Julian responded, “Where did you leave that Carpenter?”⁴² The bishop then replied, “I left him as he was preparing a coffin for your burial.” The emperor was outraged and ordered the courtiers who were present, “Detain him until I return from the war and show him what kind of death I have planned for him.” The bishop responded, “If you return from the war alive, it won’t be the holy spirit that is speaking through me.” The word of the bishop came true when the wicked emperor was killed in that campaign by a poisoned arrow. As he was getting stained with his blood, at his last gasp, he filled his fist with the blood that was gushing from his wound, sprinkled it upwards towards the sky, and angrily cried, “At the end, you defeated me O’ Nazarene”.⁴³ Thus, God intervened and saved His Church from the wickedness of this tyrant. Eventually, the Christians had some peace under his successor⁴⁴ who instead, would persecute the pagans and turn their temples into churches.

⁴² Referring to Jesus. – The translator.

⁴³ Referring to Jesus of Nazareth. – The translator.

⁴⁴ Emperor Jovian who reestablished Christianity’s privileged position throughout the Empire. — The translator.

The Forty Year Persecution of the Christians under the Sassanid Persian King

Shapur II (309-379 A.D.)

This Persian persecution of the Christians lasted forty years and was carried out by king Shapur II in 339 A. D. throughout the Persian Empire, including *Babylon*, *Beth-garmai*, *Beth-Hozayi*, *Adyabene*, *Nineveh* and their vassal territories.

The alleged reason for this persecution stemmed from the great hatred King Shapur II had towards the Romans. He, therefore, vented his anger on the Christians in his territories, alleging they were spies and supporters of the Romans for merely being co-religionists.

First, King Shapur II demanded that the Christians pay double amount of tributes and forced the Catholicos Mar Shimmon Bar-Sabbae to collect the tributes. As the latter refused to do so, he killed him. He, then, killed his two successors and a great number of clergymen and laity. He decreed a general persecution and slaughter of the Christians as well as the destruction of their churches. He wrote to the Governors, the Marquises, and the chiefs of the Magi, to execute his edict. The Magi, the Jews, and the Manichaeen priests; too, moved to aid the oppressors with hearts full of grudges. As a result, the suffering of the Christians was grievous, wickedness pressed hard on them, and the persecution spread throughout the Persian Empire.

The known number of the victims in the regions of *Dayra Soumaqa* (the Red Monastery), *Beth-garmai*,⁴⁵ *Nineveh*,

⁴⁵ Sulaymaniyah, in today's Iraqi Kurdistan. – The translator.

Marggéh, and the vassals of *Babylon*, whose names were recorded during the forty years persecution alone, totaled three hundred ten thousand lives. The sword was not returned to its sheath until the peace agreement between the two empires, the Roman and the Persian, through the mediation of St. Maroutha, bishop of *Myafarqat*, by whose efforts the persecution relatively subsided.

The church ministries in the East were reorganized during the rule of Yazdegerd I who reigned from 399-420 A.D. Nonetheless, the suffering and persecution continued sporadically and never totally ceased. At times, the persecution of the Christians of Mesopotamia, triggered by both the Romans and the Persians, would cease and at others would intensify, until the year 635 A.D. when the Muslim Arabs conquered Persia⁴⁶ and occupied Mesopotamia.⁴⁷

Under the Muslim rule, notwithstanding, the Christians had no break from the persecutions that had been directed against them by both the Persians⁴⁸ in the East and the Romans⁴⁹ in the West, despite that the Christians had tremendously helped the Muslim Arabs in their war against the pagan Persians. An example of the wickedness of the Muslim leaders at the beginning of their rule is that the Caliph Omar-Ibn-Al-Khattab sent forces that occupied *Balish*⁵⁰, *Caloniki*, *Rish-Ayna (Ras-Alayn)*, *Gamlin*, *Kfartouta*, as well as *Dara*, *Mardin*, *Tel-Mawzalt* and forced countless inhabitants to convert to Islam.

In 642 A.D., the Muslim Arabs attacked *Carcasia* and occupied it. They killed the majority of its inhabitants and

⁴⁶ The complete Arab conquest of Persia was in 651 A.D.— The translator.

⁴⁷ What was called by the Sassanids at that time “The Province of Asoristan i.e. Assyrian Province”.

⁴⁸ Who at this time had converted to Islam. —The translator.

⁴⁹ Who had already converted to Christianity. —The translator.

⁵⁰ What is today’s Raqqa in northeastern Syria. — The translator.

turned its church into a mosque. Then, Arsis, the lord of *Mardin*, fled to *Harran* and the Muslim Arabs entered the city and began slaying the Christians till they wiped all of them out and turned their churches into mosques. They committed the same in *Rish-Ayna* and *Kfartouta*. As a result, many Christians converted to Islam in order to maintain jurisdiction over their districts.

In 692 A.D., the Umayyad prince Muhammad Ibin Marwan sent an envoy to Maw'id, the chief of the Christian Arab tribe of Taghlib; calling onto him to convert to Islam. Because Maw'id refused to convert, the Umayyad prince shoved him into a muddy pit and killed him. As for Shma'la, another Taghlibite leader, after attempting to persuade him to convert to Islam and failed, he treated him brutally because Shma'la did not succumb to his will. In the end, he cut a whole piece of flesh from Shma'la's thigh, grilled it and shoved it down Shma'la's throat. His wound remained visible and never healed to the day of his death.

Following the conversion of the Arab tribes of 'aqeel, Tayy, Tanoukh, and Taghlib to Islam due to repression, the persecution continued until the year 833 A.D. wherein the Muslims had increased in the cities of *Dara*, *Nisibin*, *Diyarbakir*, *Mardin*, and *Rish-Ayna*. They killed all the Christian chiefs, men of fortune and merchants, ransacked their villages, and burnt them to the ground. They even killed children, ravished chaste young girls, and turned the churches into mosques. Under those conditions, Christianity was humbled in the entire East, particularly in Mesopotamia. In the year 1155 A.D., the Muslims decimated the Christians of *Diyarbakir* and *Mardin*, converted St. John's church of the Syriac Orthodox denomination in *Diyarbakir* into a mosque and named it Al-Walee Mosque (one of the names of Allah in the Quran). Meanwhile, in *Mardin*, they turned the Church of

the Forty Martyrs into a mosque and named it Al-Shaheed Mosque. In 1170 A.D., they also seized St. Thomas church which is confirmed by both the Archbishop Gregorius Bar-Hebraeus⁵¹ and the Edessene Historian.⁵² Under those conditions of maltreatment and slaughter, the Christians of Mesopotamia conducted their living affairs while unable to freely engage in trade or workmanship, until the year 1453 A.D. when the Turks occupied the Middle East led by Muhammad Al-Fatih who is nicknamed “The Conqueror”. Under the Turk’s rule, the persecution intensified drastically, wherefore many Christians converted to Islam. In 1650 A.D., cruel persecution and harsh sufferings were inflicted upon the Assyrian/Syriac Christians. As a result, the Assyrians of the city of *Shouro* and the villages of *Ahmadi*, *Astal*, *Reshmel*, *Qabalah*, as well as the tribes of the Mhalamiyéh, Rashidiyéh, Makhashniyéh, Tawq, Mnaizal, and the rest of the villages and towns that surround them, estimated up to six hundred thousand people, were forced to abandon their Christian faith and profess to Islam. No town in that region was totally free of Muslims except for the village of *Qilith* which totally remained adhered to the Christian faith. Overall, Christianity was extremely weakened and the Christians were bound to pay tributes. The Christians endured all sorts of injustice, yet they remained adhered to the word of their Lord who said: “*and then they will deliver you to suffering, and they will kill you and you will be hated by all the nations because of my name.*”(Matthew 24-9).

⁵¹ Syriac Gregorios Bar-’Ebraya/’Ebroyo (1226 – July 30, 1286), was the Mapheriana-Catholicos of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the 13th century in Maraghe, modern day Iran. He is noted for his elaborate treatises on theology, Syriac grammar and poetry, history and philosophy that provide valuable information about the state of learning in the said fields at the time. He is also known by his Latin nickname “Abulhparagius” a pseudo transliteration of the Arabic Abul-Faraj. — The translator.

⁵² Who is called “the unknown author of the ‘Edessene Chronicles.’” —The translator.

PERSECUTIONS OF THE RECENT ERA

The Persecutions and Sufferings of the Christians of Diyarbakir and its Outskirts in 1895

I came across a record book among the book collection of Father Paulos, the son of Father Abdil-Ahhad of the house of Father Lahdo, the priest of the village of *Karabash*, in which the news of the atrocities of 1895 had been recorded. The atrocities were inscribed by Father Abdil-Ahhad who was among the survivors of the bitter calamities that were incited against the Christians in the districts of *Diyarbakir*, *Edessa* (*Urfa*), *Harput*, *Severik*, *Malatya*, *Sassoun* and their surrounding villages.

From Father Abdil-Ahhad's Record Book

In early November of 1895, the envy and thirst for bloodshed were instilled in the hearts of the Muslim chiefs in *Diyarbakir* to launch brutal persecutions against the Christians. At the forefront of that campaign were Jamil Pasha and Bahram Pasha accompanied by the rest of the despots. They sent provocative letters to all the Kurds, telling them to ready themselves for the killing of the Christians and the looting of their properties. They promised to equip them with arms as soon as they had arrived in *Diyarbakir*. Following the Friday afternoon prayer, as they left the Mosque, they were to shout the phrase (*Muhammad Salawat*) and commence together in attacking the Christian houses, marketplaces, and churches.

As a matter of fact, they fulfilled their intentions to the fullest. On Friday, November first of 1895, the Kurds surged

clamoring and brandishing their swords while the bombs were exploding constantly, turning *Diyarbakir* into a mega-kiln. The victims were dropping dead in the streets and marketplaces like falling leaves. The Christians were running for their lives and taking shelter in the churches. Yet, the Governor⁵³ of *Diyarbakir* dispatched twenty soldiers only to guard the residence of the French ambassador. Thus, those barbarians went on a killing and looting spree until the morning of Monday, the fourth of November. The Christians, on the other hand, were firing at them from their windows and rooftops killing every pedestrian. When the Governor found out that many Muslims were getting killed on the streets, he did not like that. Therefore, he went out with the Syriac Bishop Abdallah accompanied by several soldiers to prevent the Christians from opening fire at the Muslims and restrain the Muslims from attacking the Christians in their homes and shops; plundering and killing in various ways. Since the Governor and the bishop were unable to handle the situation, the Governor contacted the city of *Mardin* requesting the appearance of the Syriac Patriarch Abdil-Massih II.

The Patriarch came to *Diyarbakir* hastily. As soon as he entered the city and witnessed the slain in the streets and heard the rumble of the explosives, he sent a message to the Governor with a Syriac young man, but as the young man arrived to *Malik Ahmad Bazaar*, a Muslim mob took him by surprise and killed him.

The mob seized the written message and took it to the Governor. As soon as he read it, he ordered the army commander to dispatch a garrison to the Syriac Church in *Diyarbakir* where more than eight thousand Christians had

⁵³ Named Mehmed Enis Pasha

taken refuge aside from the inhabitants of the surrounding villages.



Left: Abdil-Massih II. the Patriarch of Syriac Orthodox Church, 1895-1903;
Right: Abdeh d'Aloho the Patriarch of Syriac Orthodox Church, 1906-1915.

The Patriarch and his escort walked to the Governor's headquarters; stepping on the corpses strewn in the streets. They witnessed thousands of Kurds and rabbles in the yard of the Governor's headquarters brandishing their blood stained swords. Meanwhile, their chiefs and *Aghas*⁵⁴ were in a meeting with the Governor; discussing some possible ways by which they can eradicate the Christians. As soon as the Patriarch walked into the Governor's office, the meeting was adjourned furtively. The Governor welcomed the bishop with great respect and told him, "Issue an order commanding all the Christians to surrender all their weapons to the state." The Patriarch promised to meet the Governor's demand.

When the Patriarch was returning to the church, the Governor dispatched a contingent, led by two high ranking

⁵⁴ Agha is a Turko-Persian honorific for high officials used in Turkey and certain Muslim countries. — The translator.

officers, Nassif and Bakir, to escort his beatitude. The soldiers searched the Christian houses for arms and found nothing. Nevertheless, on their way back, the soldiers as well as the Kurdish mobs pillaged the homes of the wealthy and notable Christians. They began killing and breaking the chests in which they kept their gold works and precious gems and took spoils, including furniture. The plunder lasted three days.

As the Patriarch witnessed those acts, he went to the Governor and told him, “You are asking me to gather the weapons from the Christians when you should rather stop the Kurds from killing the Christians and plundering their properties.”

The Governor responded, “I have issued a strict order to the Muslims not to harm any Christian”.

The Patriarch replied, “Yes, but after fulfilling the task that was asked of them!” He said that, then left the place and went to the Mother of God Church.

As to the Christians of *Mardin* who were in *Diyarbakir* as visitors, the Patriarch gathered them from the city inns and provided them with food and shelter during the entire tribulation. This persecution went on till December 18 of 1895.

Later on, an ordinance was issued by the Turkish Government that stated, “*It has been assured to us that the Christians are loyal citizens to our state.*” Therefore, the Christians were somewhat contented that their lives were secured.

The Village of Sa'diyyéh

Sa'diyyéh is a village located about ten kilometers southeast of *Diyarbakir*. Its inhabitants were Assyrians/Syriacs and Armenians totaling three hundred people.

On Friday, November 1, 1895, the Kurds attacked the inhabitants and started killing the males, young and old, taking the women and girls captives, and ransacking their homes. Thus, the Christians fled and took shelter inside their church and locked the door. However, the Kurds along with the Turkish soldiers made a hole in the roof top, dropped down hay and petroleum, and set them on fire. Being compelled, the beleaguered Christians opened the door to escape, but they were murdered by the Kurds who were laying in wait for them at the door front. Out of the entire inhabitants of the village, only three men were able to escape who made it to *Diyarbakir* and broke the news of this atrocious crime to us.

The Village of Qitirbal⁵⁵

Qitirbal is a Christian village. Its inhabitants are Assyrians/Syriacs and Armenians totaling approximately one thousand people. It is situated on the eastern bank of Tigris River, facing the city of *Diyarbakir*. Before attacking any Christian village, the Kurds first attacked *Qitirbal* from the dry-landside, namely the east side, and started killing and pillaging all over. The Christian inhabitants took shelter in Saint Thomas church of the Syriac Orthodox denomination, including Father *Abdil-Ahhad*, the priest who ministered both

⁵⁵ This village (*Qitirbal*) is in the author's original manuscript, yet it is missing in the published version of the manuscript. — The translator.

Karabash and Qitirbal. He began encouraging the parishioners and reciting the Living Words of our Lord Jesus. He, then, prayed for them and offered them the Communion. As soon as they were dismissed from the church service, the Kurds swooped upon them and locked the door on the ones who stayed inside the church. After that, they tore the roof open and set them on fire using straw. As for those who fled the church, they were getting shot dead by the soldiers who were aligned on the city walls. Father Abdil-Ahhad sent a young Syriac man named Shimoun (Simon) to Diyarbakir. The young man crossed the river and went and informed the Patriarch Abdil-Massih of the status quo. Without hesitation, the Patriarch appealed to the Governor and the latter dispatched armed forces along with the young man. The soldiers brought all the injured and wounded survivors, including Father Abdil-Ahhad to Diyarbakir. The Patriarch took care of them throughout the calamity, and later, he sent them back to their villages.

The Village of Karabash

Karabash is a village populated by more than one thousand people. It is located about ten Kilometers east of *Diyarbakir*. Its inhabitants are predominantly Assyrians/Syriacs except for a few Armenian households.

On Friday, November 1, 1895, the Kurds attacked them and started killing and looting for two days. Many of the inhabitants took shelter in a huge pigeon turret in the east side of the village. However, the Kurds attacked them inside the turret and killed them, then demolished the turret on top of them and were buried under its debris. Those who were able to escape from the turret were getting killed by the Kurds at

the entrance of the turret, and as a result, none of them survived.

As for the few inhabitants who fled the village, some of them made it to *Diyarbakir* and others sought refuge in the villages of their Muslim acquaintances. Father Abdil-Ahhad, the priest of *Karabash*, along with the members of his household took shelter in the village of *Qozan*, but his brother, Deacon Qawméh, was killed. The priest's daughter, Hana, who was married, was carrying her newborn son named Zachariah, and, while she was fleeing, a Kurdish man stabbed her in the back with a sword that pierced her body and went through her baby's belly as well. Thus, both of them died instantly.

The rest of the village survivors returned to *Karabash*, restored the homes that the enemy had destroyed, and lived serenely after the wave of oppression and suffering had died down.

The pigeon turret in which many inhabitants of *Karabash* were killed and buried under its debris, was later called, '*the turret of the martyrs*'. On the eve of every Sunday or holiday, the priests and deacons along with all the inhabitants would go to that site and conduct a burial service at its ruins for the souls of those innocent martyrs.

Myafarqat

Myafarqat is the town of Saint Marootha. Its inhabitants were Assyrians/Syriacs and Armenians; totaling approximately one thousand people.

On the same day, Friday, November 1, 1895, the Kurds attacked them and started killing, looting, and abducting the girls. Since they had no exit to flee through, nor a place to take refuge, they took sanctuary in their church building. However, the Kurds climbed onto the roof, made a hole in it, poured petroleum on them, and set them on fire. Of the entire *Myafarqat* inhabitants, only twelve men and three women survived.

Of their heinous atrocities was; that they entered a house and found a pretty woman. As they sought to rape her before her husband's eyes, he attacked them with a club. Nevertheless, they tied him up, amputated his hands and feet then killed him. They also amputated his wife's hands and feet, but did not kill her. The miserable woman had an infant and was unable to nurse him. A Good Samaritan found her and brought her to *Diyarbakir*. She would lift her child with her teeth and breastfeed him. However, she didn't live long, but died shortly thereafter.

The Village of Alibar

Alibar is a village located in the western part of *Diyarbakir*, a journey of half-hour on foot. Its inhabitants were Chaldeans, Orthodox Syriacs, and Armenians. They were deceived by the leaders of the Muslim inhabitants of the village as they told them, "Come with us, we will move you from here to *Diyarbakir* and save you from the (Kurdish) tribes that are alien to our locality." After gathering and taking them outside the village, they killed them all. Then, they returned to the village and plundered all their possessions and belongings.

The Village of Severik

The Christians of *Severik* were deceived by both the evil *Haj*⁵⁶ Osman Pasha and his brother who invoked and rallied the Kurds in their environs and provoked them against the Christians. They attacked the Christians using swords and bayonets for two continuous days. Only four Christian families survived. As for the killed ones, they exceeded four thousand lives. The same plight befell the entire villages in the outskirts of *Diyarbakir*, such as:

To the East: *Aynshah, Tel Khas, Ghernik, Satya, Safna, Sa'diyyéh, and Qozan.*

To the West: *Alibar, Qarta, Qarah-Klissa, and Qanqart.*

To the North: *Qadhi and Batrakiyyéh.*

To the South: *Ka'biyyéh, Garoukhiyyéh, Khan-Aqpinar, Warza-Oghli, Holan,* as well as the districts of *Bsheyriyyéh, Leegha, Gharzan, Khart-Purt (Harput), Adyaman (Hussin Mansour)* and others.

As for the city of *Mardin*, though it endured hardships, no killing was committed there. Nevertheless, a vast carnage took place in the villages of *Mardin*, such as *Al-Qisor, Bnai-Beel, Qal'itmara, Mansouriyéh,* and the rest of the villages whose inhabitants fled and took shelter in the *Saffron Monastery.*

⁵⁶ Haj or Hajji, a title given to a Muslim who makes a pilgrimage to Mecca, a mandatory religious duty for adult Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime.—The translator.

THE BEGINNING OF THE GREAT WAR 1915

World War I broke out in August of 1914 as the fumes of wrath and rage were rising from various parts of the Glob. All the great nations were roaring with threats against each other. Each nation was looking askance at the other, a squinting look of envy and hatred; seeking an opportunity to attack, conquer, subdue, and expand the boundaries of her jurisdiction over the entire world.

Thus, tons of gold were squandered for arms racing as well as the strengthening of the armed forces. They were seeking to acquire destroyers (tanks), manufacture war ships, and reinforce their battlefield mounds. They were as well arousing spite and hatred in the hearts of their peoples to resist any nation that hindered their victory and avarice.

In order to cover the big expenses required for all those war requisites, each state imposed additional taxes on everything, including crops, stock and livestock as well as a capitation tax to levy more revenue that might cover the expenses of the *war* upon which their ambition for victory and the expansion of their sphere of influence relied.

No one knows exactly what promises, pledges, challenges, or threats were tackled overtly or covertly between the kings and the heads of the states. Not to mention, the uproar and havoc that the heads of the clans were inciting and the terrifying confusion they were generating in the minds of the people, to the extent that the foundations of peace and liberty were greatly shaken in the heart of mankind.

The Turkish State did not have enough heavy combat weaponry. Therefore, the military commanders resolved the adoption of a policy of tyranny and inequity. They exhausted the peoples of the Ottoman State with exorbitant taxes; using fiendish means devised by their corrupt and stagnant minds. As a result, highway robberies and plunders increased, squatting and forcible seizure of properties and possessions prevailed. As for the poor who did not have the imposed amount of taxes, they were punished by jailing, banishing, or even killing them.

This happened because of the evil mindedness of the Turkish leaders who lacked the conscience and the moral deterrent which might have kept them in check. They didn't even have a *god* to remind them of the consequence of their tyranny.

The First Spark of World War I

The first spark that ignited the war was the assassination of Austria's heir apparent⁵⁷ and his wife. It happened that on June 27,⁵⁸ 1914, a Serbian soldier murdered them both.⁵⁹ Consequently, the fire of wrath and hatred blazed in the hearts of the Austrians who sought retaliation for the blood of their crown prince.

The Austrians were persistently looking for and enquiring about the assassin. They demanded that he be executed by

⁵⁷ Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. — The translator.

⁵⁸ June 28. —The translator.

⁵⁹ They were murdered by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo, Bosnia. —The translator.

Serbia. However, the Serbians showed no concern to this matter at all.

When Austria perceived Serbia's contemptuous negligence, on July 28, 1914, she immediately declared war on Serbia. Once hearing this, Pope Leo X⁶⁰ sent a delegation carrying a letter to the king of Austria warning him not to wage war and tarnish his old age with blood.

As soon as the word reached the Russians, they mobilized their army and sent them to the borders of Austria and Germany. Thus, Germany roared like a lion and prepared her armed forces for war since she was holding an old grudge against Russia, Great Britain, and France. In fact, the Germans were looking for such an opportunity by which they hoped to come out victoriously and expand Germany's dominance over other countries. Also, to resume the imperial territory of Alsace-Lorraine that was under the French sovereignty though its inhabitants spoke German.

As a result, on August 4, 1914, Russia and France declared war on Germany. Soon thereafter, Great Britain followed and instigated Japan. Later, Serbia and Montenegro followed. Thus, their forces poured forth like torrential streams in the battlefields.

Austria, Turkey, And Bulgaria fought on the side of Germany. Italy, on the other hand, went neutral for a short period of time, but later was struck by indolence and defeat.

The war broke out and both sides started exchanging fire. The field guns rumbled, the sharpened swords flashed, and the

⁶⁰ The bishop of Rome at that time was Pius X, not Leo X who was the pope in early 16th century. — The translator.

death delivering bullets resounded about. Soldiers were falling dead like tree leaves. The fields became stained with blood, and painful moaning echoed everywhere. The wounded were being taken to the field clinics and hospitals in countless numbers. Confusing clamor overwhelmed the entire world and big cities became desolate and empty. *Had it not been for God's mercy, which protected the remnant and delivered them from eminent death, many cities would have ended up like Sodom and Gomorrah.*

Turkey and the Great War

It is well known that Turkey was prone to Germany's side and inclined to her persuasion. That was because Germany's Kaiser, Wilhelm II, on several occasions, openly declared and stated: "*Let the three hundred million Muslims all over the world be assured that the German Kaiser is their lifetime sincere friend*". By making that statement, he intended to arouse wrath and hatred in the hearts of the Muslims who were subdued by Britain. The Kaiser wanted the Muslims to rise up against the British and stir up tumult, quarrels, and systematic riots, that they may stand by Wilhelm II (Germany) and rid themselves from Britain's yoke.

In response, Turkey took the side of Germany with which was already in alliance. She began mobilizing her army and preparing her weapons as well as all the necessary logistics to support Germany and hinder the enemy forces from entering her territories. Therefore, Germany strengthened Turkey and supplied her with numerous weapons as well as funded Turkey's treasury with huge amounts of cash. She also sent many of her military commanders to lead the Turkish army and drill them on war tactics. She, as well, commissioned a

marine force to navigate Turkey's war ships, and lent Turkey thirty million *dinars* in gold. In order to assert her amity, Kaiser Wilhelm II erected a grand mosque for the Muslims in Berlin, with a beautiful twenty three meter high minaret. Surprisingly, Kaiser Wilhelm II himself placed the corner stone for this mosque!

Not even one month had passed since the beginning of the War, both Germany and Austria openly declared their sincere amity to Turkey. Besides Turkey's absolute sovereignty, they promised her prosperity in every field, such as education, vocational skills, commerce and trade. The Turks were lured by both Germany and Austria's promises. Therefore, they canceled all the capitulations pertaining to the British and French subjects in Turkey, and openly manifested their hatred towards them. That was in compliance with both Germany and Austria's foolish persuasion.

Hence, the war drums were beaten and the horns blown. The Turkish leaders stood in the mosques and government courtyards preaching and asserting the urgency of the war. Orders were issued, the levied forces were rallied, and on the other hand, the properties and riches of the people were plundered. Turkey joyfully entered the war alongside Austria and Germany hoping that in one or two days they would attack Great Britain, France and their allies, emerge victoriously, then the fury of their hearts would subside.

The Turkish leaders did not reckon with the consequences. That is to say, they did not hold as true that their losses may not be only the killing of their young men, the country's garland, but the loss of many parts of their territories as well. That was their utmost stupidity.

Enver Pasha, the Cause of Turkey's Defeat



Ismail Enver Pasha

It's obvious that all Turkey's losses occurred since the entire country had become a puppet in the hands of Enver Pasha, the Sultan's brother-in-law and the executor of Germany's will. On the other hand, Enver was a puppet in the hands of the German ambassador⁶¹ who treated him like a child. The fall of Turkey did not happen without a price. In fact, Enver Pasha had borrowed huge amounts of money from Germany and had helped himself

from Turkey's treasury causing its demise. In 1916, his share of cash alone reached forty million *dinars* in gold. Enver Pasha enjoyed the prestige of promoting or demoting anyone whom he opted. Yet, at the end, he fled to the countries that he liked. That was because, he was well aware of Turkey's weakness whether her army that lacked training on the arts of war, her wealth that was merely loans borrowed from Germany, or her obsolete and deficient weapons compared to those of the allies. Facing those realities, it was inevitable that

⁶¹ General Otto Victor Karl Liman von Sanders (1855 – 1929), head of the German military mission to Constantinople. — The translator.

Turkey would be soon weakened and brought under the yoke of the victors.

Kaiser Wilhelm II had proclaimed himself the protector of the Muslims wherever they existed. His proclamation came after lending Turkey so much money. Based upon that, the Muslims of India, Persia, Turkey and elsewhere considered him the defender of their faith in the entire world. Being misled by his statement, the Muslims overlooked the fact that the aforementioned message was sheer propaganda, and nothing else.



Otto Viktor Karl Liman von Sanders.

Nevertheless, one may wonder, how could the Austrian nation which is entirely Christian allow the killing of the Christians of Turkey for no fault on their part! By the same token, how could Germany which is also a Christian nation turn a blind eye and did nothing to prevent the genocide of the Christians! On the contrary, she incited the Turks and encouraged them to shed the innocent blood of the followers of her very faith,

Christianity!

We may also wonder how did Sanders, the German ambassador to Constantinople, soothe his soul by issuing an edict for the persecution of the Christians and order that they mercilessly be inflicted with severe torture, cruelty, slaughter,

and plunder?! It is an established fact that Turkey would have not caused any harm to the Christians, no matter how minor, without orders from the Germans. Alas, how could she commit such ugly crimes!?! Truthfully, it is both Germany and Austria that should be held liable for the blood of the innocent Christians which was unjustly spilled throughout the Turkish state.

The Vindictive Conduct of the Turks

On (August 22, 1864) a convention was held in *Geneva, Switzerland*, which resulted in some established rules for the humanitarian treatment of war. Supposedly, no nation was to violate them; otherwise it would be tried according to International Law. Of these laws, that define war, there is an article that limits war to the forces of the nations at war, and prohibits any threat to the life and freedom of the elders, women and children.

In 1899 a conference was held in *Hague, the Netherland*, to promote peace. Twenty two countries were represented in that conference, including Turkey.⁶² An article of the Geneva Convention of 1864 that limits war to the forces of the nations at war was amended to read, “*No harm or damage shall befall the rest of the inhabitants, nor their freedom infringed, even if their cities are occupied.*”

However, during WWI (1914-1918) the Turks’ vindictive conduct endangered protected persons and objects. Their war crimes involved death, injury, destruction, unlawful

⁶² Twenty-six countries were represented in this conference, including the United States. It was called by the minister of foreign affairs of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia. –The translator.

seizure of property, and the subsequent *genocide* of the Assyrians/Syriacs and Armenian.

On July 13, 1915, the day in which the Christians of the Ottoman State were being marched to their slaughter, the Germans were celebrating the anniversary of the luxurious Mosque that they had built for the Muslims in *Berlin*. Mukhtar Pasha, the Turkish ambassador to Germany, was present in that celebration and many speakers praised Germany wishing her victory and long life. During the celebration, a German notable stated, “*We shall reign over Belgium to serve as a hammer by which we shall crush Britain’s skull.*” Another said, “*We should not spare our enemies, but their eyes to cry.*” A third one added, “*Small nations don’t deserve to live, but by their own power!*”

Woe unto humanity if Germany ended up victorious, she would wipe out all mankind! One of Germany’s evil tricks to establish a pretext for the genocide was that she sent four German spies to the Armenians in the region of *Dortyol* pretending to be British. Those spies held a secret meeting with the Armenian leaders and deceived them. Therefore, the Armenians wrote and handed them letters complaining about the agonies that Turkey was inflicting upon them. They blamed Turkey for their hardships and begged the British for help. They wanted the British to expedite their arrival to deliver them from the brutal atrocities of the Turks. The spies took those letters, and in January of 1915, they delivered them to Constantinople and incited the Turks to persecute the Christians, namely the Armenians. As a result, the calamities and torments began befalling all the Christians unceasingly; branding them *traitors*.

When the Germans came to Mesopotamia following the genocide of the Christians, the Turks facilitated lodgings for them using the houses of the slaughtered Christians. Most

likely, those Germans noticed Crosses or saints' icons on the walls of some of those houses which signified the Christian faith of their owners. Yet, they didn't bother to ask who owned those houses, nor did they ask about the fate of their owners. Many of those Germans witnessed the ill-treatment and torments that the Turks inflicted upon the Christian elders and the lascivious behavior of the heathen Muslims towards the Christian young women and housewives. All the same, they didn't even question who those oppressed people were, or why those young women were so abhorrently snubbed.

Therefore, the Germans have no excuse to exonerate themselves from being accomplices in the decimation of the Christians (in Turkey). Had they sought to protect those miserable people, a hint to their Turkish allies would have been sufficient to cease the awful brutality of those barbarians. The German's utmost ambition was to achieve victory, and to allow all the Christians to be eradicated and vanish from sight.

Consequently, The Christians cannot be blamed if they shout loudly and say, "*O' Lord, crush the power of vice and exalt the horn of virtue.*" *For God, whose authorities cannot be perceived, shall assert the truth and make it triumphant. He shall humble the tyrants' might and make them a laughingstock for the world and an object trodden by the nations.*

Turkey did not start the persecution without pretexts, given that she is just and justice is the foundation of the government! Their foremost allegation was that the Christians possess firearms by which they would rise up against the government in support of its enemies, Britain, France, and their allies. Accordingly, the Turkish government dispatched announcers to the marketplaces announcing, "Any Christian

who possesses any type of weaponry must relinquish it to the authorities without delay. Anyone who fails to hand it over will be put to death should a weapon be found in his possession afterwards.” Acting as if they were searching for weapons, those announcers began storming the houses; stealing and plundering everything they came across. Woe unto the miserable one if a small knife were to be found in his possession!⁶³

On one hand, they would round up the men, ages twenty to forty five, and send them to the battlefields on foot and without provisions. On the other, they would take the elders and confine them to a prison. Nevertheless, they would spare the lives of the pretty women and young girls to take them in as wives. The women, who refused to go with them, constituting the majority, were killed without mercy, following a savage torture that even the beasts of prey would abhor its bitterness.

Status of the Turkish Cities at the Beginning of the War

Once the Turkish Governors received the order to conscript troops for the war, they became very excited and started the compulsory recruitment randomly; disregarding age or physical and mental fitness. You could see the people frightened and dismayed. They did not know where to flee

⁶³ The Turks had accused the Armenians of possessing arms and preparing for an uprising against the government. Although their allegation was a sheer lie, let's assume that that was their real concern! Then on what grounds the Assyrians/Syriacs of Turkey and the Iranian Azerbaijan were simultaneously and so barbarously decimated by the same Turks and their accomplices?! – The translator.

from the cruelty of the military commanders who stormed their homes and churches looking for men to be driven for compulsory service. They would conscript the men and send them to *Diyarbakir*, *Bitlis*, *Van*, *Harput*, and *Erzurum* on foot and without provisions. Many of them would die on the road due to hardships, exhaustion, starvation, and dehydration. There were many others who took the risk of desertion and scattered in the mountains and forests. The few deserters who made it to their homes would remain in hiding for several months lest they were apprehended and sent back to suffer the agony of imminent death. They would be waiting for relief. But alas, where would it come from?!

As a result, fear grew frequently and sadness overwhelmed the hearts. Many inhabitants fled their populated districts to the open countryside. However, others took shelter in *Mount Sinjar (Shingar)* to escape death from starvation and hardship as well as persecution by the cruel Governors and military commanders. Woe unto the unfortunate one who attempted to desert from service and was caught! His family and he would be wiped out and his home plundered then destroyed.

When the Turkish government realized its profound need for money, it was never meant for the improvement of the soldiers' living conditions as they declared, but to fill the pockets of the ones who held the helm of the government. The authorities, then, began demanding financial aid from the followers of every denomination, particularly the Christians. The demanded amount of money from every household was beyond their financial capacity. Anyone who was unable to pay would either sell his possessions or be thrown in prison until he met the payment. Hence, they began storming churches and monasteries, seizing their victuals. Then, they

went stealing dishes, cups, crosses, gold and silver chattels, and delicate utensils on the pretext of the army's need for weapons and provisions. However, no one knows where all those materials ended up and how they were used. On the one hand, the soldiers in the battlefield were either dying from starvation or surrendering to the enemy.



A caravan of Assyrian refugees arriving at Mount Sinjar

Also, because the food that went to the army was loaded onto the backs of donkeys and mules, it got spoiled due to rain and bad weather. Death swept throughout the army units because of famine, germs, and spoiled food. As a Turkish military physician summed it up, more than six thousand soldiers died every day.

THE AUTHOR'S DIARY

The Saffron Monastery – Mardin

From the moment that the war began, I also began, to the best of my ability, to record some of the important events that I would eyewitness or hear from trustworthy people. Nevertheless, like all the others, I assumed that the war would last a few months only, but our hope was shattered, it lasted four years. Although it lasted only four years, the horror and brutality of the carnage, in conjunction with the oppression, plunder, famine, pandemics, and other sorts of destruction committed during the war, could not have been brought about in a whole century of wickedness.

On Monday evening, August 3, 1914, it was announced that Austria and Germany had declared war on Russia, Britain, and France. That very day, a drastic order was issued for conscription. The sound of the weeping and mourning mothers and sisters could be heard in the streets and at homes.

On Thursday, August 6, 1914, one hundred fifty men were drafted. This group is the fifth roundup since the third of August. All those troops were sent to *Diyarbakir* without provisions, and most of them walked bare-footed in that burning hot weather.

On Saturday, August 8, 1914, a rumor spread around that the warring nations had reconciled and made peace. People were overwhelmed with great joy and started firing their guns. As the Governor of *Mardin* heard the uproar of the crowds and the booming of the gunshots, he presumed that the Muslims have attacked the Christians. He assumed so, because he had heard that the Muslims were secretly meeting

every night to plot for the slaughter of the Christians now that the government has disarmed them by all means. The Governor then dispatched announcers informing that the rumors of the truce between the warring nations were not true and that the war was still going on and never ceased. The one hour of their joy turned into dismay and anxiety. Meanwhile, in that very night, two hundred men were drafted from *Mardin* and sent to *Diyarbakir*.

On Sunday, August 9, 1914, a group of men from the township of *Sur* (Syriac: *Shoura/shouro*) came to *Mardin* to pay gold in exchange for their exemption from military service. The Governor advised the public that the exemption order is limited to the Christians. The government collected the sum of fifty *dinars* in gold in exchange for one year exemption from military service. However, in the end, the authorities accepted the exemption fee from the Muslims as well.

From that day on, the representatives and elite of the Christians: Syriac Orthodox and Catholics, Armenian Orthodox and Catholics, Chaldeans and Protestants began writing down the names of their male parishioners, ages twenty to forty five, and collecting the fifty *dinars* in gold. Many Christians paid the exemption fee and stayed home. Nevertheless, they were unable to escape from taxes and tributes as well as the extortions that they frequently met, whether willingly or forcibly.

On Wednesday, August 12, 1914, since *Diyarbakir* had no more room to accommodate the troops, an order was issued for the troops to be sent to *Baghdad*. The Governor also ordered to send a great deal of weapons with them. Since the government had no donkeys or mules to load the weapons

onto, a second order was issued and all the donkeys and mules found in the marketplaces of the city were forcibly taken away. The Governor also sent his deputies to the surrounding villages to round up all the horses, mules and donkeys they could find. They loaded the weapons onto their backs and sent them to *Baghdad*. The government officials promised their owners to have their animals back in ten days. In fact, no one knows when those animals would be returned to their owners.

On this very day, the Ezidis, inhabitants of the village of *Bajannah*⁶⁴ declared rebellion and refused to send their young men to join the (Turkish) military. Therefore, the Governor dispatched a garrison of soldiers to subdue the village, but they did not succeed and returned defeated.

On Thursday, August 13, 1914, it was reported that Germany defeated France. On that day, the Assyrian/Syriac inhabitants of *Tur-Abdeen* wrote to the Governor of *Mardin* declaring their readiness to serve in the military provided that the government would equip them with guns and ammunition. The inhabitants, on the other hand, would provide clothing and provisions for their soldiers.

Also on this day, the military officers went out patrolling the marketplaces of *Mardin* carrying swords at their sides. They were taking inventory of all the shops and claiming, "We are going to take only twenty percent of your inventory and the rest is yours."

On Friday, August 14, 1914, the military officers continued patrolling the marketplaces, looting the stores and taking anything they liked. Meanwhile, today, the news broke out

⁶⁴ Syriac 'Beth-Gannéh', meaning *the gardens*. —The translator.

that the war had spread worldwide and Turkey declared war on Russia.

Early morning of Saturday, August 15, 1914, which coincides with the Feast of the Assumption of Virgin Mary, the government announcers proclaimed in the marketplaces that any young man who is ill, married to an orphan girl, or taking care of his old father is exempt from military service. That announcement prompted reassurance and tranquility in the hearts of some people.

Today, the Turkish newspapers published that Britain and France defeated both Germany and Austria in air and on sea, while Russia defeated Germany on land.

On Sunday, August 16, 1914, the Turkish government dispatched soldiers and commanders to besiege the marketplaces and confiscate everything they could find such as fabrics, clothing, ghee, wheat, sheep and goats and bring them to the government warehouses to meet the needs of the army. On that day, many Muslims were reviling those commanders. Thus, fear befell the inhabitants of the city and the surrounding villages.

Today, Bishop Iwannis Elias Hallouli left Saffron Monastery to the Patriarchate Headquarters in *Mardin* in order to assume the responsibilities of Bishop Kyrillos Gewargis, the assistant to the Patriarch, who had grown old and was very ill.

In the evening of this day, the military announcer asserted an edict (*'ferman'* in Turkish). The edict was posted on the doors of the churches mandating that: "All men, ages thirty to forty five, ought to register their names so they are enlisted in

the army. Furthermore, anyone who wishes to pay the legal exemption fee, which is fifty *dinars* in gold, can do so within eight days.” In that very evening, many men went to the Governorate headquarters to pay the fee, but the Governor postponed the payment until the following morning. In the morning, when they went to register their names, they realized that all of them were merely being registered just as ‘*Christian*’ without mention of their church denomination, whether Syriac Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, or Catholic. The Turks used that treacherous designation to wipe out the Christians collectively.

On Friday, August 21, 1914, we heard that the fire had broken out in the marketplaces of *Diyarbakir* and consumed one thousand five hundred and seventy eight stores and shops. All those shops were owned by Christians. The arson was perpetrated in the evening of the 19th of August by a vicious decision from the Governor of *Diyarbakir* himself. The raging fires continued for three days and nights and most of the merchandise was plundered and stolen by Muslims. As a result, the Christians sustained great losses. They filed a complaint with regard to their losses, but they came back condemned and rebuked.

In the afternoon of Saturday, August 19, 1914⁶⁵, the sun eclipsed and pitch darkness beset the entire landscape to such a degree that the stars were visible in the sky dome. The darkness lasted one hour and ten minutes then gradually diminished and the light filled the land again.

⁶⁵ It should be August 22.



The Saffron Monastery



City of Mardin in the turn of 1900s.

On Monday, August 24, 1914, Turkish soldiers stormed the stores and shops of the city of *Mardin* again, plundered

merchandise, such as cotton textiles, wool yarns, socks, clothes, and shoes to *outfit* the army. The following day, they loaded one hundred camels with that merchandise and sent them to *Diyarbakir*. At the sunset of that day, three hundred fifty well-armed fighting men marched their way to the city of *Mosul*. It was said that those soldiers were on their way to *Tur-Abdeen* to capture a notorious Kurdish leader named Ali Buttéh⁶⁶ who had rebelled against the government along with his followers that exceeded one thousand men.

On (Monday), September 14, 1914, which coincided with the Feast of The Cross, the soldiers stormed the churches, rounded up all the clergymen and male parishioners and took them to the Governorate's headquarters. No one was able to escape, but those who secretly bribed their way out. This activity was repeated every Sunday, and because of their extreme fear, many Christian men stopped attending church services.

On Saturday, September 19, 1914, woe unto this day! Some two hundred Christian young men were drafted and taken to *Diyarbakir* carrying small bags containing little provisions. They were escorted by their families outside the city to a water spring called *Ayn-Sikhneh*. The women were crying and as the little children watched their mothers howling, they also started crying.

Likewise, on Sunday, September 20, 1914, the army drafted another group of about three hundred Christian young men.

On Monday, September 21, 1914, another company of more than two hundred fifty Christian young men was taken

⁶⁶ Better known as Alikéh Buttéh. - The translator.

away. As a result, sorrow overwhelmed the people of *Mardin* for three days. I could see the streets and marketplaces empty of young men and hear the wailing in every household.

On Tuesday, September 22, 1914, four hundred forty men came from the Christian villages of *Qusour*, *Tel Mawzalt* (*Wayran-Shahr*), and *Qal'itmara* to enlist in the military. They were accompanied by their elders as well as their wives and children to bid them farewell as if they knew that their men were marching to their annihilation.



Assyrians from Mardin before the Genocide

Seizing Wheat, Sheep, and other Items for the Army

On Tuesday, October 6, 1914, the government officials coerced the Christian community leaders to gather wheat from their people and boil it to feed the army. The Christians complied with full obedience. Half of the boiled wheat was sent to *Diyarbakir*, and the other half, I have no idea, to which of those tyrants' home was it delivered.

On Thursday, October 8, 1914, the Governor of *Mardin* dispatched troops to the countryside and gathered three hundred thousand heads of sheep from the Arab tribes. They sent some of them to *Diyarbakir* and the rest were slaughtered, cooked, placed in containers and packed to be sent to the army. All the cooked meat became spoiled and was disposed of. A portion of the remaining sheep herd went to the military commanders and the rest to the chieftains with whom they shared everything they seized.

On Monday, October 12, 1914, the soldiers stormed all the houses and seized all the ghee (clarified butter) that they found. The following day, the government demanded the citizens to provide sacks, baldrics, and baskets which they filled with the commodities and sent them to the army.

On Wednesday, October 14, 1914, the government officials loaded one hundred camels with wheat and sent them to *Diyarbaker*.

On Thursday, November 12, 1914, a declaration was posted on the walls of the public buildings which stated, "Orders have been issued by the government declaring, "It deems necessary to regard the war against France, Britain, and

Russia a “*holy war*”, because the king of England is threatening the Muslims and seeking their complete annihilation, for he stated, ‘*There shall be no peace on earth nor the world shall be at ease unless the Qur’an is obliterated from the existence.*’” This bluff was fabricated by the Germans to scare the Muslims and provoke them to fight, as well as to generate hatred in their hearts against the Christian natives of Turkey.

On Thursday, November 19, 1914, the Muslims congregated in the Mosques. The Mullahs started urging the Muslims and provoking them to fight against the enemies saying, “*The Balkan states waged war against Turkey, the British occupied the southern Iraqi district of Basra, south of Baghdad, and the Russians are frequently bombarding the city of Tarabzoun. Therefore, every Muslim man, young or old, ought to join the holy war against the enemies, slaughter them and wipe them out completely so that the nation of Muhammad is free of the haters of her faith.*”

On Sunday, December 27, 1914, the Turkish forces in the territory of *Sarikamish* occupied four Russian cities, but after three nights, the Russians launched a counterattack and recaptured them; taking ninety thousand Turkish soldiers as war prisoners. No one survived except the wounded, the incapacitated, and the porters of the provisions. As for Enver Pasha and the German commander⁶⁷ who were present there, both fled secretly and walked in the pitch darkness of the night all the way to the city of *Erzurum*.

⁶⁷ He was Lieutenant Colonel Stange who was a Prussian artillery specialist. — The translator.

The Onset of the Christian Genocide

On Thursday, February 18, (1915), a verdict was announced for the execution of twelve Christian young men from the village of *Qarahash* accused of desertion as alleged by the Turkish authorities. Nevertheless, the true story is as follows:

When those young men were drafted, and before being deployed to the battlefield, they deserted while they were still in *Diyarbakir* in a place called *Takhte-Qal'a*. When they were interrogated by the tribunal and asked in what location they were when they deserted, they answered, in "*Takhte-Qal'a*". However, the wicked interrogators deliberately wrote, they deserted while they were in *Chanaq-Qal'a* which is a battlefield. As a result, they were sentenced to death and executed: two of them, in *Mardin*; two, in *Al-Madinah*; two, in *Khartpart*; two, in *Urfa*; and four, in *Diyarbakir*, to terrorize the Christian population of those cities.

The two young men who were executed in the south side of *Mardin* were identified as Na'man Abdil-ahad and Abdinnoor Issa. Their funeral service was conducted by Fr. Daoud Antoun and they were buried in St. Michael's church in the *Al-Madbagha* quarter located in the south side of *Mardin*. The twelve innocent young men were executed on false premises in order to open the door for the decimation of the Christians.

The Armenian archbishop of *Diyarbakir* had defended the twelve young men and promised to pay fifty thousand *Dinars* in gold in exchange for their release, but did not succeed. The

archbishop made a mass lamentation for them at his church and assigned a memorial day for those martyrs to be observed annually by the Armenian parishioners.

Those young men were members of the Syriac Orthodox Church. Yet, the Syriac Orthodox Church disowned them, whereas the Armenian Church honored them. Following are their names: Saliba Jeremiah, Khidhir-Shah Garbo, Abdinnoor Issa, Asia Bar-Saidéh, Khidhir-Shah Yaqeen, Petors Hannoosh, Hanna Shaghouléh, Kareem Hanna, Na'man Abdil-ahad, Garabet Ya'qoub, Hannoosh 'Agheer, and Paulos Hanna.

The Resumption of the Genocide

Following the execution of the twelve young men of *Karabash* and the failed efforts of the Armenian archbishop to spare their lives, whether in his capacity as a brilliant advocate or by his generous bribes, the Christians became convinced that evil was determined against them. They became more convinced as they witnessed the kind of severe torture the German and Austrian commanders were inflicting upon their Christian “brethren”! The German and Austrian commanders not only turned a blind eye to the oppression, but also scoffed at the Christians and incited the Muslims against them. They acted more so as they saw their forces defeated in every battle and many Turkish territories falling under the British and French control. They assumed that the native Christians were the reason for their defeat, and wreaked their utmost wrath upon those miserable and helpless people.

Witnessing the German and Austrian attitude towards the native Christians, the Turks were encouraged and colluded with the Kurds to annihilate them. First, they began targeting the notables; eliminating them on false accusations. Second, they falsely accused the Christians of treason and spying against the Turkish State. They issued orders for the deportation of the Christians from one place to another as a cover up for their extermination. Subsequently, wickedness prevailed, the sword ruled, brutality raged, blood was shed, properties and chattels were plundered, churches and monasteries destroyed, and townships and cities ruined.

For that reason, I quit writing about the war, troops, weapons, victories or defeats. In other words, I limited my diary to recording the peculiar experiences rather than the general events. I devoted my diary, as much as I could, to demonstrate the torments, sufferings, and massacres that our people are sustaining on a daily basis. However, I am conscious of having limited knowledge as to relating the events in their entirety, and yet, I am revealing glimpses of them. Nevertheless, I am convinced that in the far future when the children and grandchildren of the survivors of this pernicious persecution read them, they may accuse me of exaggeration and ridicule my diary; disbelieving even these glimpses which are but a drop in the ocean. Yes, they may not believe that such malevolent atrocities could have been committed in the twentieth century, the era of civility, enlightenment and liberty. Atrocities that even the wild beasts would have shunned from!

Eyewitness Confirmation of What Happened to the Christians

Ever since the Ottoman resolution of March 1, 1915 was issued,⁶⁸ all the Christians serving in the military in the Governorate of *Diyarbakir*, were disarmed. Some of them were assigned to work on road construction, others as porters which marked the beginning of their torment and calamity. The task of the laborers was road pavement, including breaking rocks, moving soil, digging or filling up potholes. As for the porters, each of them was to carry forty Kilograms (approx. 88 lb.) of provisions or weapons beside his personal equipment, which weighed no less than fifteen Kilograms (approx. 33 lb.), bringing his load to a total of fifty five Kilograms (121 lb.). In spite of that, they were constrained not to fall behind in their journey regardless of the weather conditions, whether cold, hot, raining or snowing. Each group was guarded by twenty to thirty soldiers to lead them down and make them finish their journey in the set time. In order not to fall behind in their journey, the soldiers would beat them; forcing them to walk faster.

The desperate porters marched on a trail of terror and fear. Woe unto the one who fainted or fell behind; the soldiers would beat him with iron rods or with the bottoms of their rifles. Due to that, those helpless porters lent a hand to each other, fearing that if one of them died or were killed, his load would be divided unto them. Hence, whenever a hundred porters would leave, only thirty or less of them would make it back, because the cold weather, starvation, and fatigue also took their toll on those wretched men.

⁶⁸ The resolution stipulated the confiscation of any piece of weapon possessed by the Christians of the Ottoman state. —The translator.

The Carnage

On Friday, April 9, (1915), the Governor⁶⁹ of *Diyarbakir* ordered his henchman, named *Shakir Beg*⁷⁰ the Circassian, along with the cohort of the chief officers and guards to detain all the Christian leaders and notables. Within three days, they rounded up about twelve hundred (1200) men and confined them to a place called *Mosafir-Khanéh*.⁷¹ Later, he ordered that sever torments be inflicted upon them. They were scorching some of them with fiery skewers, amputating the fingers of others, plucking the fingernails of some with pincers, and yet cutting the ears of the rest. Thus, by using these methods of torture, they gathered all the weapons they had in their possession; disabling them from defending themselves.

On (Sunday) April 25, 1915, *Shakir Beg* and his gang tied up those miserable men with ropes and took them out of *Diyarbakir* through the Mardin Gate. After walking for a period of half an hour and reaching the Tigris River, they found fifteen rafts made ready to send them as *exiles* to the district of *Mosul*. They were surrounded by five hundred soldiers to escort them (to *Mosul*). However, that was not the intended destination, for the Governor of *Diyarbakir* had already sent a message to a (Kurdish) despot, named *Omarkéh*, asking him to rendezvous with the Turkish soldiers and help them in the extermination of the captives. So,

⁶⁹ Mehmed Rashid, Governor of *Diyarbakir* from 1915-1918. – The translator.

⁷⁰ *Beg* is a Turkish title meaning “lord” or “chief” – The translator.

⁷¹ Turko-Persian name for: the traveler’s doss-house. – The translator.

Omarkéh went to meet them accompanied by one hundred villains and bandits. The soldiers along with Omarkéh's mob, each from his side of the river, formed a circle around the captives. After two days rafting on the river, they arrived at Omarkéh's village named *Shekafta* (i.e. *the cave* in Syriac) on the bank of Tigris River. Then, the captives were ordered to get off the rafts on the river bank. After stripping them of everything they had on them, including their clothes, they led them down to a deep gorge and shot them dead (then set their corpses on fire). For almost three days, the smoke kept rising from that place.



A caravan of Armenian refugees

A Turkish soldier who was assigned to the Directorate of *Brava* informed us of a man who had come three days after the carnage and said, “Among the dead, there is a priest and three men who did not perish. We saw those men carrying lit candles and walking amidst the corpses. When the soldiers went to verify the site, they could not find anything. *Then, perhaps they were angels!*”

As soon as the soldiers returned to *Diyarbakir*, the Governor ordered for the detention of all the remaining Christian men. Henceforth, once they rounded up five hundred men or so, they would take them away to a place not very far from the city and murdered them there. As a result, the valleys, the deep pools, the gullies, and the pits in that area got overfilled with corpses. The air was polluted by the bad odors of the decaying corpses.

Testimony of a Forced Laborer

A forced laborer named Abdil-Massih related the following:

“On the fifth day of March, (1915), I was enlisted in the forced labor group and sent to Aleppo road to pulverize rocks for the pavement of the main highway. At that time, we were about three hundred laborers working in the village of *Gozli*, about three-hour walking distance from *Diyarbakir*. When I first arrived at that site, the officer in-charge assigned me as a foreman for the stone blocks group. As for the laborers, they would increase by about thirty new laborers every day until they totaled one thousand one hundred laborers. Meanwhile, fatigue and suffering would also intensify every day. There were many military guards selected by the Turkish authorities to watch the laborers. Those guards carried thick wood clubs by which they hit the laborers on their heads all day long. Being stonyhearted, each guard would break two or three clubs every day (beating the laborers). They wanted the laborers to finish a task of three days in a single day. If a laborer failed to finish his assigned task, the soldiers would report him to their commander in the evening. The Commander then would order them to lie him down on the ground. One soldier would hold down his head and another

would sit on his shanks while two others would subject him to nearly two hundred lashes until his clothes were drenched with his own blood. Only then, would they let go of him.

Abdil-Maseeh continued,

“One day, the captain ordered me and said, ‘take fifty laborers with you and go bring big rocks from the other side of the bridge of *Gozli* which was forty-five minute walking distance from our location. While we were engaged in that harsh labor; moving rocks, around five o’clock in the evening, unexpectedly, two chariots arrived from *Diyarbakir* at our location. We were told that the Governor had come to inspect the laborers. As he approached, he looked at the laborers attentively then called me not knowing that I was a Christian. He asked me, ‘What is your position here?’ I responded, ‘Your highness, I am your servant, I am the foreman of this group.’ He replied, ‘Well, why are you making them carry small rocks? Have you come here to play? All of you, you’d better open your eyes and listen, these broken rocks ought to be wetted with blood.’ Then, he went to the officer-in-charge and ordered him to execute his dictate.”

“Henceforth, the wickedness of those oppressors against us intensified, and we were deprived of mercy. Pooh, what a miserable life we had!

“For this reason, any Muslim who held a grudge against a Christian, or owed him some money, in order to get rid of him, he would go to the latter’s home or workplace, and would force him out. Then, he would take him somewhere and kill him. Yet, his crime would go unchecked.

Abdil-massih added,

“One day at noon, as we were eating bread (for lunch), a soldier from the Fiftieth Regiment named Hassan Sa’do, followed by two others, came to the commander and told him, ‘Over here, there is a man from the village of *Ka’biyyéh* named Manok, he is wanted by the authorities.’ The commander, therefore, handed him over to them. They tied him around his arms with a rope, pretending they were taking him to the city. But in fact, after walking for thirty minutes, they killed him on a hill named *Tal’a-Tapah*. Had it been at some other time, thirty of them or their ilk could not have been able to confront Manok.

“*O’ wicked time, how bitter you are! For you are rather moving backward,*” uttered Abdil-Massih then added:

“Four days later, Hassan Sa’do came back accompanied by Mohammad Ja’far and two other soldiers and picked up Beeshar and Neeshan, two distinguished Armenian men. They took them to the ramp which is in the southern part of the village of *Sirma* and murdered them there. In the morning of the following day, Hassan Sa’do, Ibrahim Al-Taweel, and five soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment came and picked up another five distinguished brave (Armenian) men: Khorain, Haj, Hagop, Mato, and Khouro. They tied them up with ropes and slaughtered them at the ramp of the village of *Almah’s* valley.

“As the wickedness reached this level, all the desperate laborers did not cease praying; asking God to hasten their death and deliver them from misery. They were convinced that as long as they remain alive, they would endure suffering and in the end they would be slaughtered. Thus, they

described the ones who had died or were slain as ‘the blessed ones’, because they had given in to despair on those long and hot days of June. They used to start working from nine o’clock in the morning till early evening except for a half hour break to eat. They were off from work only on Fridays, and even worked on Sundays. Alas, how could those wretched men wash their garments?! Their garments had turned black from dirt and their sigh and moans were reaching heaven.

Abdil-Massih Relates another Experience Torment of the Forced Laborers

“One night, while I was distributing food to the laborers’ groups in the village of *Sirma*, alas! What food was that?! It was merely a loaf of bread that looked like charcoal; perhaps, even the foxes would not have eaten it. At midnight, the first, the second, and the third group of laborers arrived, but the fourth group, which totaled one hundred sixty laborers, did not show up. When I asked the guard about them, he told me that the commander had ordered them to work all night long because they fell behind during the day and did not finish the task that was required of them. It was already two o’clock in the morning and they were still working. As I was overwhelmed by distress and couldn’t endure this any longer, I went to the commander; kissing his hands and feet saying, ‘I beg your highness, have mercy on those poor men,’ and because he somehow respected me, he allowed them to return. A deputy guard, named Maqdisi Youhanna, and I went to get them lest they be delayed if someone else were to go and tell them. We were running so fast as if our heads were racing against our feet, and as we ran a short distance from the village, we could hear their cries and moans, which prompted us to run even faster, ignoring the stumbles and slips that we

encountered. As we arrived at their location, we informed their guards of the commander's order and they released them from work. I realized that the clubs that the guards carried had already been broken against the poor laborers, because they were using stones to push them to work. On our way back to the village, the guards, being sound and strong, walked ahead of us in haste, while the wretched laborers could hardly walk, so we lagged behind them. We then noticed that some laborers had two or three cuts on their heads. Others, while working in the dark, crushed their fingers by missing blows from the breaking tools, yet, the bodies of some others were bruised due to excessive beating. I have no words to describe their agony at that time. Their whining and groaning sounded like the buzzing of a wasp swarm. Finally, they made it to the village; enervated and utterly falling apart. Many of them did not get near the food due to their severe distress and aches. That night, they slept on empty stomachs and in the morning they were awakened and taken to work again. As a result, within a mere five days, they paved the road as far as the village of *Habashee*.

“On top of all the aforementioned torment and pain, their portion of food was cut down and they did not have enough water to quench their thirst. For every one hundred laborers, a worker was assigned to supply them with supposedly enough water, but in reality, it would hardly be enough for twenty of them. Taking advantage of their situation, a profiteer, named Nado from the village of *Habashee*, used to bring bread from the town and would sell it to them. A loaf which was only worth ten small copper coins, he would sell for five or six silver coins. Nonetheless, they were required to work while hungry and thirsty. Being so thirsty, their lips would become dry and their tongues would stick to the roof of their palates making them unable to speak, so they would break into tears.

Alas, to the cruel bitterness, for the pen is incapable of describing and demonstrating the acrimony of their lives as it should.

“The laborers were moved from the village of *Habashee* to *Sarsang* and later to *Shaytan-Dara* (i.e. the valley of Satan). From that point on, there were no villages on the road to shelter them, so they slept in open areas without covers. That area is adjacent to the ranges of *Mount Masis*⁷² that are covered with snow all year long. The cold was harsh and the rain would pour down until the morning, while all the laborers barefoot, without covers or cloaks, and wet to the skin would go to work every morning. Owing to those conditions, more than twenty percent of them became very ill, yet were not allowed time-off from work. In the morning, as I accompanied the commander to check on the sick, he would call each sick laborer, ‘Wake up, you infidel.’ Being scared, the sick laborer would jump at once and get up no matter what! He would tell him to open his mouth and show his tongue, and as he did such, the commander would suddenly flog him repeatedly with the long whip he carried and wherever it struck until he lost count. He would repeat this in the same manner with every sick laborer and would force them to go to work no matter how sick they were. Then, he would signal to the guards and tell them, ‘these laborers are not sick but lazy.’ Imagine how bitter the hour was when the sick were forced to get up while most of them were near death and had a few minutes to live?! They would not let them die peacefully, but rather they had them die being flogged.

“Tuesday evening, June 8, 1915, the commander ordered me to wake up early in the morning and select two hundred laborers to be ready, and so I did. Then he ordered the soldiers

⁷² Mashu in Assyrian. —The translator.

to take the selected laborers to *Diyarbakir*. Since all my relatives and village men were among them, I asked the commander to let me go with them whether they live or die. Because he liked me so much, he advised me that if I went with them, (the officers in charge of that location) they might give me a hard time, and I replied, so be it. Finally, he reluctantly allowed me to leave with them. The soldiers forced us to walk a fourteen-hour walking distance in only ten hours. As we arrived at the workers' site, which was to the north of the city of *Diyarbakir*, we were detained there for three days. Later, the chief engineer and a high-ranking commander, a *Chiliard*, approached us, giving many orders pertaining to our task and simultaneously encouraging us. Yet, they instructed our supervisor to press hard on us at work. They told us to prepare ourselves for work on the road which led to *Bitlis* and our lodging for the night would be in the village of *Ka'biyéh*. When we entered the village, we did not find any male adults. The little Christian kids who had been spared, once they saw us, ran towards us and jumped into our laps saying, 'Our parents! The Muslims killed our parents.' In such a sad scenario, how could the heartstrings stand unbroken and the eyes not shed blood instead of tears? When the guards saw us sobbing and sighing, they started beating us with their thick clubs yelling, 'You infidels, do you think you will stay alive?' Thus, they calmed and silenced us; throttling our sighs in our chests. The following morning we began working on the *Bitlis Road*.

“On June 16, 1915, the notorious despots, Sidqi, Yahya, and Tharwat accompanied by a hundred fifty soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment and three hundred well-armed Kurdish men went to the ramp of the *Shaytan-Dara* valley where the remaining laborers had been working. They surrounded them from every side, then tied them up with ropes and marched

them down the road to *Severik*, and as they reached *Qarah-Bagja Inn*, they killed them there. They were about one hundred ninety laborers, and none of them survived except for two who came to *Diyarbakir* and informed us of what had happened to them.

“Up to this point, the Christians were collectively marched to their slaughter on the pretext that they had been exiled. However, on June 19, 1915, we were still working on the *Bitlis Road*, our work site changed as we moved from the village of *Ka'biyéh* to the village of *Sa'diyyéh*. In the evening, during the first night watch (from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.)⁷³, and while we were having our dinner, all of a sudden, the soldiers surrounded us, and their commander, Sidqi, shouted loudly saying, ‘All of you laborers lie down on the ground.’ We instantly trembled with fear and thought that our end was imminent. We began crying loudly and bidding each other farewell. They gathered us in a yard and assigned guards to watch all the entrances. A deacon stood amidst us and said, ‘O’ Brethren, do not be afraid, remember the living words of the Gospel that say: *‘Fear not those who kill the body for they cannot kill the soul...’* (Matthew 10:28)

“After two hours of our detention in the yard, the commander in charge privately called me and asked, ‘Do you know what will happen to you?’ I replied ‘Yes I do. Our end has approached; all of us will end up dead.’ He then replied, ‘No, no harm will be done to you, we will only pick out the Armenians who are among you, because we have received an

⁷³ In the Scripture, night-time is divided into four three-hour periods called “watches”. The first night watch, from 6:00-9:00 p.m., the second, from 9:00 p.m. to midnight, the third, from 12:00-3:00 a.m., the fourth, from 3:00-6:00 a.m.—The translator.

official pardon for the rest of the Christian denominations.’ Then, he took the laborers’ list and began picking out the Armenians, one by one. Around five o’clock in the evening, he had already rounded up one hundred and two Armenians out of the two hundred twelve laborers that were present. Before our naked eyes, they tied them around their arms and placed them in stables. Then, the commander told the rest of us, ‘go back to work, you should kneel and thank the government for pardoning you.’ Next day in the morning, they took those helpless Armenians out, and between the village of *Karabash* and the village of *Matraniyéh* they stripped them of everything they had and slaughtered them all.

“The following day, we heard that Captain Sidqi, accompanied by sixty soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment, went down to the laborers who were working on the road of *Mardin* in the vicinity of the village of *Aqpanar* and separated the Armenians from the Assyrians (Syriacs/Chaldeans). Among those Armenians, there was a young man from the village of *Karabash* named Mekirdiech. This young man went to the commander and claimed to be an Assyrian/Syriac. The commander then asked him, ‘is there an Assyrian/Syriac person who can identify you?’ and he replied, ‘yes, Saleem Bshara, the alderman of *Karabash* knows me.’ The commander sent for Saleem Bshara and asked him if the young man was a Syriac, and because Saleem responded, ‘Yes, he is a Syriac,’ the commander yelled furiously and said, ‘you, dirty dog, a Syriac with the name of Mekirdiech!’⁷⁴ Then, he ordered the soldiers to also include Saleem with the Armenians. Thus, he was taken along with those miserable

⁷⁴ Mekirdiech is a common Armenian name. — The translator.

Armenians and they were all killed in a wood near a water spring.

“As for the rest of us, they used to beat us with their thick clubs constantly. Anyone who would linger in a certain place or on the road for only ten minutes they would immediately kill without mercy.

“As we endured ten days being treated in this manner, in the morning of the eleventh day, the chief engineer wanted us to leave for *Diyarbakir*. We were moved together and lodged in a doss-house named *Roula*, where they kept us for two days. During those two days, the guard, who was assigned to watch over us, prohibited us from leaving the premises to buy bread or to drink water. Thus, he charged us one silver coin for each glass of water. On the third day, the director of agriculture came and told us that we had to go for harvesting. He sent every five or ten laborers to a certain village. As for me and thirteen men from my village, we were turned over to *Fevzi Beg*, who sent us to *Chanaqchi* in the area of *Hawarjay*. When we arrived there, every day, some Kurds would tell us, “You have only five days to live,” while others would say, “only ten days.” Because of fear, we lacked sleep and peace of mind. Besides suffering from hard labor, our food was merely charred bread and water.

“O’ that, we would accept the food in hopes of peace, but, because of fear, it would go down our throats like bitter wormwood”.

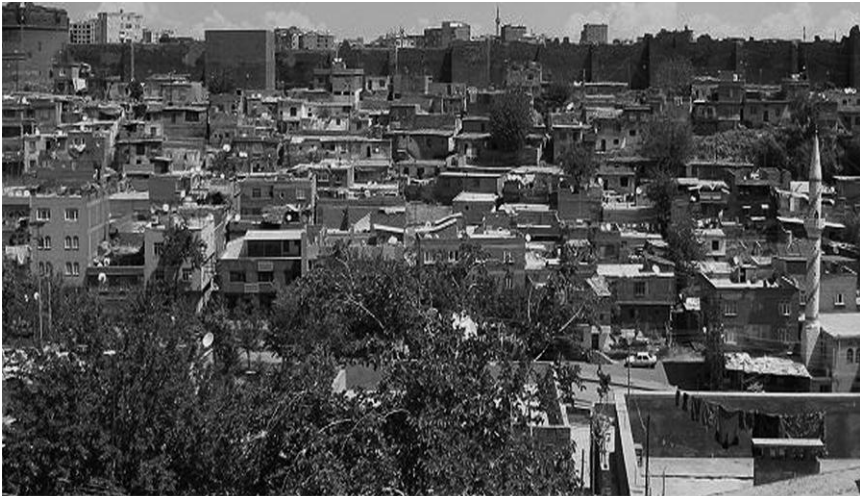
The Expulsion of the Armenians of Diyarbakir and their Slaughter

“At this point, an order was issued to exile all the Armenian families from *Diyarbakir*. About forty to fifty families were taken away every day. One day prior to their deportation, the Turkish officers would tell the Armenian women, ‘We will either take you to *Mardin* or *Tel-Mawzalt*, or to your men in *Mosul*.’ They first started with the distinguished families. Around three o’clock in the morning, they would come in carts and call the Armenians to come out and board the carts. Then, they would strip them of the many riches they had worked for. They would be escorted by soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment until they arrived in the township of *Dara*, which is located between *Mardin* and *Nisibin*. They would kill them there and throw their bodies in the huge pits around that area. However, they would not kill them haphazardly, but as they arrived to the intended location, they would send for the wicked and merciless despots of the Kurdish villages and together they would start the carnage. They would kill some with axes and others with daggers and lances. The brave Armenians who had the opportunity would throw themselves in the deep pits to die with dignity.

“Likewise, they marched down, approximately, twelve deportation caravans (convoys) to *Dara* (and slaughtered them there). Because the pits and wells became overfilled with corpses, they began taking them to the slopes of *Anbar-Djay*, *Dohk-Djede*, *Hwarjay*, and *Aqabah*. To sum it up, all the pits, slopes, gorges, and torrents around *Dara* were overfilled with corpses.

“One day, as we were harvesting wheat in the vicinity of *Baréh-Hajiyyéh*, we saw our supervisor with a regiment of soldiers leading a caravan of notable and gorgeous Armenian

women and children. As they arrived at the river bridge, the soldiers ordered them to stop for a drink of water. Although they were wearing elegant dresses and looked gorgeous, they were shedding bitter tears. After having a drink of water, the Circassian mercenaries started sexually harassing them. They stripped them of all their money and jewelry, then, drove them away like a herd of sheep. As for the old and weak women who could not mount or walk, they would kill them on the spot. While the soldiers were surrounding the caravan from both sides, the armed Kurds were following them from the rear. They took them to the top of Mount *Gawor-jay*⁷⁵ in a village known as *Goulli* were camped near the water spring which is in that locality. *I would rather leave the lascivious conduct which those soldiers demonstrated at that night to the day of reckoning when all the concealed things shall be brought to light.*



The city of Diyarbakir in the 1920.

“In the morning, after stripping the women of their clothes, they killed them as usual. Three days after that ugly

⁷⁵ Turkish: Mount of the Infidels. —The translator.

massacre, and while I was passing by the *Chanaqchi* watermill, I saw a ten-year-old Armenian boy hiding by the river, and he told me about everything that had happened to them. As I took two loaves of bread to him, I advised him to go to *Diyarbakir* secretly, so that no one could see or identify him. However, as he walked about one mile, a Muslim shepherd spotted and murdered him. Two days later, that is to say, on Friday, we stayed in the village because Friday was our day-off. At midnight, we heard gunshots being fired as if in a fierce battle. As soon as the Kurdish inhabitants of the village heard the gunshots, they armed themselves to the teeth and left the village hastily; whereas, we became overwhelmed by fear.

At sunrise, the Kurds came back, along with fifty exhausted guards, who were escorting a caravan of beautiful Armenian women, girls, and children whom we realized were picked out from the caravan which was led for slaughter. We asked our group leader if they were brought from *Diyarbakir*, and he responded, ‘No, they are from *Fiji, Walo, Sebastia, Bash-Qal’a*, and *Erzinjan (Erzincan)*.’ That caravan totaled up to forty thousand lives, and according to the commanding officer, two thousand women had to be killed every day. Every chieftain of a Kurdish village or a despot was obligated to appear before the Turkish commanding officer and take a number of the women to help in their carnage. The commander was ordering them to kill everyone without exception. In this manner, hundreds of thousands of Christians were systematically wiped out.



Armenian children from Diyarbakir

“Two days later, *i.e.* on Sunday, while my coworkers were busy harvesting, I was filling a pannier with wheat. After sending the pannier with my task-partner, I sat under the tent to rest a bit till he returned. At that time, I saw a girl about ten years of age approaching our tent. She was naked and had a scar of a hatchet cut on her neck. She entered the tent and asked for water to drink. She spoke Turkish fluently. After quenching her thirst, I asked her if she wanted food, and she answered “yes,” so I gave her a loaf of bread, a piece of cheese, some yogurt and a small cucumber. At that moment, my co-worker had just arrived. While she was devouring her food, I asked her again, ‘Where are you from, child? Don’t you have a family?’ she replied, ‘I am from the township of *Erzinjan*. I was with my mother, my sister, and my two brothers.’ She pointed her finger to a hill facing us and said, ‘Yesterday, the Turkish soldiers along with the Kurds attacked our village and killed us. They killed my mother

while I was on her lap so I ran to my brothers, but they got my two brothers and killed them, too. I, then, ran to my sister whom they killed shortly thereafter. As you see, they wounded me too, but I ran away from them. However, after running for a few minutes dazed, I fainted and fell to the ground. I only woke up today, and, luckily, here I am! As my co-worker and I listened to her story, we sobbed bitterly. She looked at me and said, ‘Uncle, I beg of you, take me to my township.’ We could not do that lest the Muslims see her and kill her before our eyes, adding that to our grief. Therefore, we thought it would be better for her if she hid herself in the bushes by the river bank where we would take some food to her every day until she gets relieved by the Divine Providence. As I was contemplating that, we saw two Muslim shepherds coming towards us, so my co-worker grabbed her by the arm and hid her somewhere. Sadly, after two days, I went to give her some food, but found her already murdered.

O’ justice, how much more shall you tolerate!

“On Friday, while we were sitting along with three Kurds under a tree in the village, we saw five children, ages between five and six walking towards us completely naked. Once the Kurds saw them, they stood up and said to one another, ‘Here are the children of the infidels, let us go and slaughter them.’ The kids suspected the Kurds vicious intention and they immediately started fleeing the scene. Nevertheless, the three Kurdish men chased the kids, caught them in a rice field down the village, submerged them in the water, and sat on their heads until they drowned. *In this horrifying action, the spirits of those kids departed and ascended to the tribune of justice upon which we lay our hope for vengeance.*

“Due to the magnitude of the distress which bore rule over us, we went inside the house and wept quietly. Later, we went outside and saw those Kurds laughing and describing to their friends how they drowned those kids to death. A few hours later, gunshots were heard coming off a hill that was facing the village. As soon as the Kurdish men who were sitting with us heard the noise, they stood up and grabbed their guns at once. Then, they called upon the inhabitants of the village and all of them went together; running rapidly towards the location of the gunshots. They came back in the evening, each one carrying a bundle of clothes that were stripped off of the slain Christians.

“There was a man in this village named Sufi⁷⁶ Hassan. He had brought with him three young Armenian women from the aforesaid caravan. Being curious to know about them, I went to Sufi Hassan pretending I was there for a certain need, and asked him, ‘Are you going to the city sometimes tomorrow?’ I was looking for an opportunity to talk to those women who looked educated and well mannered. The next morning, as I was climbing down the stairs to go to work, I saw the three of them following me down. I wanted to introduce myself and let them know that I was a Christian, but in a way the Kurds would not be alerted that I was talking to them. So, I seized the opportunity and whispered to them in Armenian while walking. When they heard me speaking their language, the oldest asked me, ‘Are you a Muslim, too?’ I replied, ‘No, I am Christian.’ By hearing that, they rejoiced and, somewhat, they were relieved of their distress. Yet, they told me, ‘This is tantamount to a miracle! How come they did not kill you as

⁷⁶ Sufi is a title given to a practitioner of Sufism: a mystical form of Islam, a school of practice that emphasizes inward search for God and shuns materialism. Sufism cherishes tolerance and Pluralism. However, Sufi Hassan was nothing of the kind.— The translator.

they killed our men and spared none of them?’ I replied that we were Syriac Orthodox and we had received an official pardon, but not before killing most of our people, sparing a small number of us for their projects. They heaved a sigh of relief and said, ‘We wish we could see Christian men alive then die in peace. I asked where they were from, they told me, one of them was from the city of *Sebasti*, the second from the city of *Erzinjan*, and the third from the latter’s suburbs. As we were engaged in conversation, a Kurdish woman happened to be watching us from the corner of the roof, so I left the scene immediately and walked to work. In the evening, when my co-workers and I returned from work, I saw those women sitting on the rooftop gazing at us with a dejected look. We did not venture to talk to them, nor did they with us. Three days later, I met them in a secluded area, and the oldest one took sixty silver coins out of her pocket and handed them to me saying, ‘Take these and buy food for you and your friends.’ I declined and told her that they were more in need of money, but she replied, ‘Oh dear, we are not considered among the living. I had sixty gold coins on me, but Sufi Hassan forcibly took them. Had I known you back then, I would have given them to you. Please, keep in touch with us and remember us in your prayers’. I replied, likewise, so that we may have a peaceful end. It is the will of the One who led us to such trials. Remember the many martyrs who were slaughtered because of their faith in Jesus Christ. I could tell that you are well educated and must be aware of the persecutions that the Christians endured since the day of the crucifixion.’ Hearing that, they heaved a deep sigh and appealed saying, ‘We beg of you to visit us every day at your convenience so we can talk, for we find great relief in your company.’ When they realized that I was able to read and write, the oldest emphasized saying, ‘Since we are brothers and sisters in faith and if God delivered you from this misery,

I want you to mention the following in your diary,' then she phrased the following: 'When the Turks drove our caravan out of our homeland, we were close to fifty thousand lives. Fifty-three days have already passed and we are still on the road to the exile. It was on this road that I recalled the words of our Lord who says, *'How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for mothers nursing their babies in those days,* (Mat.24-19). Being heavy, most of the pregnant women, who lagged behind, were killed along with the feeble ones. A mother who was unable to carry her children would abandon them in the wilderness and move on. My older sister had two sons, she carried one and I carried the other, as she became ill and could not move faster, they killed her and left both of her sons in my custody. Therefore, when we arrived here, only forty thousand lives were left. On the other hand, our destiny is inevitable and no one can tell it better than an eyewitness who would verbally pass it on or write it down in a book.'”

“Twenty days had passed since those women were brought by Sufi Hassan. They found comfort in our conversation with them on a daily basis. Later, the older one became ill, and on the third day of her illness, Sufi Hassan told her, 'Get up I am going to take you to the city to see a doctor.' The poor woman thought he was sincere and left with him. As they walked for a distance of ten minutes from that village, he murdered her between the village of *Chanaqchi* and the village of *Maqsi-Oghli* then returned home. Because it did not take him long to come back, the other two instantaneously realized that he had killed her. They were very saddened, and due to their profound sorrow, they, too, were stricken with illness. At that time, Sufi Hassan's wife, named Aisha, told them, 'Come on let us go to the river bank where I have boiled water for you to take a bath.' As they left, Sufi Hassan followed them carrying his gun and a few

minutes later, we heard gunshots while we were harvesting in the vicinity of the village. We heard the gunshots and thought that some hunters have come to that vicinity since the sound came out from inside the garden. However, in the evening, as we were returning to the village, we walked through the garden and saw two corpses lain on the ground. We, then, realized that those were the bodies of the two Armenian women, and we wept all the way to the village. When we climbed onto the roof, I saw Sufi Hassan and asked him, 'Where are your Christian daughters?' he replied, 'I took them to the city because they were ill.' He, then, opened his mouth wide like a ravening wolf and cracked up laughing as if that vile individual had done a praiseworthy deed.

“In the evening of the following day, as I went to bring our supervisor’s horse which was grazing by the river bank, I saw a woman with a messy long hair, who was completely naked, coming out of the garden towards me. I was startled and terrified by her sudden appearance. I sprang back to run away and she shouted *Amann!*⁷⁷ I beg you, just give me a morsel of bread then kill me! There, I stopped and told her, ‘Sister,⁷⁸ hang on for a minute while I go and get it for you.’ I ran as fast as I could and brought her a loaf of bread. However, when I called her to come out of her hiding place to get the bread, she did not respond because she had assumed that I went to bring a gun to kill her. When I called on her for the second time, ‘Come out my sister and get your bread, don’t be scared of someone who is a Christian like you.’ There, she responded at once; attempting to approach me. But yet, she asked, ‘For the love of our Lord, are you indeed a Christian?’ I answered affirmatively. Only then she warned,

⁷⁷ *Amann* is an imploring Turkish interjection. —The translator.

⁷⁸ A title used by the Middle Eastern men of all faiths when addressing a woman. —The translator.

‘Stay there let me see you.’ At that moment, I unwound my girdle⁷⁹ and threw it to her to cover herself. She covered herself, came out, and took the bread. She wanted to talk to me, but fearing that the Kurds might see us and kill her, I advised her to take the bread, leave the site, and be cautious. When I returned to the village, I noticed a man named Zilfo carrying a rifle and heading towards the garden, for he was obviously watching her. Then, I said to myself, ‘To hell with this life, merely for a piece of bread, a woman will now be murdered!’ The man walked into the garden, and as I was talking to my friends, we heard two gunshots. About five minutes later, we saw Zilfo returning to the village. I understood that he had gone there to kill her.

“Three days after this incident and while we were harvesting in a field called *Ardéh-Dangéh* (the water-mill field), I went along with a co-worker to get some water. By the time we approached the river bank, making our way through long grass and reed, we spotted a woman sleeping with a three year old girl beside her. As I was telling my friend ‘if we wake her up she might get startled and terrified, and if we do not, her end will be a bitter one,’ she woke up and opened her eyes. Once she saw us, she hastily grabbed her daughter and jumped into the river. I gently called on her and said, ‘Relax, do not be afraid, we are Christians, too.’ She stood still in her spot staring at us. We noticed that she was bleeding from her nose. I asked her where she was from and she replied that she had escaped from the forty-thousand people caravan. I also asked her if she was hungry and she replied, ‘We are starving, we have not eaten anything for the last three days.’ I immediately went back to our tent and

⁷⁹ Syriac *essor-haso*: A long and broad sheet of textile the Middle Eastern men and women use to wrap around their waist in those days, as part of their ordinary costume. — The translator.

brought her four loaves of bread and some yogurt. While they were eating, the little girl asked her mother if I was going to kill them and her mother said, 'No'. This man is your uncle. By hearing this, she summoned the energy to run towards me. That scene filled my heart with sorrow and I started crying and so did her mother. After we stopped sobbing, the woman asked, 'Why would the Lord allow this to happen to us, and how come they did not kill you, too?' I answered, 'Our people were also massacred and only a few of us were left alive to be used temporarily to carry out their work projects, our end is also inevitable.' Then I added, 'Now, allow me to leave in peace, be extra alert and stay in your spot lest anyone see you. I will bring you bread every morning and let us see what God has planned for us, then, I left. The following morning, I delivered on my promise and gave her four loaves of bread and some onions. On the third day of my visitation, after talking to her for almost one hour, she told me that she was sick. I could only assure her that God is merciful and compassionate. As for the little girl, every time that she saw me, she would say with her sweet innocent voice, 'Here is my uncle again.' Whenever I heard her saying that, my heart would simply tear apart. In the morning of the fourth day, I found the poor woman dead. I examined her body for any possible injury, but found none and knew that she had died naturally. The little toddler did not realize that. I could only tell her, 'I got you some bread, little girl.' I gave her the bread and she told me it was dry and asked me to soak it in water, which I did, then she started eating. I left her there to face her destiny and went away. Next morning, when I went to check on the little girl, I saw her crying on her mother's chest saying, 'Wake up mom, wake up, uncle is here.' The woman's body was swollen like a drum. Because I couldn't tolerate the bad smell of the corpse, I gave the toddler bread and yogurt, uttered to her a few words, then left. In order to avoid that

bitter scene, the following day I didn't go there to see her, but I sent the little girl some bread with a friend who found her dead, too. He came back and told us the news. By hearing that, we cried dolefully and knelt in prayer; reciting the Lord's Prayer for the spirits of the two martyrs.

“One day, as I was working on the threshing-floor, I heard gunshots. In no time, the Kurdish inhabitants of the village came out and rushed towards the source of the gunshots. Around noon, the villagers returned accompanied by two soldiers. Those two soldiers went to our supervisor's residence. Our supervisor's wife called out to me and asked me to leave my assignment and take care of those soldiers since her husband was not present. I went and welcomed the soldiers in the reception room, as ordered. I noticed a very pretty young girl with them. After resting for a while, one of them turned to the young girl and asked her to submit to Islam! She responded, I will never convert nor accept the Muslims' faith. The soldier asked, ‘And why not?’ She added, ‘Sir, my parents ordered and warned me not to convert to the religion of the Hagarenes.’⁸⁰ At that point, the soldier told her, ‘You have no idea how your parents and brothers were slaughtered.’ She responded, ‘how could I forget that!’ However, my parents also told me that I might face death, but must not submit to Islam. You can kill me right now and let me join my parents and brothers.’ At that moment, the soldier winked at me signaling to talk to her in Armenian. I began conversing with her and asked, ‘Are you from *Diyarbakir*,’ and she responded, ‘Yes’, and she asked me, ‘Are you Christian, being that you speak Armenian?’ I said, ‘Yes I am.’ Then she said, ‘It is a miracle that they did not kill you.’ She

⁸⁰ Syriac [hagrayéh/mhagroyéh], Greek [αγαρῦνοι/αγαρενοι] a term used in early Syriac, Greek, Coptic sources to denote the early Muslims [Arabs].— The translator.

heaved a sigh of relief and added, ‘Oh that, if I had only known how my parents and brothers were killed. At that point, I left them and went out.

“Several days later, our supervisor came back. I welcomed him and asked where he had been, he said, ‘I have been escorting a caravan that was coming from *Sebasti* and heading towards *Mardin*. I accompanied them for five hours, a long way from the city. We thought they were marching down this caravan to be slaughtered, but they did not kill them at this place, instead they took them to *Mardin*. Nonetheless, what I witnessed there was astonishing.’ I asked him, ‘Like what; tell me!’ He then added, ‘this very caravan was about forty thousand people. We left the city through Mardin Gate and I accompanied them all the way to the *Tigris River*. When the caravan arrived at the *Grand Bridge*, I saw a group of approximately fifty women breaking away from the caravan and running towards the bridge. Some of them were carrying their babies and others holding tight to their children. As the soldiers looked behind, they thought the women were trying to escape, but on the contrary, they stood on the edge of the bridge, which was about fifty meters above the water, called on the name of Jesus, and threw themselves along with their children in the river; entrusting their souls to God. The soldiers started shooting at them not knowing that those women were committing suicide. There were many brave women in that caravan who were not afraid of death, instead they were encouraging other women to follow suit rather than convert to Islam.’ The supervisor continued, ‘Yesterday, when I walked around the outskirts of the village of *Zonmah*, I saw a small caravan of nearly fifty women whom the soldiers had stripped them of their clothes to be killed. Among them was a very pretty woman, who, after all her companions were slaughtered, the commander called her and said, ‘Convert to

Islam, I will take you in as my wife and you will enjoy a pleasant life in my house.’ Yet, the woman was laughing. He exhausted all the means of luring her to be his life partner, but she persisted in her refusal and told him that she loved her faith and would never submit to the Moslem faith. When the commander became sure that she would not listen to him, nor would she succumb to his will, he picked up his rifle and aimed it at her, and yet, she continued laughing. Then, the commander told her, ‘Are you out of your mind?! You are about to die and you are still laughing!’ ‘Yes, your highness, I am happy!’ She replied, then added, ‘Look above at the sky and see how Jesus is calling me with his Arms wide open for my reception.’

As the commander heard her answer, his gun slipped out of his hands and went off. The young woman dropped dead and surrendered her spirit. Watching that scene, one would have thought that she had been dead a month ago,” our supervisor concluded.



Assyrian orphans in Adana (1919-1921), victims of the Genocide.

The Slaughter and Bitter Hardships that the Christians of *Diyarbakir* and its Surroundings endured in 1915

Karabash

Karabash is a big village whose population is totally Christian, predominantly, of the Syriac Orthodox denomination. It has a church consecrated for Saint Qawméh and two priests who are paternal cousins, Father Paulos and Father Behnam. It is the village of Father Abdil-Ahhad as well as (his brother) Deacon Qawméh. The latter was killed in the massacres of 1895.

On Tuesday, April 20, 1915, Yahya, the son of Yaseen Agha⁸¹ of *Dyiar-Bakir*, and Sidqi Baranji, the commander of the Fiftieth Regiment, accompanied by fifty soldiers from that regiment, came to the village of *Karabash* around nine o'clock in the evening and besieged the town from all sides. In the morning, they entered the village and summoned the mayor of *Karabash* named Bshara and told him, "Every piece of weaponry in your possessions ought to be gathered and handed over to the government; otherwise, you will face inevitable annihilation." Therefore, the mayor, accompanied by two men from the village and five soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment, went searching house to house and gathered every piece of weaponry they could find, including rifles, swords, bayonets, daggers, and others. They brought all the seized weapons and piled them up before the two despots. Having the village stripped of every piece of weaponry, both despots were thrilled and seemed quite confident that the slaughter and plunder of the Christian inhabitants of *Karabash*

⁸¹ *Agha* is a title used to address a Chieftain in Farsi/Kurdish. -- The translator.

would be very easy. Later on, they secretly informed the Kurdish villagers that *Karabash* was free of any kind of weapon, not even a simple knife that could inflict a minor wound.

Afterwards, they rounded up twenty men from the village. They drove them to *Diyarbakir* tied up, and detained them in a place called *Musafer-Khanéh*. After five days, they brought them out and tied them up with ropes again. They told them that they were taking them to *Jabaqjour* to work on the road. After walking seven hours from the village, they arrived at a village called *Sharabi* on the bank of the Tigris River. There, they stripped them of everything and killed them all.

After two days, i.e. on Thursday April 22, in the middle of the first night watch,⁸² Yahya Yaseen and Sidqi Baranji along with some soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment came again and rounded up all the men of *Karabash*, young and old. They marched them down to *Diyarbakir* under the pretext that they would be working on the highways, but in reality, they killed them all there.

When the Kurds knew that not even a single male who could lift a finger was spared in *Karabash*, thousands of them attacked the village at the midnight of April 23, and started killing and plundering. Terror beset the inhabitants who panicked and scattered all over the region. Some fled to *Diyarbakir*, while many of them took shelter in the village of *Raqli*, which is in the vicinity of *Karabash*, about half an hour walking distance. The Kurds attacked them there and blocked the exits of all the homes in which the Christians had taken shelter and began slaughtering them as if they were herds of sheep. None of them survived except for the few who fled

⁸² Around 7:30 p.m. — The translator.

under the cover of the night and returned to *Karabash* stealthily and hid themselves inside the barns, granaries, as well as within the ruins of the pigeon turrets.

Regarding those who fled at night to get to *Diyarbakir*, they made it to the Tigris River at dawn. As they were attempting to cross the river, a garrison of soldiers who were dispatched to guard the village of *Karabash* encountered them and made them go back to their village. They told them, ‘We are here to protect your lives, go back to your village.’ However, those Turkish soldiers were much more barbaric than the Kurds in their killing and plundering.

Two days later, a man named *Hajji* Mustafa who owned a big herd of sheep, came and settled with his herd by the water spring of the village. *Hajji* Mustafa, subsequently, went to visit a friend of his in the village and found the house doors locked. He began calling his friend’s name loudly, but in vain. He, then, called his friend’s wife, Merriam, who was hiding with many others inside the hay-barn. As Merriam heard his voice, she recognized him and came out. She threw herself before his feet; crying and begging for safety.

Hajji Mustafa shed his tears and swore by the living God, “I will die for your sake. Let everybody come out of their hiding places and climb to the rooftop.” He ordered his servants to offer them yogurt and yogurt drink for refreshment since it was summer time, and extremely hot.

The following day, *Hajji* Mustafa learned that the inhabitants of *Karabash* were suffering a lot under the army garrison, which was guarding them. As a result, he sent a message to the Governor of the city (*Diyarbakir*), who happened to be his friend, informing him of the situation.

Accordingly, the Governor sent a new garrison to replace the old one. This garrison was under a good and well mannered commander named Ibrahim. When the new commander arrived, *Hajji* Mustafa paid him a visit and told him, “These few poor Christians who have survived are almost dead; therefore, let them live until the will of God is done with them, whether by famine or disease.” Then, the commander promised *Hajji* Mustafa saying, “I give you my word of honor that a drop of blood won’t be shed of them, and may God be my witness.”

Then, Commander Ibrahim gathered all the villagers who had survived and told them, “In order for you to escape from the Kurds, let about twenty of you go to *Diyarbakir* every day pretending they are going to the grain-mill, then let only ten of them come back and the rest stay in the city.” In this way, within ten days, only a few old women were left behind in *Karabash* for whom the commander himself drove to *Diyarbakir* and communicated about to the Governor, “You dispatched me to guard the Christians of *Karabash* where I found none, but rotten corpses and these ten old women. If your highness orders us, we will take these women outside the city and kill them as well, or if you wish, we can let them go and die of starvation and disease in the streets and market places of the city. I think the latter suggestion would be better than staining our hands with the blood of these elders who deserve pity. Thus, the Governor set them free. In this manner, the town of *Karabash* was left desolate and a large number of Muslims settled in it.

As for the two priests of *Karabash*, Father Behnam, the son of Deacon Qawméh, was killed on the road while fleeing at night to the village of *Raqli*. In the meantime, his paternal cousin, Father Paulos, the son of Father Abdil-Ahhad, was

forced by the despot Khalil *Agha* to walk ahead of his horse, and was killed by him on the road to the village of *Matraniyéh*. According to other people, he was killed on the road of *Sharabiyéh*, and this is more accurate because the killer was from the village of *Sharabiyéh*. The following is what actually happened:

After the persecution had somewhat subsided, and the few Christians who had survived the slaughter went back to their village, *Karabash*, a Kurdish despot named Kalaf *Agha* came to the village asking for a sack that he had left in the care of one of *Karabash*'s Christian households.⁸³ The sack allegedly contained a rifle. When Khalaf *Agha* asked for his rifle, a woman named Mariam, the daughter-in-law of Maqdisi Yousif, falsely told him that Father Paulos stole it. As a result, he became so angry that he sent for Father Paulos and made him walk ahead of his horse on the road of *Matraniyéh*; lashing him while riding his horse. Every time that Father Paulos fell down, the horse stepped all over him. The poor priest would get up to continue walking wearily until they arrived near the village of *Sharabiyéh* where the despot killed him without mercy.

Where is the Divine Justice? Oh Lord, was your shepherd not indeed in the service of thy temple that you (did not) avenge his service!

⁸³ A few Christians who had survived the slaughter returned to *Karabash* and lived there for a short time after the persecution had somewhat subsided. — The translator.

Noteworthy Atrocities Committed In Karabash

When the Kurds attacked the village of *Karabash*, they intended to forcibly abduct the girls. One of those Kurdish heathens laid hold of a woman named Maran attempting to abduct her, but she held tight to her infant daughter whom she was nursing and took to flight. He chased her and stabbed her with his sword and she instantly dropped dead while her infant daughter was still at her breast. The army commander saw her and sent three men to bury her.

Two Kurdish men abducted two newly-wed girls named Mariam and Saydéh. When they forcibly mounted the girls on the backs of their horses and sped away, the girls called upon Jesus by name and jumped off the backs of the horses. The two Kurdish men lashed out at them: slashing the first with the sword and slitting open the cheek of the second. Those two girls were sent to a hospital in *Diyarbakir* by the same army commander, and were treated by an American doctor named Dr. Ward. These are merely two examples of the many atrocities that took place in *Karabash*.

Following the end of the war, and the dwindling of Turkey's power, the Turks began feeling the severity of the painful blow that struck the country, owing to the loss of their territories and the destruction of their armed forces, as well as the slaughter and persecution of Turkey's loyal natives (the Christians). Consequently, the Turkish authorities came to their senses and ceased their atrocities against them. Perhaps, they realized that only a very small number of poor Christians living on alms had survived; therefore, they allowed a few of them to return to their homes and to work in *Karabash*. However, even those poor survivors were unable to live peacefully in their own village since the Turkish government

had resettled Muslims from Bulgaria on their properties. Because of the Bulgarian settlers, the Kurds who were accustomed to looting and pillaging, and the chiefs of *Diyarbakir*, such as Jamil Pasha's family who had occupied all *Karabash*'s estates unlawfully, the Christians abandoned their village completely and went back to *Diyarbakir*. Thus, *Karabash* was no longer inhabited by Christians.

The Village of Ka'biyyéh

On the first day of April 1915, a strict order was issued by the Turkish government to gather every piece of weaponry that the Christians possessed. On the tenth of April, three army officers from *Diyarbakir* namely: Sidqi Beranji, Yahya Yaseen, and Tharwat Othman went to the village of *Ka'biyyéh* accompanied by seventy armed soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment. They arrived there at six o'clock in the evening and besieged the village from all sides so that no one could escape. In the morning, those officers entered the village and summoned its alderman named Gewargis and told him, "All males, fifteen years and up, must come out of their homes and assemble outside the village. Anyone who fails to comply and is found during the search of the homes, he and all the members of his family would be burnt alive."

The alderman went out immediately; announcing and repeating the commander's warning loudly, "Any male, fifteen years and older, who stays inside, will be killed." Thus, all of them came out promptly and none lingered. Later, the officers demanded the alderman to provide forty hemp yarns and ordered the soldiers to tie up all those men. The soldiers tied up close to one hundred fifty two men. Having done so, the officers turned to the villagers warning them and saying, "Surrender every piece of weaponry you have in your

possession voluntarily.” Those who had a piece of weaponry brought them out at once, including daggers and knives. They addressed the officers saying, “Sirs, here are all our weapons, we have none left.” Yet, the officers responded, “No, you still must have some firearms, hand grenades and cannons! Bring them all out, or all of you will be slaughtered”. At that point the officers ordered their soldiers to apply every method of torture to those villagers. Woe unto them for the torments that the soldiers inflicted upon them! They hanged some upside down and flogged them with thick bamboo sticks, two to three hundred lashes each, until the blood gushed out of their heels and stained their clothes. The wailing of those miserable victims reached the heavens, but no one pitied, nor had mercy upon them. After being tortured for nine continuous hours, the officers ordered the soldiers to pick out five of the village’s dignitaries namely: Miqsi⁸⁴ Gabriel and his brother Abdil-Ahhad, the sons of Father Ishaia; Manog and Mehran, the sons of Thomas; and Rizqo, the son of Allo. They took them to the ramp of the village and killed them there. That is how those dignitaries died. Later, they picked up Chorepiscopus⁸⁵ Moshe and the old monk Noah and started torturing them. After flogging each of them two hundred times, they threw them in a muddy pool of rainwater to wallow in their vestments. Then, they dragged them out and continued flogging them with thick clubs while ridiculing them saying, “O Priests, who, day and night, used to recite the acts and miracles of Jesus to your people in your churches, where is that very Jesus of yours? Let him come and deliver you now.” Because of the excruciating pain, their tongues stuck to their

⁸⁴ Contracted from the Arabic word Maqdisi; a title used by the Middle Eastern Christians for anyone who made pilgrimage to Jerusalem. — The translator.

⁸⁵ Chorepiscopus/Chorepiscopus, from Greek Χωρεπισκοπος: meaning “rural bishop”. However, a Chorbishop is an honorary prelate, or archpriest, in several of the Eastern Christian Churches, and it should not be confused with the sacramental Order of Bishop. – The translator.

palates and they were unable to speak. Perhaps, like Jesus when He did not respond to Herod (Antipas). Their black garments were stained with the crimson color of the blood, which was oozing from their bodies.

At eleven o'clock AM, those despots ordered their soldiers to demand the women of the village to prepare supper and added; "One lamb should be slaughtered for each one of them." Thus, eighty lambs were slaughtered on that day. Oh misery that knows no mercy! Here, I would rather refrain from talking about the sorts of lascivious and shameless acts that the wanton soldiers committed against the noble and modest women, acts that would bring a blush to the very Satan's cheeks.

Early in the evening, after having their supper, they took those captives to the city of *Diyarbakir* and lodged them in a place called *Mousafir-khanéh*. There, they once again tortured them for five days. On the fifteenth day of April 1915, the despots ordered that they be taken and put to work; breaking stones for the pavement of the highway. Finally, they marched them through the *Egeel* road that stretched over the top of a mountain overlooking the river *Euphrates*, and there they stripped them of their clothes, killed them, and threw their corpses down the mountain slopes. *Their spirits ascended towards the judgment seat; seeking a verdict.*

On April 20, 1915, at five o'clock in the evening, various Kurdish tribes attacked the village of *Ka'biyéh*, and while they were preoccupied with pillaging, the inhabitants of the village took advantage of that opportunity and fled to the city of *Maléh* to save their lives. However, even during their escape, fifty persons were slain.

When the refugees entered the city of *Maléh* and went to take shelter in the church of The Mother Of God, Father

Bshara, the priest of the church, refused to let them take shelter in the churchyard. Instead, he sent a message to the Governor of *Diyarbakir* informing him of the situation and the latter ordered the soldiers who were stationed in every quarter of the city, to expel those refugees from the city. The refugees told the Governor, “Your honor, we cannot go back to our village because we are scared of the Kurds.” He responded, “Go back and I will send four soldiers to protect you”. Thus, he sent them back to their village forcibly. The four dispatched guards proved to be treacherous since they killed four of those desperate villagers on the way back to their village.

From that day on, the inhabitants of *Ka'biyéh* were waiting for death, eager to catch up with the caravan of their martyred brothers with hearts full of hope and faith. That was because, Deacon Kouriakos, the youth teacher, kept comforting and encouraging them by reciting the stories of the saints and martyrs. Because of the many atrocities of those guards and fearing the surrounding Kurds, the village of *Ka'biyah*, which once had a population of about one hundred and sixty households, now, it was reduced to only five households; weeping and lamenting all the time. You could witness parents hugging and kissing their sons and daughters as if they were departing one another for ever.

On (Sunday), May 30, 1915, the Governor of *Diyarbakir* sent his assistant, *Shakir Beg*, who was a Circassian, accompanied by fifty corrupt despots from the tribe of *Ramma*, the very tribe of the notorious *Omarkéh*, and who are infamous for their savagery. They besieged the village at eight o'clock in the evening and stormed it at dawn. They captured every single male they encountered, bound and tied them up. They would heat steel skewers to red-hot point and pierce their bodies; demanding, “Bring all the money that you have.”

So, the defenseless captives were surrendering all they had while weeping bitterly. Thus, in five hours, those despots extorted one thousand five hundred *dinars* in gold from them. Then, they went back to their dirty norms, sexually assaulting housewives and young girls alike.

At eight o'clock, on the morning of Monday, May 31, they took the captives and had them cross the Tigris River towards *Daireek*. When they reached a hill known as *Quord-Qaya* (wolves' crag), they killed them all near a water spring named *Kaniyéh-Bazerganéh* (the merchants' spring).

At the first night-watch (6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.), they set the corpses on fire, which continued burning until the morning. In that caravan, Deacon Kouriakos, who diligently kept boosting the moral of his people during the calamity, suffered martyrdom.

Since only women and children were left in the village, the Kurdish men were coming and abducting any of the women they pleased. By experiencing this, some women fled to the city (Diyarbakir), while others gave money to Muslim women as a favor, and in turn, the latter took them to the city. Consequently, only worn-out old women were left behind in the village.

During the harvest season in the village of *Ka'biyéh*, the director of the harvest in the eastern region heard that many of the inhabitants of the village had survived the slaughter and were living in the city. He came to *Diyarbakir* and told those miserable survivors, "Because you are Syriac Orthodox, the Governor has issued an order stating that no one should harm you, go back and dwell in your village. If you claim poverty as an excuse, we will register your names on a list so that you will be given food for sustenance, and those of you who

choose not to, will be responsible for their lives.” As a result, they all chose to go back.

On the same day that they went to their village, which was (Sunday) September 12, and at the first night-watch, one hundred Circassian mercenaries and fifty soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment, under the command of Khalil Chalabi, besieged *Ka'biyéh* and terrified the inhabitants as they were taking over the village.

The following morning, they told the inhabitants, “Get ready now, we are going to take you to the city to dwell there because we are willing to resettle (Bulgarian) Muslims in your village.” Then, they gathered all the villagers at the threshing floor and gave each one a small loaf of bread and marched them towards the city (*of Diyarbakir*). As they crossed the river, they told them, “We are taking the road to *Mardin*.” upon hearing that, the villagers immediately realized that they were being led to their annihilation. There, a villager named Daniel, who had six sons, fifteen years old and up, and his extended family totaled about thirty people, shouted loudly, “Oh brothers, today is the celebration of the everlasting life; hence, let us rejoice and chant hallelujah.” The chant of their praises thundered up in the sky, and thereafter they started weeping and mourning. They proceeded on the way to *Daireek* and as they reached the eastside of the aforementioned *Quord-Qaya*, near a water spring named *Kaniyéh-Malo*, they ordered them to take a brief rest and advised the women to nurse their babies. They also advised them to have a drink of water saying, “From this point onward, there is no water on the road.”

After having a drink of water, they separated the males from the females. Then, before everyone’s eyes, they gunned down the males who dropped to the ground like slaughtered

sheep. Next, the Kurdish tribes came down like predatory animals, carrying axes, hatchets, swords, daggers, clubs, and sickles to finish the dirty job. “Woe unto the unspeakable terror. Woe to the grief that cannot be comforted, when one witnesses children being snatched from their mothers’ laps and their blood is mixed with their mother’s milk, and when the mothers are raped before everyone’s eyes, yet no one was there to stand up for them or to express outrage. *Conceal O’ Mother Earth and hide O’ sun!*”

Five days later, some toddlers were still alive amidst those corpses, but consequently, they died of starvation. This episode was related to us by a man from *Mosul* named Abdallah. Three days following the massacre, he happened to be passing by that area and was spotted by one of the assaulted women, covered with blood from her wounds, who begged him for a drink of water. Unlike the ones who had passed by before him, he felt sorry for her and tossed a cloth for her to cover herself. Then he helped her down to the water spring and asked her, “Are there any children still alive?” She replied, “Yes,” and pointed to one of the children whom he picked up and left that place.

Out of that caravan of five hundred sixty people, only three children age five to eight survived as well as two women who emerged amidst the corpses, naked just like the moment they came out of their mothers’ wombs. Sadly, those two women died two days later due to the severity of their wounds. As a result, only a few people survived from a town that totaled one thousand six hundred and fifty people.

Concluding Comments on the Carnage of the People of Ka'biyéh

With respect to the people of *Ka'biyéh*, neither time nor the events are to be blamed for their annihilation because of their overwhelming contradictions. Not even the despots who are accustomed to bloodshed were to be blamed, since the racial and religious hatred that they sucked from their mothers' breasts is still running in their blood. Even so, the entire blame, guilt, and condemnation, which shall be brought forth before the judgment seat, falls upon the one person who did not allow the *Ka'biyéh* refugees to take shelter in the Mother of God churchyard after they had escaped the carnage. *Yes*, the very person who blatantly asked the Governor to send a cruel commander to banish them from the city under the clubs of the soldiers merely not to litter the church yard, but rather be surrendered to the sword. *Yes*, the priest⁸⁶ should be held liable for the blood of those martyrs if there ever were a heavenly justice. *Lord, we rely upon your justice, and anticipate your mercy.*

The Village of Qitirbal

On (Sunday), April 1, 1915, Tharwat Othman, one of the commanding officers of the Fiftieth Regiment⁸⁷, accompanied by fifty soldiers, went to the village of *Qitirbal*. He summoned its headman named Khasho Baran and told him, "We came here to collect all types of weaponry by an order

⁸⁶ Father Bshara of the city of Maleh. — The translator.

⁸⁷ This regiment was one of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments that were established in 1891 and named after the despotic Sultan Adul-Hamid II to oppress the Armenians and the Christians of the Ottoman State in General. Their men were mainly Sunni Kurdish, but also Turkish, Circassian, Turkmen, Yoruk and Arabs. — The translator.

from the Governor. Bring every piece of weaponry in your possession.” Khasho answered, “Sir, everyone in this area knows that we, the inhabitants of this village, do not possess weapons at all. If you are suspicious, you can order your soldiers to search every house in the village.”

The soldiers started searching immediately, and unfortunately, they found a hunting gun in a house. The commander became furious, prompting the arrest of Khasho and four other prominent villagers. He, then, sent them to *Kartpert* for interrogation by the General Military Tribunal.

On the tenth day of April, Yahya Yaseen came to the village of *Qitirbal* accompanied by fifty soldiers and apprehended twenty-three men whom they found in the village. He took them to *Diyarbakir*, and imprisoned them in the *Musafirkhanéh* (*Doss-house*) while tied up. After torturing them for four days, they took them out at night on the road of the village of *Charouqiyéh* and to a hill called *Kandaléh-Sor* (the red glen), and there, they stripped them of their clothes and killed them all.

Once the women and children of the village were informed of this, they hurried and crossed the Tigris River; fleeing to the city of *Diyarbakir* which is nearby and they were all saved.

The Village of Charouqiyéh

Charouqiyéh is a village inhabited by many Christians, followers of the Syriac Orthodox and Chaldean Churches. It is situated on the bank of the *Tigris River*, eight kilometers south of *Diyarbakir*.

On (Wednesday), June 2, 1915, at eight o'clock in the evening, fifty soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment led by their commanding officer, Yahya Yaseen, came down and besieged the village from all sides, so that no one could escape. They entered the village at dawn and apprehended every adult male they came across. There were roughly thirty-five men in the village, since most of the young men had already joined the military and were in the battlefields. They tied the captives up and told them, "We are taking you to work on the highway." The priest of the village named Father Thomas was also taken. Shamelessly, they hanged a bell around his neck like the one used around the neck of a mule. They put a halter on his head and mounted him as if he were a beast of burden. They hit the road towards *Hawarjai*, and as soon as they reached a village named *Goulléh*, they stripped those men of their clothes and lined them up in groups of five to try and see if one bullet could penetrate five of them. In such a barbaric way, they killed those innocent men. The soldiers spent more than one hour watching the corpses of those martyrs. A man named Petros Moushe whom the bullets had missed, rose up amidst the slain ones unharmed and shouted to the soldiers, "I am still alive, come and finish me." The soldiers replied, "Since you have not met your destiny yet, convert to Islam and live." He then answered: "God forbid! Let it not be that I abandon my faith in Christ. Behold, my friends are waiting for me on the road, finish me right now so that I can go and join

them.” As he disobeyed their demand, they killed him. In that atrocious manner, the lives of the inhabitants of that village ended.

The women, children, and the rest of the survivors fled to *Diyarbakir* and took shelter in the Chaldean church and were cared for by his eminence the Chaldean Archbishop Shlimoun⁸⁸ until they were finally relieved by God. Archbishop Shlimoun deserves a reverential memorial for his philanthropic feat. *May God delight him with the light of His presence and shower his resting place with the dew of mercy.*

The Village of Sa'diyéh Brafa

The story of the village of Sa'diyéh Brafa was related to us by a Turkish soldier from the Fiftieth Regiment. What follows is his testimony:

“I was a soldier serving under the director of the village of *Taféh* of *Brafa*. At the time when the persecution was incited against the Christians, the *Qaymaqam*⁸⁹ of the district of *Almadinah* and about seventy Christians from the town of *Bshairiyéh* came to the district of *Brafa*. As they approached the outskirts of the village of *Tapa*, the *Qaymaqam* found a cleft at the river bank, forced those men to climb down into it, and ordered his soldiers along with the Kurds to kill them, not with bullets, but with swords, daggers, axes, and hatchets.” The soldier also added, “As they decapitated one of the

⁸⁸ Mar Shlimoun Mushe Al-Sabbagh, the Caldean archbishop of Amid (Diyarbakir) 1897-1915. — The translator.

⁸⁹ *Qaymaqam*, is the title of the official deputy of the governor. — The translator.

Christian men, his head continued uttering and praying to Jesus for almost ten minutes.

“After killing the captives, the Qaymaqam came to our director who was from *Valo* and angrily blamed him for not killing the Christians who were under his jurisdiction. Once those Christians heard that statement, they informed Father Dawood, the priest of the village of *Sa'diyéh*. He summoned and gathered all the Christian inhabitants of the village, Syriacs as well as the Armenians, since the latter's priest had left the village to another locality two months earlier. After offering them the Holy Communion, he delivered an encouraging sermon then dismissed them.

The soldier further added, “As we besieged the village and began apprehending the Christians, the aforementioned Father along with twelve others had already fled. However, after completing the killings in the village, we searched for Father Dawood, but we did not find him. The priest and his companions had gone and hidden in a big crevice at the bank of the *Shawro tributary*, where its waters flow into the *Tigris River*. They continued hiding there for eight days as a Muslim man secretly took food to them every day. On the ninth day, a *man* spotted him carrying bread and leaving the village. The former knew that the latter had no one living outside the village to take food to. He became suspicious of him, so he came and informed us. Then, we sneaked behind the former to their hideout. As he reached the spot, he called Father Dawood to come out and get the food. After they had finished eating and the Muslim man left them, we attacked and took them captives. We took them to the village of *Tapa*. There, after inflicting severe torture upon them, particularly the priest, one of the captives was about to renounce his Christian

faith, but astonishingly, Father Dawood, while under torture, roared at him.

“The priest had a small silver box in his pouch. When we tried to take it away from him, he held tight to it. No matter how much we beat him up, he did not let go of it. As we turned away from him for a moment, he opened the box, took an object out of it, and swallowed it, then threw the box towards us. Once we grew weary of torturing the captives, we drove them near some water-body and killed all of them there. Two of them had died under torture earlier.

“However, I was flabbergasted by that priest whose marvelous endurance dared all kinds of cruel torture that he was subjected to. During his harsh torment, he didn’t make a sound nor did he show any sign of pain. That was how the lives of those poor people came to an end.

The Slaughter of the Christians of Hawarjai and Jammhawar Regions

On Monday, May 3, (1915), Shaker *Beg*, a partisan of the Governor, along with a chieftain of the Ramma Kurdish tribe named Omarkéh, marched with roughly one hundred fifty men, half of them soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment and the other half Kurdish Mercenaries from Ramma (tribe). They attacked the Christian villages in the region of *Hawarjai*; including, *Silméh*, *Qarttéh*, *dair-Beshor*, *Miqsi-Oghli*, *Zoraféh*, *Hawardahléh*, and *Hawarkhaséh*. Then, they gathered the men of all those villages and took them to the village of *Chanaqchi*.

After rounding up all the Christian men of *Chanaqchi* as well, they shackled them together and took them to a vale at the village of *Hawardahléh*. There, they stripped them of their clothes and riddled their bodies with bullets until they all dropped dead. They were about one hundred sixty four distinguished, strong, and wealthy men.

Soon thereafter, those militants went to the villages of *Sirmi* and *Gozli*, rounded up the Christians men of both villages and killed them, as well. As for the women and children of the abovementioned villages, some fled to the city of *Diyarbakir* and survived while others were taken captives by the Kurds. The captives who succumbed to their persuasion and converted to Islam were allowed to live, while those, who didn't renounce their Christian faith, were killed.

The Slaughter of the Christians of the Villages of Anbarjai Region

On Friday, May 7, (1915), Yahya Yaseen led fifty soldiers accompanied by *Qassim-Beg*, the landlord of several villages, followed by twenty of his well-armed young men and marched towards the villages of the *Anbarjai* region, including *Bagjéh-jeek*, *Bouzvinar*, *Koshik*, *Abbasséh*, and *Jernik*. They gathered all the Christian men of those villages and took them to a village called *Malajabréh*. After picking up the Christians of *Malajabréh* as well, *Qassim* and his young men started torturing them, though all of those Christians were serving him and working on his properties. Later, they took them to the eastern side of the village of *Malajabréh* to a gorge called *Daréh-Jiyana* and there, they

killed them all totaling around one hundred fourteen men. The women and children, whose lives were spared, worked for Qassim till the end of the harvest season which lasted about three months. After that, this very Qassim called upon them to convert to Islam.

Those who converted survived and the rest were annihilated. That was how they were rewarded for the services they had rendered for him.

Many towns surrounding Diyarbakir such as Qadhi, Jernik, and Ragl h were inhabited by a Muslim majority, whereas the small villages such as Aynshah, Telkhas, and Qabadqazil were completely inhabited by Christians. Some of those villages were totally wiped out, while the others, knowing of their brethren's plight, fled to Diyarbakir. Nevertheless, the young men of these villages had been drafted earlier for military service, or were taken for work on the highways. Those who served in the military were killed, and others who worked on the highways were slaughtered and no one heard of their demise. To this day, their families are waiting for their return⁹⁰.

⁹⁰ This italicized paragraph is in the author's original manuscript, but is missing in the published version. — The translator.

Persecution and Slaughter of the Christians in the District of Mardin in 1914

The events that I am about to record are merely a tiny drop in the ocean of the blood that was spilled in all of the Christian villages. For neither can a pen describe, nor can many volumes be sufficient to cover the wicked atrocities that were committed against the Christians. However, in memory of them, I am merely mentioning a few of the countless atrocities.

The Saffron Monastery

The *Saffron Monastery*⁹¹ is located about eight Kilometers east of *Mardin*. This monastery was congested with thousands of men, women, and children who had survived the carnage and escaped from the Christian villages surrounding this monastery, such as *Qal'itmara*, *Bnai-Beel*, *Bakeerah*, and others, together with the monks of Virgin Mary of *Ntofo*⁹² and the nearby *Monastery of Mor Ya'coub*. They all were weeping and mourning the young and old men who were slaughtered as well as those who were drafted into the military and perished.

While the dwellers of this monastery were anticipating attacks from the Kurds at any moment, in the morning of Monday July 4, 1914, those wicked Muslims attacked the monastery and besieged it from *'Ayn-Gournéh* in the

⁹¹ Was originally named; Beth Hanania or Mar/Mor Hanania Monastery. — The translator.

⁹² The Syriac word for dripping, trickling. — The translator.

southeast to the Qourqous⁹³ of the Mother of God in the north. Nonetheless, some of the attackers reached as far as the nearby grove of the monastery.

As the occupants of the monastery, clergy and laity, found themselves in that calamitous situation, some of them were firing their bullets at the Muslim assailants from the rooftops. Others were diligently inciting the guards to fight back, while some were taking part in prayer. The scene of their supplication was so pitiful and saddening as rows of little children stood before the supplicants; kneeling and crying, “*moran hoos w’rahém ‘layn*”; which translates, “*Our Lord, forgive (us) and have mercy upon us.*”



The Saffron Monastery, Mardin.

⁹³ Qourqous = shrine, or probably from: Syriac: Qourqa/Qourqo, Qourqis, Qorqisa; a Circle or round play ground. Or from Greek: κούρκος = Circus — The translator.

When the guards at *Qal'itmara* heard the gunshots, they blew their horns alarming the city (of *Mardin*) to dispatch a supporting force for them. Around noon, a contingent of fifty soldiers from the Fiftieth Regiment arrived, but they were seeking death and destruction. In fact, we were protected by the grace of God, since the Kurds who came to take over the monastery had made a deal with the commanding officer of the Fiftieth Regiment, named Farhan. They had promised to give him two hundred *dinars* in gold if he were to surrender the monastery to them in order to kill and plunder. Therefore, when those soldiers wanted to enter the monastery, some men refused to open the gate for fear of undergoing that which had been done to the Christians of the village of *Qassr h*. However, Bishop Elias Halouli and others allowed them to enter the monastery. Prior to causing any havoc, and due to an appeal from Bishop Kyrillos Gewarguis, a contingent of soldiers was dispatched by the Governor of *Mardin* and arrived at the site. As soon as they entered the monastery, they drove the other treacherous soldiers of the Fiftieth Regiment out of the monastery. At that moment, the hearts of the clergy and laity were filled with peace and heaved a sigh of relief. The second contingent was about one hundred soldiers, and as they climbed onto the roof and saw those barbarous Kurds surrounding the monastery, their commander became enraged and started cursing the first contingent of the Fiftieth Regiment; calling them names. Later, he ordered his soldiers to shell and bombard the Kurds, to kill and disperse them.

As the Kurds encountered the attack, they retreated with the agony of defeat. The head of the monastery ordered the attendants to slaughter ten heads of sheep and prepare food for the soldiers who remained two days at the monastery. The Great War was still going on and those soldiers' uniforms were dirty, and as a goodwill gesture, the occupants took care

of them and washed their uniforms. They even gave some of them new clothes because theirs were worn out. The occupants, also, gave the commander of the contingent twenty *dinars* in gold as a gift, which he shared with his soldiers. When they were dismissed from their duty, the commander left ten soldiers to guard the monastery. They stayed there for twenty days being cared for and respected by the occupants of the monastery.

Although the Christians who had taken shelter in the Saffron Monastery escaped the enemy, they couldn't escape famine and deadly epidemics. They ran out of the food that they had carried with them when they were fleeing their homes. They were unable to leave the monastery, and whoever attempted to do so, was immediately getting killed by any passing-by Kurd.

When all the provisions in the monastery were consumed, they suffered famine, and owing to the lack of sanitary measures and cross-contamination, contagious diseases broke out triggering death. Half of the survivors who had taken refuge in the Monastery died of famine and disease. Gradually, the rest of them started fleeing the monastery to *Mardin* under the protection of the soldiers who were left at the monastery. There (in *Mardin*), some of them worked to make a living and others begged for their food. Shortly thereafter, they dispersed in the desert of *Mardin* among some Arab tribes and survived death from starvation.

The Saffron Monastery is much older than the rest of the Syriac Orthodox monasteries. It has been the Patriarchal See of Antioch for the Syriac Orthodox Church since the twelfth

century.⁹⁴ It contains a beautiful church, seventeen meters long and twelve meters wide, built in the shape of the Cross. On the second floor, there stands the Church of Revealing (?) which was built in 1696. Around the altar, there are quotations from chapter sixteen of the Gospel of Matthew written in Estrangelo⁹⁵ characters; indicating the episcopacy of Peter, the head of the apostles. It is surrounded from the northern side by monk cells and a cloister similar to that of the Ntofo Shrine of the Mother of God,⁹⁶ of Mor Ya'qoub, of Mor Hzazel, as well as the monk cells of Mor Behnam, and others. This Monastery is surrounded by gardens, vineyards, and fields; dense with vine trees, figs, almonds, walnuts, pears, apples, pomegranates, olives, and other fruitful trees.⁹⁷

During the abovementioned calamity, Patriarch Abdil-Massih, who had joined the Catholic Church after being unjustly excommunicated, but later returned to his fold i.e. to his Mother-Church, was in the monastery with Bishop Iwannis Elias Halouli, Bishop Severus Samuel of Saint Malki, as well as eight senior and twelve junior monks. There were, also, around forty pupils together with the people of the villages of *Qal'itmara*, *Bnai-Beel*, *Bakeerah*, and some survivors from the nearby villages, such as *Dara*, *Piran*, *Bafawéh*, *Ma'sarta* and others.

The valiant and armed men, who protected the monastery from attacks by the (Kurdish) despots, were the young men of

⁹⁴ It had been the Patriarchal See for the Syriac Orthodox Church since the thirteenth and not the twelfth century. However, in 1933, due to adverse political conditions, it was moved to Homs, Syria, and in 1959 was moved again to Damascus, the capital of Syria. — The translator.

⁹⁵ The most ancient of the three Syriac alphabets. — The translator.

⁹⁶ The *Ntofo* shrine of the Mother of God. *Ntofo* = trickling myrrh oil. — The translator.

⁹⁷ This Italicized paragraph is in the author's original manuscript, but is missing in the published version. — The translator.

the village of *Bnai-Beel* who are renowned for their valor and true grit. Those young men carried their guns and guarded the monastery day and night until the (Turkish) forces arrived. Then, they fled and went in hiding fearing that they would be caught and conscribed to serve in the military or, in other words, be sent to their death. Had the Turkish officers found guns on those young men, they would have been subject to death penalty, since it was prohibited for a Christians to possess weapons of any kind.

The Village of Bnai-Beel

Bnai-Beel is a densely populated village of one hundred fifty Syriac Orthodox households who are celebrated for their fortitude and fighting qualities. It is located about fifteen kilometers east of *Mardin* and ten kilometers northeast of the *Saffron Monastery*.

It has two churches named after Saint Quryaqos and Saint Shmouni and two priests, Father Yoseph and Father Shem'oun, the latter having passed away one year ago.

On June 9, 1914, around five thousand Kurdish savages, men and women, attacked the inhabitants of this village. There were ten soldiers who, supposedly, were assigned to protect the village, but they did not help them at all, nor did the despot, Khalil Ghazaléh, assumingly a "friend" of the village who had frequently pledged their protection.

When the inhabitants of the village got constrained by seeing the Kurds entering the village and looting under the nose of the Turkish soldiers, their pride could not concede any longer. They counterattacked the Kurds and forced them out of the village.

Meanwhile, they pounced on them like lions and chased them away off the village limits, while brandishing their daggers.

Nevertheless, when the men of *Bnai-Beel* returned after driving the Kurds away, the soldiers with the despot Khalil Ghazaléh deceived them and gathered all their weapons. During their meeting in the garden with the soldiers, along with the despot Khalil Ghazaléh and his followers, some of the villagers were picking apricots to treat their alleged protectors. Nonetheless, the latter opened fire on the villagers who, as soon as they saw this, began fleeing while being shot at. Regrettably, they killed six men from *Bnai-Beel* that day.

What makes one wonder is how those brave warriors were deceived by the soldiers and by Khalil Ghazaléh! The very Bnai-Beelians who were familiar and aware of the wickedness of this treacherous race that keeps no promise nor abides by any alliance.

As a result, all the inhabitants of the village fled to the *Saffron Monastery* and remained there for almost three months. They lived on the little victuals that they carried with them, and subsequently they returned to their village.

The Village of Dara

Dara is an old town situated at the foot of the mountain which is between *Aamouda* and *Nisibin*. Although the persecution of the Christians had not yet been openly declared, on June 1, 1914, the Kurdish chief of *Dara* accompanied by a *sheikh*⁹⁸ along with Ahmad Khalil summoned the Christian men of the village totaling about

⁹⁸ The Arabic word for chieftain, also used as a title for Muslim clerics. —The translator.

twenty five persons and told them, “You have been summoned by the government to go to the city of *Mardin* for military service.” They took them to a pit about half an hour walking distance from *Dara* and there they killed them and threw their corpses into that pit together with a woman who did not submit to them. None of the men survived except for one of them who fled and made it to the village of *Bekeera* completely naked, and informed us about what had happened. To this day, there are still captive Christian women in this village who refuse to marry Muslim men.



Ignatius Elias III, patriarch of Antioch, Head of the Syriac Orthodox Church from 1917 to 1932.

Three months after the massacre of this village, a Christian woman named Saydéh fled with her eight-year old son and came to the Saffron Monastery.

This woman had had fifty three heads of sheep entrusted to the care of the chief of *Aamouda*, named Farhan.

Patriarch Ignatius Elias III sent soldiers claiming the sheep and Farhan sent them back to her.

However, a year later, the abovementioned woman returned to *Dara* with her son and was killed by the very man from whom she had fled.

The Village of Ma'sarta

On June 2, the despots of *Ma'sarta*, Hussein and Shendi, savagely attacked the Christians of the village. As a matter of fact, they did not act on their own in that attack, but after they had met with the leaders of *Mardin* including Khidher Chalabi, Muhammad Ali Chalabi, and Shawkat Malléh and were given the green light from them to kill the Christians.

Granted permission from the abovementioned leaders, the two despots returned to the village. In the evening, they summoned the Christian men who numbered about thirty and told them, "We received orders regarding your protection, come over so we can read them to you." Upon their arrival, the two despots and their followers tied them up, took them away and killed them at the edge of a huge pit, as none of them would convert to Islam.

Some of this village's men had not responded to that order and did not go with those who were killed. Upon hearing the news of their brethren, two of them made it to the *Saffron Monastery* and were saved, but others fled to the village of *Bafawah* and were killed there.

Several Muslim women had hidden Christian children and women in their homes. Once the turmoil relatively calmed down, those Muslim women began taking three or four Christian children and women every now and then to the Church of the Forty Martyrs in *Mardin*. They were rewarded and paid by the Patriarchal Procurator, Bishop Kyrillos Gewarguis, and by the Christians of the city in order to please those women and encourage them to bring out more hidden Christians.

The Village of Bafawah

On June 4, the Kurds raided the village of *Bafawah*. While the bands of robbers were engaged in the plundering of the village, the landlord of the village and his brother had been busy killing the Christians of their own village. *Woe to the wickedness and disbelief!* They burned the priest of the village alive and slaughtered the chief of the village named Gewarges, who was known for his kindness and generosity. Gewarges and his son had a rifle, and when the Kurds approached them, his son, named Yoseph, said, "Father, allow me to kill some of them, then let me be killed." However, his father admonished him saying, "Do not bring the judgment of killing upon yourself and if we are to be slaughtered, why would we stain our hands with the blood of others." At that point, Yoseph laid down the rifle and instead picked up the Holy Gospel and began reciting. He held the Gospel tight in his hand and did not drop it until he was killed with a sword. Eight Christian men fled the village, two sought refuge in the village of *Rassin* and there they were caught and killed by Kurds. Four others made it to the village of *Bnai-Beel*, and two others arrived to the Saffron Monastery after eight days. The remaining Christians of that village were taken to the city of *Sur*.

The Village of Bakeerah

This village is an estate of the Saffron Monastery. When the news of the slaughter of the Christians broke out, the Abbot and the treasurer of the Saffron Monastery went to the Ottomanist despot Khalil Ghazaléh and discussed with him the protection of the village. The Abbot asked if there was a need for requesting military guards from the city for their protection, and Khalil Ghazaléh assured him that there was no

need for soldiers and swore to protect the village estates and its inhabitants.

However, the treacherous Khalil did exactly the opposite. For after returning from his plundering of Bnai-Beel and finding out that some of them (the Bnai-Beelians) had survived, he went and vented his anger on the inhabitants of *Bakeerah* who were in his custody and whose majority were originally Bnai-Beelians. First, he invited the men and the women, prepared supper for them and told them, "Get ready; let me take you to *Saffron Monastery*." (Second), he led them through the road of *Khourméh*, and halfway upon the road, as they approached a water-well called *Beer-Mamo*, there, they killed the men, totaling fifteen, and Khalil took the women to his domain. Later, many of those women escaped to the *Saffron Monastery*. Three inhabitants of *Bakeerah* jumped into the abovementioned water-well and were still alive. Therefore, Khalil Ghazaléh's thugs piled wood on top of them and burnt them alive. At night, a pretty woman, whom they wanted to take in as a wife, left her little child behind. She escaped and came to the *Saffron Monastery*.

The Village of Mansouriyéh

On Wednesday,⁹⁹ June 11, (1914), the Muslim inhabitants of the village turned against their Christian cohabitants and slaughtered them. The slaughter of one sector of the village was not yet over when a contingent of soldiers arrived from *Mardin* and stopped the onslaught; saving the other sectors of the village.

⁹⁹ June 11, 1914 coincides with Thursday. — The translator.

When the turmoil somewhat calmed down, the government gathered some of their stray livestock to provide food for them. At that juncture, forty women went to their homes to bring food and other necessities, but the Kurds attacked and killed them. A Muslim woman from the village of Dashiyyeh told their story and described how astounded the perpetrators were by the courage of those Christian women. She added that they were facing death with a smile; sacrificing their lives for their faith. This story was verified by a Christian boy who was taken captive by the Kurds and later escaped and confirmed to us what had happened.

The Village of Qussour

On Saturday¹⁰⁰ June 14, (1914), the cruel Kurdish leaders along with the Arab tribes in the plains and hills of *Mardin* prepared to launch an attack on the village of *Qusour*. There were approximately one hundred twenty Turkish soldiers stationed there to protect the village, since its population exceeded four hundred households, all of whom were members of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

At first, the soldiers confronted the attackers, but in the end, they colluded with them in plundering and ruining the village. So, they aided the attackers who entered the village and began killing and looting, then set it ablaze; a fire which continued burning for eight days. The few who escaped under the pitch darkness of the night, made it to *Mardin* in a heart-breaking condition.

¹⁰⁰ June 14, 1914 falls on Sunday. — The translator.

The following day, the Governor of *Diyarbakir* came to *Mardin*. Witnessing this, he sent his assistant to investigate the killing. The investigator was able to count up approximately one thousand seven hundred corpses of the slaughtered ones. He, also, saw the son of *Sheikh* Ramadan, whom the Kurds revere and claim that he performs miracles, well armed and ready for plunder. The Governor's assistant detained the son of *sheikh* Ramadan along with others and took them to *Mardin*. The Governor excoriated him ostentatiously. Later, he exonerated him, and let him go unpunished.

The Village of Qilith

Qilith is a large village with predominantly Syriac Orthodox inhabitants except for some Catholic and Protestant converts. There was a very old church in this village named after Mor Shimoun Qnonoyo and Mor Youhanon of *Delaim*. The inhabitants exceeded two hundred households and lived a life of leisure and affluence, for they owned vast estates, vineyards, orchards, and livestock.

The priests of *Qilith* who are: Father Thoma, Father Mas'oud, Father Abrohom along with the notable, Mr. Eskandar Malki Gabro, and others were jailed for quite some time in the city of *Sur's* prison and subjected to brutal torture. They too were slain along with the rest of the Christian inhabitants of *Sur* at a location called *Babayn* (meaning "two doors or double-door").

On June 3, 1915, the Kurds rallied and besieged the village from all sides. There were twenty-five soldiers deployed there allegedly to protect the inhabitants. At that time, the headmen of the village, Benyamin and his son

Shimoun had been taken to *Diyarbakir* as captives. Later, despite their release, they were killed by the soldiers on their way back to *Qilith*. All the inhabitants of the village had taken shelter in Benyamin's house. Being overcrowded, when the Kurds slaughtered them, their blood ran down from the upper story to the front door of the ground floor. I shall refrain from mentioning the kinds of despicable and outrageous acts they committed against the women inside and outside the village. Later, the Kurds began checking the corpses to make sure that no one was still alive. They heated skewers red-hot and pierced the corpses, so that if a wounded person were still alive, he/she would react to the pain, then they would finish them off. Finally, they gathered the rest of the inhabitants and took them to the city of *Sur* where they forcibly took many pretty women as wives.

Petros Gabriel said, "Miqsi Hanna, Malki the orphan, and I accompanied by a horse groomer named Rashido went to *Sur* and from there we went with a noble soldier to the village of *Qilith* and lodged at Jibo Galli Sabo'os. In the morning of the following day, Galli's mother, named Zairo, came to us and said, "The sons of our *Begs* (lords) sent a message informing us that the soldiers may come to the village; therefore, no young men or women should remain in the village. For your well-being, you too must escape to the mountain, take some raisins with you and leave." I then told her, "If they are coming for mobilization, then we won't be fleeing, because I have paid the military service exemption fee and my companion is underage."

An hour later, we heard gunshots followed by bitter wailing of the old women who were left behind as they witnessed seven young men being gunned down at the gardens area. At three o'clock pm, the soldiers arrived from the city of *Sur* and found only the elders. They laid hold of three women, and after raping them, they crucified them

naked. As for the three priests of the village, after their torture, they took them to *Sur* and incarcerated them.

The City of Sur

The Christians formed a small minority in the city of *Sur* in comparison to the Muslim population. At the commencement of the persecution, the soldiers apprehended all the Christian men they found in the village, including the following: Eskandar Gabbéh, Amseeh Lolo, Malko Bahhéh Sabbagh, Bahéh Kajoun, Sehioun, Zayno Dawood and his brother Habel, Gorggeis Shammias, Murad Haddad, Sa'do Na'ilband and his son Eskandar, and Baro the son of Eséh Bano who professed to Islam, yet was slaughtered.

Following the torture of those desperate Christians in the prison for a certain period, they brought them out and led them away alleging they were taking them to *Mardin*. Prior to their departure, they collected from some of them the military service exemption fee, which was fifty *dinars* in gold per person. They had not walked long when they killed Amseeh Lolo after a cruel torture. Once they arrived at the *Babayn* area, Father Abrohom died before being slaughtered. As for Father Thoma, they killed him while his arms risen towards heaven. Also, they subjected Eskandar to harsh torture for being a distinguished person. On the other hand, while they were luring the so-called Baro Eséh Bano to convert to Islam and live, lest he be killed like the others, in a moment of weakness, he professed to Islam, even so, they killed him.

Some Muslims publically testified that they saw a beam of light coming down from the sky and spotlighting their corpses, but they assumed it was smoke.

The Monastery of Saint Aho in Arzon

When the persecution of the Christians started, the monks of Saint Aho including Ya'qoub of *Habisnas* and Gabriel of *Bshairiyéh* along with the priests and the rest of the parishioners, fled the monastery. They sought refuge at the despot Jameel Jatto's who at the beginning welcomed and promised to protect them. Nevertheless, when the Turkish military commanders forced him to either extradite them or face persecution. At which point, he picked out two men from each village, as well as the three priests, and took them away for slaughter. Those monks and priests marched happily forward to face death as if they were attending a feast. They did not cease chanting hymns until the hour of their slaughter. However, in a moment of weakness, one of the laymen professed to Islam, yet he was killed, too. In this modus operandi the Christians were wiped out in those regions.

The City of Mardin

Mardin is a large and heavily-populated city. Around twenty thousand Christians lived in it, including members of The Syriac Orthodox Church, Armenians, the Chaldean Church, Catholic Syriacs, and Protestants. The Orthodox Syriacs formed the majority. The city is built on the southern slopes of a high hill. Its buildings resemble terraces; rising above each other. The mount is crowned with a fortified castle that has a rugged path and rough upward slope. The ancients called this castle, "Master of the Fortresses and the Center of Combat". No castle is stronger and more fortified than this castle in the entire region of 'Gaizarta/Gaizarto'¹⁰¹. Many

¹⁰¹ Gizra/Gizro, Gaizarta, also called Baith Zabdai in Syriac. Arabic: Jazirat ibn Umar, an important town during the Abbasids and the Crusades periods which →

kings, in the ancient times, grew weary before they were able to conquer it. The castle is surrounded by other strong fortresses whose names prevailed over the city, and thus was called Mardin (Plural of fortress in Syriac). The conquering kings constructed stronghold stations, ample residences, and dug water-wells within the castle. Also, they planted in it a variety of trees to sustain and withstand a siege by the enemy as well as the war calamities.

Mardin overlooks the following town: Dara, Nisibin, Sinjar, Dnisar, Kfartouta, Khabour, Rish-Ayna as well as other ancient towns. The people of Mardin were proselytized to Christianity during the tidings of the Evangelists; Addai and his disciple Aggai in the middle of the Second Century. Thus, it is considered among the first Christian cities. What verifies this is its very old churches and monasteries, such as the Church of Saint Shmouni and Saint Mikhael's Monastery on the south side of the city as well as the Grand Church of the Forty Martyrs which the Muslims converted into a mosque and named it 'Masjid Al-Shaheed'. This conversion is verified by the Patriarch Mikhael Rabo¹⁰², by the unknown Edessene historian, and by Gregory Bar Hebraeus in their historical accounts. Unfortunately, we did not receive the news of our Christian forefathers of the first three centuries, because the many wars, turmoil, and persecutions that they endured resulted in the destruction of their writings and news.¹⁰³

functioned as a gateway connecting upper Mesopotamia to Armenia. It is surrounded by the Tigris River on the North, East, and South; which gave it its name-meaning 'The Island' in Syriac and Arabic. — The translator.

¹⁰² Michael the Great, Syriac Orthodox Patriarch, 1166-1199 A.D. — The translator.

¹⁰³ This Italicized part about the city of Mardin is in the author's original manuscript, yet it is missing in the published version. — The translator.

Onslaught and Inflictions that the Ezidis Endured in Mount Sinjar for the Christians

Mount Sinjar is a merging-summit of rugged mountains that are abundant with fruits, particularly figs. Since the early ages, this mount was famous for its predominant Christian community and renowned for its monasteries and churches among which was the Monastery of Mar Sargis of *Mount Sahhya*. In this monastery, eminent bishops and skillful scholars were cultured, among them the scholar, Dawid Bar Paulos D'Beth Rabban.¹⁰⁴ However, towards the end of the Twelfth Century, the Ezidis¹⁰⁵, who had increased in number, conquered the Christians and destroyed their churches and abbeys. Thus, the entire mountain was cleansed of Christians.

The Ezidis are related to Yazid Ibn Muawiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan.¹⁰⁶ They believe in one August-god under whose dominion six other gods exist lower than him in rank, and they include: Izid, *Sheikh* Adai, Malek Taous, Sharaf Ad-Deen, Shams Ad-Deen, and Fakhr-Ad-Deen. They believe in reincarnation and the eternity of the soul.

Yazid was born in 659 A.D., and in 688 he slaughtered a great number of Arabs in *Kufa* and *Basra*. In 879 A.D. Ahmad, the grandfather of *Sheikh* Adai ruled the Ezidis and was succeeded by Musafir then Adai who taught the Ezidis to acknowledge the deity of Yazid. It was Adai who killed the monks of *Mount Sinjar* towards the end of the Thirteenth

¹⁰⁴ David the son of Paul of the house of Rabban. — The translator.

¹⁰⁵ They are also known as Yazidis. — The translator.

¹⁰⁶ The Ezidis have no blood relation with the above mentioned Yazid. They were labeled so. — The translator.

Century. Later, Adai was killed by Hulagu Khan's warriors in a location called *Taq*, whereas his son Sharaf-Ad-Deen was killed in *Jazeera*.

The Ezidis have two grand princes holding the title of *Al-Haj*. They both observe forty-day fasting in the summer and forty-day in the winter. The two princes are known for being compassionate, pitiful, and kind.

Among their customs, when a son is born, the father stays at home for seven days. Then, his relatives come together and circumcise the newborn. They also baptize him with water in the summer time. Marriage by consent or abduction of the woman is permitted throughout the year, except for the month of April. The Ezidis are polygamists and a man can marry up to seven women at the same time. As a part of their wedding tradition, the guests would sit and eat raisins with the bride and groom; however, the wedding would not be completed, but by the will of the parents. It doesn't make a difference for them if the bride is a virgin or not. When one of them dies, they cover a horse with a purple cloth and have it walk before the procession. They dance with swords and shields, fire gunshots in the air, sprinkle dirt on their heads and rip off their garments. They would cut a tuft of their hair and place it on the grave.

The Ezidis celebrate three festivities. The first, at the beginning of summer, in memory of *Sheikh* Adai's murder, and they call it the Festivity of the Forty, the second, at the beginning of November, in memory of the murder of Adai by Hulagu Khan's men, and the third, at the beginning of April, in memory of *Sheikh* Adai's storming of Nestor's Monastery.

It is forbidden for an Ezidi to learn reading and writing unless he belongs to the family of *Sheikh Adai*.¹⁰⁷

There are twenty-five princes under the Chief Prince. The latter has absolute freedom to kill and plunder as well as to appoint or discharge any of the princes that he chooses to.

The second prince does not drink alcohol at all, nor does he allow anyone who consumes alcohol to enter his domicile.

The duty of the third prince is prayer and teaching. His orders are obeyed. He keeps a chain and some clubs by which he casts away demons.

The fourth prince commands marital affairs. Under his guidance there are elders who obey him.

The fifth prince has companions and attendants who reside in the towns of *Bahzanéh* and *Baashiqqa*, in the province of *Mosul*. The Ezidis collect gifts and alms and send them to him.

The sixth prince has companions and each companion is called *Fakir*, meaning “poor”. They wear black garments and represent the Ezidis’ anchorites. All of them marry except their head that is called *Chawish*.

The seventh prince, also, has companions who are called *Pouchkéh* and there are too many of them. They fast forty

¹⁰⁷ In the mid twentieth century, the Ezidis began sending their boys to school, and only recently, they allowed their girls to be educated. — The translator.

days a year. They pay pilgrimage to the tomb of *Sheikh Adai* and call themselves the Jackasses of *Sheikh Adai*.

The Ezidis had seven bronze statues. Two of them were destroyed by the Muslims and the other five survived. The statues signify birds in their resemblance, and each has one eye only.

When the Ezidis congregate in the house of their chief, they place one of the statues in a bowl of water and chant in Persian language until the statue begins to dance. This ceremony is performed only once a year.

The Ezidis love the Christians and despise the Muslims because the latter disdain the Ezidis and dishonor their religion. They exhibit high self-esteem and are hospitable to strangers. These qualities were reflected by their compassion and reception of the Christian refugees as well as their struggle and suffering to save them from slaughter. They went so far as to expose their lives to the risk of death and their homes to plunder for the sake of the Christians. By doing so, they deservedly gained earnest affection and great respect from all the Christians.



Ezidi family from Akra, 19th century

Christians Seek Refuge at Mount Sinjar to Escape Slaughter

The Christians of *Mardin* and its suburbs inferred that no matter how obedient, submissive, and faithful they may be to the Turkish government and the Muslim population, they would not be able to appease those tyrants nor arouse compassion in their hearts. Therefore, they preferred to abandon their homes, become aliens to their country, and scatter all over the world. They found no better sanctuary than *Mount Sinjar*, living under the protection of the Ezidi people.

In the spring of 1915, heartbreaking news reached the city of *Mardin* that the Ottoman Turks were persecuting and slaying the Christians in the regions of *Dospan* and *Arzroom*, and disdaining the Christians in the rest of the cities. Accordingly, many young Christian men from *Mardin* and its suburbs left clandestinely to avoid injustice, persecution, and eminent annihilation in the military. When they arrived at *Mount Sinjar*, the Ezidis welcomed them warmly and cheerfully. Their Chief Prince, Hamo Shiru, who is well known for his kindness and philanthropic spirit, used to welcome them with open arms. He would designate an area for them to stay and meet their needs. He would allow them employment and would comfort them any time they had received news of the horrible atrocities. In this manner, he earned the utmost respect and affection of the Christians.

As the month of July was looming, the refugees heard about the caravans of the banished ones and the slaughter of the Christians everywhere. They became overwhelmed with grief and sadness and were convinced that their relatives were undoubtedly among those who were wiped out by the sword of the cruel despots while they were abroad.

Disease and Pestilence Inflicting the Christian Refugees in Mount Sinjar

In the fall of 1915, the miserable conditions of the Christian refugees in *Mount Sinjar* deteriorated and their mishaps increased due to the relapsing fever attributed to the lack of sanitary measures, grief, and misery. Consequently, the Ezidi chiefs, lead by Aashour, the chief of the *Mamidha* territory, detested the infected refugees. Fearing their deadly disease, they forced them to vacate their homes. Aashour was so alarmed by the disease that he decided to gather all the infected Christians and confine them to one location to perish there, so that the Ezidis would be protected against that disease. Therefore, the Christians appealed to their sympathizer, Hamo Shiru, the Chief Prince of the Ezidis, who confronted Aashour and threatened to kill him should he harm any Christian. Thus, Aashour dismissed his plan and designated an area for them in his village, *Mamidha*, until they recuperated from that syndrome.

Since the Christians were unable to obtain medicine, twenty men died as a result. Once again, Aashour and the people of *Mamidha* were enraged and wanted to expel them from the village. The Christians once more turned to the Chief Prince, Hamo Shiru, who took care of them and designated for them a big hill that faced his village. He allowed them to build houses and weave huts from oak branches to temporarily reside in them during the fall, and return home soon after the beginning of winter. Nevertheless, he advised them that it would be safer if they stayed and lived close to him. Before the beginning of winter, the Ezidis built houses for them constructed of adobe blocks. They also built a hall in which they congregated and prayed being serviced by a Chaldean priest named Yoseph who didn't stay for long; leaving them

under the religious guidance of a teacher named Farajalla who taught, cautioned, and encouraged them. Gradually, the number of the Christian refugees in *Mount Sinjar* increased, so they built about sixty houses to shelter them. They also constructed another building as their clinic to care for the sick. They even established a charitable association and collected donations from Christians for the needs of the sick.

At the beginning of March of 1916, survivors from the Armenian caravans as well as from the regions of *Shaddadéh* and *Deir ezZor*, began arriving at the southern slopes of *Mount Sinjar*. In many cases, the Muslims would bring caravans of Christians to that arid wilderness and leave them there to die from starvation and thirst.

As the Ezidis heard of the caravans, they would approach them and snatch little boys and girls. They would bring them to the mountain and hand them to the Christians while naked, bare-footed, and with emaciated bodies. The Christian refugees in *Mount Sinjar* used to receive them cheerfully and would thank those who saved them.

At this point, as the persecution pressed hard on the Christians, many escaped from *Mardin* and its outskirts. They were rather the survivors who had escaped from the caravans that were marched to their death and eventually made it to *Mount Sinjar* in a very miserable state. Later on, approximately three hundred more people arrived at one time from the regions of *Shaddadéh*, *Deir ezZor* and other villages in those areas. Their Christian brothers in *Mount Sinjar* welcomed them warmly. They took good care of them and collected fifty dinars in gold as alms for their temporary needs.

In the summer of 1916, some Christian refugees began working in the vineyards and fields of the Ezidis with a wage enough to cover their needs. Others asked their relatives to send for them needles, gum, and sugar. Yet, some others asked for gold and silver jewelry, such as rings, earrings, and bracelets. They swapped those items for wheat and lentil to secure provisions for themselves and their brethren since they lived as one family. So, God showered them with His blessings and they flourished. However, as the harvest failed and led to scarcity and due to the prevalence of famine in the entire *Mount Sinjar* region, those Christian refugees, disregarding their wellbeing, took the risk and went to the Arab tribe of Tayy and brought big amounts of barley, millet, rye, and other items of sustenance which secured their lives. When the Chief Prince, Hamo Shiru, saw the magnitude of their sustenance, he was flabbergasted and contentedly said, “I frankly admire you Christians for the abundance of your sustenance resources, whereas we the owners of vineyards, fields, and livestock are lacking such resources to the point that our children need to borrow from you.”

Due to the severe scarcity and dire famine, a few Ezidis began stealing and pillaging essential food items. Therefore, their Chief Prince, Hamo Shiru, issued a strict order stating: “Anyone who steals or pillages anything from the Christians, his house shall be plundered and will be banished from the land.” Truly, he carried out the order against the Ezidis who stole riches from the Christians. By doing so, he earned tremendous respect from the Christians as well as an honorable mention in the pages of our historical accounts. To his credit, the Christian refugees in *Mount Sinjar* enjoyed one year and six months of peaceful life. In the meantime, fear of persecution had diminished in *Mardin* and the British forces

had entered the city of *Mosul*¹⁰⁸ and occupied the entire country of Iraq.

However, wickedness continued and atrocities increased. The Turks, who had wiped out most of the Christians in their territories, launched attacks against *Mount Sinjar*, because they had heard that many Christians had taken shelter there. A heavily-armed force was sent by the Turkish government to seize *Mount Sinjar* and wipe out the Christians who had survived the carnage and sought refuge there.

The Turkish armed forces arrived and stationed at *Mount Sinjar* then blockaded the entire mountain. Their commander named Mouhyiddeen, who was also the head of the Turkish intelligence in that region, sent a message to the Ezidis' Chief Prince, Hamo Shiru, which stated, "Surrender all the Christians who fled and took shelter in your mountain, as well as every sort of weapon that you have in your possession; otherwise, I will inflict heavy casualties on you and destroy all your homes."

When Hamo Shiru read the message, he became very angry and said, "How could my conscience allow me to turn over these Christians who sought my protection?! I have pledged their safety, sworn and given my word of honor not to betray them. '*La w'fista*' (Ezidi expression for an oath of honor)¹⁰⁹, as long as I am alive, I won't hand over even one Christian to him, and only when my children and I are killed, then the enemies can do to them whatever they choose to." He continued and added, "This commander wants us to surrender

¹⁰⁸ The British captured Baghdad in 1917 and only entered the city of Mosul on November 3, 1918. — The translator.

¹⁰⁹ There is no such an Ezidi oath. The author must have made a mistake in the transliteration of their oath phrase. — The translator.

our arms. What a stupid thought! He expects us to surrender our weapons and become like sitting ducks to his bullets and guns!” Then he summoned all the chiefs of the Ezidis, showed them the order, and revealed his personal opinion that he rejected the commander’s order. The chiefs notwithstanding, reflected different opinions. Some said: “We’d better obey the commander’s order.” While others shouted: “We should confront him and fight in self defense.” Nevertheless, Hamo Shiru convinced all of them to confront him and fight in self defense rather than surrender themselves like sheep for slaughter. The chiefs left the meeting and went back to their homes, picked up their weapons, and rushed to a place called *Sheeb-Alqasim*, which is sacred ground for them, and stationed there. Hamo Shiru took some of his followers and went to a place called *Kharséh* to scout the enemy and found three Turkish army legions stationed there; looking for the opportunity to attack and occupy *Mount Sinjar*.

On the Gospel’s Sabbath, i.e. Easter Eve, the Turkish army approached the Mount, where the Ezidis had gathered, and began shelling *Sheeb-Alqasim* with artillery shells that shook the ground and terrified the entire populace of *Mount Sinjar*.

The Turkish army began marching towards the mountain while Hamo Shiru and his fighters were lying in wait for them. As the Turks drew closer, the Ezidis showered them with a hail of bullets killing fifteen of them. The Ezidis losses were limited to only one man named Khalaf Sinjari who ventured and went to retrieve the guns of the dead Turkish soldiers. When Hamo Shiru saw the huge numbers of the Turkish forces and their heavy weaponry, he feared that a massacre would take place should they stay in their lurking-place. He retreated to a nearby village, assembled the

Christians, and told them, “I advise you to leave your lodgings and move to the southern part of the mountain where there is no danger. Take all your belongings including provisions, utensils, and other materials with you, because the enemy is around the corner and is seriously threatening us.” The Christians carried their belongings and moved to the southern quarter. Thus, the Turkish army stormed the village of *Mamidha* and began plundering the houses. That very day, they stormed many Ezidi villages, and at sunset they reached the Christian dwelling sector. Inside the first abandoned Christian house that the Turks stormed, they found an old man who was unable to flee. They killed him on the spot, and stole everything they found in that house.

As for the Christians who abandoned their dwelling sector, they fled; climbing through the rugged heights of the mountain while terrified and in tears.

After the village of *Mamidha* and the village of Hamo Shiru were subdued, all the Ezidis surrendered to the Turkish Army and exhibited total submission. The Turkish authorities assigned a deputy to the village of *Mamidha* and deployed a garrison in every village. Hence, the mountaineers went back to enjoy some peace.

The soldiers, who were stationed there to guard the mountain, grew weary of staying and gradually decreased in number since they were leaving the mountain. As a result, the Ezidis grew stronger and rose up to retaliate against the Turks. Wherever they encountered a Turkish soldier, they killed him and seized his weapon until the rest of the soldiers fled; fearing for their lives.

After a short period of time, some Christians sought refuge at the dwelling area of the Arab tribe of Tayy and gave money to their *Sheikhs* in return for their protection from slaughter. Others fled from one town to another until they reached *Nisibin*, exhausted and hungry. As for those who stayed behind in *Mount Sinjar*, they went back to their dwelling sector and lived there until there was no fear of any further persecution. Consequently, the peaceful Christian scattered all over, owing to the wickedness of the Turkish forces.

The Massacre of Beth-Zabdai (Azakh)

Beth-Zabdai, AKA *Jazeera Ibn Umar*, is a town known for its bad weather and is situated on the Bank of the Tigris River, about hundred eighty kilometers south of the city of *Mardin*. This town used to be a dwelling for a large Christian community, including members of the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Chaldean Church, and few Catholic Syriacs. Each of these denominations had an archbishop, priests and a magnificent church.

In April of 1915, the ruthless Governor Rashid Pasha dispatched one of Diyarbakir's leaders named Zalfi, on a mission. This wretched leader provoked and incited the Kurds to slaughter the Christians.

It happened that Mar Yacoub, bishop of the Chaldeans, paid a visit to Zalfi. Instead of welcoming the bishop, Zalfi looked at him wrathfully and stated: "The day in which we will place a load of a hundred pounds of barley on your back and drive you like a donkey has approached." By hearing that,

the bishop was shocked and went back to his cell; sad and distressed.

A few of *Mardin's* Muslims who had participated in the massacre of *Beth Zabdai*, like Muhammad Rasoul, Muhammad Nazo, and Khider Chalabi's brother, told us, "When the time for the massacre of the Christians of *Diyarbakir* was about to start, Archbishop Bihnam Aqroyo of the Syriac Orthodox Church had already left *Jazeera* for *Azakh*."

On Monday, August 17, 1915, the Turkish Army stormed the church of the Catholic Syrians and detained Bishop Mikhael and Fr. Paulos and imprisoned them. Then, they stormed the church of the Chaldeans and picked up Bishop Yacoub and three priests; Fr. Youhannan, Fr. Eliya, and Fr. Marcus and jailed them along with the others.

On Friday, August 28, 1915, the ruthless Turks brought both Bishop Mikhael and Bishop Yacoub before a tribunal and demanded they surrender every piece of weaponry they and their parishioners had in their possession. Since they had none, and replied, "We don't have any sort of weapons;" yet, the Turkish commanders glowed with anger and had them beaten severely until they began bleeding. Later, they murdered them execution-style by firing three bullets at each of them. Finally, they tied a rope around their feet and dragged them away outside the city, while naked.

On the following day, Saturday, August 29, the Turkish soldiers rounded up all the Christian men and incarcerated them. They left them for four days without food and drink while being brutally tortured. Subsequently, they tied them up with ropes and drove them about half an hour on foot south of

Beth-Zabdai, to an area called *Sous River*, killed them all there, and came back; carrying the victim's belongings.

On (Wednesday), the first of September, 1915, the ruthless Turks returned to *Beth-Zabdai*, gathered all the women, girls, and boys and told them that they were taking them to *Mosul* to join their relatives. Nevertheless, while their howls and cries were ripping the heavens apart, they marched them out of the town straight to the *Sous River* area and slaughtered them, there. They stripped them of everything they had on them; clothing and jewelry. Then, they picked out the girls and boys that they liked, and took them home with them. None of the Christians of *Jazeera* survived except for four women that had sought refuge with a Muslim man who hid them in his house.

The Massacre of the Town of Siirt

Siirt is a town near the bank of the *Tigris River*. It's surrounded by mountains that are abundant with vineyards and orchards of Figs and pomegranates. It is annexed to the Governorate of *Bitlis* and located at a distance of four days walking from *Mardin* heading north.

The number of Christians in *Siirt* and its outskirts exceeded twelve thousand people consisting of Syriac Orthodox, Chaldeans, and Armenians. The Chaldean denomination was ministered by the renowned scholar and blessed martyr Mar Addai Sheir, the Chaldean Archbishop of *Siirt*.

Siirt had a monastery and schools for boys and girls as well as two orphanages managed by three nuns. Overall, *Siirt* was a thriving and well-populated Christian town. Soon after

the beginning of WWI in 1914, the Dominican monks and nuns were compelled to leave *Siirt* and return to their countries.

Around mid-June, 1915, the Kurdish despots grew mighty and stormed the Christian households and began torturing and killing them. They apprehended many Christian men beginning with members of the very distinguished families, such as the praiseworthy family of Abboush, whose members exceeded sixty persons, the family of Aiwas, the family of Mousi Georges, and others. The number of the detained ones came close to six hundred men whom they imprisoned and deprived of food. Then, they began interrogating the priests and community leaders under cruel torture; asking about the hiding places of their weapons. Suddenly, the ruthless Ahmad *Agha* Kaghéh tackled Father Abrohom, the Syriac Orthodox priest, decapitated him and threw his head in the marketplace for the heathen Muslims who went kicking it as if it was a soccer ball.

Next, Qasimlo and his thugs stormed the house of the Chaldean priest, Fr. Gabriel, and took him to face a tribunal. Once he walked into the place, they stripped him of his clothes and started piercing his body with the sharp tips of their daggers and swords. With every stab, they commanded him to renounce Christianity and profess to Islam, but that martyr father would shout back and repeat, "I'll die adhered to the glorious Christian faith," until he expired. Then, they decapitated him and dumped his head in a ditch near Ahmad *Agha's* house.

After holding the Christian men for four days in prison, on the fifth day, and early in the morning, they chained and moved them to a valley called *Ziryab*, which is about five kilometers north of the city. Before slaughtering them, Father Aphraim stood amidst them encouraging them to remain adhered to their faith. As they heard him, they burst into tears, and their wails were heard in the city. Similarly, they killed all

of them, brought their belongings, and divided them among themselves.

Later, they stormed the Christian homes, rounded up the women, boys, and girls and split them into three caravans. They marched them all bare-footed, naked, hungry, and thirsty from one massacre to another. They would walk them through rugged places to torture them more. They would strip them of their clothes, commit sexual violence against married women, and corrupt the chastity of the young girls, then kill them.

Many of those despots picked out their favorite underage girls and took them to their harems to appease their dirty lust. Only the little Christian children were left in the city; that the despots let live in order to have control over their parents' movable and immovable properties. Once the Russian forces approached those regions, the Turks gathered those young boys as well and killed them all at a place called *Saréh-Zeenéh*.

As for the Archbishop Addai Sheer¹¹⁰, Othman *Agha* sent him to his village, *Dair-Sho*. However, a week later, Ali, Naqeeb Al-Ashraaf,¹¹¹ and the City Judge knew of his whereabouts and sent soldiers who picked him up to be killed. Prior to his killing, he asked them if they would allow him five minutes to pray. He knelt and prayed, then wore his cross around his neck and told them, "Now, do whatever you are intending to do."

¹¹⁰ His Grace Archbishop Addai Sheer was barbarously murdered by Ottoman soldiers in January of 1915. After humiliating him, they riddled his body with bullets, decapitated him and disposed his body in Botan River. Then, they carried his head to their superiors as an evidence of his execution. — The Translator.

¹¹¹ Literary: the head of the dignitaries. An honorary official position used in the Islamic states dating back to the Abbasid era. It is considered the highest rank behind the governor and the Mufti. In the Ottoman State, the Sultan himself assigned persons to this position. — The translator.

They killed him on the spot, took off his clothes and brought them to Ali and the City Judge as an evidence of his slaughter.



Mar Addai Shier, the Chaldean Archbishop of Siirt (1867-1915. His Grace was barbarously murdered by Ottoman soldiers in January of 1915. After humiliating him, they riddled his body with bullets, decapitated him and disposed his body in Botan River. Then, they carried his head to their superiors as an evidence of his execution. — The translator.

Later, they began plundering and distributing the clothes, utensils, and livestock of the Christians among themselves. They turned the Chaldean church into a mosque and named it *Khalil Mosque*, after Khalil Pasha, the tyrant of that territory.

They also turned the Dominican School into a military hospital. They discovered the hiding and storage places where the Christians kept their valuables that exceeded ten thousand Dinars in gold aside from what they had already plundered from their homes, shops, and churches.

They did the same to the villages in the suburbs of *Siirt*. All those places were cleansed from the Christians.



The city of Siirt

The Massacre of Karkh-Boran (Karboran)

Karboran is a big town in *Tour-Abdin*. It is heavily populated, predominantly, by Assyrians/Syriacs along with a few Armenian households.

When the sword for the massacre of the Christians was brandished, the ruler of the region summoned the sons of the despot, Ali Rammo, as well as the chiefs of the Kurdish Tribes. He met with them secretly and incited them to kill the Christians and plunder their homes.

They attacked the Christians in their homes and besieged them for four continuous days. Nonetheless, they were unable to penetrate the homes since the Christians were well fortified. They then climbed to the rooftops, drilled holes and stuffed hay and dry twigs through them, and set them on fire.

As for those who fled the village, the Kurds chased and captured more than six hundred of them. They chained and threw them in prison.

At that point, the ruler of the region sent after the archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church, *Mor*¹¹² Yacoub, whom he was fond of, and hid him in his house to save him from being murdered. The people who spotted the archbishop entering the ruler's house thought that perhaps he had renounced his faith and converted to Islam. However, after slaughtering all the imprisoned Christians, except for some beautiful women and girls, the ruthless Mustafi, the son of Ali Rammo, went to the ruler's house and dragged the archbishop out against the ruler's will. He handed him over to two of his

¹¹² My lord or Sir, used not only when addressing superiors but as a title of ecclesiastics and saints. — The translator.

followers who took him away, killed him and brought his clothes (to the ruler). All the Christian belongings as well as the church chattels were looted. Thus, *Karboran* was left desolate.

Saint Gabriel Monastery

St. Gabriel Monastery is an old monastery built in 397A.D and was renovated in mid-Sixth Century.

In the fall of 1917, a tyrant leader named Shindi led an army to this monastery and asked the four (Turkish) guards who were stationed there to leave the monastery. Then, he and his soldiers entered the monastery and attacked the monks and ministers, as well as seventy men from the people of *Kafar-Bah*. They took them outside the monastery and killed them. None of them escaped the carnage, but two young boys. One of the boys made it to *Seberina (Basibrin)*, and the other to the township of *Ayn-Wardo*.

The ruthless Shindi occupied the monastery and took over all its treasures and books. The remaining people of *Kafar-Bah* defended themselves for six months, but in the end, the Kurds killed them all in the church of Saint Stephanus and took possession of everything in the village, including its riches and livestock. The few people of *Kafar-Bah* who survived, scattered in the surrounding towns, terrified.

During the time of the persecutions, no one attacked this monastery because a number of Kurdish chieftains had taken an oath and pledged to protect it. However, and obviously, Shindi and his gang were acting on behalf of high ranking 'so called' Young Turks.

The Massacre of the Village of Qal'itmara¹¹³

Qal'itmar is a famous town located between the city of *Mardin* and the Saffron Monastery. All its inhabitants are Syriac Orthodox with a few Catholic and Protestant households. The Orthodox Syriacs had a church in *Qal'itmara* ministered by two priests, Father Elia and Father Daweed.

On Friday, June 11, 1915, some women from this town went to *Mardin* and told Bishop Kyrillos Gewarguis and the leaders of the community that the Kurds were threatening to attack their village and kill its inhabitants. The bishop along with the leaders of the community advised them to take their possessions and livestock, and to flee with all the inhabitants to Saffron Monastery that is fortified against attacks.

However, Ismael Ali Mahmoudi as well as Ahmad Mirzo and his son knew about their intention and attempted to appease them, but in vain. The village inhabitants preferred to move to the Saffron Monastery.

On Sunday morning, June 13, (1915), fifty-four men from the inhabitants of *Qal'itmara* went back to their town to retrieve some of their utensils and vessels that they had left behind. They were accompanied by two soldiers, Khalo and Abdi who guarded the monastery. They were attacked and killed by the Kurds inside the village because the two soldiers couldn't protect them. None of them survived, but two wounded men, Gewargis, the son of 'Abéh, and Shem'oun, the son of Malkéh Yacoub, who fled to *Mardin*. There, Gewargis went to the Protestants' hospital and was treated by an American doctor, named Thom.

¹¹³ The Syriac 'Hesno d'atto' meaning 'the woman's castle'

The inhabitants of the village at the monastery heard of the slaughter and became filled with zeal, so they went to their village to give them a decent burial. They placed the corpses in sacks and took them to the church for funeral services. The Kurds were firing at them, but miraculously no one was injured and they returned to the monastery safely.

On Thursday, June 24, (1915), Captain Nouri Al-Batlisi, came to the monastery and rounded up four hundred fifty men. He marched them forcibly out of the monastery and took them to *Mardin* where he joined them to the forced labor group. Among them, were five Armenian men who had fled from the village of *Viran*.

The Turks segregated those Armenians and killed them on the road. The rest were taken and joined to the forced labor group that worked on the highways. Nonetheless, after several days; bribing the officers in charge, they fled, one after the other, and returned to the monastery again. Soon after they had made it to the monastery, the aforementioned Nori Al-Batlisi knew about them and decreed a forced contribution of forty silver coins be paid to him by each of them monthly.

After few months of suffering, they were struck by fatal diseases and many of them perished. The rest of them fled and scattered about the desert among Arabs, moving from one place to another, until some of them made it to *Mount Sinjar*.

The Massacre of Nisibin (Nusaybin)

Nisibin (Nusaybin) is famous for its antiquity. A celebrated school was founded in it at which St. Aphraim the Syrian and Narsai the Great taught. *Nisibin* is dense with orchards and gardens and is divided by *Harmas River* which the Greeks called *Gandogees*¹¹⁴ and the Arabs *Jaqjaq*. At one time, *Nisibin* was a buffer zone between the Persian and the Roman empires. After being ruined, it was rebuilt with sundried adobe blocks and bricks. None of its old buildings survived except for the Saint Yacoub church and few ruins of its ancient wall. There was a Syriac Orthodox community in *Nisibin* being ministered to by the Anchorite Stephanus who, heroically, martyred after a brutal torture. Some Jewish families; also, lived in *Nisibin*.

In 1916, the Germans constructed a huge building and a warehouse on the north side of the city where they stored a huge amount of paraphernalia and provisions for the workers who were laying the railroad tracks.

On Friday, June 4, Razzo the son of Nijméh went to Gewargi Aphrahat's house, tied him up and sent him to *Mardin* where he was killed along with the Christians of that city. Fortunately, both his brothers, Habib and Abdil-Karim fled to *Da'doushiyyéh*. They turned to Ibrahim, the chieftain of the Arab tribe of Tayy, seeking refuge. He promised them and their entire families' protection.

On Sunday, June 6, the enemy detained all the Christians who were in *Nisibin*. Meanwhile, Abdoullah *Beg* the

¹¹⁴ The Greeks called it "Mygdonius", not *Gandongees*, which the Arabs called "Jaqjaq". - The translator.

Circassian and Abdoul-Aziz Dashi went to the surrounding villages and brought all the Christians to *Nisibin*, tied up.

On Sunday, June 13, at midnight, Rora, the chief commander arrived in *Nisibin*.

On Monday, June 14, the commander summoned the Christian detainees and told them, "The government has spared and granted you clemency; therefore, you can go home."

However, after the sunset, the ruthless Mahmoud Shawkat, Shakir *Haj* Jawziyéh, *Haj* Asaad Chalabi and Qaddour *Beg* came to the prison and released all the detainees. Abdil-Kareem and his brother Basil fled to *Mount Sinjar* and escaped the slaughter.

On Tuesday, June 15, the Turkish soldiers returned to *Nisiben*, rounded up all the young and adult Christian men and threw them in Prison. At midnight, they led them to a place called "*Kharabéh Kort*" (meaning the "*caved-in ditch*" in Kurdish), and slaughtered them all there.

Furthermore, the Kurdish lords formed a committee headed by Rafeeq Nizam-Addeen to slaughter the Christians in the villages surrounding the city of *Nisibin*. Later, Qaddour *Beg* and Sleiman Majar joined the gang and sent envoys to the Kurdish chiefs inciting them to slaughter the Christians.

Some of those Kurdish chiefs were: Ibrahim, the landlord of the village of *Khaznéh*, who took all the Christians outside his village and killed them. Ahmad Al-Youssif, the landlord of *Habsa*, who gathered all the Christian inhabitants of the surrounding villages and slaughtered them with his own hands. Mohammad Al- Abbas, the chief of *Dokar*, aided by

Qaddour *Beg*, a commander of the Fiftieth Regiment, killed all the Christian inhabitants of his village. Ali Al- Eissi, the landlord of *Haloula* village, provoked by Qaddour *Beg*, also slaughtered the Christians of his village and seized all their possessions; that is to say, every item the wealthy families owned such as the Elia Elyouda family and others.

Later, Commander Qaddour *Beg* accompanied by Ahmad Al-Abbas, Ibrahim Al-Khalil, Umar Al-Awsi, the chief of the *Dakshouriyéh* tribe, slaughtered all the Christians of *Mharkéh*, *Girkéh-Shamo*, and *Khwaitlé*, sparing no life. Nevertheless, Sleiman Al-Abbas freed the Christians of *Gir-Shéran* who fled and survived. As for the Christians of *Saroughéh*, *Kubibéh*, and the rest of the nearby villages, they fled and scattered hither and thither.

Following these events, Qaddour *Beg* gathered all the women and children, and detained them in the Saint Yacoub Church. After picking out the pretty women and girls for themselves, Qaddour *Beg* took the rest of the women outside the city and killed them in a place called *Kharabéh-Kort*. They tied the children up with ropes and took them somewhere in the wilderness. There, they raced their horses, galloping on the tender bodies of the innocent kids to suffer a horrifying death under the hoofs of their horses.

Subsequently, the abovementioned tyrants gathered all the utensils, furniture, and livestock of those Christians and divided them among themselves.

Nevertheless, Muhammad, the chief of the Arab tribe of Tayy, ordered all the members of his tribe to protect and care for the Christians who sought their refuge. He also sent a great number of the Christians to his loyal friend, Hamo Shiru, the

Chief Prince of *Mount Sinjar*. He did not harm any Christian nor did he take any of their possessions. It had been said that, some of those Kurdish thugs showed the chief of Tayy tribe a very valuable ring for sale. He asked whose ring it was, and they said it belonged to a Christian.

He then responded, “My heart refuses to take pleasure in something that its legitimate owner did not enjoy.” By that response, the sellers were put to shame and left the place embarrassed.

Vicious Torment and Anguish that the Christians of Diyarbakir endured in 1915

No matter how skilled and capable a writer may be or how effective and excellent his style is, he/she won't be able to fully portray the suffering and cruel torment of the Christians of *Diyarbakir*, for they are beyond words and imagination. Suffice to say that *Diyarbakir*, which is built with black stone, was the source of the destruction and cause of every atrocity and crisis. In fact, it was accurately named by our forefathers, “The Fortresses of Blood.”

Wickedness began pressing hard on the Christians of *Diyarbakir* ever since they were plotted against by the Committee of the Union and Progress in the capital city (Constantinople). They selected a tyrant, named Rashid Pasha, who despised Christians, and appointed him as the Governor of *Diyarbakir*. They granted him full authority over every affair and placed marauders known for their cruelty and hatred towards the Christians under his command.

On April 5, (1915), Rashid Pasha contrived a satanic scheme. He brought six high ranking officers of his fellow partisans from *Constantinople* to *Diyarbakir*. Those officers spoke Armenian language fluently, and were to operate as spies. He sent them to the Armenian Church in *Diyarbakir* where they alleged to have fled the capital city and came to *Diyarbakir* to incite a rebellion against Turkey to the advantage of the Russians. Then, the very Rashid Pasha published a declaration stating, “Six high ranking Armenian officers fled the capital city and went to *Diyarbakir* as rebels and instigators to incite the masses against our government.” As a part of his scheme, he sent some men looking for them in the Armenian Church and the houses of the Armenian leaders. Two days later, Rashid Pasha himself accompanied by Commander Rushdi and a number of high-ranking military and police officers went searching the homes of the Armenians. As they barged in the Armenian Church and found the planted spies there, they clamored and pretended to be shocked! Then Rashid Pasha ordered his marauders to dig and search the church and the bishopric for weapons and explosives. They began digging and searching for approximately five days.

From Monday morning, April 12, to Thursday April 15, 1915, the Turkish authorities apprehended six hundred fourteen Armenian leaders and merchants from the *Fatih Pasha* and *Hassouli* quarters and confined them to a place called *Karavanserai*. Thus, they would arrest forty to fifty Christian males and incarcerate them with the others on a daily basis. When the confinement place became over crowded with prisoners, they resumed torturing them with the most barbaric means. They plucked the fingernails of some with pincers, pulled out the teeth of some others, and still, they pierced the hands and feet of others with iron nails. Many

of those unfortunate Christians perished in prison and were taken outside, dumped on a dung hill. Simultaneously, they sent their evil marauders to the surrounding Christian villages who began killing, plundering, and torturing them with no mercy.

At those difficult times, some eight hundred forty Armenian men, who were forced to work on the roads of *Arzeroum*, *Tarabzoun*, and *Arzanjan*, arrived near *Diyarbakir*, and before entering the city, Rashid Pasha sent garrisons of soldiers who slaughtered them on the road.

On Sunday, April 25, (1915), those despots tied up eight hundred and seven detainees of the *Karavanserai* with ropes and took them outside the city through the southern gate which is called the *Mardin Gate*. As they reached the *Tigris River*, they boarded them on seventeen rafts that were prepared for them. Commander Rushdi boarded with them accompanied by some high-ranking Circassian military officers and guards. After traveling for an hour down the river afar from the city, they docked the rafts and ordered the captives to write letters to their families saying that they were going to the city of Mosul. By using this wicked trick, Commander Rushdi intended to mislead the rest of the Christians who were in the city. Next, they stripped them of their clothes and slaughtered them in a place called the 'Strait of *Ramma*,' then burned the rafts, and rapidly returned to the city to march the remaining Christians to their annihilation. Every time they would take a caravan outside of the city, they would also take the Armenian archbishop with them to witness the misery of his people and make him suffer more. After the last caravan of men, they dragged the archbishop to prison. They began picking up every Christian they ran into, inside and outside the city. They would take them to the *Fatih*

Pasha Mosque and torture them with deadly means. They would amputate the body parts of some, one organ after the other; yet, would pour gasoline on others and burn them alive.

At that point, they brought the five Armenian priests and incarcerated them with their archbishop. They began applying all methods of torture unheard of against these helpless people. They rode on their backs as if they were donkeys, scourging and beating them on their heads. They were forcing them to sweep the floor with brooms while they were riding on their backs. They kept torturing them bitterly for three days. On some occasions, they made the archbishop wear a heavy stone urn on his head and wanted him to jump and dance. They boiled two eggs, placed them in the palms of his hands and forced him to hold them tight until the skin of his hands peeled off. In the end, they brought a long steel stake and thrust it in the top of the archbishop's skull until it penetrated through his neck. Later, they took his corpse to the yard, poured gasoline on it and burned it. Finally, they dragged it and dumped it on a dung hill. As for the five priests, they tied ropes around their necks and kept tightening them, little by little, until they choked them to death.

After exterminating all the men, they began rounding up the youngsters too. They used to take them away, one caravan after another, some through the Roman Gate, others through the Mountain Gate, and some others through the Mardin Gate. When the women's caravans were led out, Muslim men and women snatched babies and toddlers from the arms of their mothers who were being led to their slaughter.

Gewarge Marjan, from the village of *Qassréh*, told me that while he was wandering in the desert wearing Arabian costume, he spotted a women's caravan in the vicinity of the village of *Sheerkéh* arriving from *Diyarbakir*.

When the caravan entered the village, they began picking up four women at a time and taking them to a pit. There, after being stripped of their clothes, they killed them and dumped their corpses in the pit.

Gewarge Marjan also stated that he saw another caravan of women, children, and elders from *Diyarbakir* in the village of *Taalikéh*. They slaughtered them and threw their bodies in a pit. He, himself, went to that pit and heard their groans. He dangled a rope down the pit and pulled twelve of them out, among which was the son of Wazir and Khatoun the daughter of Yoseph Torani.

Gewarge spotted a third caravan in the village of *Aaliyéh* west of *Taalikéh*. After being dumped in a pit by the ruthless despots, a man named Abdul-Qadir *Beg* along with his followers went to the pit and pulled out about fifty persons, of whom most were wounded. He cared for them and treated their wounds, but unfortunately they all died.

As a result, *Diyarbakir* was left desolate of its Christian inhabitants. In 1914, you could hardly find a Christian man or woman in *Diyarbakir*, save a few miserable survivors of the massacres that the Kurds had erected in the suburbs of *Diyarbakir*. Those survivors, however, were either elders or boys and girls under twelve years of age. They had taken shelter in the vacant houses that belonged to the Armenians and lived on certain charities. The majority of them also perished due to the harsh weather conditions, hunger, as well as the deadly diseases that broke out in the city. The diseases were caused by the filthiness of the Muslim refugees whom the Turkish government brought from the northern territories that were occupied by Russia.

Auction of the Christian's Possessions

Anyone who had roamed around the cities of Mesopotamia post the Genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Christians would have noticed that the despots were constantly looking for laborers and porters. They would forcibly take the porters to the homes and stores of the Christians and make them carry loads of utensils, clothes, crocks, and other tangible properties and commodities. They would take these items to a public square and sell them for low prices. They would allegedly deposit the money in the government treasury account, but in reality, they pocketed those funds.

As a testimony of what took place in the city of *Mardin*, I, hereby, state that after the extermination of the Christians, the Turkish government seized all their movable and immovable properties. Those properties included homes, furniture, livestock, and many other possessions. The government selected some wicked tyrants, such as the son of *Haji* and *Najeem*, headed by *Hassan Mufti*, *Muhammad Ali Chalabi*, and *Sadiq Sirri*. Those tyrants gathered laborers and porters forcibly, took them to the homes, stores, and warehouses of the Christians and made them carry their possessions. Then they moved them to a big warehouse as well as to the Armenian Churchyard and auctioned them. Whenever those tyrants ran across purses containing precious items, they would shove them in their pouches and take them home.

You could hear the auctioneers shouting while holding items in their hands. Then would sell them recklessly and

hand the profits to the commanders who sat at a head-table. Whether by the commanders' rules or by stealing, the commanders would not accept but the lion's share of the profits as paybacks.

Later, the commanders and the auctioneers went to the churches, seized all the chattels and sacred utensils. These items were gold and silver cups, dishes, crosses, hanging lamps as well as the priests' garments, rugs, and the altar's covers and sold them for very low prices. You could see the holy books torn apart, thrown on the ground, and being stepped upon. Following the sale of those properties, they started looking for safes and hiding places where the Christians kept their valuables.

Hiding Places

Some Christians had hidden their riches and valuables, such as gold, silver, and other jewelry articles underground hoping that they would not be found by the enemy until they had returned from exile.

The Christians neither realized nor thought that their enemies were more crafty and astute than themselves. The enemies, however, called for all the psychics and fortune tellers to rummage through the houses of the merchants and the wealthy, and to dig and locate their hidden valuables. So they did, and they found a lot of riches.

The Power of God Inspires Many to Declare the Truth of the Christian Faith

An Infant Boy

A Christian infant boy was taken by some Muslims from the lower quarter of *Mardin* known as Tanners Quarter. When they took him to Muslim wet nurses, he would vomit and refuse to nurse from their breasts. Nevertheless, when they turned him over to the Christian wet nurses, he gladly nursed from them. *Blessed be thy name O' Creator!*

A Christian Girl

One of the soldiers who guarded the *Saffron Monastery* told us that as he was accompanying a caravan of captives, he brought a pretty girl to wed her to his son. When he spoke to her about the matter, she threw herself to the ground and refused to capitulate to his wish. For eight days, she adamantly refused to accept his offer and was never lured by his bait. But rather, she preferred to die for her faith in Jesus Christ like the rest of her family. As a result, he took her outside the city and killed her. Thus, she ended her life and did not corrupt her chastity by marrying a filthy person.

Brutality of the Tyrants

A soldier from the Fiftieth Regiment told us, as they were marching a caravan of the banished Christians, a mother of a two-year-old boy told one of the guards, "I know that I am being led to my death, here, take my little baby and raise him as your son. Also, I am giving you three gold dinars to spend on him." As soon as the soldier took the gold dinars and put them in his pocket, he picked up the baby and dashed him against a rock that they came across and killed him before his

mother's eyes. When we returned back and took the *Rish-Ayno (Raas-Alayn)* highway, through which we had marched the caravan, and drew near the aforementioned rock, the soldier began telling us the story of the baby and describing how he had killed him. He had not finished his story yet when, all of a sudden, he fell to the ground and died instantly beside the very rock by which he had left the baby's corpse. Thus, the word of the Lord is fulfilled as He says; "*.....and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*"(Matthew 7:1)

The Gate that Separates Life form Death



Assyrian refugees

A Muslim despot had brought two beautiful little girls from a caravan of Christian captives. One of them was twelve years of age and the other eight. When he tried to tempt them to convert to Islam, the older girl told him, "I won't convert to Islam because I am willing to go to my relatives." The man replied, "All of your relatives are dead, but you're alive." The girl responded, "My mother told me that there is nothing between life and death but a small gate, and

the key to that gate is the very weapon you're carrying." After hearing the girl's answer, the ruthless despot became convinced that those girls won't submit to his religion. Therefore, he took them outside and killed both of them. *Thus, they departed from life to death; or rathe, the chamber of rapture.*

Her Answer Was a Razor Blade!

In one of the caravans of the helpless Christians of *Diyarbakir*, there was a girl celebrated for her beauty. When the murderers saw her, they fell in love with her. One of them wished to take her in as a wife. As he spoke with her about his wish and requested an answer, she looked at him scornfully, took a razor blade out of her pouch and slashed open her abdomen, and while breathing her last, she uttered, "This is the answer that I had already prepared for such a request and time." *Thus, she departed to the eternal life with pure and intact chastity.*

Like a Lamb Being led for Slaughter

When the turn of a young man from *Diyarbakir* came to be killed, he asked his killers not to hold him, but instead, he raised his arms towards the sky, laid his body on the ground and stretched his neck for the slaughter uttering; "Now, fulfill your wish." *For the sake of your love, O' Lord!*

The Power of God Manifested in His Elite

Qarah-Kleeséh (the black church) is a village in the suburbs of *Diyarbakir*. It has a church named after Saint Elias. Post the extermination of its Christian inhabitants, an extended Muslim family from the district of *Van* lived in the

church. One day, a member of that family went to a Christian man who worked for a Muslim household in that village and asked him, “Has this church recently been ruined by Muslims, or had it been ruined some time ago?” The man answered: ‘No, it had been ruined a long time ago.’ The Muslim then said, “One night a man wearing a black cloak came to me and said, ‘Take your family and leave this church, or I’ll let all of your family members perish. Five of our men have already died, and right now my brother is sick.’ He stated that and left. The following morning, the Muslim man came back to the same Christian man asking him for a spade and a shovel to bury his brother. Two days later, his second brother also died. After returning from the burial of his brother, and because the vision he spoke of was recurring every night, he came to us while his livestock was herding with those of the village and said: “I am leaving this place lest I die.””

Blessed be your zeal O’ Saint Elias, would that God assign you in charge of the scale of justice!

His Evil Deeds Backfired Against Him

One of the very wicked guards, who whenever journeying with a caravan of the persecuted Christians, he would walk in the rear. He would kill any Christian on the spot if he/she lingered behind due to sickness, fatigue, or any other reason, and would strip them of their clothes. One day, as he was returning home carrying spoils from the slaughtered Christians, he became sick on the road, and could not make it home. When his relatives went to bring him home, they found him torn apart by stray dogs.

Feeling the Prick of Conscience

Yahya Yaseen of *Diyarbakir* was one of the Fiftieth Regiment commanders. During the brutal persecution and slaughter of the Christians, he seized countless items, specifically, church riches and chattels, made of gold and silver. He stole all the wine that he found in the churches for himself to consume.

When the persecution subsided a bit, he suffered from a very grievous disease. He lost his mind and started hallucinating and having terrifying nightmares. He used to scream tumultuously; wondering, "What is this sound that I hear coming from the churches? They are after me for everything that I have done! Shut the doors and the windows." Finally, he died in a restroom; terrified and suffering from his obstinate disease. *"If everyone is rewarded according to his/her deeds, the torment of this tyrant was not enough with regard to his evil deeds and injustices."*

Like so, the Misery of the Oppressors is mocked

An eighteen-year-old girl who was extremely pretty with a charming stature was driven in the caravan of the fourteen thousand Armenians of *Erzurum*. When that caravan passed by the southern part of the village of *Hareen*, in the district of *Mardin*, the commander in charge and several of his soldiers fell in love with her on the spot, each one wishing to take her in as a wife.

When the commander saw his soldiers flattering her persistently, he gave up on her. Then, a corporal drew near her; seducing and begging her to accept him as a lifetime partner; promising her a pleasant life. She then responded

boldly and said, “You may perceive my beauty that has mesmerized you and perhaps has no match in your entire country, not to mention my wits and manners that have no comparison in this region of yours! Nevertheless, I only want you to answer my question with a positive *yes*, and only then, will I submit to you.” When he asked what her question was, she added, “First say, I would be divorced¹¹⁵ from my wife if I did not answer ‘yes’.” He was vexed by that, but his friends urged him, “Come on, tell her whatever she wants to hear, let us see what she is up to.” As he recited that statement, she added, “Come on, convert to Christianity!”

At the beginning, he grew perturbed and responded angrily, “How dare you ask me this, you infidel!” She looked at him out of the corner of her alluring eyes, overwhelmed him with her lavishing charm, and calmly turned her face away from him. As he was captivated by his lust, his friends persuaded him to verbally state that he would convert. However, even when he answered, “Yes I will become a Christian,” she mordantly laughed, and while staring at him scornfully she said, “You have just divorced your first wife and renounced your faith for the sake of your shameful lust! How can I trust you, or rather rely on your promise and marry you?! As far as I am concerned, it is enough for me that you have believed in Christ. Oh’ there, did you think I am that naive to cave in to intimacy, cleave unto a stranger, and enter into an abominable matrimony which is abhorred by my faith?! Did you expect that from me after the slaughter of my honorable family?! As a matter of fact, there is nothing in common between my high honor and your low life.”

¹¹⁵ A Muslim husband may divorce his wife by declaring *talaq* = divorce, a formula of repudiation. However, the initial declaration of *talaq* is a revocable repudiation. The husband can revoke the divorce within the *iddah* period, a rather complicated procedure. Furthermore, if a husband is pushed by others to pronounce the *talaq*, the divorce would be invalid. —The translator.

When he threatened to kill her, she joyfully responded, “Now I’ll die in peace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ whom you already believed in.” Having lost hope in her, he took a deep sigh and ordered one of the soldiers to kill her because his heart could not allow him to do so with his own hands. She was killed near the *Palace of Serugh-Khan* (Serugh Inn).

Thus, she was offered chastely; a gracious sacrifice to our Lord.



Melek, a seventeen-year Assyrian orphan who was adopted by an Armenian family, then was deported with her new family and abducted.

Courtesy of Nubarian library collection, Paris.

The Muslim Soldier who believed in Christ and martyred

A Muslim soldier from *Mardin* named Aabo Shaikhi Khalaf, who served in the Fiftieth Regiment stated, “Once, I went with the caravan that was being driven from *Mardin* on the road of *Rish-Ayno (Ras-Alayn)*. After exterminating the entire caravan near a well on the road to the village of *Taymikkéh*, they spared a young girl whom a Turkish soldier wanted to take in as a wife. When he asked her to profess to Islam, she declined and told him, ‘I would rather die with my people than change my faith.’ He exhausted all his means, but she did not submit. Finally, the soldier grew weary of her and became so angry that he drew his sword and chopped her head off.

He instantly noticed that the blood was gushing upward and not downward. He was shocked by this phenomenon and left speechless. Then he regretfully shouted, “I will sacrifice my life for such a true faith.” By hearing that statement, his friends admonished and advised him, “Don’t say that, their faith is untrue.” Nevertheless, he repeated that statement again and again. As a result, his fellow soldiers riddled his body with bullets, and he dropped dead next to the young woman who prompted his martyrdom.

Two Martyrs from Bnai-Beel

Shimoun and Shammo deserve the rank of the early martyrs of the church. As Shimoun was fleeing, he kept uttering the name of the Lord Jesus until he entrusted his soul to Him. As for Shammo, since he was very old, he did not want to go with the families to the *Saffron Monastery*. He used to say, “How can I leave while the young men and lads

are getting killed here? I would rather die here for the sake of Jesus' name so that my former trespasses are forgiven." That was what really happened.

As his people were fleeing, he saw a man named Sufi and asked him, "What is all this commotion about, or is it that you are lying to us?" Sufi then answered that nothing was happening, yet he pointed his gun at Shammo's chest and killed him. As Shammo fell to the ground, he suddenly stood up and said, 'O Jesus help me'. Then, he picked up a stone for a pillow, lay down facing the east, and passed away.

A Kurdish man, who used to relate this story in the court of their leader, would frequently say, "How great is their love for Jesus Christ! And who is this Jesus in whom they believe and die for?!"

Two days following the carnage, another person from *Bnai-Beel* named Youseph Qarqou'h was found still alive. He was found by a Muslim acquaintance named Bakir Matto. When Youseph saw Bakir, he gained little strength and begged him, "Take me to my brothers in the village of *Bakirah*, or to the *Saffron Monastery*." The Muslim replied, "Your brothers were slaughtered yesterday, and *Saffron Monastery* is under siege by Kurds and none of the Christians there will be spared. If you convert to Islam now, I will take you to my house." Youseph answered, "If my brothers are killed and the *Saffron Monastery* is gone, why should I stay alive when I am half dead? For God's sake, kill me now and end my agony." The Muslim repeated his call, and Youseph responded that he would rather die as a Christian. Thus, at his request, Bakir drew closer and shot him point-blank while he was crossing his heart.

A Caravan from Diyarbakir

This caravan was led away from *Diyarbakir* and contained two thousand five hundred people. When the soldiers brought that caravan to *Shkafta* i.e. the cliffs and caves in the area of *Ramma*, they took them down a deep gorge and riddled their bodies with so much live ammunition until they caught fire. The smoke of the burning corpses was billowing for three continuous days.



Another caravan of Armenian refugees

A Kurdish man passed by that area and came to the Turkish soldiers and told them, “There are some people still alive who are among those you slaughtered. Yesterday, at that place, we saw a priest wearing a shiny purple garment with four gentlemen. When the soldiers went to check upon the situation, they saw nothing, but profound tranquility, horrible scene, and heartfelt sorrow. A very benumbing scene, indeed!

The Kindness and Good Heartedness of the Ezidis

A Syriac man from *Mardin* named Mikhael Saliba told us, “I worked until the summer of 1916 as a maker of saddle pads (blankets) in the temporary camps of the Arab nomads that were set up at the slopes of *Mount Sinjar*. I used to witness caravans being brought from the Armenian areas and slaughtered at that location. One day, they brought a big caravan and lodged them in the villages: *Wardiah, Gdala, Abhara, Hol, Ayn-Gazal, Um-Diban*, and others, to be slain the following morning. Two Ezidi men and I went to the village of *Um-Diban* at night and rescued seventeen men, twelve children, twenty women, and three donkeys. We brought them to the Chief Prince of the Ezidis, Hammo Sheero who praised our efforts and encouraged us to liberate more captives.

Mikhael also added, “One evening, I visited a Muslim man named Muhammad Biyo Mosilly who welcomed me saying, “O’ man, I have good news for you! Yesterday, I abducted three Armenian women whose beauty has no match in this area; one for myself and the other two for my two brothers.” On that very evening, I went to my Ezidi friends and informed them of the incident. Twenty-two Ezidi men accompanied me to that man’s house, and we forcibly rescued the three Armenian women and brought them to Hammo Sheero. When those women realized that they were with Christians, they cheered up for a short while then started weeping for the abyss of death that separated them from their families.