

Curriculum: Introduction to the Assyrian Genocide

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Lesson: Introduction to the Assyrian Genocide

Grade-level: High School

Subject: World History

Length: This is designed as a 1-day introduction to the Assyrian genocide, with two suggested lesson plans that could also be combined into two days of instruction. The material can be taught as a stand-alone case study of the Assyrian genocide or taught adjacent to a lesson on the concurrent Armenian genocide to provide a full picture of the scope of Ottoman-led violence.

Rationale: Students will understand key events surrounding the Assyrian genocide, including how the Ottoman Empire carried out a policy of genocide against Assyrians living within the Ottoman Empire and Persia during the First World War and the continued impact of these atrocities on the Assyrian population today. The Assyrian genocide is lesser known than the concurrent Armenian genocide, and understanding the experiences of both Armenians and Assyrians provides a fuller understanding of this period.

Learning Objectives:

- HS.H1.6: Analyze the relationship among different regional, social, ethnic, and racial groups and explain how these groups' experiences have related to national identities.
- HS.H2.3: Evaluate the short- and long-term impacts of conflicts and their resolutions.
- HS.H4.4: Examine how a diverse society can be a force for unity and/or disunity.

Essential Questions:

- What was the Assyrian genocide?
- How and why did the Assyrian genocide happen?
- What happened to Assyrians after the genocide?

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this lesson, students will understand:

- What genocide is and when it became international law.
- How the Ottoman Empire carried out a genocide against Assyrians in both the Ottoman Empire and Persia.
- The immediate and long-term impact of the genocide on Assyrians.
- Why these atrocities are understood to be genocide, even though the word did not yet exist when they took place

Students will also gain experience conducting analysis of oral histories and/or archival documents.

Teacher Preparation:

See 'Teacher Resources' document

Sample Lesson Plan 1: Teaching With Testimony

Student Materials:

- 'Assyrian Genocide Timeline'
- 'An Overview of the Assyrian Genocide'
- 'Key Terms'
- Personal Histories
- Optional: Oral History Video Excerpts

Lesson plan:

- Personal Testimonies:
 - Share written testimony with students (and, if appropriate, optional oral history video clips)
 - Student discussion (as a class or in groups):
 - What is being described?
 - What happened to their family during these events?
 - What happened to their family after?
 - What could have caused this?
 - Why might the descendants of genocide survivors be sharing these stories?
- Defining Genocide:
 - Students are reminded that when these atrocities occurred, the concept of genocide had not yet been created. These atrocities were referred to as the Seyfo, annihilation, race murder, massacres, slaughter, and other terms. Students are provided with a definition of genocide (the UN genocide convention definition is recommended).
 - Students discuss the meaning of this definition
 - Students discuss if anything shared in the personal histories sounds like what is described here
- Class Lesson:
 - Teacher provides students with material handouts (timeline, key terms, and brief overview of the genocide)
 - Teacher asks students what they know about the Assyrian population; and shares information to situate Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire
 - Teacher asks students to discuss the key terms, providing supplemental information on key events (optional - using slides with maps and images)
- Individual reflection and discussion:
 - Students write a reflection comparing how the Assyrian (and Armenian, if already studied) experiences during WWI fit with our understanding of genocide, drawing on testimonies and written materials
 - Students discuss their thoughts in groups or as a class
- Group discussion:
 - The text of AZ HCR 2044, which recognizes the Assyrian genocide within the

- State of Arizona, is shared with students
- Working in groups, ask students to discuss the text of the resolution: What historical evidence does it share? What action does it encourage? What is the importance of resolutions like this?

Sample Lesson Plan 2: Teaching with Archival Documents

Student Materials:

- 'Assyrian Genocide Timeline'
- 'A Brief Overview of the Assyrian Genocide'
- 'Key Terms'
- 'Article analysis'
- NYT Articles on the Assyrian Genocide document (if not conducting own database research)

Lesson plan:

- Class Lesson:
 - Teacher provides students with material handouts (brief overview of the genocide, key terms, timeline)
 - Teacher asks students what they know about the Assyrian population; and shares information to situate Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire
 - Teacher asks students to discuss the key terms, providing supplemental information on key events (optional - using slides with maps and images)
 - (If using both lesson plans, teachers will have already done this)
- Article analysis:
 - If students are using the provided document of *New York Times* articles:
 - Provide students with the article analysis worksheets and articles from the Selected NYT Articles (teachers may also wish to divide articles amongst groups).
 - Students individually complete an article analysis worksheet for each of the articles assigned to them.
 - If students can conduct their own research and have access to a newspaper database:
 - Direct students to the database to which they have access (for example, *the New York Times* archive)
 - Discuss with students how to conduct a search for material from the relevant time period (suggested parameters are dates of 1914 to 1919) and discuss keyword strategies
 - For example, 'Assyrian Genocide' should not turn up any results; instead, Assy* could capture Assyro-Chaldean, Assyria, Assyrian, Assyrians; students may also wish to search by sectarian identities (Nestorian, Chaldean, Syriac, Church of the East) to see if additional articles are found, by key names (Shimun, Agha Petros),

or by a combination of 'Christians' and geographic location (Persian Christians, Ottoman Christians)

- Students carry out their own searches to find a pre-assigned number of articles
 - If incorporating this lesson alongside the Armenian genocide, instructors may also wish to have students search for information on the Armenian genocide
 - Students complete an article analysis for each of their articles
- Group discussion:
 - Using student learning materials, students examine where their articles fit, geographically and chronologically, within the historical narrative of the Assyrian genocide.
 - Students discuss their article analyses.
 - Class discussion:
 - Groups share the highlights of their article analyses with the class
 - Students discuss what research parameters worked well or did not work
 - Students discuss potential challenges of conducting research during this period (for example, the absence of a single word like genocide to describe events, translation issues, multiple spellings of locations, multiple ways Assyrians are identified, and misidentifying Assyrians as members of other groups).
 - If also researching the Armenian genocide, students might also discuss what factors contributed to the Armenian genocide receiving more media coverage.
 - Individual reflection:
 - Students write a concluding reflection explaining what they understand about the genocide and exploring what impact it had on the Assyrian community.
 - Students share their reflections in groups or as a class.

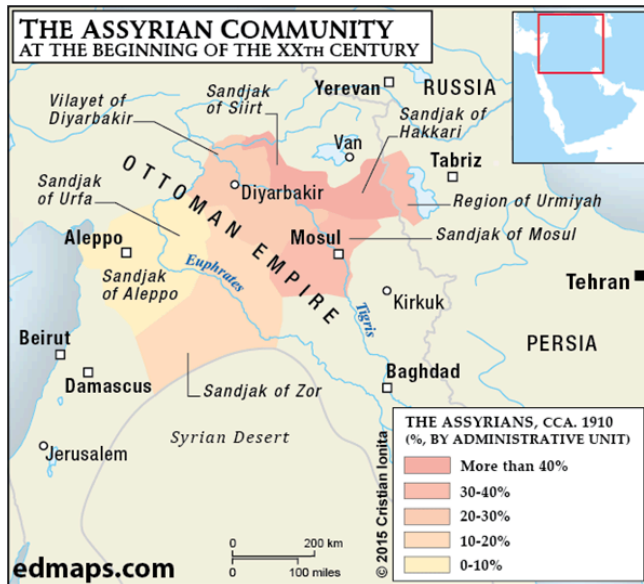
Assyrian Genocide: Timeline of Major Events

<i>Late Nineteenth Century</i>	The Assyrian population in the Ottoman Empire and Persia was approximately 500,000-1,000,000 (spanning present-day Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria).
1908	The Young Turk Revolution: The Committee of Union and Progress forces Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II to install a constitution and parliament, and hold multi-party elections. The Sultan was replaced in 1909 by his brother Mehmed V.
1913	Raid on the Sublime Porte: Hard-line Turkish nationalists within the Committee of Union and Progress consolidate power under the rule of the 'Three Pashas': Talaat Pasha, Interior Minister; Enver Pasha, War Minister; and Cemal Pasha, Naval Minister.
1914	The Ottoman Empire joins the WWI battlefield in late October as part of the Central Powers.
	October 26: Talaat Pasha issues a deportation order for Assyrians living in the Ottoman Empire near the Persian border.
	Ottoman troops and allied Kurdish militias attack Assyrian villages in Urmia, Persia, and in the Hakkari region of the Ottoman Empire. Thousands of Assyrians are murdered as violence begins to escalate towards genocide.
1915	Talaat Pasha states that "there was no room for Christians in Turkey".
	Violence against Assyrians in Urmia continues until May, when Ottoman troops are pushed out of Persia by Russian forces. It is estimated at least 70 villages are destroyed during this period and thousands killed.
	April 25: Approximately 250 Armenian leaders and intellectuals are executed in Istanbul. This date is now commemorated as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day and Assyrian Genocide Remembrance Day.
	May 10: Mar Benyamin Shimun XXI, Assyrian Patriarch of the Church of the East, declares war on the Ottoman Empire, aligning Assyrian militias with Allied forces.
	May 27: The Ottoman Parliament passes the Tehcir Law, authorizing the deportation of all Ottoman Armenians. While Assyrians also experience genocidal violence, it is not similarly under deportation orders.

(1915 continued)	Diyarbakir massacres: Ottoman forces execute Assyrians and Armenians in the Diyarbakir region (Turkey), assault the women and children, and destroy towns.
	Siirt massacres (Turkey): 8,000 Ottoman soldiers, called "The Butchers' Battalion," kill an estimated 15,000 Assyrians, including women and children.
	Assyrians increasingly flee, with survivors seeking refuge in Persia, Russia, and elsewhere within the Empire.
1917	The Russian Revolution ends Russian participation in WWI and Russian protection of Assyrians in Persia. Ottoman forces soon reenter Persia and renew attacks on Assyrians, including Assyrian refugees from the Ottoman Empire.
1918	Khoi massacres: Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimun arranges for 3,500 Assyrians from the Ottoman Empire to be resettled in Khoi, Persia. However, nearly the entire population is killed upon resettlement.
	Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimun is assassinated in March by Kurdish chieftain Simko Shikak during a peace negotiation, along with more than 100 Assyrians who accompanied the Patriarch.
	Mass flight of Assyrians from Urmia. Thousands die from attacks by Kurdish militias, exposure, disease, and starvation. Almost 35,000 survivors ultimately take refuge in the Baquba refugee camp opened by Britain near Baghdad, Iraq.
	October 30: The Ottoman government signs the Armistice of Mudros, ending the Empire's involvement in WWI.
1920	The Treaty of Sèvres is signed between the Ottoman Empire and Allied powers. It gives large territories to European rule and calls for the creation of an Armenian state and a Kurdish state, overlooking Assyrian demands for independence or autonomy, and protection under an Allied power. The treaty would be renegotiated in 1923 as the Treaty of Lausanne, which eliminated the proposed Armenian and Kurdish states.
1933	Simmel (Simele) Massacres: at least 3,000 Assyrians in northern Iraq are massacred by the Iraqi military less than a year after Iraq gained independence.
2007	The International Association of Genocide Scholars recognizes the Assyrian Genocide as a genocide.

A History of the Assyrian Genocide

Prepared by Dr. Erin Hughes and Professor Hannibal Travis
on behalf of the Seyfo Center Arizona Chapter, 2023



Assyrians are a unique ethnic group indigenous to the Middle East, with a homeland that spans the present-day states of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Prior to the First World War, the homeland was divided between what was then the Ottoman Empire and Persia, and population estimates were approximately 500,000 people.¹

Assyrians traditionally speak Aramaic and their national roots trace back to the Assyrian Empire of Mesopotamia. Assyrian civilization is credited with spreading written language and literature, establishing written legal systems, advancing astronomy, and creating sculptures and architecture that are part of the rich Assyrian cultural heritage

and are considered to be amongst the great cultural heritage of humanity.

Assyrians are amongst the earliest followers of Christianity, typically belonging to one of four unique churches: the Assyrian Church of the East (whose followers were sometimes called Nestorians until the early 20th century), the Chaldean Catholic Church (Chaldeans), the Syriac Orthodox Church (Syriacs, and who were also called Jacobites or Syrian Orthodox until the end of WWI), and the Syriac Catholic Church (Syriacs or Syrian Catholic prior to 1918). With the increased presence of Western missionaries in the Middle East and with more Assyrians living in the diaspora, Assyrians have also joined Presbyterian, Russian Orthodox, and Evangelical churches, amongst others, or may not practice a religion.

Religious leaders historically have held a significant role within the community. In part, this was shaped by the Ottoman Empire's millet system, in which recognized religious leaders served as both the spiritual and political heads of their followers. While this system allowed Armenians, Assyrians within the Chaldean and Syrian Orthodox millets, and other religious minorities to practice their religion and speak their language, it also placed members of millets as unequal, second-class citizens within the Empire. Although there is uncertainty if the Church of the East was officially recognized as a separate millet, it was able to maintain a strong degree of independence because of its geographic distance from the Ottoman government, at the far east of the Empire in the Hakkari Mountains, and because the position of the Church Patriarch was inherited and not appointed, which meant the Church's leadership was not subject to the approval of the Ottoman sultan.

Increasingly throughout the 19th century, foreign missions across the Ottoman Empire and Persia cultivated relationships with the Assyrian churches. Chaldean and Syriac Catholic

¹ Population estimates from David Gaunt (2015) 'The Complexity of the Assyrian Genocide' Genocide Studies International 9(1).

leadership, because of their communion with the Vatican, often had relationships with European states, especially France. Multiple missions, including Presbyterian, Anglican, and Russian Orthodox, established large presences in Persia to build relationships with the Assyrians therein, a role Russia especially used to advance its territorial and political interests as much as its religious goals.

Changes and Challenges within the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire, founded in 1299, was one of the world's largest and longest-lasting, at its peak spanning the Middle East, North Africa, and southeastern Europe. Starting in the 18th Century, however, the Empire began to lose territory as a result of European encroachment, unsuccessful military campaigns, and rising nationalist movements. Frequent warfare and military expenses pushed the Empire into debt. At the same time, the Empire also struggled to compete against the growing economic power of a fast-industrializing Europe.

Efforts at reform in the 19th century led then-Sultan Abdulmecid I to issue two edicts aiming to modernize the state, increase religious freedoms, and make subjects equal under the law. This period, known as the Tanzimat era, was soon followed by a movement for constitutional reform, which in 1876 successfully created a constitution and a parliament. Yet, just two years later, then-Sultan Abdul Hamid II suspended parliament and the constitution and consolidated his own power.



Also occurring during the Tanzimat era, however, were the Bedr Khan massacres. Khan, a Kurdish tribal leader, conquered Assyrian villages from Hakkari to Tur Abdin, carrying out executions and forced conversions throughout the 1840s with the open support of the Ottoman government and local rulers until Ottoman forces exiled Khan in 1847 following Assyrian pleas for European aid.² Similarly, the Hamidian Massacres, including the Diyarbakir Massacres in 1895, and the Adana Massacres in 1909 targeted Assyrian and Armenian populations with extreme violence, killing an estimated 100,000 and 20,000 people, respectively.³ These atrocities signaled the willingness of civilians and tribal leaders alike to participate in carrying out violence, as well as the increasingly vulnerable status of the Assyrian

²Anahit Khosroeva (2017) 'Assyrians In the Ottoman Empire and the Official Turkish Policy of their Extermination' in *Genocide in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. George Shirinian, Berghan Books; Hannibal Travis (2006) 'Native Christians Massacred' *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1(3): 329; Sabri Atman (2023) '180th Anniversary of the Nestorian Massacre' *Seyfo Center*, available at seyfocenter.com/english/180th-anniversary-of-the-nestorian-massacre.

³Rouben Paul Adalian (1999) 'Hamidian Massacres' and 'Adana Massacre', *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, ed. Israel Charny, available through Armenian National Institute, www.armenian-genocide.org.

Map: 'The Ottoman Empire: 1350-1918', The Islam Project, available at www.theislamproject.org/education/Ottoman_Empire.html.

and Armenian communities.

In 1908, the potential for improved governance emerged when a group called the Young Turks successfully forced Sultan Abdul Hamid II to restore the 1876 constitution, bring back Parliament, and hold multi-party elections. Unfortunately, by 1913, hopes for progress faded as a group of extreme Turkish nationalists within the Young Turk Movement seized power. These individuals, led by Talaat Pasha, Minister of the Interior, Enver Pasha, Minister of War, and Cemal Pasha, Minister of the Navy, would bring the Empire into the First World War in October 1914 on the side of the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary, and would ultimately carry out genocide against Assyrians, Armenians, and Greeks.

The Genocide

Talaat Pasha, in October 1914, issued an order to deport Ottoman Assyrians living near the Persian border. This order took place even before Ottoman military engagement in the war began.⁴ However, the Empire's first actions against Assyrians were not a relocation inland as stipulated in the order, but attacks on Assyrian civilians living in Urmia, Persia, that began in late 1914. Reports estimated that by May 1915, approximately 6,000 to 8,500 people in the Urmia region, about one-fifth of the Assyrian population, were killed or died of a cause related to the Ottoman invasion.⁵ From village to village, accounts described the brutal murder of civilians, assaults of women, kidnapping of children, and theft and destruction of property. In some towns, all men were executed and women and children were enslaved; in others, women, children, and the elderly were also slaughtered. At times when military supplies were strained, the Ottomans turned to especially cruel methods of killing to save bullets for the war.⁶

Evidence of these atrocities includes extensive eyewitness and survivor accounts. The United States, prior to joining the war effort in 1917, maintained a diplomatic presence in the Ottoman Empire and accounts from missionaries and consular officials, including official State Department records, substantiated similar reports from German officials, Russian officials, British officials, Persian officials, members of the militaries, and foreign missionaries. These accounts, as indicated by the systemic targeting of Assyrian civilians in Persia, a neutral country, and later within the Ottoman Empire, disprove claims by Ottoman and later Turkish officials that such violence was carried out in the theater of war or as part of the conflict.

Although the Ottomans were forced from Urmia by Russian troops and Assyrian fighters in May 1915, violence instead came to target Assyrians who were Ottoman citizens, coinciding with the escalation of genocidal violence against Armenians. Accounts tell of militias entering villages and executing every Assyrian – or, in more diverse areas, every Christian - Assyrian, Armenian, and Greek alike. Laying siege to mountainous Assyrian villages, Ottoman forces and their Kurdish allies aimed to starve Assyrians from their homes, destroying crops and food supplies and preventing goods from entering the region. As forces reached the villages, the violence was often total: a report compiled by the British government noted that, across forty villages in one area of the Hakkari mountains, only seventeen survivors remained.⁷

Assyrians organized a military resistance led by General Agha Petros Elia of the Baz tribe, Malik Khoshaba of the Tyari tribe, and Dawid Mar Shimun, the brother of Patriarch Mar Benyamin

⁴ David Gaunt (2006) 'Massacres and Resistance: The Genocide of Armenians and Assyrians Based on New Evidence from the Archives', Lecture, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, 7 December 2006.

⁵ Travis 2006:332.

⁶ Gaunt 2006.

⁷ Travis 2006: 334.

Shimun, leader of the Church of the East. Assyrian troops were outnumbered and under-equipped and sought outside assistance from Russia and Western Allied powers. In response to the atrocities his faithful experienced and in the hope of support from the Allied powers, Mar Benyamin Shimun declared war against the Ottoman Empire on May 10, 1915.

Assyrian defenses could not long sustain the Ottoman and Kurdish onslaught and, by the fall of 1915, Assyrians in Hakkari fled, on foot, through the mountains to Urmia, where they sought protection under Russian troops who were still occupying the region, or to Russia itself. Russian protection provided temporary relief to the surviving population, but violence continued against Assyrians living in other parts of the Empire.

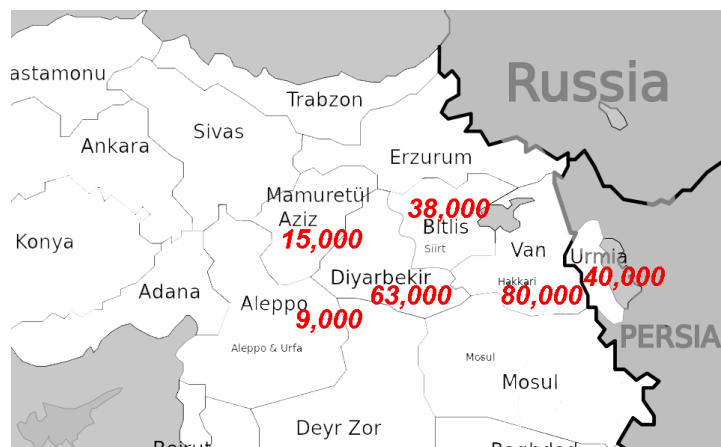
West of Hakkari, the governor of the Diyarbakir region personally perpetuated massacres, organizing death squads to attack Christians living in his district, in some cases, giving amnesty to outlawed tribes in exchange for carrying out such violence.⁸ Reports from 1915 describe multiple Assyrian and Armenian villages in Diyarbakir as having been “exterminated.”⁹

Tragically for those in Urmia, Russia withdrew from the war effort following the 1917 Russian Revolution. In March of 1918, Mar Benyamin Shimun, alongside more than 100 Assyrians, was assassinated during a peace negotiation with a Kurdish chieftain. Ottoman and Kurdish attacks escalated that summer and Assyrians were forced to flee, with more than 30,000 Assyrians ultimately finding refuge in a camp established by the British military in Baquba, Iraq. An estimated 7,000 people died during the trek to Baquba from violent attacks, exposure, and illness.

On October 31, 1918, the Empire officially surrendered to Allied powers, finally bringing an end to both the war and the genocidal violence.

In total, it is estimated that 250,000 Assyrians were killed in this genocide, and at least 4,000 children were orphaned.¹⁰ Exact figures are difficult because of several factors: uncertain population numbers before the genocide, an already-dispersed population, and the flight of refugees across the region. Approximately 1,000,000 Armenians and 100,000 Greeks were also killed during this period, all victims of concurrent genocidal policies by the Ottoman Empire.

Region ¹¹	Assyrian victims
Persia	40,000
Van	80,000
Diyarbakir	63,000
Harput	15,000
Bitlis	38,000
Urfa	9,000
Additional regions	5,000
<i>Total</i>	<i>250,000</i>



⁸ Gaunt 2015: 89.

⁹ Travis 2006: 336.

¹⁰ Arianne Ishaya (2022) 'Rise from the Ashes: Overpowered But Unbroken: Children in the Assyrian Genocide', Lecture, California State University Stanislaus.

¹¹ Figures provided at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and shared in Gaunt 2015: 88. Map by Kathovo, Assyrian population 1914, Wikimedia Commons, modified by E. Hughes: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Assyrian_population_1914.svg.

The chart and map on the previous page show the scale of the genocide by region. Van, where the Hakkari mountains are located, was home to the greatest loss of Assyrian life.

After the Genocide

An immediate consequence of the genocide, atop the tremendous loss of life, home, leadership, and community, was the widespread displacement of survivors, who had fled to Iraq, Persia, the Soviet Union, Syria, and elsewhere into the diaspora.

A top priority of the Assyrian delegations at the post-war Paris Peace Conference was to secure the right to return home for any survivor wanting to do so. Delegates also advocated for the right of Assyrians to national self-determination, fitting with Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points and the redrawing of European empires into smaller nation-states. Moreover, Assyrians sought the protection of an Allied power over their homeland for at least the next two decades.¹²

The resulting 1920 Treaty of Sèvres between the Ottomans and the Allied Powers only made a passing mention of Assyrians, stating Assyrians living in Kurdish regions should have safeguards for their protection. In 1923, following the Turkish War of Independence and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Sèvres was renegotiated and replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, which likewise did not address Assyrian demands for autonomy or protection. The new Turkish state prohibited the return of Assyrians who fled the genocide and, in 1924, forcibly expelled many who had returned. These decisions ultimately made tens of thousands of Assyrians permanent refugees, thousands of whom were stateless. Most remained in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, or Iran, although many later fled violence and persecution, as well as bad governance, in the latter half of the 20th century. Many others, unable to ever return home, were forced to build new lives in the diaspora.


Recognition

At the time the genocide occurred, the word genocide did not yet exist. Eyewitness accounts and survivor testimonies often speak of slaughter, massacres, barbarity, cruelty, race murder, extermination, *Seyfo* (sword), and other terms hoping to capture the totality of these events.

By 1933, the Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek experiences would provide a foundation for Raphael Lemkin in developing the word and concept of *genocide*, and laying the foundation for the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide that, since 1951, governs our international framework criminalizing genocide. Today, genocide is understood as an effort to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.

Over the following decades, scholars, survivors, and their descendants, and committed activists

Resolution
International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS), 2007



WHEREAS the denial of genocide is widely recognized as the final stage of genocide, enshrining impunity for the perpetrators of genocide, and demonstrably paving the way for future genocides;

WHEREAS the Ottoman genocide against minority populations during and following the First World War is usually depicted as a genocide against Armenians alone, with little recognition of the qualitatively similar genocides against other Christian minorities of the Ottoman Empire;

BE IT RESOLVED that it is the conviction of the International Association of Genocide Scholars that the Ottoman campaign against Christian minorities of the Empire between 1914 and 1923 constituted a genocide against Armenians, Assyrians, and Pontian and Anatolian Greeks.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association calls upon the government of Turkey to acknowledge the genocides against these populations, to issue a formal apology, and to take prompt and meaningful steps toward restitution.

¹² See, for example, Joel Werda (1924) *The Flickering Light of Asia, Or, The Yoosemational* 9(1). ef (2017) *Assyria and the Paris Peace Conference*, Nineveh Press.

have worked to raise awareness of the genocide and seek official recognition. Recognition honors and memorializes the victims, acknowledges the irreplaceable loss, and aspires to recommit humanity to ensuring such horrors do not happen again. It also pushes back against the continued denial of these events by the Turkish government. In 2007, the International Association of Genocide Scholars passed a resolution recognizing the Ottoman government carried out genocide against Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks, affirming the overwhelming scholarly consensus that these genocides happened and that it is right to call them genocide. To date, 10 countries have recognized the Assyrian genocide, including Armenia, Australia, Germany, and, most recently, France. Several US states, including Arizona and California, have also passed recognitions.

Assyrian Genocide: Key Terms

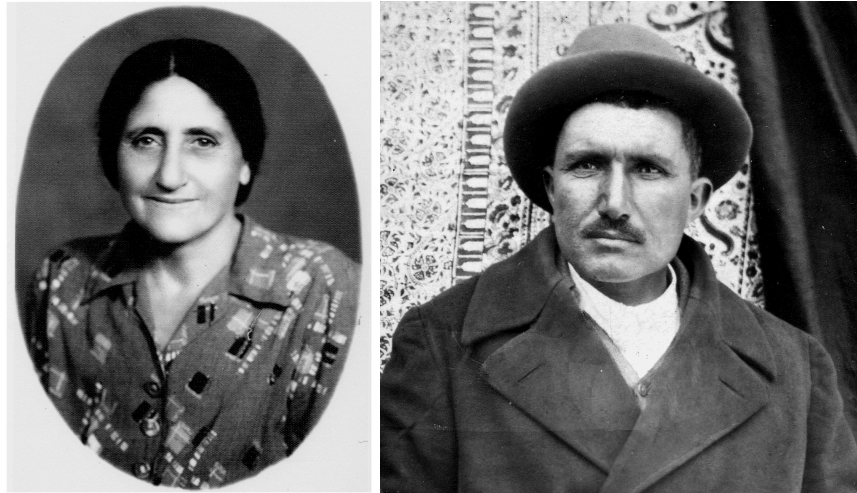
Student Handout

Assyrians	Assyrians are a distinct ethnic group whose homeland spans the current countries of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Assyrians trace their heritage to the ancient Assyrian Empire and speak Aramaic (also called Assyrian, Syriac, and Sureth). Assyrians are traditionally Christian and have founded several churches throughout their history, including the Assyrian Church of the East, the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, and the Syriac Orthodox Church. Some Assyrians identify as Chaldean or Syriac.
Assyrian Genocide	The systemic murder and deportation of Assyrians throughout the Ottoman Empire and Persia was committed by the Ottoman Empire beginning in 1914. An estimated 250,000 Assyrians were killed, and witnesses estimated up to half of the Assyrian population died during this period due to murder, disease, starvation, and exposure. This genocide took place at the same time as the Ottoman genocides of Armenians and Pontic Greeks. As the word genocide did not yet exist, Assyrians initially used such terms as <i>ferman</i> [decree], <i>nakabat</i> [catastrophe], or <i>qafilat</i> [flight] and eventually referred to these atrocities as the <i>Seyfo</i> or <i>Sayfo</i> (sword).
Young Turks	A Turkish nationalist movement within the Ottoman Empire that came to power following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Although they first established a constitutional monarchy, by 1913, three figures, Talaat Pasha, Cemal Pasha, and Enver Pasha, effectively seized power and later were responsible for carrying out genocide against Assyrians, Armenians, and Pontic Greeks.
Hakkari	A portion of the Assyrian homeland in eastern Turkey (then-Ottoman Empire) near present-day Iraq and Iran. Although it is a mountainous region, Assyrians living in Hakkari were amongst those most targeted in the genocide. Survivors fled to Persia or Russia. Most Assyrians were banned from returning to Hakkari after the genocide.

Urmia	A region in northwest Persia (present-day Iran) between Lake Urmia and the Ottoman Empire (present-day Turkey) that comprises a portion of the Assyrian homeland. Although Assyrians living in Urmia were not part of the Ottoman Empire, Assyrians here were amongst the first genocide victims. Russian and Assyrian forces were able to push back the Ottomans, but the population again fell victim to violent attacks after Russia left the war effort in 1917. Most of the surviving population fled to Russia, Iraq, or elsewhere in Persia.
Baqubah Camp	A refugee camp established by Great Britain during WWI near Baghdad, Iraq, to provide shelter and humanitarian aid for approximately 40,000 Assyrian and Armenian genocide survivors, largely from Hakkari and Urmia. After the camp closed, most survivors remained in what would become Iraq.
Simmel (or Simele) Massacres	The August 1933 massacres of Assyrian civilians in northern Iraq by the Iraqi military. Iraq gained its independence from Britain in 1932. An estimated 3,000 to 6,000 Assyrians were killed and over 60 Assyrian villages were destroyed.
Diaspora	A population dispersed from its homeland. Today, as a result of the genocide, Simmel, and continued persecution, more Assyrians live in diaspora than in their homelands.

Elishwa's Heroic Journey: The Exodus

Written by Shmouel Issa and Adrenna Alkhas (Elishwa's son and great-granddaughter)



(Elishwa, left, and her husband, Lazar, right)

When the supplies from the British and the Russians dried out the Assyrian armed men retreated to their villages to protect their homes and families. The reaction from Kurds and Turks was so overwhelming that the armed Assyrians had to fight off attacks on their villages, and help their families flee south alongside the Iraq/Iran border. Lazar decided to join the Exodus with his brothers, sisters, and families. His two sisters went missing. Using his beloved white horse, he went looking for them. He found one but the youngest went missing as dead or kidnapped. Meanwhile, Elishwa, waiting for Lazar to join the family group in the Exodus, panicked and left her baby behind. The cries of the baby were too unbearable, so she returned, fetched the baby, and in more panic joined the family group. Lazar delivered one of his sisters to the fleeing group and returned to join the men who were protecting the rear of the Exodus.

Ten thousand Assyrians fled to Russia and sought safety, and never returned. Some 80,000 men, women, and children from Urmia, and mountaineers from northern Iraq joined the exodus led by Dr. William A. Shedd and a group of Assyrian leaders over 500 miles from Urmia to Hamadan in Iran, and then to Bequbah in Iraq. Lazar joined the resistance at the rear of this exodus, Elishwa, and baby son Michael separated from Lazar, and marched with her sisters, parents, and Lazar's family members. Elishwa had one thing in mind and that was saving Michael. Lazar and Elishwa had the foresight to cater for a long haul and arranged to line up Elishwa's waistcoat with gold coins that Lazar had saved. She wore the coat next to her skin. The 500 miles was a treacherous journey. Some mothers with more than one child had to leave any sick one behind to save the other (s). The 80,000 fleeing Assyrians used horse-driven carriages, horses, mules, and donkeys to flee with some bare necessities. Some fled on foot with their children and bare necessities. Besides the armed Assyrians at the rear of the exodus stalling the advance of attacking footmen and mounted Muslims, selected leaders administered the fleeing population to

help them move in the right direction and along the best route possible leading them south where some British garrisons were located.

The weather was hot during the day and cold during the night; the terrain varied from plain, and arid to hilly, watery, and mountainous. Many died en route. Elishwa's father, and brother were some of many. The route taken by the exodus was marked by dead bodies. During the exodus there were cries of children abandoned by their parents and hopeless women and children whose body was giving up and could not keep marching; help was not available from the Russians and the British even though the Assyrians were their allies in the battles with the Turkish army. The Russians did send 200 Kazaks back to Urmia, but they were slaughtered by the Turks and Kurds on their arrival. The Assyrian leaders did not have enough basic supplies to help, and therefore everyone had to fend for him/herself. Food was obtained along the way from any village, unaffected by the Muslim fanatics.

Water became very scarce in parts of the route. Any rainwater collected in the ground was used when necessary. There are tales of women drinking horse urine, mistaken for water, in the horse hoof marks. Kurds and Turkish mounted men from some villages along the column of the exodus attacked the fleeing crowds, stealing their possessions, and kidnapping young girls whose parents helplessly saw their daughters disappear, and never to see them again dead or alive.

Elishwa, separated from Lazar, looked after her baby son Michael over the 500 miles of cruel track. Breastfeeding him and using every resource en route to keep her baby alive. The gold coins which lined her waistcoat came in handy at some friendly villages. This waistcoat became her savings bank over a long period. Lazar and all remaining fighting men were cut off from the exodus column for a long period. These men finally had to follow the exodus tracks. Dead bodies were clear markers of the route because 40,000 died on the route. Lazar, still riding his beloved horse, followed the track not knowing the fate of his young wife and all the other family members.

After six days the exodus arrived at a river where they rested, refreshed their supplies the best they could, and stayed overnight. But in the early hours of the morning under the pressure of approaching Kurds and Turks, the fleeing resumed. Some of the mountaineers herded their sheep amongst the fleeing crowds which created more congestion and dust in the heat of July. The sounds of the dying, wailing of women, and cries of children filled the air and induced more terror.

The survivors reached Saieen Kala where they met a small British garrison who was of some help with their limited supplies; a loaf of bread must have felt like manna from heaven. After a short respite, they had to flee again in a panic under the pressure of the attacking Turks and Kurds who were seen in the distance raising clouds of dust as they approached with their gleaming swords. The leaders with some help from the British garrison guided the survivors through difficult terrain through valleys surrounded by high mountains, and where there was no

sign of much vegetation. The intense heat, Asiatic cholera, and dysentery claimed many lives en route. A mother nursing her baby while leaning against a rock was seen by the surviving wife of a doctor. But on close examination, the mother was found to be dead, but the child was still nursing.

The terrorized fleeing crowds had no time to help each other. Elishwa clung to her baby son and used every resource to save him. The march continued over steep tracks and around the mountains until they reached BIJAR, a Kurdish town in Kermanshah, Iran. Bijar has lush and watery surroundings and is famous for its rugs. Fortunately, the British had a strong garrison in Bijar, and the town population was not affected by the fanatics of the attacking Kurds and Turks. Here the Assyrians felt much safer and camped in gardens and orchards made available by the British. The Assyrian Dr David Youhanan who attended to the sick of all nationalities fell ill and died in Bijar. He was buried on a hill with a tombstone provided by the British Captain Fisher at the pleading request of David's wife. Mrs. Youhanan had to leave Bijar with her three children and join the exodus to Hamadan, and from there she made her way to the USA and settled there. Her surviving son became a professor of English at New York University.

The survivors were led to Hamadan in Iran then to Baqubah northeast of Baghdad, Iraq where the British had a large presence. The British set up a refugee camp for all 40,000 surviving Assyrians, and a few thousand Armenians. Elishwa, her baby, and the surviving members of her family as well as Lazar's family members settled in Bequbah Camp. By now, Elishwa, having lost her father and brother during the exodus, had three sisters and her mother left. Lazar had two brothers, one of whom, David, was married to an Armenian lady, Saroungul; they lost their three children en route to Baqubah. Saroungul was so heartbroken that she wore an incredibly sad face, and never smiled. David was as tall as Lazar with gentle manners. The other brother was Iskhak who was married to Ister and had six children, the oldest was Shawil who was killed by the German bombing of Habbaniya in 1941. Lazar's sister Sarra was married to an Armenian man, Karow; they had no children. They all settled in the Baqubah refugee camp which was opened and funded by the British. For three months Elishwa, without her husband, shared a tent with her immediate family in a terror-free environment but a far cry from their home in Urmia, the Persian Paradise. She had no idea what her husband's fate was. She kept nursing baby Michael in the hope that Lazar would turn up.



(Elishwa, c. 1985, Chicago)

Life of a Faithful and Altruistic Woman: Iniar (Ino) Jajoo (1902-1992)

Written by David Jajoo (her son) in Farsi in 1998
(Abridged translation by Ramina Jajoo, MD, her granddaughter, in 2021)



(Warda and Iniar Jajoo, and their child)

Iniar Saoul, also known as Ino Jajoo, was born in 1902 in the village of Birijeh in the district of Tkhoomeh in what is known today as southern Turkey. She was born to her father, Sawa, and mother, Dora. Sawa was well-versed in herbal and naturopathic remedies. Her family and the families of her two uncles all lived together. The inhabitants of this district were primarily farmers, growing various crops and raising farm animals. They lived peacefully in this beautiful mountainous region and followed the rules set by the village elders known as the "goziraya". The houses were built with rocks on the hillside and the children recalled spending their days working, enjoying nature, and having many celebratory gatherings such as religious feasts including regular prayer sessions and Lent. Children were taught to observe and follow these traditions.

At the age of 14, Ino was betrothed to the neighbor's son, Warda Jajoo. A year later, due to ongoing persecution by the Ottoman Turkish forces (which started around 1914-1915) despite fierce resistance by the Assyrians of Hakiari, she and Warda were forced to flee for their lives. She always recalled how one of her cousins, Yalda, hid many Assyrian books in a copper pot which he buried by the water mill in the hope that someday they would return and recover them. After the defeat, many had to escape to higher altitudes to hide behind rocks and witness their houses being burnt down. While fleeing on foot she witnessed many dying from hunger, thirst, disease, and exhaustion. She was forced to abandon her sick and frail mother to save herself and

her baby brother, Giwergis (George), whom she carried on her back. Until the day she died, Ino bitterly regretted leaving her mother behind, not knowing what happened to her, whether she was eaten by the wolves or met with a fate even worse than that. During the death march, she witnessed many barbaric acts and saw many Assyrian women whose tongues and breasts were cut off by the Turkish army. At some point they took refuge in a large mill and noticed that the ground they walked on was soft, only to discover that they were walking on corpses covered with crops.

Ino also told her family how during this persecution, the much beloved Assyrian bishop, Mar Binyamin Shimun, was assassinated in the city of Kohneshar (Kohne-Shahr) in Iran. Warda and his younger brother, Yavela, along with a few other Assyrian men, went to retrieve the body of their bishop for proper burial. During this fight, Yavela and many others were killed but the survivors were able to obtain Mar Binyamin's remains.

After several years of wandering, living in poverty, and even begging for food, in 1922, Warda and many Assyrian men enlisted in the British army, the Levies, in Iraq. They lived in refugee camps in Bacuba. Ino had 2 children but both died in infancy. Warda was promoted to sergeant and eventually was honorably discharged in 1928 due to the "reduction of the establishment". They moved to Mosul, and their daughter, Naimeh, was born there.

During these years of persecution, Ino and Warda lost many family members, one of whom was Ino's brother, Shimun who died at the age of 24. Ino became weak and sick and was advised by the doctors to move to cooler climates as Mosul was too hot for her. So, they migrated to Hamadan in Iran. Moving to a foreign country, yet again, and not knowing the language was especially hard for them. They were mistreated and she often recalled that she wasn't allowed to touch the groceries while shopping as she was told she was Najess (dirty) as she was Christian. Subsequently, Ino and Warda were blessed with three sons: George, David, and Thomas. Life remained very difficult for them and finally in 1955 they all moved to Tehran. A year later, Warda, having been ill for quite some time, passed away at the age of 55.

Ino continued to live with her family who gradually started the immigration process to Australia beginning in 1984. She passed away in 1992 at the age of 92, surrounded by her sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. She shared her heart-wrenching stories with her family members and would often cry herself to sleep, having lost more than 20 members of her family during the Assyrian genocide of 1915. She always fondly remembered her childhood days in her village. She is survived by her grandchildren: Ninva, Benipal, Ramina, Sabrina, Hanibal, Raman, Ramsin, and Rameil.



*above: The Jajoo family;
below: Werda Jajoo and the Assyrian Levies battalion in which he served*

Assyrian Genocide Survivor: Rose Sargis (1914-2010)

June 2004 interview made available by Assyrian Information Management – Ator via [YouTube](#)
(abridged video transcription by Erin Hughes)



Image from [Atour](#)

Rose Sargis (RS): I'm Rose Sargis. I was born in Iran in 1914. War had just begun.

Interviewer (Q): What village were you born in?

RS: Abajalu was the name of our town. From our town, as I understand, doctors were educated by the Presbyterian missionary people. They are the ones who put up schools for us and taught teachers, taught ministers and theologians and so on and so forth. But it's 1914 and I was three months old -

Q: What was your mom's name?

RS: My mom's name was Eslye, her maiden name was David, and her married name to my dad was Agase.

Q: And your father's full name?

RS: Delazus (sp?) Agase... So anyway, we were in this barn with my - my mother was Armenian - with my mother's Armenian family, hiding from the enemy. I, as a three-month-old -

Q: Who were they hiding from?

RS: From the Kurds, or anyone else that was out there to kill anybody for no rhyme or reason. At the age of 3 months, I started crying. My uncle, my mother's uncle, said to my mother, "Throw her into that river 'cause they'll hear her cries and they'll come and kill all of us." And that was true. They would do that. They used to take people up against the barn and shoot them for no rhyme or reason. So anyways, this was 1914, at the age of 3 months, then the war subsided for... a short while. We went back to our homes for a while. Then, again, it began in 1917 – it ended in 1917, it started again earlier. We were thrown out of our homes, ransacked, and were fleeing on foot.

Q- How old were you then?

RS: I was by then 4 years old. My mother told me that I was 4 years old. We were barefooted, with no food, nothing really, just the clothes on our backs, and we were fleeing, not knowing where we were going, not knowing what would become of us. And then suddenly - I remember this myself at the age of 4 - the British army came and rescued us and took us to Iraq, and put up tents for us, and fed us, and clothed us until my father found where we were after the war. Because, as you all know, after the war, everybody's scattered. My dad was here in Chicago... he was with the Carter Westminster church that helped my dad, with the Presbyterian missionaries, find where we were in Iraq being taken care of by the British army. Then he did send for us.

Q: Do you remember anybody from your village that were also there with you?

RS: Yes. Some friends were there with us... there was one I know that was a cousin to my husband. Walter Jacobs. And his mother.

Q: Do you remember her name?

RS: Her name was... I'm forgetting her name now, it's been some time since I've used it. There were several people that we did know... While we were in camp, so to speak, my cousin had gone downtown in Iraq and bought each of us a rubber ball. There was one square area that was cemented like a sidewalk, and we were playing with our rubber ball, and all of a sudden about six high school kids – this was by the railroad tracks, and I remember right over the tracks were fields of poppy and my cousin said, 'give me the ball because the boys will take it away from you.' I said, 'No, I'll just put it behind my back.'

Well, before I knew it, one of those six high school kids came and grabbed it out of my hands. And the whole town that we're in, the tents there, ran after those six boys trying to get that ball back. That's how precious balls were in those days.

Q: This village, this was in Baquba, Iraq?

RS: Yeah, Baquba. They caught one of the boys and took a book away from him. I remember the next day – because books were precious in those days – the father and the son came begging for his book, and we gave it to him, but he said he didn't know who took the ball. So to this day, I love balls, I always used to buy balls for kids. That was in Iraq, until my dad discovered through the Presbyterian Church missionaries and our Iranian missionaries where we had land, and my dad sent for us. That was 1921 that we came to America.

Q: Prior to coming to America in 1921, did your mom tell you any stories and did you remember any stories that the elders told you?

RS: As I was a kid, it took us three months, three different ships, to come here... We finally got to America on Canal Street, and we got a cab, and we came to these flights of stairs on Oak Street in Chicago, and we climbed these stairs, and there was my dad who had never seen me. I had never seen him, of course, and my aunt and my uncle. The first thing my uncle said to my mother because he had become a barber on Chicago Avenue, he said to her, "I have to cut her hair", my mother started crying because people in Eastern countries, women don't cut their hair, the girls don't cut their hair. Anyway, he did cut my hair, and my mother wept like you wouldn't believe. He told her the reason he was cutting it was because the children would not play with me. I have a picture of that haircut, with the American flag, which I love dearly, and I cherish it because it's the only picture I have of myself as a young child of seven years old.

...

Q: Do you remember, if we go back to Urmia before you came here, do you remember anything about those marches, where you left from, the days of when you left Urmia?

RS: At the age of 4 – my mother used to [unclear] mention this, beg – because we had nothing – for food for me for 10 days they used to tell me. I remember seeing this, at 4 years old, fleeing, children that were left along the wayside. If a mother had more than one child, she could not have it. They would just sit them down on the ground, put some raisins on their lap, and carry on for their own lives. I remember that very distinctly. But beyond that, and being in Iraq those three years, and the things that helped, the British Army helped us to survive—another miracle.

...I don't know whether I fulfilled what you wanted to hear because somehow I think I was a little young for all these times of war and haven't been able to capture too much of it.

Q: It's remembering as much as you can, and that's all we hope for, that your stories reach the generations to come. This is why we're here and we're talking about this. Things of this nature need to be shown so these things don't happen again in the future.

Article Analysis Worksheet

Name of Article:

Date:

Newspaper:

Author (if listed):

Is this a news article, is it an opinion piece or editorial?

What did you learn from the article?

Where do the events in the article take place?

What sources does the article use for its information?

Does the article appear to have any biases regarding the information it is sharing? For example, does it appear to have a positive or negative view of any groups of people or locations it mentions? Cite examples of what you notice.

Recognizing the word genocide did not yet exist, what words does the article use to describe violence or other atrocities?

Does the article provide any data or evidence that could help support the conclusion that these events were a genocide?

If the article is about Assyrians, how does the article label Assyrians (for example, Assyrians, Assyro-Chaldeans, Ottoman Christians, etc.)?

Articles from the New York Times Archives

(on the following pages)

TALAAT SAYS TURKS FIGHT FOR LIFE

Most Powerful Ottoman Minister Declares Conflict Was Forced on Them.

SAYS HOLY WAR IS A FACT

'Sorrowful Eyes of All Islam' Turned to Turkey—Persia's Present State a Warning.

CONSTANTINOPLE, Feb. 17, (via London.)—Turkey declared war without being urged by Germany or impelled by any other influences save those of the Empire; she engaged in military operations only when actions on the part of Russia and Great Britain made defensive measures necessary, and today Turkey has taken all the steps needful to carry the war through.

"The holy war is not menacing Christians, but the holy war is a fact which the enemies of the Mohammedan world should bear in mind. Christians in the Ottoman Empire who are participating in the destinies of their country are not suffering from conditions brought about by the present state of affairs, and any statements to the contrary are a result of British, French and Russian intrigues, the purpose of which is to direct against Turkey the pressure of neutral countries of lower standing in the Ottoman world."

The foregoing are among statements made to The Associated Press to-day by Talaat Bey when questioned concerning the political and military situation in Turkey. Talaat Bey today fills the posts of Minister of the Interior, Minister of Finance and Minister of Marine in the Cabinet. Two weeks ago, in addition to these offices, he was also Minister of War, which gave him the four most important portfolios in the administration. He is a Young Turk and is undoubtedly the most important man in Turkey at the present time. His advice is heeded everywhere, and he virtually directs the public affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

To the correspondent of The Associated Press Talaat complained of the attitude of foreign newspapers, including the American press, which, he said, were oblivious alike of the position of Turkey under the pressure of the Entente powers and of the efforts of the Young Turks to accomplish the reforms associated with that party.

"On land and sea alike the Russians and the British provoked hostilities," Talaat Bey declared. "Our action was finally the result of efforts to bottle up our fleet by mining the entrance to the Bosphorus.

"Turkey is prepared to carry on the war to the end of the European conflict. The fact that we are able to face the enemy on four fronts simultaneously against forces three or four times as great as ours, and to mobilize at the same time an army of more than 1,000,000 men for a reserve, is for us, as well as for our allies, a matter of the greatest importance, and for our allies a precious advantage."

The interview then turned to the holy war. Answering a question on this subject, Talaat Bey said the holy war was a fact, in spite of the claims of the enemy, and he added that the Christians were the enemies of the Mussulman world. Questioned concerning the oft-mentioned "reprisal policy," the Minister answered:

"Turkey decided at the outbreak of hostilities just what retaliatory measures she would employ in case the powers of the Triple Entente acted contrary to the regulations set down by international law.

"Russia is our hereditary enemy, and Great Britain is the power which subjugated Islam," the Minister said. "Nothing demonstrates the enthusiasm of the people so well as the formation of volunteer regiments in all corners of our immense Empire.

"All the sorrowful eyes of Islam are today turned toward the Turks, who, since their appearance upon the historic scene, always have been the benevolent champions of the disciples of Mohammed and all Asiatics generally. The success of Ottoman arms can have but one result—the rising of all Mussulmans subject to the dominion of Russia, France and Great Britain. Persia is a living symbol of what Turkey would have become if we had not taken part in the present war."

The conversation was then turned to the military resources of Turkey, and in this connection Talaat Bey was willing to discuss, although guardedly, the political and military situation of Turkey's allies. In this connection he said:

"This situation appears to me excellent from every viewpoint, even admirable. I am not competent to judge of military matters. All I know is that the Germans are fighting continuously

and advantageously on French and Russian territory in such a manner that their enemies do not dare go from the defensive to the offensive. Public opinion in Turkey concerning the naval operations of the Germans is simply overcome with astonishment; the audacious offensive at sea of the Germans has provoked our legitimate admiration."

The relations of Turkey with the Balkan States was dismissed by Talaat Bey with these words:

"Turkey has most cordial relations with Bulgaria, sincere relations with Rumania, and good relations with Greece, Serbia and Montenegro do not count."

FLED BEFORE THE TURKS.

Plight of Destitute Christians Reported to Mission Board.

The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions received information by cable yesterday to the effect that there are in Tabriz 20,000 refugees who fled from Urumia on the approach of the Turkish and Kurdish troops. These people are in need of relief. The board gave out a letter received from the Rev. J. D. Barnard, an English missionary in Turkey, which said:

"Practically the entire Christian population of the Urumia Plain and neighboring districts were in flight as we left. As far as the eye could reach in both directions there was a constant stream of fugitives, sometimes so dense that the road was blocked. It was a dreadful sight, and one I never want to see again. Many old people and children died on the way."

From Syria the board has received information that British and French missionaries have been driven out, and that only the American and Italian missions remain. The Danish missionaries have been forced to leave Damascus.

HANG A BISHOP IN OUR MISSION

**Turkish Regular Troops at
Urumiah Also Kill Four
Orthodox Priests.**

A MISSIONARY IS BEATEN

**Mr. Allen Insulted—Dr. Packard
Risks Life by Showing Flag
and Averting Massacre.**

WOMEN TAKEN AS SLAVES

**Men Murdered by Turks and Kurds
—Christians Held Out Till Their
Ammunition Was Gone.**

TIFLIS, Wednesday, March 24, (via Petrograd and London, March 25.)—Telegrams and letters reaching here from Urumiah, Northwestern Persia, describe the situation of the American Presbyterian Mission stationed there as desperate. Turkish regular troops and Kurds are persecuting and massacring Christians.

Dr. Harry P. Packard, the doctor of the missionary station at Urumiah of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, risked his life in a successful effort to prevent a frightful massacre at Geogtopa, where 3,000 Persian Christians made their last stand. They had fought for three days, and all their ammunition was gone. At this juncture Dr. Packard unfurled an American flag and advanced between the lines. His act resulted in the saving of all but 200 of the Persian Christians, who had been burned in a church.

Fifteen thousand Christians have taken refuge under the protection of the American Mission station, while 2,000 are at the French Mission.

A dispatch received at Tiflis from Urumiah yesterday said that seventy Turkish regular troops had entered the mission, hanged the Orthodox Bishop, Mar Ella, and four Orthodox clergymen, and beaten and insulted a missionary named Allen. Shortly before that sixty refugees had been dragged from the French Mission and executed in spite of the pleas of the nuns.

Slain in Groups of Five.

At Culpashan the Kurds were particularly cruel. This was the last of a total of 103 villages to hold out, and it was occupied a month ago. The Kurds ordered all the male citizens into the streets, tied them in groups of five, marched them to the graveyard, and killed them barbarously to the last boy. Girl babies and the older women were then executed with great atrocity, while the younger women were carried away as slaves.

As a result of the war 12,000 Persian Christians are taking refuge in the Caucasus, some 17,000 are described as in imminent danger at the Urumiah Missions, while 20,000 are dead or missing. Furthermore, much property has been destroyed.

The Christians fought their assailants bravely, and as long as they had ammunition they were victorious.

The missionaries are untiring in their efforts to help the people, and they are spending money to this end freely. In Urumiah they are disbursing the equivalent of \$400 daily.

Disease is prevalent among the refugees.

the mountain passes in freezing weather. At Dilman they were joined by many more from Salmas plain. But for Father de Cross of the Roman Catholic Mission at Hosrova, near here, the disaster might have become historic. After assuring the safety of the sisters of the mission, Father de Cross joined the pilgrims, and managed to secure bread and shelter for many of them.

The caravansaries were so crowded that few persons could lie down in them, and thousands slept in the mud and the snow. Children were born on the roadside or in the corner of a caravansary.

Arriving at Julfa, on the Russian border, passport difficulties added to the troubles of the fleeing people. Maddened women threw their children into the Araxes River or into pools in order to end their sufferings from cold and hunger.

Father de Cross had to put his back against a wall to fight off the famished mob when he began distributing bread. The mud and cold and the shelterless nights, during which the garments of the refugees were frozen knee high, continued for three weeks, until the people were slowly dispersed by rail. Meantime, hundreds of them had not slept under a roof or near a fire.

Isaac Yonan, a graduate of the Louisville (Ky.) Theological Seminary, was among the refugees. He kept a diary of the happenings during the exodus. This relates that among the refugees from Urumiah were an old man and his two daughters-in-law, with their six children, three of them babes in arms. The oldest child was 9 years old. They were eight days on the way, averaging twenty miles daily through the mud. The old man became stuck fast in a pool and at his own request was left there to die. One woman gave birth to a child during the march and an hour afterward was again plodding along with the other refugees.

Two of the children were lost in a caravansary, but were taken up by Cossacks along with forty other persons. The soldiers displayed great humanity, often giving up their horses to the women.

One young woman carried her father for five days, when he died. A woman was found dead by the roadside with her infant, still living, wrapped up in her clothing.

In a single day twenty persons died in the railway station at Nakhitchevan, across the border in Russia. The entire casualties aggregated hundreds. People died unheeded and unmourned; in fact, those who died seemed to be envied by the living.

GREAT EXODUS OF CHRISTIANS

Thousands Suffered Greatest Hardships to Escape Enemies.

DILMAN, Persia, April 24. (via Petrograd to London, April 26.—The exodus of from 20,000 to 30,000 Armenians and Nestorian Christians from Azerbaijan Province, the massacre of over 1,500 of those who were unable to flee, the death from disease of 2,000 in the compounds of the American mission in Urumiah, and possibly of an equal number of refugees in the Caucasus have been confirmed.

When it became known on the night of Jan. 1 and 2 that the Russian forces had left Urumiah about 10,000 Christians fled, most of them without money, bedding, or provisions. Vehicles and camels and donkeys were for hire only at prices at which they might previously have been bought.

A majority of the people started out afoot, through mud knee-deep, across

SAYS TURKS AIDED RECENT MASSACRES

Troops Allowed Kurds to Kill Hundreds, American Mis- sionary Reports.

RUSSIA THE SOLE HOPE

Occupation of Persia Alone Can Save Situation, a Missionary Writes.

More than 800 native Christians have been massacred by Kurds, and not less than 2,000 have died of disease at Urumiah, Persia, according to information received by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions yesterday. The Turkish soldiers are accused of aiding or permitting the massacres. Two letters were received from Dr. W. S. Vanneman, head of the Presbyterian Mission Hospital at Tabriz, who is the Chairman of the relief committee appointed by the American Consul. Because of the strict censorship Dr. Vanneman wrote to his wife, who is in Salem, N. J., rather than to the board itself. His letters were sent to the board by Mrs. Vanneman. In a letter of March 14 Dr. Vanneman wrote:

"About ten days ago the Kurds in Salmas, with the permission of the Turkish troops, gathered all the Nestorian and Armenian men remaining there, it is reported about 800. Four hundred were sent to Khosrova and 400 to Haft Dewan under the pretense of giving them bread. They were held a few days and then all of them tortured and massacred. Many of the women and children were taken away and maltreated. This happened a day or two before the advancing Russian Army took Salmas.

"We are very anxious about Urumiah. A letter dated March 1, from Dr. Shedd (the Rev. Dr. W. A. Shedd of Marietta, Ohio) came through by messenger two days ago. He said things were getting worse. Gulpashan, which hitherto had not been disturbed by the Kurds, as it had not fought against them, had been plundered and ruined. I think this was the only village which remained. Fifty-one of the most prominent men of this village were taken out at night to the cemetery and shot. The women and girls who could not escape were violated. This was done by the Turkish soldiers.

"Forty men had been taken from the Roman Catholic Mission in Urumiah City, kept prisoners a few days, then were taken at night two miles from the city and shot.

"Dr. Shedd asked the American Consul at Tabriz to come to Urumiah, but

after consulting with three other Consuls here it was decided it would be impossible to get through. Mr. Paddock has telegraphed every possible place for assistance. We can do nothing more.

"We hear, but do not know if it is true, that the mission in Urumiah has been forced to pay \$40,000 as a ransom for the refugees, and we fear it is true. Dr. Shedd writes that not less than 800 had been murdered in Urumiah and not less than 2,000 had died of disease. This applies to Christians only. This is a very large per cent., as more than half of the Christians fled to Russia."

Under date of March 21 Dr. Vanneman wrote:

"We are more anxious than ever about Urumiah. On the 17th Turkish troops attacked our mission and the Roman Catholic Mission and took five native Russian priests from our compound and treated them badly. We do not know yet if they were killed. Mr. Allen was also treated badly because he had sent out three messengers. The gates of the Catholic Mission were burned and they were all in great danger. We received word from Ambassador Morgenthau that orders had been sent to Urumiah to protect Christians, but the order was just too late. We are working to get all the remaining Christians away from Urumiah.

"Some of the native Christian preachers have been crucified and some burned, but these were of other denominations.

"If the Russian troops should be withdrawn again, every Christian would have to leave Tabriz. We have received \$6,000 for relief and have spent at least \$15,000. If the people have to be moved from Urumiah and then fed, you can imagine what an expense it will be.

"I do not believe the real condition of affairs is comprehended in America. It is practically the extermination of the Syrians (Nestorians) and very bad for the Armenians also. The only hope is occupation by Russia."

ies. They can only hope today that some of their relatives will be returned to them from Kurdish enslavement. Those who did not escape, or were made slaves, perished.

The committeemen speak English fluently, and were at one time prosperous merchants. This was before their little tribe was gripped by the cogs of the great war.

Until American missions were established in the Urumiah country the Assyrians maintained their religious traditions by semi-annual reading from half a dozen cherished parchment New Testaments, taking the additional precaution of requiring the more gifted youth to memorize the whole of their sacred literature. With mission schools and hospitals, enlightenment and prosperity increased. The Assyrian villages were as famous for neatness and comfort as their gardens were for fertility. Further encouragement and protection were brought by the Russians, who came into the country about nine years ago.

The Assyrians took sides with the Russians in this war, while the Mohammedans turned to the Turks and Germany. Organized and drilled by Russian officers, the Assyrians rendered valuable services by fortifying some of their villages and guarding the caravan roads to Urumiah. About 250 were regularly enlisted, the Central Committee supplying the funds. Later, 2,000 or 3,000 volunteers were under arms and had some training.

Toward the end of December the Russians and Assyrians defeated a large body of Kurds, inflicting a loss estimated at 500.

Fleeing before impending massacre, 3,000 of the Assyrians gathered at a strong village, Geogtapa, and held their ground five days with a loss of seventy men.

AWAIT EXPULSION OF KURDS.

Thousands of Christians Want to Return to Persia.

TIFLIS, Transcaucasia, Saturday, March 27. (Correspondence of The Associated Press.)—Many thousands of the Assyrian inhabitants of the country west of Lake Urumiah have had to flee before the coming of the raiding Kurds. Some 45,000 or 50,000 of these people a few months ago occupied the smiling gardens on the lake shores. Now 12,000 are refugees in Russia and some 15,000 or 17,000 toow refuge under the protection of Dr. Harry P. Packard of the American Presbyterian Mission at Urumiah. His successful efforts in their behalf already have been told by cable. His name will survive in Assyrian traditions.

The members of the Central Committee of the Assyrian or Chaldean Christians are awaiting only one thing, the return of the Russians, to endeavor to reconstruct into a safe community this remnant of the ancient empire of Nineveh. The committeemen fled with their famil-

RUSSIANS OCCUPY URUMIAH.

**Drive Turks from District Where
Massacres Took Place.**

PETROGRAD, (via London,) May 28.
—Urumiah, Persia, has been occupied by the Russians after an engagement with the Turks in the direction of Dilman and near Bachkala, according to a statement issued by the General Staff of the Army of the Caucasus.

Urumiah, in Azerbaijan Province, with a population of about 50,000, is a centre of missionary activity. It is the seat of Fiske Seminary for Girls and of Urumiah College. For weeks the missionaries stationed there, as well as many thousands of Assyrian Christians, have been in grave danger from attack by Kurds and Turks. Between 15,000 and 17,000 natives are reported to have placed themselves under the protection of Dr. Harry P. Packard of the American Presbyterian Mission, at least 12,000 have taken refuge in the Caucasus, and it has been estimated that 20,000 are dead or missing.

The entire Urumiah district has been terrorized by wandering bands of Kurds and by Turkish regulars. Appeals have been made to the American State Department to take measures for the protection of American missionaries, and the Russian Government has been urged to make every effort possible to occupy the district. There have been many reports of atrocities and the wholesale slaughter of natives. The Christians have resisted the attacks of the Kurds as vigorously as possible, but have been handicapped by a lack of guns and ammunition.

BISHOPS APPEAL FOR NESTORIANS

**Ask American Aid for 100,000
Christians Who Are Vic-
tims of Moslems.**

ARE DYING OF STARVATION

**Their Plight Parallels That of the
Serbs and Armenians, Bishop
Greer's Committee Reports.**

Sixteen bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States issued an appeal yesterday in behalf of a group of Nestorian Christians of Assyria. Headed by Bishop Greer of New York the bishops who signed the appeal bring for the first time, it is stated, to the attention of the people of this country the story of the battle for life on the plains of Kurdistan of an entire people, a struggle which the bishops add "went on practically without the knowledge of Europe or America, and which ended in the complete destruction of 1,000 Christian tribesmen and the reduction to destitution of 100,000 more."

The appeal continues:
"The Assyrian Christians are of Syriac origin and are related racially to the Syrians. For centuries they have lived along the borders of Turkey, Persia and Russia, chiefly in the high ranges to the east of the Tigris Valley and north of Arabia. At the beginning of the war, according to the first news of any completeness which is just reaching America through missionary sources, the Turks and the Kurdish tribes in Persia attacked the Assyrian Christians without warning. These latter, most of them herdsman and farmers of sturdy stock and persistent traditions, were able in some cases to retreat to plateau fastnesses, selling their lives as dearly as possible, but failing to protect their families from the brutality of the Kurds and the lower class Turks.

"While the world was watching the more spectacular fortunes of war in Western Europe and along the Russian front an epic battle took place on the heights of Eastern Asia, as full of dramatic incidents and heroic fighting against odds, perhaps, as has ever occurred. The fragmentary accounts of this struggle, which was protracted for months, now reaching this country and England, indicate that when the full story is known the tragic history of Serbians and Armenians will be found to have been duplicated in a region entirely out of the main path of the world war.

"The most significant fact brought out in these reports concerns the needs of 100,000 refugees, chiefly women and children who, left to die by the Kurds and Turks, have struggled together in pitifully desperate bands to the lower villages of Kurdistan, where they are cared for by Russian and American and in some spots German relief agencies. These agencies have sent appeals which have reached the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, at 70 Fifth Avenue, which has undertaken to send supplies. Already more than \$115,000 has been sent. A large share of this was contributed by the Rockefeller Foundation, and most of it has bought rations of bread and salt for thousands of refugees.

"Another letter says: 'Christians are living in barns and stables. They are so lean and emaciated that death will get at them wholesale.'

"One of the letters from Asia Minor on which the bishops base their appeal says: 'These people are dying for actual lack of nourishment. Those who are sick and those who are well are all huddled together under a few quilts, in some cases the wife or the daughter buries the family dead. Many of them are so lightly covered that very soon the dogs get them out.'"

The appeal of the bishops, which relates further details of the condition of the refugees, is signed by:

David H. Greer, Bishop of New York; Charles S. Burch, Suffragan Bishop of New York; James De Wolf Perry, Jr., Bishop of Rhode Island; William Lawrence, Bishop of Massachusetts; Samuel G. Babcock, Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts; Frederick Burgess, Bishop of Long Island; Philip M. Rhineland, Bishop of Pennsylvania; Thomas J. Garland, Suffragan Bishop of Pennsylvania; William T. Manning, Rector of Trinity Parish, New York; Edwin S. Lins, Bishop of Newark; Chauncey B. Brewster, Bishop of Connecticut; Thomas F. Davies, Bishop of Western Massachusetts; William A. Leonard, Bishop of Ohio; Charles T. Olmsted, Bishop of Central New York; Richard H. Nelson, Bishop of Albany; W. R. Stearly, Suffragan Bishop of Newark, and Paul Matthews, Bishop of New Jersey.

FLOCK TO FLOWER SHOW.

**Natural History Museum Crowded
in Last Day of Annual Exhibit.**

The rain and the fact that President Wilson was in the city are the reasons given by the managers of the Horticultural Society Flower Show at the Museum of Natural History for the failure of the attendance yesterday to come up to the Sunday afternoon of the show a year ago. Before the show closed its doors at 5 o'clock yesterday 64,994 persons had passed through the doors, as against 88,593, the record of the Sunday last year. The total attendance since the opening on Thursday, however, broke last season's record. At the 1915 show 194,024 persons came to view the flowers. This year 190,993 persons were in attendance.

All day long a stream of persons, mostly women and children, entered the building and slowly passed in line before the exhibits. The main attraction was the magnificent exhibit of chrysanthemums in the centre of the main hall. The table decoration exhibit also came in for much favorable comment. When 5 o'clock and closing time came there were so many in the hall that it took the attendants a quarter of an hour to get them all out.

SEND SHIP TO AID STARVING ARMENIA

**Syrians, Too, Will Share in
\$250,000 Cargo on
Collier Caesar.**

FIVE MILLIONS ARE NEEDED

**Organized Campaign to Collect This
Has Been Organized for
Thanksgiving.**

The United States collier Caesar is due in New York this week to take on a Christmas cargo of food and clothing supplies for the starving people of Armenia and Syria. A statement issued yesterday by the American Committee, in charge of the fund, says that to date the committee has raised \$2,018,602.68 and, of this sum, \$2,000,000 has been applied to the relief of 2,000,000 Armenian, Syrian, and Assyrian war sufferers in the Near East.

"By sending America's 1916 Christmas ship," the statement adds, "the committee's relief work will approach a scale slightly more nearly adequate to the starvation demands. The Christmas ship will leave New York early in December with a cargo of food and new clothing, costing more than a quarter of a million dollars, and will be followed after its departure by increased efforts to continue the saving of Armenians and Syrians from starvation by the cabling of further funds direct to distribution centres.

"Altogether the committee, basing its figure on cabled reports from its agents, estimates that \$5,000,000 is necessary merely to keep alive the women and children survivors. An organized campaign to collect the balance of this \$5,000,000 has been arranged for Thanksgiving, when, in pursuance of the President's proclamation calling for un stinted giving, contributions will be received in churches throughout the country.

"The destitute ministered to by the committee comprise, roughly, 1,000,000 Armenians in deportation camps in Turkey and in refugee bands in Syria, the Russian Caucasus, and Egypt; 1,000,000 Syrians, whose crops and homes have been confiscated, and 1,000,000 Assyrian Christian women and children in Kurdistan and Persia, who have absolutely no protection against Winter except what comes from relief funds. The money cabled by the committee is spent under the direct supervision of American Consuls and missionaries, and, in some cases, of Russian and German officials and teachers.

"The \$2,000,000 contributed came from at least twenty countries or dependencies, the American Committee acting as an international relief agency. Substantial gifts have come from China, Korea, Japan, France, Egypt, the Philippines, Hawaii, Alaska, British Columbia, Cuba, and several South American republics. One check came from the Nez Perce Indians. The bulk of the gifts came from the United States, however.

"The Christmas ship cargo, which will be completely assembled as soon as sufficient funds are received, will be loaded aboard the Caesar as soon as that vessel reaches New York from Charleston, S. C., where, under orders from Secretary of the Navy Daniels, day and night repair shifts are putting her in shape. The Caesar will leave Charleston Dec. 2, stopping at Norfolk for coal.

Gifts for the Christmas cargo are pouring in rapidly to the Bush Terminal, Brooklyn, in care of Albert W. Staub. The committee has just received a check for \$10,000 from The Christian Herald to be used in the purchase of wheat, flour, and rice to go on the Christmas vessel. This check makes a total of \$25,000 contributed by subscribers and friends of that paper for Armenian and Syrian relief."

ARMENIAN COUNCIL PROTESTS TO BERLIN

Asks That Measures Be Taken to End Excesses of the Turkish Troops.

GERMANY IS RESPONSIBLE

Her Insistence at Peace Conference Resulted in Withdrawal of Rus- sians, It Is Pointed Out.

LONDON, April 14.—Russia has followed her protest in Germany against the Turkish operations in the Caucasus, which have resulted in wholesale murders of the Armenian population, by forwarding a similar protest by the Armenian National Council, addressed to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the President of the Reichstag. This protest, received from the Russian wireless system and given out by the British Admiralty through the Wireless Press, reads:

"The Armenian National Council, as the supreme body for the expression of the will of the Armenian people, is addressing you in connection with the tragic state of things in Armenia. Armenia is flooded with blood and, only recently saved from centuries of slavery, is again condemned to fresh sufferings. Following upon the withdrawal of the Russian troops, Turkish troops have already invaded the undefended country and are not only killing every Turkish Armenian, but also every Russian in Armenia.

"In spite of the terms of the peace treaty, which recognizes the right of self-determination for these Caucasian regions, the Turkish Army is advancing toward Kars and Ardahan, destroying the country and killing the Christian population. The responsibility for the future destiny of the Armenians lies entirely with Germany, because it was Germany's insistence that resulted in the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the Armenian regions, and at the moment it rests with Germany to prevent the habitual excesses of the Turkish troops, increased by revengefulness and anger.

"It is hard to believe that a civilized State, like Germany, which has the means for preventing the excesses of her ally, will permit the Brest-Litovsk treaty to be used by the German people, who have been involved in war against their own will, as a means for the creation of incalculable sufferings.

"The National Council firmly believes that you will undertake the necessary measures, which depend solely upon you, to influence the Turkish authorities with a view to saving the Armenian people from fresh horrors."

MURDER OF MAR SHIMUN. Syrian Catholicos First Head of a Nationality to Perish in the War.

The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief last night gave out the following concerning Mar Shimun, head of the Assyrian Church, who was killed recently, according to a cablegram received by the State Department at Washington on Saturday.

Mar Shimun is the first political head of a nationality who has paid the supreme sacrifice of this war. To his people he was both King Albert and Cardinal Mercier. In 1903, when a boy of 16, Mar Shimun was selected to become Catholicos or Patriarch, to succeed his uncle, Ruwel Reuben, who was on the point of death. He was consecrated Catholicos on April 12 of that year. He was educated by native teachers and by members of the mission established by Archbishop Benson of Canterbury at the Patriarchal seat, Qudshants, (Kochannes,) in Kurdistan.

His elder sister, Surma, who ranked next to him in influence over his people, also was educated at the mission and later became a recognized authority on canon law and Church history.

Attacked by the Turks in June, 1915, Mar Shimun and his 125,000 Assyrian highlanders defended the narrow valley of their mountain home, which might be termed a Switzerland in Asia. After Turkish mountain guns had battered down ancient castles and churches, the Assyrians were forced to abandon their valley and retreat to mountain fastnesses.

When their supplies ran out, Mar Shimun, with a handful of warriors, risked grave perils to reach the Russian lines at Salmas, Persia, but the Russians, weakened by the loss of Warsaw, could give no assistance. Then Mar Shimun, returning to his people, was forced to lead them down to the plateaus of Northwestern Persia, where they scattered over the plains of Salmas and Urumiah. There 15 per cent. of them died from cold and hunger.

As 138th Catholicos of the east he maintained the ancient traditions and his people almost worshipped him.

PERSIAN ARMENIA RAVAGED BY TURKS

Massacre at Urumiah—47,000 Refugees Reach British Lines in Mesopotamia.

LONDON, Oct. 10. — Mesopotamian dispatches received here record the arrival inside the British lines of 47,000 Assyrian, Armenian, and Russian refugees from Urumiah, Persian Armenia, who broke through the Turkish front and made their escape.

Another 10,000 refugees, according to the dispatches, are distributed in Kurdistan towns or are wandering in the hills. The Turks pursued them, but were driven back by British cavalry.

Later the Turks entered Urumiah and massacred 200 persons, mostly old men. It is reported that 600 Christian women have been distributed among the Turkish troops and the Moslem inhabitants of Urumiah.
