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**YAKUP HIDIRSAH**

**MASSACRE OF CHRISTIANS**

**(ASSYRIANS- NESTORIANS-  
CHALDEANS- ARMENIANS)**

**IN MESOPOTAMIA**

**AND**

**KURDS**

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**A Documentary Study**

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## INTRODUCTION

Given that the research on the origins of the Christian populations who are known to be the descendants of the old nations and who are called as "Syriacs", "Nestorians", "Chaldeans" has not reached a definite conclusion yet, we deem it early for the time being to state a view on this subject here.

Neither do we want to go into the discussions on the views supporting "Assyrians" vs "Aramis" that have emerged in recent years especially between the leftist and rightist Syriac people in Europe.

However, we attach great importance to the views of the Syriac historian and the former spiritual leader of all the Syriac people in Turkey, the Metropolitan Filiksinos Hanna Dolapönü (1885-1969) of Mardin concerning the issue. Hanna Dolapönü states that the origin of the Syriac people can not be based on one race only. According to him, "Syriac people have originated from Aramis, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Phenicians, Kenanis and Indians."<sup>1</sup>

After pointing this out, we are moving onto the main subject.

As is known; in the course of the history, Syriacs, Nestorians Chaldeans and Christians were killed, wounded, plundered and oppressed by the nations who intended to establish sovereignty over the Mesopotamian territories in which they were settled. In the region, innumerable incidents occurred. It is known that a large number of partial or impartial written works have been produced concerning these incidents. However, in most of these books the inhumane atrocities Kurds have taken against the Christian nations have either been ignored or discussed superficially. It is a fact that this attitude is closely related with the political interests.

In this study, we aim to shed light on the subject by analyzing the relationships and the events taken place between the Kurds and Christian Syriacs, Nestorians, Chaldeans and Armenians who had kept the local administrations under their control in the region in the various periods of the history. As far as we know, it is the first time through this study that Kurdish atrocities against Christians have been examined as a whole at the level of a documentary study.

The reader will certainly appreciate that only a very brief summary of the Kurdish massacre and brutality perpetrated with the purpose of the extermination of the Christian (Syriacs, Nestorians, Chaldeans, Armenian) people in the course of the history has been presented in this study. We hope that in the future we will shed light on the unclear aspects of the subject by making use of the other historical documents in a more comprehensive way.

### **KURDS ARE NOT FROM MESOPOTAMIA**

The various sources providing information on the origins of the Kurds share the view that they are not originally from Mesopotamia. The scholars have put forward various theses on the homeland of the Kurds. Various claims have been set forth that the Kurds came from the east of Iran, Scandinavia, India, Caucasus, Central Asia, the Zagros Mountains and settled in Mesopotamia.<sup>2</sup> The common feature of all these claims is that the Kurds are not from Mesopotamia. However, in the books written by the members of the Kurdish movement in recent years the expression, "the homeland of the Kurds" has been used for Mesopotamia and it is stated that Syriac, Nestorian, Chaldean and Armenian people settled in this region after coming from other parts of the world.<sup>3</sup> This view which reflects the chauvinist mentality of the Kurdish ideologue is not worth elaborating on as it is nothing but a "claim".

Mesopotamia which the political Kurdish movement described as "Kurdistan" is essentially a geographic location which has been adopted as a homeland in the course of the history by the peoples of Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean and it is the homeland of these people. Armenian, Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish people and others came to this area later and settled there.<sup>4</sup> It is also known that a Syriac Kingdom, the capital of which was the province of Urfa of today existed from 192 B.C. to 244 for 436 years.<sup>5</sup> It is also established in historic sources that in the previous periods, the peoples of Assyria, Arami, Akkad, Babili, and Chaldean established sovereignty in Mesopotamia and Eastern and Southeast Anatolia.<sup>6</sup> Even in the Seljuk period, the Seljuks were in majority in many settlement parts of the area. For example, Turkish historian Prof. Dr. Osman Turan states that Syriac people were in majority in Urfa even at the beginning of 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

## **SYRIAC PEOPLE IN ARABIC, SELJUK, OTTOMAN ERAS**

Before moving onto the parts which examine the Kurdish oppression and atrocities committed against the Christian peoples in the region, which is the primary subject of this study, it is deemed beneficial to quote some views of Yakup Bilge, the Syriac writer which we believe casting light on the political history of the region:

"When the Muslim Arabs came to the Near East, they met a national church which included all the Syriac people except a small minority... Together with the conquest of the Muslim Arabs, Islam would spread in the Near East... The Syriac people who accepted Islam were losing their national characteristics, using Arabic rather than Syriac and breaking off their relations with the Syriac culture... The new situation which emerged as a result of the disappearance of the Arabic influence and the establishment of sovereignty by the Seljukian people in the Near East affected the Syriac people as well. The Seljukian people were selecting local officials among the Syriac people. This situation paved the way for the Syriac people to carry out an intellectual Renaissance. The language of Syriac began to be effective again. The Syrian intellectuals reverted to old Syriac sources again. The movement improved and spread with the works of history, politics and religion. The history books and encyclopedias and populist chronicles were written. Many written works were produced in political and religious fields. This cultural movement affected the all society and provided a great momentum to the society. However, this atmosphere of cultural development would not last long. As a result of the Mongol raids, all the peoples living in the Near East would be massacred in a short while.

As a result of the military campaigns Tamerlane (1336-1405) conducted in the Near East at the end of 14<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Eastern Syriac people living in the southern areas of Upper Mesopotamia fled to inaccessible mountains and lived on these mountains until 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Western Syriac people experienced harm by these raids. The people were massacred and the monasteries and churches were destroyed. All the Syriac people bore sufferings for more than one century. This complex and unclear situation in the Middle East lasted until 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century a new power emerged in the region: the Ottomans.

The Ottoman conquest was a conquest which lacked -or rather had less- religious aspect. The settlement of the Ottomans to the region was an important stability factor for the peoples living in that region due to the disorder present in that region until then. However, this situation did not ensure that all the

"reaya" i.e. non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman Empire would have equal rights. Yet, unless they wanted freedom, the peoples could live in the territories of the "Sultan" if they paid the taxes and the tributes they were required. In fact efforts was being made by the "Sultan" to ensure the safety of lives and possessions of these people as far as the conditions permitted. The people were suffering from the taxes, yet; this would prevent them from annihilating completely.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, the threats, pressures, even the inhumane actions of the local Kurdish rulers and feudal lords reaching the level of massacre and their attitudes which consider the seizure of the properties and possessions "permissible" and even "lawful" and "booty" were inviting the catastrophe for the Mesopotamian Christians. Naturally this situation was affecting the Christian population as well.

We are of the belief that the following points concerning the Kurdish-Christian relations indicated by the Dutch sociologist Martin Van Bruinessen will give a sufficient idea on the gravity of the subject:

"Christians were constituting a greater part of the population in Kurdistan than that of today. The massacres, escapes, voluntary migration and the acceptance of Islam decreased their number significantly. I have met with "crypto-Christians" who speak Kurdish and who have accepted Islam in appearance yet who still remember their origins of Armenian and Nestorian in various parts of Kurdistan (Siirt and Hakkari). The relations between the rest of the Christians and their Kurdish neighbours are in general far from being sincere. Especially the Western Syrians (Western Syriac people) from Tur Abdin have been subject to the wild behaviors of the chiefs of the Kurdish tribes who have grabbed their lands, possessions and even their daughters."<sup>9</sup>

### **Plundering of the Churches and the Kurds**

It is stated in many sources that the Kurds have often conducted raids on the Christian churches and destroyed and plundered them in the course of the history. For example, in the introduction part of the well-known book called "History", which was written by the Syriac historian Bar Hebraeus who has become famous with the name of "Abu'l Farac", Ernest A. Wallis Budge, who translated this book from Syriac to English, provides detailed information on

the Kurdish assaults against Mar Mattai Monastery. We quote the following parts from the statements of Budge concerning the subject:

"We have little information on the history of Mar Mattai Monastery in the periods following the spread of Islam in Mesopotamia. However, this had been an important penetration center for Syriac people and an important place for taking refuge when the Syriac people were oppressed by the Arabs and then Mongols and wild Kurdish tribes. Apparently, Mar Mattai monks had not been disturbed for a while and they had fixed the buildings in which they had been living peacefully, paved the main roads of the steep path leading up to the monastery, decorated the church with sacred pots made of golden and silver and stored wine, oil etc. in here.

The monastery, before long, reached the level of a place being worth of plundering and the Kurds and their neighbouring tribes have robbed the monastery and left nothing there. Bar Hebraeus quotes one of these assaults which took place in 1262: A force consisting of Kurdish cavalymen and infantrymen had a battle with the monks in the monastery for four months, leant ladders to the walls in order to go inside, yet the monks pulled the ladders, set them on fire. The Kurds climbed the mountain behind the monastery, moved a stone and rolled it up. This stone which broke into pieces, pierced the wall and they went through this hole. The monks met the enemies by throwing stones and arrows, and repelled the enemies and fixed the wall. During the battle Abu Nasr, the chief of the monastery lost one eye and many monks got wounded with the arrows the Kurds had shot. However the stores of the monastery were running out and nothing was enough for the monks who were under fire. Therefore these monks volunteered for peace and they promised to give the curtains, hooks and the furniture to Kurds and to collect as much gold and silver as possible. On hearing that the Mongols were moving towards Mosul, the Mongols accepted the offer they received and they took the furniture worth one thousand golden dinar and left.

A few years later, the Kurds trapped ten monks from Mar Mattai Monastery in Alpef. After torturing them, they killed one of them and sold nine of them at four thousand zuzes amounting to a hundred gold. In 1286 a Kurdish regiment occupied the Mar Mattai Monastery and stayed there for four days...

In 1830, the Monastery was attacked and plundered by the Kurds and Rabban Matta together with his community was fired. G.P. Badger who was one of the monks of Eastern Indian in Bombay group stayed there for two days in October 1843 and witnessed the destruction of the buildings of church and monastery the Kurds had carried out. The building had completely been abandoned and all

of its doors had been pulled out. Possibly the Kurds must have pulled out the doors and burnt out them for cooking. The cells of the monks were destroyed...

In almost 1844, a Kurdish general of Ravandiz carried out an attack on Mosul, and following the seizure of the city, he attacked Al-Kosh Monastery of Rabban Hormizd and the monasteries of Mar Mattai in Alpef. There was a big library in Al-Kosh. Upon the attack, the monks took the five hundred manuscripts in the library and concealed them in the caves of the surrounding mountains. However the caves were flooded by the heavy rains and the manuscripts were drifted in the waters and they could not be caught again. The Kurds plundered the monastery and destroyed anything that they would not use.

During the great war, the Kurds and Hamavinds destroyed anything they found including the manuscripts in KudSanis. Later, they moved to Urmiye by the Lake Van and destroyed and set the churches, houses and buildings on fire. They also destroyed the printing machine, broke the molds of the letters into pieces, ruined the typesetting and printing machines, and destructed the rooms and possessions of the typesetters. American mission had many Syriac manuscripts, the copies of the manuscripts which were present in KudSanis or in the possession of some individuals, great Sacred Books in Syriac language and the written works such as Fallaçy printed in the printing machine set up by the American delegation. This printing machine was set up in Urmiye in 1840 by Dr. Perkins and his friends W.R.Stocking, A.L.Holladay, E.Breath, I.L. Merrick, W.Jones and Lieutenant Colonel Stoddard. Together with all these written work, the copies of the periodical called Zahriré dhe Bahrâ were burnt and it was not possible to get hold of them...

During the raids carried out by the Kurds, the inside of the churches became so damaged that no work of sculpture or any kind of decoration or ornament could be found..."<sup>10</sup>

### **Bedirhan the Kurdish Emir of Cizre and Kurds**

It is based on the historic documents that in 1843 the Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean Christians were subject to the unprecedented brutality of Bedirhan, the Kurdish Emir of Cizre and a massacre of these Christian peoples was carried out by the Kurds.

After he took the emirate from his elder brother Salih the Emir in 1821, Bedirhan the Emir maintained his loyalty to Ottoman Sultan for a long time.

However, after the Ottoman army was beaten by the forces of Ibrahim Pascha who was the son of the Egypt Governor which progressed to North Syria in 1838, Bedirhan the Emir started to act as he wished and tried to establish a separate administration from the Ottomans. Meanwhile, he developed his relations with the leaders and the rulers of the Kurdish tribes and made great efforts to unify them under his own leadership. After a while, he formed alliances with some sheiks and leaders of the tribes from MuS, Van, Hakkari and Bitlis.<sup>11</sup>

Kurdish writer Dr. Celilê Celil states the following on the subject:

"These Kurdish leaders formed a "sacred unification" in order to initiate a joint uprising against Turkey, liberate Kurdistan and found a different independent state.. Mustafa Bey\*, DerviS Bey, Mahmut Khan and Nurullah Bey and Fetah Bey from Hakkari, Halit Bey from (Bitlis), Serif Bey from MuS, Hüseyin Bey the Blind who is the leader of the Kurdish tribes in the district of Kars participated in the "Sacred Unification". Their leader was Bedirhan Bey...After the military-politic and socio-economic situation was put in order and Bedirhan Bey formed the unification of the chiefs of the Kurdish tribes, he decided that it was high time that an independent Kurdish state the leader of which would be himself, should be founded. The evidence for this was the fact that he had coins minted under his name. According to the testimony given by the Kurdish historian Alaaddin Succadi<sup>12</sup>, "on the front of the coins engraved 'Emiri Bohtan Bedirhan' at the back is engraved 'the Hegira year 1258'<sup>13</sup>. Bedirhan Bey declared the city of Jazira (Cizre) in which his flag was flying as the capital of the state. Kurdish leaders and the followers of Bedirhan Bey supported and defended the new state. Bedirhan Bey founded an independent Kurdish Emirate which is of political significance.."14

Everything is normal up to now. The main problem starts after the year of 1842. There are Armenian sources indicating that Bedirhan Bey adopted an assimilation policy in religious sense because he started to have 'khutbah' (a plain sermon) delivered in the mosques after he declared "his emirate" and had coins minted under his name. Bedirhan Bey was considering himself as the spiritual leader of the areas liberated from the Turkish sovereignty.<sup>15</sup>

After placing its "Sacred Unification" on strong foundations, for Bedirhan the period of dragging the Kurds into "sacred war" against the Christian peoples in the region would begin.

Soon he started to display his real face and with the call he made to the peoples of the Syriac, Nestorian, Chaldean and even Armenian Christians, he required

them to increase the tributes they had been paying to the Ottomans by a few times. At the same he sought the ways of to send them away from their homes and seize their possessions and lands. In fact his real intention that was his real aim and tax was only an excuse.

It was not possible for Syriac, Nestorian and other non-Muslim communities which strove to survive with difficulty to accept these harsh conditions put forward by Bedirhan the Ruler. Therefore, they replied a negative answer to Bedirhan.

This was what Bedirhan the Ruler was expecting for and he called the Kurdish Muslims to fight "a sacred war" against Christian Syriac, Nestorian, Chaldean and Armenian people and ordered to massacre and annihilate them...

We will try to summarize what happened after that according to the historical documents and sources.

We can also find information in the Kurdish sources concerning the wild massacre perpetrated by Bedirhan Bey against the Christian peoples. Kurdish writers and historians also admit this massacre carried out by Bedirhan Bey.

On this subject, the Kurdish historian M.Emin Zeki states that:

"The Nestorian people who were living in the district of Botan over which Bedirhan Bey had dominance did not pay their taxes and rebelled against him. Bedirhan Bey had to dispatch troops and control them. The Nestorian people were inflicted on heavy losses and great damage."<sup>16</sup>

Also the Kurdish writer Dr. Celil  Celil admits the following on the issue:

"...the Kurdish troops attacked the Assyrians and started slaughters. Consequently, a few Assyrians were killed, their villages were destroyed and set into fire... For the second time, in 1846, the Assyrians residing at the Thuma region have been massacred. Mar Semun hardly survived fleeing to Urmiyah."<sup>17</sup>

Kurdish writer M. Kalman almost approves the liquidation of Nestorians and Syriacs whom some writers mention that they have been massacred on the pretext of their not "paying the taxes":

"Who, for what reason should clash with the communities paying taxes and providing troops?"<sup>18</sup>

M. Kalman also adds to his words:

“The rights of the Christian community expanded following the Tanzimat Fermany (The Imperial Decree on Reformation in the Ottoman period) in 1838... The missionaries were willing to disseminate Christianity in Kurdistan... The Assyrians were trying to make the efforts to disseminate Christianity, beneficial for their own nationalistic interests. Naturally, such understandings were not pleasing for Yezidis and the Muslims.”<sup>19</sup>

These sentences obviously reveal the fact that the only reason for the massacres against the Syriacs, Nestorians and the Chaldeans by the Kurds was not the "taxes".

As a matter of fact, M Kalman makes a confession and says:

"Nurullah Bey and Bedirhan Bey, attacked the Assyrians to prevent their being influential in the region as a result of the Assyrians' being alleged defended by the West. Killed many people. The villages were burned down and booted. One of the reasons of this attack was that, the Assyrians refused to pay taxes to Bedirhan."<sup>20</sup>

So, the reason for the massacre was not "tax", but the bigotry of the fanatical Muslim Kurds against Christian belief.

Just at this point we would like to cite the remarkable and eloquent words of the British writer William Eagleton:

"In 1843 and 1846, Bedirhan started a massacre and booting campaign against the Christian Assyrians (Nestorians) he was anxious about whose getting stronger and independent through becoming able to rule themselves. It was intolerable for Bedirhan to see the Assyrians living on his own territories getting stronger. Thus he killed ten thousand Assyrians. Even though Bedirhan was a feudal tribal leader, he was expressing the aspirations of the Kurdish nationalism."<sup>21</sup>

Many of the resources confirm that the Kurds under the command of Bedirhan massacred more than ten thousand Nestorian, Chaldean and Syriac Christians.

The Kurdish writers, for an unknown reason, keep the number of victims of this savageness secret. For example, M. Kalman, in his words we have cited above, takes the massacre as a simple, ordinary incident and says "killed many people" and tries to keep the truth as a secret.

The Armenian writer Garo Sasuni, expresses his views on Bedirhan as follows:

"It is true that some of the Jazira (Cizre) Emirs had the reputation of 'bandit'. It is also true that Bedirhan was violent, biting and cruel ... There was an semi-independent Syriac region in Çulamerk (Hakkari)... Pashaliks of Cezire, Zaho, Hakkari and Amadiye, having this or that way a kinship with Bedirhan, have become his Allies. After gathering all these forces around himself, Bedirhan focused on Çulamerk (Hakkari) and on the independent Syriac thresholds at the northern region. Previously, these thresholds had been able to resist against the Emir of Hakkari. The Syriacs relying on the strong thresholds, had not intended to make concessions. Thus Bedirhan resorted violence against the Syriacs. Bedirhan had been successful. Occupied Çulamerk, killed many Syriacs, (Rafi, in his book 'The Western Armenia' mentions the number of the Syriacs as 10.000), forced many to convert to Islam and recruited some to his army."<sup>22</sup>

The German writer Karl May (1842-1912) in his book "Durchs Wilde Kurdistan" cites what a Christian woman told Chodih, who had visited the region, about the Kurdish violence in Lizan village:

"Have you heard of Bedirhan Bey, Zeynel Bey, Nurullah Bey and Abdüssamet BeyS They are the murderers of Christians. Those Kurdish brutes attacked us from all fronts. Put our houses, gardens into fire, destroyed our crops, destroyed our sanctuaries and killed our husbands and sons. The blood of innocent victims had run into the Zap river. The fire that was extinguishing our villages were twinkling on the hills and plains of our country!"

"I know; it must be something terrible!"

"TerribleS Oh Chodih, terrible is nothing. I can tell you such heartbreaking things. Do you see the steep mountainS There! The people of Lizan fled there. Because, they were probably thinking that no body would attack them from the beneath. However, they took very little water and food with them. They surrendered Bedirhan not to starve. He promised to spare their lives and freedom should they give up their arms. However he did not keep his promise and killed them all. More than one thousand Chaldeans died and only one survived, to tell what was going on at the mountains."<sup>23</sup>

E. Soane, while telling about the massacre against the Syriacs, puts the blame only on the Kurds. E. Soane also mentions that there was a tribal hostility between Nurullah Bey, the Ruler of Hakkari and the Syriacs.<sup>24</sup>

Well-known writers such as Minorsky, Adamov, Wigram mention the suppression and extortion Bedirhan Bey and Nurullah Bey exerted on the Nestorians.<sup>25</sup>

The well-known Dutch sociologist Martin Van Bruinessen mentions the following on the issue:

"When in 1843 the Nestorians in Tiyyari, for the first time, refused to pay taxes to the Ruler of Hakkari, the associate of Bedirhan Bey, tribal units have been sent to the region and many Nestorians had been killed. The massacre has been repeated in other regions. Well-known Archaeologist and Consul Layard, mentioned that the reason for the massacre might be the provocation of the missionaries and for the massacre he blamed directly Bedirhan and indirectly the fanatical anti-Christian sheik who is too much influential on the Emir. This sheik was probably Seyid Taha, father of Ubeydullah who was the leader of the 1880 rebellion. There are some rumors that this sheik was wearing veil to protect himself from the faithless glances of the Christians."<sup>26</sup>

The fanatical Kurdish Sheiks, who always sought a pretext for rebellion also played a significant role in provoking the massacres against the Syriacs, Nestorians and Chaldeans. After the massacre of the Syriacs, M. Gamazov the Russian representative in the committee for border demarcating between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, who visited the tribe of Bedirhan Bey and the region, mentioned that Sheik Abdülaziz of Gurandest had a significant role in the hostility between the Syriacs and Kurds.<sup>27</sup>

Also the Kurdish sources confirm the fact that Bedirhan Bey, prior to the massacre against the Syriacs, made use of the clergies called "sheik" who had a significant position among the Kurds and established an alliance with them to provoke the Kurds against the Christians. Celadet Bedirhan, in his book under his nickname "Bletch Chirguh", mentions the names of Sheik Muhammed from Mosul and Sheik Yusuf from Zaho as the above-mentioned "sheik" advisers of his grandfather Bedirhan Bey.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, the documents in the Ottoman Archives indicate that Bedirhan is a member of "Nakhshibendi Sect".<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the real reason for the Bedirhan's decree for the massacre of the Syriacs, Nestorians and Chaldeans has been revealed.

It is obvious that the real reason for Bedirhan's massacre of the Christians was the "religious bigotry".

The Turkish writers, as well as the Kurdish writers, very obviously mention that "Bedirhan, attacking on the Nestorians, had massacred tens of thousands of them".<sup>30</sup>

It is a known fact that there are hundreds of documents in the Ottoman Period Archives of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey on Bedirhan's massacres against the Syriacs, Nestorians and Chaldeans.

We deem it appropriate to refer to some of these documents on massacres of the Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean Christians. These documents reveal apparently the barbarity and brutality of the Kurds.

It is possible to see in the following document, the details of the bloody action of Bedirhan Bey against the relatives and associates of the Nestorian Patriarch Mar Semun.<sup>31</sup>

"The document from the Bedirhan Bey, the Emir of Bohtan, to the Governor of Mosul indicates that he will be sending nearly ten thousand rifled troops against the Nestorians at the mountains and receive support from the Kurdish community called Artushi, Ysmael Pasha, Tatar ASa (a feudal lord) and the Emir of Hakkari. Bedirhan Bey, asked for support from Ysmael Bey to contain the Nestorians and nearly eight thousand troops had been sent to him. There might be two reasons for Ysmael Pasha from Amadiye to send eight thousand troops. First, following Bedirhan Bey's containment of the Nestorians, Ysmael Pasha is willing to resume the Amadiye Governorship from which previously he was dismissed with difficulty and secondly, Ysmael Pasha is planning to take a share from the plunder and prize.

The troops, after raiding on Deyir, plundered and set into fire many many villages among the mountains. They especially, took with them the goods, properties and books which they plundered from the village Bindesbido and destroyed the church. The people of the village had been subject to oppression and torture and a few hundred people had been taken away to be sold as slaves by the Ruler of Cizre (Bedirhan Bey). In the Diz village, cutting into two, they had thrown the corpse of the patriarch Mar Semun's mother, into the Zap river, saying that her son would share the same fate.

Eighteen days ago the patriarch, together with his brother, secretary and three-four servants, had flown to Mosul and found shelter in the house of the Acting British Consul and later on, requested the Mosul Governor to release the slaves. The Governor said he would not start a procedure against himself or the Nestorian community should they do not surrender himself and the patriarch

agreed to this provision. Even though he had mentioned that the bad treatment they suffered was due to the order of the Governor of Erzurum, the Mosul Governor stated that he would not have any idea or command on this. The Patriarch said that he intended to submit the situation to the Government and stated that their primary demands and requests were settling the problem of buying and selling of slaves which was abominable and undesirable for them, return of the goods and properties that had been plundered and seized, and the withdrawal of the soldiers of Bedirhan Bey from their countries."

The Kurdish assaults against the Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean Christians caused a deep hatred in the Christian World.

Martin Van Bruinessen expresses this hatred with the following words:

"The massacres were met by screams of horror. The British and the French forced the Ottoman Empire to punish Bedirhan."<sup>32</sup>

Following the atrocities by Bedirhan Bey, the Ministry of Interior had sent an order, of which the Governorates of Diyarbekir, Sivas and Mosul had been notified, to the office of Anatolian Army Marshalship on 27 Cemaziyülevvel 1262 (1846) and on 27 Zilkade 1262 (1846). The order says "The Head of Cizre District Bedirhan Bey, gathering more than ten thousand Kurdish soldiers, had dared to kill and execute huge numbers of people attacking on the Tuhub and Tiyar tribes of the Nestorian community in the Hakkari Sanjak; so the necessary measures should be taken..."<sup>33</sup>

After Bedirhan's being punished for the Kurds' massacring the Syriacs, Nestorians and Chaldeans, the Nestorian Patriarch Mar Semun presented a letter, in Arabic, to the Ottoman Empire in which he had expressed his gratitude and required to be protected against the Kurds.

The English version of the Arabic letter Mar Semun presented to the Ottoman Empire:<sup>34</sup>

"It is our submission following the prayers for the Ottoman Empire and her Emperor: May God, creator of the world, ensure the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire. It is well-known that I am a humble individual from the Anbariye region, who had the honor of finding shelter in Mosul and receiving the mercy and compassion of the Ottoman Empire. The Governors of Mosul treated me with respect and hospitality. Thanks God! Now by the protection of our Emperor, most of the Nestorian expatriates returned their villages and live in peace. They cultivate their land and securely build their houses. Our church

is now ruined. Without a church and a priest the population would get out of discipline and might resort to pillage. My humble aim is to go to those regions, choose and assign their priests, to call back the vagabonds and to establish their villages. However, without the permission of the State, I can neither turn back to Anbariye nor re-establish the places that have been ruined and have even left no trace behind. Now, our only request from the great State is to enable my turning back to my country by giving the Mosul Governor the necessary order and permission. It is not a secret to the Ottoman Empire that Anbariye sanjaks had always been ruled by nobody but the Kurdish Beys. Sometimes Erzurum Governor, sometimes Mosul Governor claimed the rule of these territories. These claims are the major reasons of the independence and freedom of this land. We now are so much willing the State to keep us under the control of one of these two Viziers so that we could know what to do. Should the Ottoman Empire is willing our goodness, safety and re-establishment of our lands, he must place us under the control and command of the Mosul Governor. Because, Erzurum is far away from us and it is difficult for us to travel there, whereas Mosul is nearby and easy to travel. Our protection against the Kurds might be ensured by the Governors of Mosul.

It is known to our State that we have the fermans given to our fathers by the previous Caliph and then emperors. In the disasters the Kurds caused, we lost these fermans as well as many other documents. We the Nestorians, are a nation that has been the community of Muslims before any Christians. I, being their Patriarch, request that the brevets should be given to me and to the priest under me. I, being the servant to my Master Sultan, pray for his survival, for the distress of his enemies and his being victorious before all of his enemies. Amen, amen. 7 Cemaziyelahir 1262 (1846).

**The well-wisher of the Ottoman Empire  
Mar Semun,  
The Patriarch of the Nestorian Nation"**

Meanwhile, the written complaints that had been sent to the Ottoman Empire from the British and French Consuls to Mosul via their Embassies, increased everyday.

As a matter of fact, the report sent by the British Consul to Mosul to the British Ambassador to Ystanbul is as follows:<sup>35</sup>

"I inform you that the Nestorians in Tuhup, previously being subordinate to the Head of Hakkari District Nurullah Bey, then being given by him under the rule of Bedirhan Bey, will be subject to massacre which is more violent than the one

in Tiyar. The Nestorians heard that Bedirhan Bey would not take hostages anymore but execute everybody including women and kids. Bedirhan Bey for the time being, is gathering his troops and storing food in his castles. (The Nestorians misunderstood

Bedirhan Bey's such activities, he is doing these preparations not to attack the Nestorians but since he is scared of the military measures the Government is taking against him.) The Christians, in anxiety and hurry, are getting prepared to take shelter in the Iranian territories. First, a priest and an alderman have been sent to Mosul to ask for the protection of Tayyar Pasha, they were either killed on their way or could not pass Pervari and turned back. Abdüssamed Bey who became famous in the Tiyar incident, is slaughtering the Nestorians on their own lands. Recently they have slaughtered seven people here.

Since all the Beys at the vicinity are in alliance, the attack that is being planned against the Nestorians would be more significant. Bedirhan Bey, Nurullah Bey and Abdüssamed Bey are the prominent ones that would take place in this attack. If the Kurdish Beys could not reach an agreement among themselves, the saints in their belief Sheik Muhammed from Mosul and Sheik Yusuf from Zaho advised all the Kurds to unite around Bedirhan Bey to exterminate the Christians and later on they can deal with their own problems. Abdüssamed Bey heard that there occurred a disorder among the Christians and His Majesty Tayyar Pasha sent Sheik Muhammed from Mosul to Pervari for peace keeping aims, this behavior of the Sheik was deemed to be shameful.

The Kurds have initiated every kind of oppression and maltreatment against the Christians living at the mountains. Although the Ottoman Empire promised not to collect taxes from the Nestorians living in Tiyar, due to the losses they have suffered, this year the Nestorians had to pay cizye (a kind of tax in the Ottoman Period) two times to Bedirhan Bey and once to Nurullah Bey. Apart from this, the attacks of the wild tribes in the surroundings, nothing was left in the lands. When His Majesty Tayyar Bey heard the things going on, banned oppression against the Christians by sending an order to Bedirhan Bey. His brother sent Ahmet Bey and told that even if one person from the Christians were raped, this would necessitate responsibility, and he ordered Sheik Muhammed to immediately turn back to Mosul. Ahmet Bey paid visits to the villages to see the conditions of the people there and encouraged the Christians around Mar Semun not to be scared and tell their sufferings. Even though all the Nestorian districts are assumed to be on the side of Beys of Hakkari, some are under Bedirhan Bey's control and are assumed to be subordinate to Erzurum Province. Since at the mountain chain between Hakkari and Erzurum, the major enemies of the Nestorians live, and since the way to Erzurum is too long and

full of difficulties and dangers, it is an obstacle for the Nestorians to ask for help from Erzurum whenever they are attacked. Their contacts with Mosul is sustaining. They can take their crops to Mosul in four-five days and when necessary, the Governor of Mosul has the means to easily send troops and provide them with various assistance whenever need arises. It is possible for the Nestorians to survive and maintain their presence only through having their lands being under the rule of Mosul.

Abdüssamed Bey, together with the ones sharing the same opinion and aims with the above-mentioned two sheiks, must be sent away from the region and Bedirhan Bey should not be left independent. The Ottoman Empire, deceived by the power and might of Bedirhan Bey which is based on apprehension, provided him with some rank and permission. Bedirhan Bey has so many opponents and enemies. Sending the Sheiks away from him and dealing with the BünyaniS (PinyaniS), Zibari and other Kurdish tribes at Governmental level, may be the measures which can easily make Bedirhan Bey flee out of these mountains. The Nestorians in Tuhub, Cilo and Baz have a few thousands of rifles. It is possible to make use of them in this suppression action. His Majesty Tayyar Pasha, after the Bairam, is intended to make a tour up to Cizre. Since there will be many troops with him, it would not be deemed possible for Bedirhan Bey neither to do any harm against the Nestorians nor to help Han Mahmut."

Receiving this report, the British Ambassador to Istanbul informed London about the situation and upon the response he received, gave the following instructions to the British Consul to Mosul:<sup>36</sup>

"I received a series of instructions from Lord Bravn regarding the Nestorian community and in general, the Christian community, having the citizenship of the Ottoman Empire. The British Government was pleased with my report on the Nestorians to the Ottoman Empire. The British Government is willing to ensure the Nestorians' being in good and secure conditions not only due to the fact that they are Christians but probably due to the fact that the Ottoman Empire has political interests and contacts. In the framework of British Government's guidance and advice to the Ottoman Empire, I urge you to improve the conditions of the Nestorians and to take them under protection immediately."

Following is the report of the French Consul to Mosul on September 20, 1846:<sup>37</sup>

"I inform you that an incident similar to the one that took place three years ago in Tiyar, controlled by Bedirhan Bey, is to take place, and that according to the estimations of the public, this time oppression and slaughters will be more violent than any of the previous ones the helpless Nestorians had been subject to. Since the Nestorians had not been able to pay the big amounts of taxes to Bedirhan Bey, he intended to attack them and seriously threatened them. It is known fact that Bedirhan Bey would not renounce his threatening. This time he would not show mercy to neither women, nor children, nor elders. He told the Governor of Mosul that should they complain about him, he would immediately attack them and implying Monsieur Ystionis's mission, mentioned that none of the Consuls may this time be influential on him to calm his rage.

It is interesting to see that even though the Ottoman Empire paid too much efforts to correct the Kurdish rebels, took no measures against Bedirhan Bey, the strongest of all. Such hesitation of the Ottoman Empire is attributed to fear. Bedirhan Bey, taking advantage of the situation, disregarding the power of the Government, increases his strength and influence on Kurds. I have read in the news papers published in Istanbul that the Government would force the Kurdish Beys who have been independent until today, to obey him. I wish such an initiative planned by Ysmael Pasha would also include Bedirhan Bey. However, additional to the fact that the troops of Ysmael Pasha are insufficient to get a good result, it has to be kept in mind that the well-trained sufficient troops sent by the former Grand Vizier late ReSıt Pasha, had to withdraw two times from the forces of Bedirhan Bey. It can not be possible for the Governor in Mosul, with insufficient troops, to render a service nor to save the Nestorians whenever he hears that the Nestorians are being slaughtered. This is a matter of conscience and humanity. In this framework, it is indispensable for the Government to take immediate and influential measures and to try hard to prevent this blood shedding before it is too late, since it is her responsibility."

On November 3, 1846 the French Ambassador, receiving this report, had given the following instructions to Monsieur Loksroi, the Chief Translator of the Embassy to be delivered to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>38</sup>

"It has been a grievous mission for me to make you inform the Minister of Foreign Affairs about the information I received. Recently, Bedirhan Bey's threatening against the Nestorians resulted in dreadful atrocities, Çal, Sinancy and Çopi turned out to be scenes of slaughter and destruction. The violence and bad events of 1846, exceeded the ones witnessed in 1843. Prosperous Ali Efendi recently told you about the hope to prevent the malicious actions of Bedirhan Bey through the calming efforts of the Governor of Mosul, and it was believed that this initiative would help to prevent and eliminate the misfortune

on the Nestorians through negotiations and advice and that it was a sufficient measure. I would not rely on this hope. In fact, in your meeting with the Grand Vizier and prosperous Ali Efendi, the situation was necessitating suppression by force rather than gentleness to protect the dignity, honor and interests of the State. My aim was to tell all these to the authorities of the Government. I am not intended to put the Ottoman Empire, which I know to be as deplored as I am, in a responsible position for all these atrocities on the contrary, I am grateful to the Governor of Mosul for his good-will.

However, good-will would not be enough anymore to suppress the atrocities taking place today. Now, the requests of the European Christian nations, enforcing the Ottoman Empire to make an explanation on the atrocities taking place in the country, requires to be met through positive deeds. A few days ago, Bedirhan Bey's body was a deficiency for the Ottoman Empire. However today it is a cause of embarrassment. Such an embarrassment that is caused by a man who disrespects the influence of and dishonors the State he is subordinate to. It is now time to cleanse the Kurdistan of his filthy body. Even his name will be forgotten one day. Since I know that the Gentleman I am sending this report also shares the my opinion, I did not hesitate using harsh expressions. I request you to deliver one copy of this report to the prosperous Ali Efendi."

Following this and similar reactions, the Ottoman Empire had sent a strong army to Cizre under the commandship of Marshal Osman Pasha. Bedirhan, being defeated in a short period, surrendered on July 20, 1847 and has been taken to Istanbul together with his allies and then he has been exiled to Kandiye city of Crete. Bedirhan, after staying eight years in Crete came back to Istanbul and then he settled in Damascus, where he died in 1870.<sup>39</sup>

Following the end of the Bedirhan movement, and the establishment of security and order within the region, the application of Imperial Decree Of Revolution, and administrative as well as judicial organizations were started. These developments were also appreciated by the foreigners. As an example, Lord Cowley, English Ambassador to Turkey, by means of sending the following letter dated July 26, 1847 to the then Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Ottoman Empire, expressed the appreciation of the British Government:<sup>40</sup>

"English Ambassador expresses his most sincere congratulations on the occasion that Ottoman Army has gained a victory over Bedirhan forces. Mr. Ambassador is in well understanding of the humanitarian reasons that urged the Ottoman Empire to start this campaign, and he understands the undertaken measures, just and merciful opinions that was appreciated by his Excellency the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire as well. Many prideful efforts were conducted

for the prevention and the deterrence of some wicked incidents within the authority of our Embassy and, the revenge of Christians and innocent deads' was taken. The Ambassador expects that all his wishes should be concerned as reasonable, since he wishes for the victory regarding the efforts for the benefit and safety of humanity. The Ambassador requests the help of The Foreign Minister to convey these wishes and opinions to the pashas within the cabinet. On the other hand, the Ambassador wishes that his excellency the Sultan occupies his post with honor and dignity for a long time.

## **THE SUPPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLES TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

It is known that as a result of the pressures and genocidal behaviors of Bedirhan and the Kurds under his command against the Christians, Syriacs, Nestorians, Chaldeans and Armenians have called for help from the Ottoman Government. It is even known that they joined the Ottoman forces under the command of MüSir Osman Pasha and fought against the Kurds.

Also the Armenian sources confirm that, Christian societies living in East and South East Anatolia, during the campaign against Bedirhan have established an alliance with the Ottoman Forces and fought against the Kurds.

Avedis Berberyan, an Armenian writer, expresses the following interesting detail regarding this subject in his book named "Armenian History":

"The Armenian people living in Vaspurakan, Taron (Daron) and Bagrevand escaped from the exploitation of the barbaric Kurdish Society by means of Patriarch Matteos:

(1847) Until a few years ago, cruel and rebellious Kurdish people under the command of Khan Mahmut and Bedirhan had plundered and destroyed the provinces such as Van, Taron (Daron) and the villages in that region. Neither the Governor of Van nor of Erzurum were seemed as if they were aware of those incidents. Because the Kurdish people had been sharing the spoils with them. Therefore, they were not trying to prevent their attacks neither directly nor by means of threat.

When Patriarch Matteos realized what was happening, he expressed his complaints twice to the Bab-y Ali in vain, and he added the following statement to his last complaint: 'The people living in Van region decided to migrate to Russia because they realized that they can not stand the torture of the Kurds

any more. In order to protect them and also not to be guilty in the future I would like to inform you in line with the mission given by you.'

Upon this, Bab-y Ali has gathered and the army was prepared for a new war and also brave and strong Sultan Osman was appointed as the Commander in Chief. This army by assaulting against rebels from the north and the south, beat and defeated them.

Before the above mentioned war, Patriarch Matteos sent a letter to the each of the Armenian Spiritual Leaders in Diyarbekir, Bitlis, Palu, Erzurum and Van. With those letters he wanted them to take revenge for tortures they were subjected to until then, to help the Ottoman Army by using every means and also to serve the Army to show their loyalty to the Sultan.

Armenians of Vaspurkan gathered and assaulted on the Cezire region. The leading barbarians had deployed in the crucial points. The Armenians had oppressed Bedirhan, the ruler of Kurds, in a way that he lost all his hopes and surrendered with all his family to Osman Pasha. On the other hand Osman Pasha sent them to Istanbul without losing time, and occupied all the castles belonging to Bedirhan. Later on Bedirhan and his family were exiled to the Crete Island.

On the other hand Kurdish Leader Khan Mahmud, was detained in an Armenian monastery first and then was surrendered to Osman Pasha. After he was sent to Istanbul together with his family, they were exiled to Silistre."<sup>41</sup>

An Armenian author, Hagop Sahbazyan, claims that the Armenians in Van arrested Bedirhan and then surrendered him to the Commandership of the Ottoman Army.<sup>42</sup>

However Garo Sasuni, another Armenian author, states that Armenian in Van surrendered not Bedirhan but his brother in law Khan Mahmud to the Osman Pasha.<sup>43</sup>

Garo Sasuni explains this issue in details in the following sections of his book : "Armenians Support for the Ottomans" and "The Reasons For Armenians Support to the Ottomans".

According to Garo Sasuni: "Some of the Armenians supported Osman Pasha and after victory they helped the maintenance of some of the Beyliks ....If we review the history of a few centuries, we see that the instability between Armenian-Kurdish relationships has started after the defeat of Bedirhan.

As the Ottoman administration became stronger, the sympathy of the Armenians (in particular living in cities) for them became more and more intense. The reason was that they saw the Ottoman Administration as the third alternative, and they believed that this force would hinder the uncontrolled behaviours of the Kurdish people... Armenians, in order to recover, have taken shelter within the Ottoman administration. Because, they believed that with this way they would be exempted from their taxes and they also believed in the necessity of bearing the Ottoman mandate. In time Armenians and Kurds have alienated and this fact has created the events in 1843. These incidents had become a basis of the future Armenian-Kurdish hostility. This increasing hostility has been developing mutually and it has been reaching the same point. Regarding Kurds-Armenians relations the ones directing and the ones being directed are of the same character. The Kurds were preserving their authoritative characteristics and they believed that it was their right to carry out Asian despotism against the Armenians. As a result, overwhelmed Armenians were in disappointment, and this feeling had orientated them to the Ottoman's side. The Armenians who have the same nationality with the Kurdish rulers, in order to protect their rights had wanted the Central Ottoman Administration to intervene this issue. However whenever they submit such a proposal, this was considered by the Kurdish rulers as a treachery and the Armenians were accepted as Kurdish enemy. The Armenians who had been struggling between these two forces, had become the supporter of the third strong force in time. In 1847, most of the Armenians together with the armed forces had fought against Kurds. The victory of Imed Osman Pasha (against Bedirhan) had been welcomed in Istanbul with a great joy. Upon the order of the Armenian patriarch, prayers had been said in churches and thanks had been given to God.<sup>44</sup>

### **"CIRCULAR" PUBLISHED BY THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHY**

Upon the arrest of Kurdish ruler Bedirhan, who is responsible for massacre of more than ten thousand Christians (Syriac, Nestorian, Chaldean, Armenian), the Armenian Patriarchy in Istanbul, by means of sending a circular, had ordered all the Armenians "to be grateful for the Sultan and his strong State".

The whole text of the above mentioned circular is included in the book titled as "The Armenian History" which was published in 1871 and was written by Avedis Berberyan. A. Berberyan stated that this circular had been written in local language then in order to be understood easily.

Following is the full text of the circular published on December 9, 1847 which is considered as a historical document and was signed by Bishop Father Matteos, the Istanbul Patriarch:

"An announcement from Bishop Father Matteos, the Patriarch of Constantinopol -a capital where the Sultan himself resides- to the all holy churches' unity:

You the faithful people; our Armenia that has unique qualifications according to all the nations in the world, which is incomparable, in which Armenian people pride, and which cries silently for the fact that it became a ruin and desert because of the cruel and unmerciful despotism of the wild Kurds for centuries; our dear children who had fallen into the tearing claws of inhumane Kurds like a hunt; and our orphan Armenian nation! The God would save the Armenians, who are his own people, from this unbearable slavery, as in the way that he saved Israel from the hands of Egypt.

The God, by looking at the Armenians' world from sky, saw that Armenia had become a meadow and grassland for the animals of the wild Kurds, and also she saw that these beautiful lands that he created for the Armenians, who are the first created individuals, had become a cave. Then the God remembered us with her own goodness by realizing the strength of belief in Hayk-Nahabet which enabled him to kill with his arrow Babilon Tiran, the creator of the first idolization, by means of strength he had taken from God.

As the God saw this beautiful and unique country in a helpless situation in the hands of merciless Tirans, he showed mercy and with his divine wish, he cultivated the sublime Sultan Abdulmecid's kindhearted nature with pity and mercy for us, and as a result Abdulmecid decided to free the Armenians from the despots in this country.

Since we know that such a favour of the God belongs only to Armenian nation, with our gratitudes, we prayed, worshipped and begged him during days and nights. Therefore the God, with his potentialed right hand protected and helped the army of this country, which includes in regular and brave soldiers. The God is holy and his potentialed right hand is undefeatable. After he heard the religious wishes of the innocent children within the church chorus and also the aspirations of the priests whose hands were open with a strong belief but in sorrow, he filled the hearts of the enemy with fear and horror and made them say "help". After he made Khan Mahmud and Bedirhan Bey, the ruler of the despots, fall in to the hands of Osman Pasha in an embarrassed and desperate way, he made them beg to forgive their lives and then the God had dedicated this extraordinary victory to the name of Sultan and to his orders. Therefore Armenia was rescued from this pitiful situation and unbearable slavery. We hope that, by means of our kindhearted, generous and humanist King (Sultan)

from now on Armenia would develop, recover and by getting fertile would reach its magnificent appearance as it was in the old days.

Now, see and think about the meaning of these words! The more you think the more you will be surprised. You will be amazed by the unique love and special interest that our majestic Sultan has for the Armenian nation. Since his great benevolence had heard my requests and prays for these victories he wanted to increase our joy and unspeakable pleasure. For this reason, he sent the following order to the patriarchy on November 27, Saturday:

‘The God heard your prays and requests that you have said for my victory, accepted them and dedicated an unprecedented victory to my kingdom. I had been wishing this victory so much in order to provide the comfort of my orders which had been commanded by the God. Patriarch! Now announce to your citizens that I am in a state of joy like you! I accepted your loyalty, love and aspirations for my Kingdom. I am sure that you are expressing your wishes before my kingdom. God bless you.

Please look and feel surprise at the unique protectorate of our Sultan directed by him to the nations under his sovereignty!

Deem today as an independence fest, make wishes from the God, praise the Sultan and say;

Hail our merciful, triumphant, benevolent and mighty Emperor and King, Sultan Abdulmecid Khan!

Hail strong and just Valide Sultan (mother of the Sultan)!

Hail the children of the Emperor, his family members and noble princes (Sultan’s sons) who are the right hand of the God and are the pride of our Sultan and also of the strong Ottoman Empire!

God bless these superior people, make their viziers, who are very respectable individuals within the state, stronger, and while protecting Armenian nation by showing them rightfulness before the eyes of our Sultan make them deserve our savior Isa’s favour and humanity.

Be holy till the eternity. Amen! Istanbul/ December 9, 1847."<sup>45</sup>

**VIOLATION OF KURDISH SHEIKHS AND AGHAS**

After the Kurdish movement aiming at the destruction of Christians had been suppressed in 1847, Kurds have filled with enmity against Armenians, Syriacs and other Christians. They were considering them as Ottoman supporters. Kurdish Beys and Aghas were violating the Christians and this tradition was inherited from father to son.

Since 1860, ownership struggle has gained a specific nature. Sheikhs wanted all properties to their own possession. In the very old days, these possessions were given to "derebeys" (a kind of ruler) first, and then were left to the farmers as a result of the newly passed laws by central administration.

Garo Sasuni, an Armenian author clarifies the subject in the following way:

"The individual who had started this movement was Sheikh Sabadullah, the father of famous Sheikh Celalettin. He used religious radicalism as a weapon. It was told that while he was travelling he was covering his face with a veil in order not to see the Christians and stated that even to see Christians was a great sin.

This religious fanaticism showed its effect soon. After a while, some Armenians who were expelled from Kurdish regions had to leave their properties and migrated to other places. The remainder had turned out to be the villagers without any land and they were subordinate to Kurdish Aghas. Therefore, the Kurdish occupation on the Armenian lands had started in a different way. This matter, later on, became a problem for the state that was difficult to solve. On the other hand, this problem paved the way for a great economic and social gap between the Armenians and the Kurds..

Apart from a very small minority, most of the Armenians were trying to please the Kurdish tribes in vicinity and moreover they had to pay every kind of direct and indirect taxes on them."<sup>46</sup>

### **THE COMPLAINT REPORTS SUBMITTED TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

Garo Sasuni gives the following information regarding this subject:

"From 1850 to 1878 when the Berlin Conference was conducted, the despotism and violation having applied on the Armenian provinces were documented with a number of reports and complaints which had been sent to the Armenian Patriarchy in Istanbul. However, the Patriarch did not have any weapon other

than to submit proposals to the Bab-y Ali and to ask for a remedy from the Ottoman Empire.

To give a general idea regarding this issue, we can state that in only a decade between the years 1860-1870, Patriarchy has submitted 529 "proposals".

The Patriarchy and the Armenian National Majlis were anxious about the complaints and cries of distress. In 1870, during the period of M. Hrimyan's patriarchy it was decided that the reports and complaints of the last 20 years would be reviewed, a detailed report should be written regarding the new reports that come from all the regions of the Ottoman Empire. This report should state the existing situation and give some advices, and at the same time a commission would be established in order to present this report to the Majlis.

After long sessions and reviews on November 8, 1871, by means of a report presented to the plenary session of the Armenian National Parliament named 'The Report of The Commission Having Allocated to Search the Illegal Events Particular to The Provinces' the Commission had put forward the crisis within Armenia specifically."<sup>47</sup>

The following interesting statements were included on page 470 of the above mentioned report:

"The regions which were under the administration of beys (rulers), aghas and the Kurdish despots were the places where the complaints were most. These beys and aghas were either interfering the administration personally or influence the existing administration."<sup>48</sup>

### **"THE SPECIAL OPPRESSION" APPLIED TO THE CHRISTIANS BY THE KURDS**

The title of the fourth section of the above mentioned famous "Report" is "Special Oppression". This section includes in the relations between the Armenians and the Kurds. On page 473, it is stated that:

"The oppression did not cover the whole regions but it was mostly in the provinces of Kurdistan, Erzurum and Diyarbekir, and in other words in Van, KiSy, Guzulcan, Tercan, Bitlis, MuS, Çarsancak, Diyarbekir and Siirt.

The names of the people who oppressed and how they did this were expressed. Some cases were really horrible. We can assess the scope of the oppressions from the statements of the ones who were oppressed: "When they ask us, we will

tell just the opposite. We will deny these acts. Because afterwards how can we rescue from their handsS"

It is understood that in the regions of Harput, Erzincan, ESin, Bayburt, Yozgat and BaSrewand, the beys were complaining about the religious fanaticism of the Kurd and other Islamist population."<sup>49</sup>

On page 481 of the Commission report the following measures are submitted:

"1. Kurds and other groups living at mountains (one of them is Circassians) pose a danger to not only the Armenians but also to other people in particular the state treasury. They are carrying guns and they neither pay taxes nor fulfill their military services, and they are in a rebellion.

On the other hand, other peoples are disarmed, they both pay their taxes to the government and also provide soldiers. Besides they pay tax to these rebels too. What the Ottoman administration should do is either take the arms of these rebels or distribute guns to disarmed people. Therefore these monsters living in tents will become settled villagers and then the country will be freed from this oppression.

2. The ones applying "special oppression" whose names were suggested to be disclosed by us when it was submitted to the Bab-y Ali, must be exiled to Rumeli. If this measure is not taken, it will be very difficult to rescue the poor people in that region from them and their captivity.

3. Barracs should be established throughout the Iranian border as well as in certain regions of Kurdistan."<sup>50</sup>

Let's leave the ground to Sasuni again:

"During the period 1860-1870, 59 'proposals' were submitted to the Ottoman State. Out of this, 65 were regarding the 'special oppressions, alien smuggling and murder" in the region of Erzurum and 79 regarding the region of Diyarbekir, and these were included in section four. Therefore, the number of the 'proposals' submitted to the Bab-y Ali regarding the Kurds reaches to 144.

The Armenian National Parliament was not interested in this report. Because conservatives did not want such a report to be presented to the State. After a long delay, in 1872 it was presented to the Bab-y Ali with a few changes, but it did not make any effect.

After that date, the situation in the Armenian provinces even got worse. Although rebellious attitudes of the Kurds aroused repercussion in the Armenian National Congress in Istanbul, no positive result can be achieved from the complaints by the Bab-y Ali."<sup>51</sup>

### **MASSACRES OF CHRISTIANS DURING THE SHEIKH UBEYDULLAH REBELLION**

It is known that thousands of Christians had been massacred during the rebellion incited by the famous Kurdish Sheikh Ubeydullah in 1880 in an attempt to revolt against the Ottoman leadership.

Garo Sasuni especially claims that the above-mentioned massacre had been conducted by Sheikh Syddyk, the son of Sheikh Ubeydullah, and thus he describes him as "cruel".

According to Garo Sasuni; "The army of Sheikh Syddyk has caused a lot of damage in wherever he passed in that hundreds even thousands of Armenians and Syriacs had been killed during this occasion."<sup>52</sup>

We have to express that Sheikh Syddyk is the brother of Seyid Abdulkadir, Head of the Kurdistan Development Association<sup>53</sup> established in Istanbul in 1918.

Garo Sasuni has also stated the following:

"After the 1880 incident, the Armenian-Kurdish contradiction became more explicit and created a serious hostility.

The Kurdish tribes expressed their hostilities against the neighboring Armenians and Syriacs by applying to unexpected despotism. The regions of AlaSkert, Basen, Vaspurakan (Van), Daron (MuS) and Diyarbekir were faced with horrible violence."<sup>54</sup>

### **THE HAMIDIYE REGIMENTS AND THE MASSACRES OF CHRISTIANS**

36 regiments formed in 1891 in the regions of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia and called "The Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments"<sup>55</sup> were all consisting of Kurds. Each regiment consisted of 1200 people. Commanders of the regiments were the Kurdish chiefs of tribes, while the soldiers were the members of the Kurdish tribes.

There are plenty of sources mentioning the suppression and massacre applied by the Hamidiye Kurdish Regiments to the Syriacs, Nestorians, Chaldeans and Armenian Christians settled in the region.

The following words of the Armenian author Garo Sasuni are worth of interest:

"In the Summer and Fall of 1895, violent massacres against the Armenians started everywhere. Kurds also eagerly got involved in these barbarian acts. To say the truth, all the massacres in the Armenian provinces were carried out by the hands of the Kurds.

The Armenian regions which were able to resist survived. Meanwhile, 300.000 people were massacred in the rest of the regions. Moreover, while many people died due to starvation, diseases and misery, many others had been able to survive only by changing their religion.

While turning into a reactionary element and sinking into an ethic of Tatars, they gradually became a tribe not friendly to the Armenians at all, losing their self-esteem and nobility."<sup>56</sup>

Researcher-author Sabri Atman states that "the Hamidiye Kurdish Regiments had massacred not only the Armenians but also about 200-300 thousand Assyrians-Syriacs."<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, the Syriac author Yakup Bilge claims that "the Hamidiye Kurdish Regiments had applied 'massive massacres' on Syriacs, that a large group of Syriacs had been either expelled from the region or killed as a result of the conflicts, that the call for a 'Sacred Jihad' had paved the way for the warrior instincts of Kurds and made them act against their real national interests under the cover of Islamism, and that the Hamidiye Regiments led by the Kurdish chiefs of tribes had been engaged in massive massacres by walking onto the Syriacs."<sup>58</sup>

Here, we need to clarify a point. After a while, some of the Hamidiye Regiments, claimed to be formed by the participation of tribes and with the aim of protecting the Southeast Anatolia against the Russian attacks<sup>59</sup>, have started to deal with their own interests, violating the "Law on the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments"<sup>60</sup>, and have caused a lot of damage not only to the Christians but also to the Muslim Kurd, Arab and Zaza communities.<sup>61</sup>

## **MASSACRE OF CHRISTIANS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

During the First World War (1914-1918), the Syriacs escaping from the cruelty and oppressions of the Kurds, took asylum in Iran. However their sufferings had never ended in Iran, as they met this time with hostilities of Kurds in Iran and had been massacred by them.

William Eagleton, a British writer, in his book of "Kurdish Republic of Mehabad", refers to the above-mentioned massacres of Syriacs under the heading of "Symyko Movement and the Kurdo-Assyrian Conflict".

We would like to quote the following from Eagleton's book :

"The Assyrian tribes living in the Hakkari region -Ottoman territories in the Southeast- independent of any state control, flowed to Iran in the fall of 1915 under the leadership of Mar Shemun, their Patriarch and Leader. They hoped to find a temporary shelter in the plains of Selmas and Urumiye with the support of Christians belonging their tribe and residing in that area.

When we come to the late 1917, we see Mar Shemun as the commander of armed Assyrians. They had obtained those arms during the time just before and after the downfall of the Russian front. This group of armed Assyrian Christians were posing a threat to the Muslims in Urumiye, as well as the leaders of Kurdish tribes living in the region. The most prominent one among those Kurdish leaders was Ysmail Aga (Symyko), leader of the Shykakan tribe.

Symyko invited Mar Shemun to a meeting in GüneySehir village in Selmas. Shemun came, and the two leaders had a meal together and discussed the idea of setting up a coalition based on goodwill between the Kurds and the Assyrians. However, as they were still talking, suddenly bullets started to rain. Patriarch and all his men, except one of his guards, lost their lives in the attack.

Kurds, with the support of Ottoman Army, attacked on the Christian forces from the South of Urumiye and surrounded them. Bloody fightings took place. Assyrians lost their morale as their lines of defense were collapsed. Assyrians that could survive, were forced to withdraw, and they escaped as far as the towns under British control in Hemedan. That withdrawal had been just a disaster for the Assyrians. During their withdrawal, they had been the targets of both the attacks of Kurds still following them, and also of the various tribes being on their way. In the aftermath of these attacks, the Assyrians were completely dissolved"<sup>62</sup>

Concurrently, Syriac Patriarch Mar Severios Afram Barsavm, went to Europe and made various contacts with the aim of drawing the attention of the world

public opinion to the massacres conducted by Kurds against the Syrians and making these atrocities to be ceased. When Barsavm was in London in 1919, he wrote a letter addressing the U.K. Prime Minister to convey his protests. In his letter Barsavm told in detail the atrocities conducted between 1914-1918, the destruction of churches and monasteries, and the incidents that took place in Tur-Abdin and the surroundings.

Below is a list of figures which was attached to Mar Severios Afram Barsavm's letter in order to show the losses of Syriac community. We are enclosing this list here in its original form, in order to give an idea about the dimensions of the disaster that occurred.<sup>63</sup>

| <u>Name of Place</u> | <u>Number of Villages</u> | <u>Family</u> | <u>Individual</u> | <u>Church</u> | <u>Clerics</u> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Diyarbakir           | 30                        | 764           | 5379              | 5             | 7              |
| Silve                | -                         | 174           | 1195              | 5             | 1              |
| Lice                 | 10                        | 658           | 4706              | 5             | 4              |
| Derik                | -                         | 50            | 350               | 1             | 1              |
| Siverek              | 30                        | 897           | 5725              | 12            | 12             |
| Viransehir           | 16                        | 303           | 1928              | 1             | -              |
| Mardin               | 8                         | 880           | 5815              | 12            | 5              |
| Savur                | 7                         | 880           | 6165              | 2             | 3              |
| Nusaybin             | 50                        | 1000          | 7000              | 12            | 25             |
| Cizre                | 26                        | 994           | 7510              | 13            | 8              |
| Biseri               | 30                        | 718           | 4481              | 10            | 10             |
| Pirvet               | 15                        | 282           | 1880              | 1             | 1              |
| Midyat               | 47                        | 3935          | 25830             | 60            | 60             |
| Bitlis               | 12                        | 130           | 850               | 1             | -              |
| Siirt                | -                         | 100           | 650               | 1             | 2              |
| sirvan               | 9                         | 283           | 1870              | 4             | 4              |
| Garzan               | 22                        | 744           | 5140              | 12            | 9              |
| Kerboran             | 24                        | 508           | 3500              | 5             | 2              |
| Urfa                 | -                         | 50            | 340               | 1             | -              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         | <b>346</b>                | <b>13350</b>  | <b>90313</b>      | <b>156</b>    | <b>154</b>     |

When we look at that list we see that during the period between 1914-1918, in the region where we call as the Turkish Mesopotamia (and only in the settlement centers referred to in the list), about a hundred thousand Christians of Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean origins, had been mercilessly and brutally killed by the Kurds.

Relevant to the massacre of Syriacs during the above-mentioned period, we deem it sufficient to give the names of the following five studies :

1. Dr. Gabriele Yonan, Massacre of the Assyrian people, completely unknown until today 1915- 1918, Sweden (Nsibin Publishing House).
2. Patriarch Mar Esay Samcun, The Tragic End of Syriacs, Sweden, (Nsibin Publishing House).
3. Atrocities Conducted by Kerboran in the Turkish Mesopotamia, Sweden, (Nsibin Publishing House).
4. Hori Yshak Armele, El-Kasare Fi Nekebat El-Nasara, 1919 (in Arabic)
5. Hori Süleyman Finno, Massacre of the Syriacs from Farman Tur-Abdin in 1914-1915, Athens 1993

### **MASSACRE OF CHRISTIANS AS QUOTED BY HORI SULEYMAN HINNO**

Hori Suleyman Hinno, who is from Harabale village of Midyat/ Mardin, is today the cleric of the Syriac Church in Kuburelbeith District of Syria. In his book having the name of "Massacre of the Syriacs from Farman Tur-Abdin in 1914-1915", which was published in Athens in the year 1993, Hinno tells in detail the massacre of Christian Syriacs by the Kurds in about 100 settlement centers within the boundaries of Mardin Province.

You can find below some excerpts from Hinno's book :

"Helva village : .. After the Syriacs of Nusaybin were all murdered, Kadir Bey, acting cunningly, first surrounded the village with a squad of Kurds so that none of the villagers could escape. Then, all the men in the village, tied with ropes, were brought to the bank of a river at a place called Kiro. There, they all were killed and thrown to the river. After that, all the women were gathered in a house, which was set to fire, and all the children were converted to Muslim religion. In the aftermath of this massacre, Helva village had become completely cleansed of Christians".

“Bayaza village : ... They killed a total of six persons, including Melke, his son, his two brothers, Ysa Rohom, and Gevriye. The cunning Ahmet Yusuf, after murdering those six persons, got together the Kurdish tribes in the villages of Sehya, Leylan, Geutbe, Grisor and others in order to raid Bayaza village.

The raiders plundered the village and killed the Syriacs mercilessly. During the raid Ahmet Yusuf's nephew Rhays, drawing his sword, shouted : "Bring them to me, so that I will slaughter them like lambs". The Kurdish brigands, wandering in the village, killed every single person they saw".

"Leylan village : ...In that village, more than fifteen Syriac families were living. Kaseken Kurds under the leadership of Ahmet Yusuf, raided the village, and brought all the Syriacs, including the women and children, to Siha and Helva. There they killed all of them."

"Kanak village : ... Savme, a priest from Basibrin, who was on his way to Mamelan village with two other persons, was captured and killed under torture. The two men together with the priest were also murdered. The Syriacs living in the village, hearing the murder of Savme and two other men, escaped from the village and took shelter either on Mount Izlo, or in Basibrin village. Having lived out of their village for more than two years, they returned to Kanak after the danger abated. Until the year 1926, there had been Syriacs living in that village. However, the incidents that took place in 1926, enforced the villagers to leave their homes and escape to Syria. Nowadays, the village is inhabited by the Muslims, who converted the church of the village to mosque".

"Tilhasan village : ...Fifteen Syriac families were living in Tilhasan, and the owner of the village was a man named Ömer Osman. The Syriacs living here were also massacred by the Kurds. A murderer named Osman killed seven women -all were widows- with the aim of sacrificing them to God. Furthermore, he took bath with the blood of his victims with the hope of getting a saint. May God punish him and other people having the same aberrant mentality with the fire of Hell. As a result of such cruelties, that village also became emptied from Syriacs".

"Upper Kefre village : ...Syriacs of Kefre village, having heard about the massacres going on, sheltered in the Mor Yakup church in the village. Kurds, under the leadership of Fani Yusuf Aga, son of a GercüS landowner Hasan Semdin, raided kefre village and attacked the church. Fightings lasted for five days. The Syriacs living in that village had a small number of weapons, as they had not taken any measure for a possible war. They even did not have drinkable water in the church they were sheltering. Their only chance to get water was a single well located nearby (even though its water was mixed with sewage water). Unfortunately, the enemies learning that the people in the church were getting water from that well, filled the well with brushwood, stones, woods, etc. so that it can not be used any more. Then, merciless Yusuf Aga came at the door of the church and promised : "if you surrender instead of dying from

hunger and thirst, I promise that we will not do any harm to you". Syriacs, being in a helpless situation, believed in his words and got out. The murderers did not keep their promise and brought the clerics and other prominent villagers outside of the village and killed them all under torture. Among those killed, there was also a priest named Abid Adem from Kefre. The Kurds cut him up with a saw while he was alive, and cauterized his eyes with red-hot irons. Some of the women witnessing that savagery, threw themselves into wells. Only the small children survived that massacre, as the murderers intended to use them as servants."

"Arbaya village : ...In that village, about a total of thirty Syriac families were living. During the massacres committed by the Kurds under the leadership of Ali Musa, one of the leaders of Dereli tribe, all the Syriacs were killed, except a few who succeeded to escape. Those who could escape, after hiding outside the village for some time, returned to their homes with the support of Çelebi Aga. As of 1971, a number of Syriac families remained in that village. Later, they migrated to European countries. In 1979, there were no Syriacs living in the village".<sup>64</sup>

### **ASSIMILATION POLICY OF KURDISH POLITICAL MOVEMENT**

Syriacs, Nestorians and Chaldeans, being the first Christians and the oldest residents of Mesopotamia, cradle of civilizations, seem to be faced with a terrible scenario prepared by the Kurdish political movement, as they had been in the past.

According to the "Kurdish Thesis of History", which is espoused by all the Kurdish organizations and ideologues, including the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), all the people and nations that had lived in Eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia throughout history are defined as "Kurds", and all the historical works, as well as languages, cultures and civilizations exclusive to the region are identified as "Kurdish".<sup>65</sup>

There are evidences indicating that there already exist intentions aiming at the "Kurdization" of Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean Christians. The most evident proof to the denial of the identities of Syriacs, Nestorians and Chaldeans, is the usage of terms such as "Syriac Kurds", "Nestorian Kurds", "Christian Kurds", etc. by some Kurdish writers when referring to those people.<sup>66</sup>

Another evidence of the same intentions is the fact that territories of Mesopotamia, on which Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean people have been

living throughout history, are shown as a part of "Kurdistan" on the imaginary maps drawn by Kurds.

The so-called "Kurdish Parliament in Exile" (KPE), which was declared on April 12, 1995 in Den Haag/Holland, has chosen the map of "Kurdistan" as its emblem. In that map, besides the territories of Syriacs, Nestorians, and Chaldeans, the territories inhabited by local people of Arab, Zaza, Armenian, Azeri, Turkmen, etc. origin are also shown within the boundaries of Kurdistan. All the ethnic elements in the region are referred to as "people of Kurdistan", "Kurdistanis", or "Kurds". In the "Bulletin of Preparatory Commission for the Kurdistan Parliament in Exile" , the same expression was used for the above-mentioned people.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, the decision taken by the KPE to the effect that "the official language of the KPE is Kurdish", and also the KPE's campaign of "In Kurdistan, Speak in Kurdish! Think in Kurdish! Write in Kurdish!", obviously intend to dissolve the people in the region other than Kurds in the pot of "Kurdism" in order to convert them into Kurds.

It is a matter of concern that some Christian "parliamentarians" of the KPE, like George Aryo, Musa Caklo, Petros Karatay and Samoev Merabi, are playing the "representatives" of Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean people in the KPE. It is obvious that these individuals are not elected by the people they claim to be representing, but they accepted to be members of the KPE just for getting personal benefits. There is no need to say that the PKK-member Kurds, who intend to get support from the Christian World for the Kurdish political movement, exploit the existence of Christian members within the KPE and act as if they are the "protector of Christians".

"Christian" members of the KPE should realize this truth. They should keep in mind that the Kurds, who, throughout history conducted genocides against Syriacs, Nestorians and Chaldeans, are now preparing a new scenario and that the known character of Kurds shall never change.

We can not understand how the four Christians that joined the KPE are still unaware of the terrible plan prepared by the Kurdish chauvinists, who aspire to darken the future of Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean peoples, to make them deprived of their sovereignty rights, and even to terminate their very existence. It is impossible to understand why these Christians are supporting the Kurdish political movement, which is certainly aiming their destruction.

The KPE, which was established through the efforts of the PKK, implies in its above-mentioned "Bulletin" what kind of a future it is preparing for the Christian people in the writings having the signature of two of the PKK's subsidiaries, which are namely the "Kurdistan Islamist Movement", and the "Kurdistan Alevi Union". We wonder what the four Christian members of the KPE are thinking about the the future of Syriacs, Nestorians and Chaldeans under a regime dominated by fanatic and chauvinist Kurds, and how these people will then preserve their existence, identities, characteristics, and churches.

There is no need to be a fortune-teller in order to know that the establishment of a "Kurdistan" as fervently aspired by the Kurds, would mean the total eradication of Christians from Mesopotamia.

The genocides implemented at different times in history by the Kurdish tribal leaders against Christian Syriacs, Nestorians, Chaldeans and Armenians are remembered very well. Therefore, it can not be asserted that the Kurds will give up oppressions and atrocities they conducted in the past, once a Kurdish state under definite control of Kurds would be established in the region. The character of Kurds is very well known by the Christians of Mesopotamia.

It is also known that the PKK, which has started initiatives aiming to dissolve the Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean communities in the pot of "Kurdism", and to that effect, it has already started to employ methods intended to liquidate those communities. The PKK, which since 1984 has been also targeting the Christians living in Southeast Anatolia, has killed many Christians and forced many Christian families to migrate from that region. These assaults have not targeted only the Christians living in Southeast Anatolia, but also the ones living in Northern Iraq. The PKK, without getting satisfied with these attacks, is abducting the Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean youth in order to use them in terrorist attacks, and in that way intends to serve more than one of its purposes at the same time.

On February 10, 1997, Christians living in Northern Iraq / Shaqlawa have been the target of a brutal attack conducted by the Kurds. During the incident, two Assyrian (Nestorian) Christians were killed on the street by Kurds. The Assyrians have brought the matter to European platforms and in order to protest the incident, they have distributed a press release under the heading of "A New Display of the Kurdish Justice in Northern Iraq" and undersigned by the Assyrian Democratic Organization, an organization which is active in Europe.

On March 06, 1997 in Brussels, during a conference held in the European Parliament building by the Kurdish Institute of Brussels, an organization which is controlled by the PKK, a dispute arose between a group of Assyrians (Nestorians) distributing hand-bills to protest the Shaqlawa incident and Kurds trying to prevent them. The news about that dispute and mutual criticisms of both parties also appeared in Turkish press.<sup>68</sup>

In the hand-bills distributed by the Assyrian Democratic Organization, following points were emphasized :

"On February 10, 1997, two Assyrians, Lazar Matta and his son Haval, were attacked by hundreds of Kurds, and were brutally murdered in Shaqlawa.

Similar incidents have increased in number during the recent years. A small Assyrian girl named Ahlam Petros Nissan was kidnapped on September 10, 1996 by a group of armed PKK militants from Baz village, located in the Barwari-Bala region of Northern Iraq. Still, no news could be received regarding the fate of that small girl.

Until now, no judicial investigation was started regarding the murder of two Assyrians. "Kurdish authorities", as they are always doing, seem to be paying no effort to implement the laws and justice, and trying to appease the Assyrians by showing the murder of these two individuals as ordinary trivial incidents.

Resumption of attacks are eroding Assyrians' trust in Kurds, and besides, they are proving that all these tragic incidents are resulting from a planned policy of Kurds, who intend to eradicate the Christians in Northern Iraq".

On the other hand, following the operation launched by the Turkish armed forces on May 14, 1997 against the PKK in Northern Iraq, the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) forces, taking that opportunity, started attacks against Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean Christians living in various settlement centers, like Duhoq, Zaho, Rewanduz, Shaqlawa, and Arbil.

During these attacks, 18 Christian villages were evacuated, thousands of hectares cultivated lands, vineyards and orchards were burnt down, hundreds of people were detained and tortured, and tens of individuals were brutally murdered.

Particularly on the day of May 16, 1997 and afterwards, KDP Peshmergas, raiding and plundering the houses in Christian-inhabited Ankawa District of Arbil, brutally killed many innocent and defenseless people by shooting.

Those inhumane oppressions and atrocities conducted by the KDP against Mesopotamian Christians were protested through various marches and demonstrations organized in Germany, Belgium, Holland, Sweden and France by Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean organizations in Europe.

A demonstration of protest was held on June 28, 1997, before United Nations building in Geneva. The demonstrators conveyed a file documenting the KDP's oppressions and atrocities on Syriacs, Nestorians and Chaldeans to the officials of United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and urged them to make the necessary initiatives on this issue.

At the same time, the Syriac, Nestorian, and Chaldean organizations called the Christian world, the Pope, General Secretariat of United Nations, and international NGOs to pay joint efforts in order to prevent the KDP's policy intending to eradicate the Christians.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is a fact that Kurds bear the full responsibility for the miseries of Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean Christians, who were forced to leave their homelands and live in various countries of the world with immigrant status. Every Syriac, Nestorian and Chaldean should always bear this fact in mind.

When we approach the matter from an objective point of view, we see that there is no difference between the oppressions conducted by the Kurds against Syriac, Nestorian, Chaldean and Armenian communities in the past, and the inhumane attacks of the PKK and other Kurdish organizations targeting the same communities today.

The efforts of both the PKK and other Kurdish political organizations and ideologues to assimilate and "making Kurd" all the ethnic groups living in the region, makes the situation even further alarming.

In that context, we hope that particularly in European countries, those Syriacs, Nestorians, Chaldeans and Armenians, who knowingly or unknowingly have gone under the control of PKK or other Kurdish organizations, will review their status once more so that they will not be used as tools for the dirty tricks of the Kurdish organizations.

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**FOOTNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Hanna Dolapönü, "**Süryaniler**" (Syriacs), Öz Hizmet, no:6, 1955, p.133; **Tarihte Mardin (Mardin in the Course of the History)** (Translator:Cebrail Aydin), Istanbul 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Von Luschan, **Völker, Rassen, Sprachen ( Peoples, Races, Languages)**, Berlin 1922; Nikola Marr, **Der Japhetische Kaukasus (Jaffa Caucasus)**, Leipzig 1923; K.Moszynski, **Badania nadpochodzeniem I pierwotną Slowian (Reserch on the Origin of the Slavs and the Initial Culture)**, Cracovie 1925; Mesud Fani, **La Nation Kurde et son évolution sociale**, Paris 1933 (Turkish publication: **Kürtler ve Sosyal Gelismileri**, Ankara 1993); Aydin Taneri, **Türkistanli Bir Türk Boyu Kürtler (The Kurds, A Turkish Tribe from Turkistan)**, Ankara 1983; Dr. sükrü Mehmet Sekban, **La Question Kurde**, Paris 1933 (Turkish publication: **Kürt Sorunu**, Istanbul 1970).

<sup>3</sup> Welatê Torî, **Birlikte Oldugumuz Halklar ( Peoples We are Together )**, Istanbul 1988, p.7.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Shaq Armalto, **Türkiye Mezopotamiasında Mardin (Mardin in Turkish Mesopotamia)** (Translator: Turan Karatas), Sweden 1993, p.12.

<sup>5</sup> T. Yılmaz Öztuna, **Baslangicindan Zamanimiza Kadar Türkiye Tarihi (Turkish History from Beginning to Current Time)**, Vol: 1, Istanbul 1963, p.52.

<sup>6</sup> Horebishop Aziz Günel, **Türk Süryaniler Tarihi (History of Turkish Syriac)**, Diyarbakir 1970; Cebrail Aydin, **Tarihte Süryaniler (Syriacs in the History)** Istanbul 1964; Hanna Dolapönü, **Tarihte Mardin (Mardin in the Course of History)** Istanbul 1972; Yakup Bilge, **Süryanilerin Kökeni ve Türkiyeli Süryaniler (The Origin of Syriacs and Syriacs from Turkey)**, Istanbul 1991.

<sup>7</sup> Prof.Dr. Osman Turan, **Doğu Anadolu Türk Devletleri Tarihi (The History of the Eastern Anatolian Turkish States)**, Istanbul 1973, p..232.

<sup>8</sup> Yakup Bilge, **op.cit.**, pp. 48, 49, 52, 53.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, **Kürdistan Üzerine Yazilar (Articles on Kurdistan)**, Istanbul 1992, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Gregory Abu'l Farac (Bar Hebraeus), **Abu'l Farac History** (Translated from Syriac to English by Ernest A.Wallis Budge; from Syriac to Turkish by Ömer Riza Dogrul), Vol:1, Ankara 1945, pp. 60-63.

<sup>11</sup> M.Emin Zeki, **Kürdistan Tarihi (History of Kurdistan)**, Istanbul 1977, p.141.

\* **Bey is the title given to the tribal leaders.**

<sup>12</sup> Alaaddin Succadi, **soresekani Kurd û Komari Iraq**, Baghdad 1959, p.45.

<sup>13</sup> A.D.:1842

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Celilê Celil, **XIX.Yüzyil Osmanli Imparatorlugu'nda Kürtler (The Kurds in the Ottoman Empire in 19th Century)**, Ankara 1992, pp. 129, 130, 134, 135.

<sup>15</sup> Hagop sahbazyan, **Krdo-Hay Badmutyun (Kurdish-Armenian History)**, Istanbul 1911 (See Bazil Nikitin, **The Kurds**, Vol: 2, Istanbul 1978, p. 33)

<sup>16</sup> M.Emin Zeki, **op.cit.**, p. 142

<sup>17</sup> Dr. Celilê Celil, , **op.cit.**, pp. 142-143.

<sup>18</sup>M.Kalman, **Osmanli-Kürt Iliskileri ve Sömürgecilik (Ottoman-Kurdish Relations and Imperialism)**, Istanbul 1994, p. 118.

<sup>19</sup> M. Kalman, **op.cit.**, p. 118.

<sup>20</sup> M.Kalman, **op.cit.**, p. 119.

<sup>21</sup> William Eagleton, **Mahabad Kürt Cumhuriyeti 1946 (TheMahabad Kurdish Republic of 1946)** (Translated by Mehmet Emin Bozarslan), Istanbul 1976, pp .26-27.

<sup>22</sup> Garo Sasuni, **Kürt Ulusal Hareketleri ve 15.Yüzyildan Günümüze Ermeni Kürt Iliskileri (Kurdish National Movements and Armenian Kurdish Relations From 15<sup>th</sup> Century Till Today)**, Istanbul 1992, pp. 70-71.

<sup>23</sup> Karl May, **Durchs Wilde Kurdistan**, Wien 1881.

<sup>24</sup> E.S.Soane, **To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise**, London 1912, p.116.

<sup>25</sup> Bazil Nikitin, **Kürtler (Kurds)**, Volume:2, Istanbul 1978, pp. 32-33.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, **op.cit.**, p. 131; also see A.Henri Layard, **Niniveh and Its Remains**, Volume:1, London 1850, p. 228.

<sup>27</sup> M.Gamazov, **Ot Bosfora do Persidskogo Zaliva. Iz zapisok vedennih vo vremya çetirihletnego putesestviya demarkatsionnoy komissii no Turtsii I Persi (Notes Compiled in the Four-Year-Journey of theTurkish-Iranian Border Commission Extending from Istanbul Strait to Persian Strait )**, Vremya, SPb, 1861, Vol: VI, p. 116 (See: Dr. Celilê Celil, **op.cit.**, p. 143)

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Bletch Chirguh, **El-Kaziyetü'l-Kurdiye (Kurdish Problem)**, Cairo 1930, p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> Nazmi Sevgen, **Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri-Osmanlı Belgeleri Ile Kürt Türkleri Tarihi-** (Turkish Administrations in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia-The History of Kurdish Turks with the Ottoman

Documents), Ankara 1982, p. 81.

<sup>30</sup> Prof.Dr. Abdülhaluk Çay, *Her Yönüyle Kürt Dosyası (Kurdish Dossier with All the Aspects)*, Ankara 1993, p. 346.

<sup>31</sup> Archive of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Mesail-i Mühimme* (Important Issues), 1229, 13 Lef (See Nazmi Sevgen, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78)

<sup>32</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, *op. cit.*, p. 131

<sup>33</sup> Archive of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Ayniyat Defteri* (Book of Expenditures), 609 (See Nazmi Sevgen, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79)

<sup>34</sup> Archive of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Mesail-i Mühimme* (Important Issues), 1238, 10 Lef (See Nazmi Sevgen, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80)

<sup>35</sup> Archive of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Mesail-i Mühimme* (Important Issues), 1235, 9 Lef (See Nazmi Sevgen, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-88)

<sup>36</sup> Archive of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Mesail-i Mühimme* (Important Issues), 1229, 10 Lef (See Nazmi Sevgen, *op. cit.*, p. 88)

<sup>37</sup> Archive of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Mesail-i Mühimme* (Important Issues), 1238, 2 Lef (See Nazmi Sevgen, *op. cit.*, p. 89)

<sup>38</sup> Archive of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, *Mesail-i Mühimme* (Important Issues), 1238, 2 Lef (See Nazmi Sevgen, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90)

<sup>39</sup> J. Joseph, *The Nestorians and their Muslim Neighbors, A Study of Western Influences on Their Relations*, Princeton 1961; Prof. Dr. Erich Feigl, *Die Kurden*, München-Germany 1995, pp. 187-189; Nazmi Sevgen, *op. cit.*, p. 101; Dr. Celil Celil, *op. cit.*, p.148; Prof Dr. Abdulhaluk Çay, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

<sup>40</sup> Archive of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, 1263, *Irade*,1263, No: 1279, 3 Lef (See Nazmi Sevgen *op. cit.*, p. 104-105.

<sup>41</sup> Avedis Berberyan, *Badmutyün Hayots (Armenian History)*, Istanbul 1871, pp. 321-322 (See Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75).

<sup>42</sup> Hagop sahbazyan, *op. cit.* (See Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, p. 79)

<sup>43</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, p.79.

<sup>44</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-83.

<sup>45</sup> Avedis Berberyan, *op. cit.* , pp. 323-326 (See Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85).

<sup>46</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.* p. 95

<sup>47</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, p.96.

<sup>48</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, p.97.

<sup>49</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>50</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>51</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 99.

<sup>52</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

<sup>53</sup> Ismail Göldas, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti(The Kurdistan Development Association)*, Istanbul 1991.

<sup>54</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>55</sup> Prof.Dr. Bayram Kodaman, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devri Dogu Anadolu Politikasi (South East Policy During the Term of Sultan Abdulhamid II)*, Ankara 1987; Prof.Dr. Bayram Kodaman, *"Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alaylari"(Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments)*, Tarih Dergisi (Historical Journal), An Issue Separate from the No:32, Ankara 1979; Necati Gültepe, *"Hamidiye Alaylari"(Hamidiye Regiments)*, Hayat Tarih Mecmuasi (Journal of Life and History), No:7 (July 1976); *"Hamidiye Alaylari"(Hamidiye Regiments)*, Ana Britannica Encyclopedia, Volume:14, p. 374.

<sup>56</sup> Garo Sasuni, *op. cit.*, pp.124-125.

<sup>57</sup> MED TV, August 3, 1995, *"Gotubej"* (Conversation) Program.

<sup>58</sup> Yakup Bilge, *op. cit.*, p.110-111.

<sup>59</sup> Ali Vehbi Bey, *Prenees et souvenirs de l'ex-Sultan Abdulhamid*, Paris, pp. 16-17. (By Prof.Dr.Bayram Kodaman, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33).

<sup>60</sup> Archive of the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey, Yıldiz Document, Part 37, Document No.47/27, Envelope 47, Cartoon 113. *"Law on the Hamidiye Regiments in accordance with Military Regulations. Dersaadet 1308."* (By Prof.Dr.Bayram

Kodaman, *op. cit.*, p.34).

<sup>61</sup> M.Serif Firat, *Dogu Illeri ve Varto Tarihi (Eastern Provinces and Varto History)*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Ankara 1983.

<sup>62</sup> William Eagleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39

<sup>63</sup> Hori Süleyman Hinno, *Farman Tur-Abdinli Süryaniler'in 1914-1915 Katliami (Massacre of the Syrians from Farman Tur-Abdin in 1914-1915)*, Athens, 1993, pp. 14-15.

<sup>64</sup> Hori Süleyman Hinno, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 42, 43, 44, 100, 143.

<sup>65</sup> Botan Amedi, *Kürtler ve Kürdistan (Kurds and History of Kurdistan)*, Istanbul 1991; Welatê Torî-Nêrgiza Torî, *Kürt Kökeni Büyük Boylar (Large Tribes of Kurdish Origin)*, Istanbul 1991; Ihsan Nuri, *Kürtler'in Kökeni (Origin of Kurds)*, Istanbul 1977; Selahaddin Mihotulî, *Arya Uygarliklarından Kürtler'e (From Arian Civilizations to Kurds)*, Istanbul 1991; Nêrgiza Torî, *Kürtler'de Sanat (Art in Kurds)*, Istanbul 1991; Cemsid Bender, *Kürt Tarihi ve Uygarligi (Kurdish History and Civilization)*, Istanbul 1991; M.Emin Zeki, *Kürdistan Tarihi (History of Kurdistan)*, Istanbul, 1977.

<sup>66</sup> Amed Tîgrîs-Aso Germiyanî, *Dîroka Kurd û Kurdistanê*, Istanbul 1991, p. 22; M. Emin Zeki, *op. cit.*, p. 169; C. Aladag (Kemal Burkay), *Kürdistan'in Sömürgelendirilmesi ve Kürt Ulusal Hareketleri (Colonization of Kurdistan and Kurdish National Movements)*, Istanbul 1978, p. 205; Mehmet Bayrak, *Kürtler ve Ulusal Demokratik Mücadeleleri (Kurds and Their National Democratic Struggle)*, Ankara 1993, pp. 596-597; Cigerxwin, *Tarixia Kurdistan*, Stockholm,1985; and others...

<sup>67</sup> *Kürdistan Sürgün Parlamentosu Hazirlik Komisyonu Bülteni (Bulletin of Preparatory Commission for the Kurdistan Parliament in Exile)*, no: 1, February 1995, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> *"Kürt-Asuri Gerginligi" (Kurdish-Assyrian Tension)*, Türkiye Newspaper, March 18, 1997.