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THE OTTOMAN GOVERNMENT’S POLICIES CONCERNING THE ARMENIAN SOLDIERS IN THE OTTOMAN ARMY AND THEIR FAMILIES IN THE WAKE OF THE PROVISIONAL LAW OF RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT*

(GEÇİCİ SEVK VE İSKÂN KANUNU SONRASI OSMANLI HÜKÜMETİNİN OSMANLI ORDUSUNDA GÖREVLİ ERMENİ ASKER VE AİLELERİNE YÖNELİK UYGULADIĞI POLİTİKALAR)

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Abstract: *This article aims to evaluate the conflicting situation that arises from the allegations regarding the killing of Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman Army with the enactment of the Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement and the existence of a decree issued by the Ottoman State pertaining to not subjecting Armenian soldiers and their families to relocation.*

The Events of 1915 is among the topical issues of both the Turkish and Armenian people’s agenda. Armenians persistently attribute the crime of genocide to Turkey and the Turkish people. What lies behind the effort to keep this problem in the agenda is the Turkish people’s rejection of these accusations of genocide. This rejection does not stem from the “denial of the truth” as alleged by the Armenians, but from the fact that Armenians

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ignore the necessity of scrutinizing the events of the period according to the prevailing circumstances of that period. In connection to this, the Hermeneutic evaluation of historical documents according to the circumstances of a given period is one of the fundamental principles in historiography. This approach, which prevents false notions of past periods, is accepted as one of the prerequisites for the field of history in becoming a scientific discipline. Within the framework of the Events of 1915, Armenia/Armenians, attributing the crime of genocide to Turkey, claim that men of Armenian descent were killed after having been enlisted during the First World War. However, the Ottoman State, two months after the implementation of the Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement, had issued orders to not relocate soldiers of Armenian descent and their families.

Keywords: *Events of 1915, Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement, Labor Battalions, Armenian Soldiers*

Öz: *Bu makale, Geçici Sevk ve İskân Kanunu ile Osmanlı Ordusunda görevli Ermeni askerlerin katledildikleri yönündeki ithamlardan ve Osmanlı Devleti tarafından Ermeni asker ve onların ailelerinin sevk edilmeyeceği hakkında alınan kararnamenin mevcudiyetinden doğan çelişkili durumu değerlendirmeyi hedeflemektedir.*

1915 Olayları hem Türklerin hem de Ermenilerin gündeminde olan konular arasındadır. Ermeniler 1915 Olayları ile ilgili Türklere/Türkiye'ye sürekli soykırım suçu isnat etmektedir. Ermenilerin bu sorunu gündemde tutma çabasının arkasında, soykırım suçlamalarının Türkler tarafından kabul görmemesi yatmaktadır. Oysaki bu kabul etmeme Ermenilerin iddia ettiği gibi "gerçeğin inkârından" değil, Ermenilerin dönemin olaylarını, dönemin koşullarına göre değerlendirilmesi gerekliliğini görmezden gelmelerinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu minvalde Hermeneutik bir bakış açısıyla tarihi metinlerin dönemin koşullarına göre yorumlanması, tarih yazıcılığının temel ilkelerinden biridir. Tarihi yanılısamların önüne geçecek olan bu yaklaşım tarih ilminin bir bilim dalı olarak temellenmesinin koşullarından biri sayılmaktadır. 1915 Olayları çerçevesinde Türkiye'ye karşı soykırım suçu isnat eden Ermenistan/Ermeniler Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Ermeni kökenli erkeklerin askere alındıktan sonra katledildiklerini iddia etmektedir. Oysaki Osmanlı Devleti, Geçici Sevk ve İskân Kanunu'nun yürürlüğe girmesinden iki ay sonra Ermeni asker ve onların ailelerinin sevk edilmemesi hakkında karar almıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *1915 Olayları, Geçici Sevk ve İskân Kanunu, Amale Taburları, Ermeni Askerler*

The most important factor in historiography is evaluating every historical document according to the conditions of their periods. This approach, which will avert historical misconceptions, is without doubt a prerequisite of history being established as a scientific discipline. Historical methodology does not accept the attempts to understand or evaluate any given event by isolating it from the internal and external conditions of its period, or from the decisions and resolve of the significant actors of that event so as to strip them of their agency.¹ This historical understanding, referred to as Hermeneutics, indicates that trying to understand, explain, and interpret texts without paying regard to the conditions of the period in question will be meaningless. For instance, an article written in 1916 on the treatment of “camel teeth” may not mean anything today, but if one considers that camels met the transportation needs of the time, the article probably put forth remedies for a very important issue of that time.²

Therefore, the “Provisional Law Concerning the Measures to be Taken by the Military Authorities against those Who Oppose the Operations of the Government during Wartime” [*Vakti Seferde İcraât-ı Hükümete Karşı Gelenler için Cihet-i Askeriyyece İttihaz Olunacak Tedâbir Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat*] of 27 May 1915³ that the Ottoman Government issued during the First World War, shortly referred to as the “Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement”, was a historical fact that should be evaluated within the conditions of the era.⁴ However, accusations of genocide attributed to Turkey are tried to be considered within the context of “1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” as a “conscious and systematic” practice, with the aim of undermining the just scope of the actual law.⁵

1 Mehmet Akif Tural, “İkinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında ve Bitişinde Türkiye'nin Ekonomisi,” *Prof. Dr. Abdurrahman Güzel Armağanı* (Ankara: Akçağ, Aralık 2013), 154.

2 Baytar Müfettişliği Umumiliği, *Deve Dişleri* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Askeriye, 1332 (1916)).

3 *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915–1920)* (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Yayınları, 1995), 8.

4 The “Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement” being widely referred to as the “Deportation Law” leads to misconceptions about the law’s content (as the word “deportation” has a different meaning from “relocation”) and causes the “resettlement measures” taken by the Ottoman Empire regarding the relocated Armenians to be overlooked. For this reason, putting the effort into referring to the law as the “Relocation and Resettlement Law” will be a correct approach in relation to narrating it to future generations. Güzin Çaykırın, “Osmanlı Ordusunda Hizmet Eden Ermeni Asker ve Ailelerinin Sevk Edilmeyeceğine Dair Mukarrerat,” *Yeni Türkiye Dergisi Ermeni Özel Sayısı* 4, Sayı 64 (Eylül 2014): 2996.

5 On 9 December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly approved the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”. The relevant part of the Convention (Article II): In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. Pulat Tacar, “Ermenilerin Soykırımını Savını Yadsıyanları Cezalandırmak Veya Türkiye’den Tazminat Almak Amacı İle Yaptıkları Yargı Mücadeleleri,” *Ermeni Araştırmaları* 50 (2015): 405.

However, the 3rd Army Commander Mahmut Kamil Pasha requested from the Ministry of War the removal of the Armenians from the “war fronts” [*harekât-ı harbiye*] region (Erzurum, Trabzon, Van, Bitlis, Mamuratülaziz, Diyarbakır, Sivas) as some Armenians had begun to revolt after the Russians’ invasion of Van in order to ease the Russian advance (19 April 1915).⁶ Therefore, the relocation of some the Ottoman Armenians was not carried out due to a “conscious and systematic” practice of annihilation, but due to a necessity that emerged during the Van Rebellion.

Ultimately, attempting to understand the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement* by viewing it from the year 1948 or from today will not go beyond a relative effort. As one diverges from the time of the genesis of historical events, the degree of relativity concerning the events will increase by that amount. This increase signifies a divergence from the conditions of the period. Meanwhile, a counter viewpoint will increase the objectivity towards the said events.

Governments subjecting elements of their population whom they perceive as threats to the country’s territorial integrity to *Provisional Relocation and Resettlement* until the states of emergency ends, and within this scope, securing their safety and property is not limited to Turkish history. For example, the period in American history that began with the Pearl Harbor attack and led to American citizens of Japanese descent being interned in camps is also related to this. On 7 December 1941, after the Japanese aerial attack on Pearl Harbor, the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt decided on 19 February 1942 for 120,000 American citizens of Japanese descent to be interned in camps inside military areas for two years.⁷ The decision was taken under circumstances of war and state security was expressed as the most fundamental reason. The Ottoman Empire also enacted the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement* under conditions of war, hence when one examines the reason for the law’s enactment, it can be seen that state security was under threat. Interestingly, while heavy accusations are being directed at the Ottoman Empire for its decision taken in conditions of war, no comparable criticism is directed at the United States regarding this subject. Many Ottoman Armenians unfortunately perished during the implementation of the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement*, while very few Japanese Americans perished during their internment. However, this does not change the fact that both the Ottoman and the American governments conceived their relocation and resettlement plans based on security concerns under conditions of war. There is no authentic evidence suggesting that either of the governments sought a policy of annihilation against their subjects.

6 ATASE, BDH-401-50-1-21(22).

7 Özer Zeytinoğlu, “İkinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında ABD’de Yaşayan Japon Asıllıların Enterne Edilmesi,” *Avrasya İncelemeleri Merkezi (AVİM), Blog No: 2014/17, 11 Haziran 2014,* <https://avim.org.tr/Blog/IKINCI-DUNYA-SAVASI-SIRASINDA-ABD-DE-YASAYAN-JAPON-ASILLILARIN-ENTERNE-EDILMESI>

As mentioned above, the genocide accusations directed at the results of the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement* within the framework of the 1915 Events are sought here to be analyzed from a wide perspective. For instance, there have been claims that Armenian men of military age were disarmed and massacred after they were enlisted into the Ottoman Army. However, the Ottoman Government, after the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement* was enacted, issued a decree regarding the Armenian soldiers serving in the Ottoman Army and their families to not be relocated. This decree stated that “Armenian soldiers, officers [and] medical officers and their families should not be relocated and should be left in the districts they reside in.”

The aim of this work is to contribute to the disproving of the Armenian genocide allegations by comparing the claims that that Armenian men were murdered after being enlisted into the Ottoman Army (the claims start with the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement* and include the period afterwards), with the Ottoman Government's decree in question. A literature review ascertained that no work was conducted in such a manner regarding this subject. The aforementioned two situations will be analyzed by a comparative method, primarily using a qualitative approach.

Before moving on to the primary subject, it is necessary to state that after the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement* went into effect, it is seen that words such as *dispatch, banish, expulsion, transfer, change of location, change of settlement, send, expulsion, deportation, and evacuation* are used in various documents sent to and received from the relevant authorities within the scope of the Armenians' relocation and resettlement.⁸ Within the scope of this work, on condition that the meaning of the texts' written language of that period is considered with the Hermeneutic viewpoint,⁹ the word *relocation* will be used instead of the words that were mentioned by referencing the name of the law involving the relocation and resettlement of the Armenians.

Comparison of the Decree on the Armenian Soldiers Serving in the Ottoman Army and Their Families not Being Relocated with the Armenian Claims that Armenian Men were Massacred After Being Enlisted into the Ottoman Army

The war conditions that occurred after the beginning of the First World War One also brought with them certain precautions. One of these precautions was the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement*. The law, enacted on 27

8 The corresponding Turkish words: *sevk, tebid, ihraç, nakil, tebdil-i mekân, tebdil-i iskân, izam, tard, tahliye ve tehcir*. Çaykiran, “Osmanlı Ordusunda Hizmet Eden...” 2991.

9 Doğan Özlem, *Tarih Felsefesi* (İstanbul: Notos Kitap, 2016), 262.

May 1915, went into effect with its publishing in the period's official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekai* on 1 June 1915.¹⁰ After the law went into effect, a Ministerial Cabinet Decision regarding the reasons necessitating the relocation of some Armenian citizens was published on 10 June 1915. In this decision, the aforementioned citizens' "hindering the operation of the army" was given as a reason for the stipulated migration. Again, in the decision, protecting the state's existence and security, the definitive elimination of the harmful activities aimed at damaging the state order were given as further reasons. Additionally, precautions such as providing provisions and security to the lives and property of the Armenians who were to be subjected to relocation and resettlement, the construction of homes in the locations they were to be sent to, supplying seeds to farmers, and supplying tools to employed people were present in the decree.¹¹

As stated previously, one of the claims of the Armenians regarding the crime of genocide is that the Armenian soldiers serving in the Ottoman Army were disarmed and massacred.¹² In response to these accusations, it is necessary to state that the Armenian men had been transferred to unarmed troops for reasons such as deserting with their weapons after being enlisted into the army as a necessity of the war effort, joining the enemy armies, spying against the government, joining the gangs, and raiding Muslim villages.¹³ Unarmed troops in question were the Labor Battalions [*Amele Taburları*]. Since the Labor Battalions were rear service troops, it was not possible for the Armenian soldiers to be disarmed. It is also necessary to express that it has been proven with archive documents that militants of Armenian descent who were Ottoman citizens and who crossed over from Russia specifically enrolled into the Labor Battalions with the intention of forming gangs inside Ottoman territories.¹⁴

10 Kamuran Gürün, *The Armenian File* (Ankara: Bilgi, 2012), 300.

11 It is possible to list reasons for the Ottoman Armenian relocation as follows: it was determined that some Armenians were hampering the transport of provisions and military equipment, cooperating with the enemy and aiming to act with them, and moreover, joining enemy ranks, conducting armed attacks against the military forces in the country and innocent people, providing equipment to the enemy's naval forces, and were willing to show fortified positions to the enemy. *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri 1914-1918*, Cilt I (Ankara: ATASE Yayınları, 2005), 131-132.

12 Amongst the other accusations are Armenian intellectuals being arrested in the "second phase". On 24 April 1915, more than 650 Armenian intellectuals -scientists, priests, lawyers, journalists, doctors and writers- were arrested and allegedly ruthlessly murdered in Central Anatolia. In the last phase, the Armenians, starting from June 1915, were expelled to Ras al-Ayn and Deir ez-Zor towards the Syrian deserts and all the Armenians were allegedly ruthlessly exterminated within several months. Ս.Պողոսյան, Ա.Ասրյան, Խ.Ստեփանյան, Է.Հովհաննիսյան, *Հայոց Պատմություն* (Երեվան: Արմյանի անվան Հայկական պետական, 2009), 229. [S. Poghosyan, A. Asryan, H. Stepanyan, E. Hovhannesyan, *Armenian History* (Yerevan: Abovyan State University, 2009), 229.], Աշոտ Մելքոյան, *Հայոց Պատմություն* (Երեվան: Հայագիտական, 1998), 180-182 [Ashot Melkoyan, *Armenian History* (Yerevan: Hayagitak, 1998), 180-182].

13 *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri 1914-1918*, 102. *Ermeniler Tarafından Yapılan Katliamın Belgeleri 1914-1919*, Cilt II (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2001), 86. *Ermeni Komitelerinin Amaçları ve İhtilal Hareketleri* (Ankara: ATASE Yayınları, 2003), 170.

14 ATASE, BDH-2825-90-25-2.

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Before the First World War, the Ottoman Government enacted the “Mandatory Military Service Law” [*Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanunu*] on 22 May 1914, bringing mandatory military service to all citizens living in the Ottoman geography.¹⁵ After the war began, the Ottoman Government declared mobilization on 2 August 1914 and began taking measures to prepare its military troops for war. The forming of the Labor Battalions also took place during this process. The soldiers serving in the Labor Battalions comprised of various groups such as Muslims, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Assyrians.¹⁶ Labor Battalions were used for procuring supplies and infrastructure maintenance, such as road repair behind the front lines, transportation, communication, grain, weapons, ammunition, shoe, and clothes production. The soldiers in these battalions were unarmed as they were used for logistical work. The reason these battalions were unarmed was due to their line work, but also to prevent them from joining the enemy.¹⁷ In addition to these, high-ranking Armenian officers also served in these battalions. Moreover, as it will be exemplified below, it is seen that many high-ranking Armenian soldiers also served in combat units apart from medical duties.¹⁸ Ayhan Aktar’s article titled “*Birinci Dünya Savaşı’nda Osmanlı Ordusunda Ermeni Askerler*” [Armenian Soldiers in the Ottoman Army in the First World War] draws attention to the presence of many high-ranking Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman infantry and cavalry.¹⁹

Exactly at this point, it is necessary to underline a decree that was enacted after the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement*. This decree constitutes an important resource regarding whether the claims directed against Turkey on the Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman Army being “disarmed and massacred” during the First World War reflect the truth.

15 Zekeriya Özdemir, “Birinci Dünya Savaşı’nda Amale Taburları” (Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Gazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü), 1994, 25.

16 Özdemir, “Birinci Dünya Savaşı’nda Amale Taburları,” 56.

17 Süleyman Beyoğlu, “Ermeniler Amale Taburlarında”, *Yeni Türkiye Dergisi Ermeni Meselesi Özel Sayısı*, Sayı 60 (2014): 5.

18 Within the Armenian allegations, the killing of Armenian soldiers through their disarmament is said to have been carried out in the Labor Battalions. However, the Labor Battalions were unarmed forces. It is being alleged that the Ottoman State perpetrated a systemic genocide against the Armenians. According to this, the first phase of this was to enlist 300,000 Armenian men, disarm them, and then execute them by firing squad after having placed them in small units. Ս.Պողոսյան, Ա.Ասրյան, Խ.Ստեփանյան, Է.Հովհաննիսյան, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, 229 [S. Poğosyan, A. Asryan, H. Stepanyan, E. Hovhannesian, *Ermeni Tarihi*]. Likewise, according to Svazlyan, under the pretext of mobilization, Armenians were executed by firing squad and starved to death in prisons. Svazlyan additionally alleges that the Ottoman State issued a special decree against Christians and massacred the Christians in the army through this decree. Verjine Svazlyan, *Ermeni Soykırımı ve Toplumsal Hafıza*, Çev. Emine Demir (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2005), 43-44. Yet, the Yezidis, a people whose religious doctrines are related to Christianity, were exempted from military service. Özdemir, “Birinci Dünya Savaşı’nda Amale Taburları,” 27.

19 Ayhan Aktar, “I. Dünya Savaşı’nda Osmanlı Ordusunda Ermeni Askerler,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, Sayı 225 (Mart 2015): 30-39, <http://www.ayhanaktar.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Osmanli-ordusunda-Ermeni-Askerler-Toplumsal-Tarih-no255-Mart-2015.pdf>

According to the decree, “amongst the Armenians that will be relocated, those whose parents are soldiers or who are civil servant families will remain in their places of residence” (19 August 1915).²⁰ The decree was sent to the Under-secretariat of War [*Harbiye Müsteşarlığı*] by the Headquarters of the General Intelligence Department [*Karargâh-ı Umumi İstihbarat Şubesi*]. In encrypted message, the Ministry of Interior requested from the provinces that lists of military families be prepared and delivered to local civil servants. Moreover, it was informed in the encrypted message that the decree was circulated from the Supreme Military Command to the 3rd and 4th Army Commands as well as to the Deputy Command of the 3rd and 5th Corps. It is seen that the Directorate General of Security Affairs [*Emniyeti Umumiye Müdüriyeti*] was informed before the decree in question was signed (16 August 1915).²¹ The scope of the decree was limited to Armenian soldiers, Armenian civil servants, Armenian military and medical officers, and their families. The decree was not implemented towards other Armenian families.²²

Therefore, it is not just to claim that Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman Army were “disarmed and massacred”. The question that should be answered first to prove otherwise is; why did the Ottoman Government feel the need to enact such a decree for Armenian soldiers that it supposedly wanted to massacre? As it will be exemplified below, why were individual applications evaluated and officially processed and why were some errors quickly sought to be remedied? Why did the Armenian soldiers in question write applications to benefit from this decree? It is possible to state the following regarding the reasons for enacting this decree:

1. Preventing Armenian soldiers and civil servants, who may have alleged that their families were being subjected to relocation by the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement*, from fleeing government service,
2. Ensuring that Armenian soldiers and civil servants would not be concerned with any issues while performing their duties and would concentrate on their tasks,

20 ATASE, BDH-2288-14-4-1. (The rest of the document states that: “... should the number of those families exceed five households in the towns and villages, the additional families will be asked to move to the Muslim villages, within their residential sub-provinces [*kazas*] and districts [*sanjaks*], of their own choice; but, still not to exceed the stated number of families, in other words, they will be relocated to those villages not to exceed five percent of the total Muslim population. That means there can only be a single Armenian family in a village of 20 Muslim families. Hence, there can be no more than 5 families in crowded towns and villages. The Ministry of Interior circulated the issue to all the provinces [*vilayets*] as is. The lists of the families of the military personnel should be urgently prepared and forwarded to the local administrators. Seyfi, Director of the Headquarters of the General Intelligence Department. 16 August 1915.”)

21 BOA, DH-EUM-VRK-15-49-1.

22 BOA, DH-ŞFR-55-A-160-1-1.

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3. Discouraging Armenian soldiers and civil servants from engaging in espionage against the Ottoman State,
4. Considering Armenian soldier's tasks, obviating problems such as how to fill the void that may occur if they desert their stations,
5. It is also within the realm of possibility that this decision may have been taken as a necessity of the duties of the Armenians who were regarded as "faithful subjects" of the Ottoman State.

It is seen that the decree was implemented shortly after its declaration. For instance, the Eskişehir Governorate halted the relocation of military families that came from İzmit and informed the Ministry of Interior that they would be resettled in the district that they resided in Eskişehir (24 August 1915).²³ Furthermore, there are applications made by Armenian soldiers serving in the Ottoman Army in order to benefit from the decree in question. These are some of the applications made to the relevant offices and the procedures conducted in line with the applications: Dentist [*Diş Tabibi*] Karnik Karakoç, who was serving in the 5th Army, made an application for four military families in Bursa and ensured their transfer to İstanbul.²⁴ The family of Captain Doctor [*Tabip Yüzbaşı*] Dülbendciyan benefitted from the decree in the same way.²⁵ On 20 November 1915, upon Talat Pasha's personal order, Hovseb Kendirciyan's family, because his brother was in the military, was exempted from the relocation and their residence and accommodation was ensured in the Aleppo Province.²⁶ Artillery Third-Lieutenant Mıgırdiç Karabetoğlu's family in İzmit (his mother, four sisters and two brothers-in-law), having been relocated to Konya, were returned to İzmit as part of the decree in question.²⁷ Third-Lieutenant Artin Galustoğlu's family who were relocated to Konya were returned to Eskişehir.²⁸ Third-Lieutenant Asadur Artinoğlu's family who was sent to Konya Ereğli were returned to İzmit.²⁹ In the same way, the family of Captain Simpat Bacanyan serving in the 77th Regiment 3rd Battalion was exempted from relocation.³⁰ Another example was Specialist Dentist Lieutenant Baruyir's,³¹ Specialist Dentist at the Maltepe Barracks, request for his family's transfer to İstanbul in accordance with the decree:

23 BOA, DH-ŞFR-485-36-1-1.

24 ATASE, BDH-2288-14-1-111.

25 ATASE, BDH-2288-14-1-46.

26 ATASE, BDH-1806-341-1-9.

27 ATASE, BDH-2288-14-1-36.

28 ATASE, BDH-2288-14-1-58.

29 ATASE, BDH-2288-14-1-66.

30 ATASE, BDH-2288-14-1-94.

31 Written as "Baruyir" in the Ottoman document. However, amongst Armenian names, this name corresponds to Paruyr/Baruyr (Բարունյր). A copy of the request is in Appx. 1.

“I have been serving in the Ottoman army as a doctor since the declaration of mobilization. My father, Doctor Cerrahyan, and my mother, who resided in İstanbul, have been relocated to Konya Ereğli while they were in İzmit as guests. In response to the event, an order was given that my father Dr. Cerrahyan and my mother be transferred to İstanbul to my home. I have heard that my elderly father and mother had reached all the way to Konya. However, their inability to come here since one and a half months, and my mother’s illness upsets me very much both physically and emotionally. As you are the only official that I can fall back on, it would please me very much if the necessary orders are given via telegraph to those who are concerned in order for my father Doctor Cerrahyan and my mother, who are waiting in Konya, to return to me. I beg once again that this favor is done. The order regarding this subject is yours. 23 September 1915.”³²

After the request, on 1 October 1915, the Governor of Konya [*Konya Valisi*] informed that the family of Lieutenant Baruyir was about to reach İstanbul.³³ In the work of Ohannes Aram Kondayan titled *Sandıktaki Hatıralar* [Memories In A Chest], it is mentioned that upon the request of Cerrahyan’s son, he returned to İstanbul and served as a staff doctor in the İstanbul Armenian Hospital after the war.³⁴

It is seen that in some cases, the decree was given as a justification for requests outside the scope of the decree. For example, Agop Kaşıkçıyan, who was a Captain Doctor at the War Hospital No. 4 of 5th Army Field Inspectorate [*5. Ordu Menzil Müfettişliği 4 numaralı Harp Hastanesi*] in Kırkkilise, sent a request to the Ministry of Interior that he wanted his sisters in Bursa to be transferred to him as there was no one to look after them.³⁵ The Ministry of Interior informed the Ministry of War of the situation and asked whether it could be permitted (7 July 1916).³⁶ However, the Minister of War Enver Pasha considered Agop Kaşıkçıyan’s request to be impossible due to military considerations (19 August 1916).³⁷ Considering that “Armenian soldiers and their families would not be relocated” in accordance with the decree, Agop Kaşıkçıyan’s sisters were exempted from the relocation and stayed in Bursa, however, it was not permitted for them to go to Kırkkilise.

32 ATASE, BDH-2288-14-1-30.

33 ATASE, BDH-2288-14-1-35 (The response text is in Appx. 2).

34 Ohannes Aram Kondayan, *Sandıktaki Hatıralar*, Çev. Karin Karakaşlı (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2013), 46.

35 BOA, DH-EUM-2.ŞB-26-39-12.

36 BOA, DH-EUM-2.ŞB-26-39-6, BOA, DH.EUM.2.ŞB-26-39-17.

37 BOA, DH-EUM-2.ŞB-26-39-3.

In another example, it is seen that when the case of whether to relocate Armenian soldiers and their families residing in İzmit and the neighboring areas, who were determined to have engaged in espionage and aided Armenian gangs, became an issue, some regulations were made to the decree in the order to *avoid violating* the said decree.³⁸ It was considered inadvisable for the Armenian soldiers and their families in İzmit and the neighboring regions to stay there, yet it was politically improper for them to be relocated. Accordingly, it was decided for them to be relocated to far-away villages in Adapazarı and İznik where there was no Armenian population. Amongst them was Armenian Captain Dr. Armenak Hancıyan from İzmit working at the İzmit Gendarmerie Battalion Command, who was confirmed to be a spy and a revolutionary committee member.³⁹

Conclusion

The relocation of Armenians during the 1915 Events within the scope of the *Provisional Law on Relocation and Resettlement* is a subject that should be evaluated in terms of the prevailing conditions of the time and accordingly go through various examinations. Examining historical texts with a certain method and according to the period's conditions will contribute to historical facts being presented without misconceptions. Ultimately, it has been revealed that the claims of Armenian men (the ones with military service obligation) being “disarmed and massacred” after being enlisted are in contradiction with the existence of the decree enacted by the Ottoman Government on “Armenian soldiers and their families not being relocated”.

With the implementation of the decree, the relocation of the Armenian soldiers and their families as part of the *Provisional Law of Relocation and Resettlement* was halted. It is seen that some of the Armenian soldiers and their families were nevertheless relocated because of errors that occurred after the implementation of the decree. However, the personal applications that were made were taken into consideration, even during war conditions, and efforts were made to obviate the errors in question. Moreover, it is apparent that some regulations were made to the aforementioned decree in order to avoid violating it and allowing Armenian soldiers who were confirmed to be spies or committee members and their families to nevertheless benefit from the decree.

Lastly, it has been realized during this work that no research has been conducted on how many Armenian soldiers were enlisted in the Ottoman

38 BOA, DH-EUM-2.ŞB-53-52-36.

39 BOA, DH-EUM-2.ŞB-53-52-26-27-29(30).

Army during the war effort. Furthermore, it has been noticed that there is a need for comparison between the number of Armenian soldiers assigned to the Labor Battalions as stated in the Armenian resources and the number of Armenian soldiers indicated in Ottoman archive resources. Based on this, it is clear that researchers who want to conduct studies in this area would definitely fill a large void with their work.

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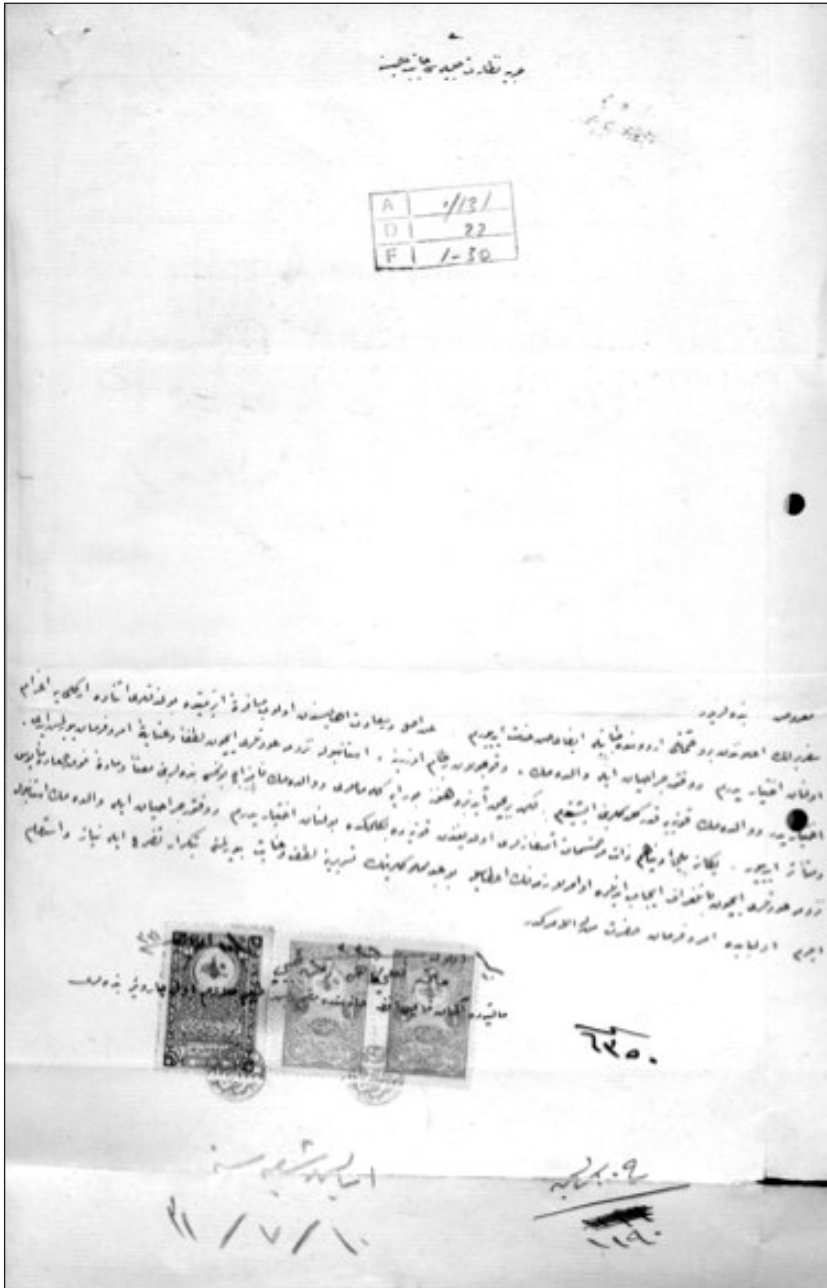
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APPENDICES



Appendix 1: Lieutenant Dentist Baruyir's Application

Appendix 1 (continued): The Latin Transliteration of Lieutenant Dentist Baruyir's Application (in Turkish)

Hârbiye Nezâret-i Celîlesi Cânib-i Âliyesine

Mâ'r'uz-ı bendeleridir.

Seferberlik i'lânından berü Osmânlı Ordusunda tabâbetle ifâ-yi hüsn-i hizmet ediyorum. An-asl Der-saâdet ahâlisinden olup misâfireten İzmit'te buldukları esnâda Ereğli'ye i'zâm olunan ihtiyâr pederim Doktor Cerrahyan ile vâlidemin vuku'bulan ricâm üzerine İstanbul'a nezdime avdetleri için lütfen ve inâyeten emr ü fermân buyurulmuş idi. İhtiyâr peder ve vâlidemin Konya'ya kadar geldiklerini işitdim lâkin bir buçuk aydan berü henüz buraya gelmemeleri ve vâlidemin nâ-mizâc bulunması bendelerini ma'nen ve mâddeten fevk-al-âde me'yûs ve müte'essir ediyor. Yegâne melce'ü penâhîm zât-ı merhametsimât âsaf-âneleri olduğundan Konya'da beklemekte bulunan ihtiyâr pederim Doktor Cerrahyan ile vâlidemin İstanbul'a nezdime avdetleri için bit-telgraf îcâb edenlere avâmir-i lâzîmenin i'tâsıyla abd-i memlûkların tesrîrine lütfü inâyet buyrulmasını bi-tekrâr teferru' ile niyâz ve istirhâm eylerim. Ol-bâbda emr ü fermân hazret-i men lehül emrindir.

10 Eylül 1331/23 Eylül 1915

Maltepe T'alîm-gâhı Dış Tabibi

Maltepe'de Alman Kalpi Efendi hanesinde mukim Dış Tabibi Mülazım-ı Evvel Baruyr bendeleridir.

Appendix 2 (continued): Response given to Lieutenant Dentist Baruyir's Application

Hârbiye Nezâret-i Celîlesine,

10 Eylül 1331 tarihli telgrafname-i ali nezaret penahilerinden Diş Tabibi Mülazımı Evvel Baruyir efendinin pederi Cerrahyan ile validesi Serpuhi'nin Dersaadet'e gitmek üzere vizelerinin verilmiş olduğu arz olunur efendim. 18 Eylül 1331 (1 Ekim 1915).

Konya Valisi

(İmza)