

# THE HUMANITARIAN TREATMENT OF THE ARABS TOWARDS THE WESTERN ARMENIAN SURVIVORS OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF THE EYEWITNESS SURVIVORS

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After the overthrow of Sultan Abdul Hamid's reign and the declaration of the 1908 Constitution, the party of the Young Turks, which formed the government, endeavored not only to preserve the Ottoman Empire, but also to brutally annihilate or to amalgamate and forcefully Turkify the Armenians and the other subject Christian peoples and to create a universal Pan-Islamic state extending from the Mediterranean Sea to the Altai territory.

The eyewitness survivors of the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923), who, for the most part are no longer alive presently, narrated in every detail, during my recordings, the historico-political circumstances of the first genocide perpetrated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The executive committee of Ittihat had foreseen to carry out the deportation and the massacre of the Armenians without the help of the army or the police, entrusting the job to the criminals and murderers released from the prisons, as well as to the Kurds, the Circassians and the Chechens.

In these historico-political circumstances, the general mobilization, arms collection and the extermination of the Armenian intellectuals in the deserts had become the greatest evil for the Christian nations living in the Ottoman Empire, particularly, for the Armenians of Western Armenia, Cilicia and the Armenian inhabited localities of Asia Minor.

The mobilization in Turkey was followed by the arms collection. That was accompanied by ubiquitous round-ups, during which, on the pretext of collecting "arms", the Turkish policemen ravaged the houses of the Armenians, plundered their properties, arrested and killed many of them.

The extermination of the Armenians was realized both on the spot and in the places of exile, in the vast deserts of Mesopotamia, especially in Rakka, Havran, Ras-ul-Ayn, Meskené, Surudj and Deir-el-Zor and elsewhere.

The Genocide survivor, **Yeghissabet Kalashian** (b. 1888), from Moussa Ler (Dagh), has narrated her mournful past: *"At the time we were in the Arabian desert; we were living like animals - no clothes, no manner of life, no washing, no drinking. Even during the fulfillment of our natural needs the gendarmes stood by, showing an indecent behavior to women and girls. Food? What food? We gathered grass, we grazed on grass like animals. If we found salt, we ate grass with salt. Sometimes Arabs were seen in the distance. The Arab Bedevis (Bedouins) had a lot of sheep but they had no houses and lived in tents. These Arabs took pity on us and occasionally gave us some pilaf,*

*which we ate voraciously, since life is sweet.... My three little children died on the roads of exile. That is why I am all alone at this age...*<sup>1</sup>

That is why the Armenian mothers, who were deprived of the elementary conditions of survival, after giving away their properties to the Turkish government and the armed brigands and feeling their imminent death, preferred to leave their beloved children to the kind Arabs, in order to preserve the children's life in case they themselves would be martyred.

**Barouhi Chorekian** (b. 1900), from Nicomedia, told us: *"...When they exiled us, we remained in the desert for twelve months. I and my three sisters fled to the forests. Swimming across the Khabur River (river flowing near Deir-el-Zor), we arrived near the Arab Bedouins. They sheared our lice-infested hair; they tattooed our face with ink in order to hide our Armenian origin. They gave us their sheep to graze"*<sup>2</sup>.



Grigor Gyouzelian  
(1903, Moussa Dagh)

A 90-year-old survivor, **Grigor Gyozealian** (b. 1903, Moussa Ler, Kabousié Village), remembered with a feeling of infinite gratitude the kind old Christian-Arab woman from the village of Muhardi on the road to Homs-Hama, who distributed in secret every evening the rice she had cooked and the pieces of bread thrust in her belt to the Armenian orphans lying exhausted at the base of the walls and then disappeared secretly in the darkness<sup>3</sup>.

The same fact has also taken a poetical form in the following song, where the child-deprived mother hurried to cross the river and find her child sheltered *"in the Arab village"*:

*"Khabur,<sup>4</sup> make way for me, let me cross the desert,  
My child is in the Arab village, bare and naked,  
Oh, mother! Oh, mother! Our condition was  
lamentable,*

*At the time we were in the desert of Der-Zor"*<sup>5</sup>.

**Mariam Baghdishian** (b. 1909) has also narrated that she was five or six years old when, on the roads of exile, together with her sister, they played with the curls of their mother lying on the sands of the desert, unaware that she was already dead; then a certain Arab woman took her home, where the little Mariam carried water from the well with a jug over a four-year period. Once, when they wanted



Mariam Baghdishian  
(1909, Moussa Dagh)

<sup>1</sup> Svazlyan V., *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors*, Yerevan, 2011 (henceforth: *Testimony*) 282, p. 465.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *Testimony*. 304, p. 499.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *Testimony*. 289, pp. 473-484.

<sup>4</sup> Habur/Khabur - river flowing near Deir-el-Zor.

<sup>5</sup> Svazlyan V., *op. cit.*, *Testimony*. 508, p. 574.

to tattoo her face with blue ink, she ran secretly away and took refuge in the Armenian orphanage with the help of a Greek priest<sup>6</sup>.



Sirena Alajajian  
(1910, Adabazar)

A 90-year-old survivor, an inhabitant of the Armenian national St. Prkich (Savior - Arm.) old-age nursing home in Constantinople (Istanbul), **Sirena Alajajian** (b. 1910), from Adabazar, was four years old when the Turks murdered her father and her mother. The Arab desert inhabitants took care of the parentless child. After four years, following the Armistice in 1918, when the orphan-collectors were gathering the Armenian orphan children in the deserts, they saw an eight-year-old little girl with curly blond hair and blue eyes, her beautiful face tattooed with blue ink, and bearing an Arabic name. Undoubtedly, she was Armenian. Although she had forgotten her Armenian speech, but she had not forgotten to cross herself as a Christian, and that was the

proof that she was an Armenian-Christian. Thus, little Sirena was taken to the Armenian orphanage<sup>7</sup>.

Another eyewitness survivor from Nicomedia, **Barouhi Silian** (b. 1900), whose face was also tattooed, communicated to me: *"...We remained for twelve months in the desert. We had no bread, no water, no dwelling, nothing at all. From among our family of nine, only I remained alive; they killed my mother in front of my eyes, they took away my sister, my other younger sister, who was very young, fell ill and died, another sister got lost, we could not find each other. The gendarmes caught my sister-in-law, who was pregnant, and made a bet: 'What is inside this gâvur's belly?' said one of them. The other cut open her belly with a sword before our eyes and replied: 'Gâvurs do not bear boys, see!' I fled, with four other girls, to the forest and then swam across a river. An Arab took me to his home and told me: 'My daughter, I know you have no similar custom, but let me tattoo your face with blue ink, so that they will not take you for an Armenian.' I cried. I had neither bed, nor clothes. They tattooed my face, they sheared my thick braids. I did the housework there..."*<sup>8</sup>



Barouhi Silian  
(1900, Nicomedia)

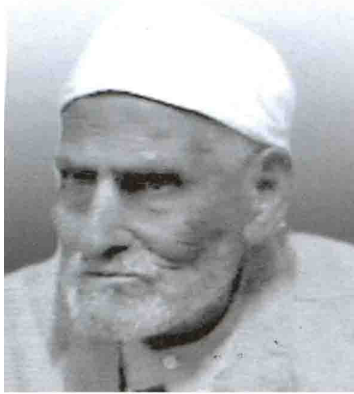
Except the Armenian eyewitness survivors (in 1999) the facts about the Armenian Genocide are testified also by the Arab desert inhabitants, 119 years old **al Gihim** (b. 1880, Rakka), **Bashir el Saadi** (b. 1901, Rakka), the Arab desert woman **Batra** (b.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Testimony. 294, pp. 487-488.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Testimony. 225, pp. 410-412.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Testimony. 230, p. 414.

1906, Deir-el-Zor), **Hab Ali** (b. 1905, Ras-ul-Ayn), **Abdul Ghafour** (b. 1915, Ras-ul-Ayn) and others<sup>9</sup>.



al Gihim  
(1880, Rakka)

The Arab desert inhabitant **al Gihim** (b. 1880, Rakka), an eyewitness of the Armenian Genocide, testified: *"I am already 119 years old. I was born in Rakka. I remember well the sufferings of the poor exiled Armenians. They had been violently driven out of their homeland and walked hungry and thirsty to the Syrian Deserts to the bank of the Euphrates River. The Turk butchers had deceived the Armenians, saying that they would soon return to their homes, but had taken them to the bank of the Rakka rampart and slaughtered. Only 7 families were rescued by our Arabs, who had helped them to escape and find shelter in their tents."*<sup>10</sup>

The Arab desert inhabitant **Bashir el Saadi** (b. 1901, Rakka) also testified: *"In 1915, I was 14 years old. I was a shepherd grazing the animals of our people on the bank of the Euphrates River, near Rakka. I saw groups of people – tired, exhausted, in rags, half-naked, who came to our areas. Later, I learned that the Turkish government had deported them from their homeland and had driven them to the Syrian deserts. Those Armenian exiles had walked under the guard of Turkish gendarmes for days, without knowing where they were going. They left their relatives by the roads. These were unable to walk and many of them had been killed by the Turks."*



Bashir el Saadi  
(1901, Rakka)

*I and my cousins used to go to the desert on our camels and, seeing their miserable state, helped them by milking our camels and giving them the milk to drink instead of water. They were so emaciated and weak that all of a sudden they fell down on the ground and died"*<sup>11</sup>.

While **Hab Ali** (b. 1905, Ras-ul-Ayn) recalled in his testimony how he had saved several Armenians and mentioned that a number of Arab tribes had also humanely succored the suffering Armenian deportees: *"I was ten years old in 1915 and I remember well the unfortunate Armenian deportees. They reached Ras-ul-Ayn tired, exhausted, half-naked and blood-stained. I, myself, took several of them and hid them in a large pit, and they were saved from the Turkish gendarmes pursuing them."*

<sup>9</sup> Doctor of History, *Nora Arissian*, from Damascus, interviewed Arab-Bedouin habitants from the Syrian deserts in 1999 and passed the videocassette to the Archives of the Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. I have presented these five [Testimony. 302-306] testimonies, that I have deciphered and translated, in my mentioned book, pp. 498-306.

<sup>10</sup> Svazlian V., op. cit., Testimony. 302, p. 498.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Testimony. 303, pp. 498-499.

*A number of Syrian tribes also helped those Armenians. Among these kind Arabs were Shanmar, Bakkara, Oubada, Ajubeh, Harp, Al Muhamed, Al Hassan, Al Udwa, Jabra, Zubeyd and others who hid a great many Armenian women and children in their families and saved them from death.*

*The Turk gendarmes on horseback and the soldiers, escorting the Armenian deportees, forced them to walk without taking a rest. The Chechens, the Kurds and even the Turkish soldiers themselves attacked them with knives and struck them with axes, while the Arabs have never touched or hurt the Armenians<sup>12</sup>.*

**Abdul Ghafour** (b. 1915), living in the same Ras-ul-Ayn Desert, also testified: *"The Armenians, who had been driven out of their historical native land by the Turks, arrived in Ras-ul-Ayn completely exhausted and disorganized. In order to survive, they became servants in the houses of the Arabs. Their women had beautiful eyes and were very diligent. These women were obliged to marry our desert sheikhs or the heads of the villages. Some of them changed their religion, but some - did not. In time, negative consequences followed. Their state soon became sad and melancholic. Later they tried to search and find their relatives and kept links with them, but being honest women, they preserved their families.*

*A young girl, whose father and mother had been killed by the Turks, had walked the road of exile with her two younger brothers. Due to exhaustion and hunger, her brothers had died on the way, and she, alone, had reached Ras-ul-Ayn. Out of despair, she married the sheikh of the Shamma tribe. She gave birth to me, thus becoming my sisters' and brothers' loving and caring mother<sup>13</sup>.*



Batra  
(1906, Deir-el-Zor)

Recalling the tragic state of the Armenian deportees, the Arab desert woman **Batra** (b. 1906, Deir-el-Zor) has described, at the same time, the suffering Armenian women: *"I am 93 years old woman. I am from the Syrian deserts. In 1915, I was 9 years old and I remember well how the exiled Armenian caravans arrived in Der-Zor one after the other. They had endured much torture. They were hungry, thirsty, in rags, and barefoot. They came and gathered near the Der-Zor bridge. We saw how the Turkish gendarmes and Chechens killed them. The women, who survived, married our Arab sheikhs and heads of the desert villages. They became good mothers of families. Most of them changed their religion, but some of them did not. We admired the beauty of Armenian women. They had marvelous eyes. Besides, they were balanced in nature, obedient and honest. They never begged.*

*The Turks scattered the Armenians all over the Syrian deserts, but the Arabs pitied them and gathered them up<sup>14</sup>.*

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., Testimony. 304, p. 499.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Testimony. 305, p. 499.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., Testimony. 306, p. 499.



In the Syrian deserts, thanks to the kind Arab Bedouins, numerous generations of Armenians exist up to the present day, unfortunately having lost their mother tongue, changed their names and even apostatized; nevertheless, they still remember the national identity of their ancestors. These facts are testified also by the representatives of the subsequent generations of the eyewitness survivors, **Jirayr Reisian** (b. 1949, Aleppo), **Martiros Ashekian** (b. 1927, Aleppo), as well as **Hakob Moutafian** (b. 1980, Deir-el-Zor) and others.



Jirayr Reisian  
(1949, Aleppo)

In 2005, in Aleppo, I have written down the accounts of **Jirayr Reisian** (b. 1949, Aleppo), the Head of the Armenian National Sahakian School of Aleppo, about the toponyms of the Sheddadié and Markadé locations, based on the testimonies of Arab Bedouins: *"In the spring of 2005, I visited Yerevan together with the Arab tribal heads of Syria. An interview was organized at the "Armenia" TV studio with these Arab tribal heads, and I was invited to translate from Arabic into Armenian. One of the tribal heads was Sheikh Nawaf Ragheb-el-Bashir, the chief of the Bakkara (Baggara) tribe from the region of Der-Zor. During the interview, the Sheikh gave the following interesting assertion concerning the Arabic names of the 2 localities "Sheddadié" and "Markadé."*

*Sheddadié is the region, quite far from Der-Zor, where, in the days of the Armenian Genocide, in 1915, thousands of Armenian deportees were forcibly driven, packed into natural caves and burned alive. That locality took its name from those horrifying events, since "Sheddadié" in Arabic means "the place where grave and horrible events took place."*

*Markadé is a hill where there is a small memorial chapel in memory of the Armenian martyrs. It is a place where thousands of Armenians and people of other nationalities go on a pilgrimage. If you dig, up to the present day, any part of the hill even with your bare hands, you will find the skulls and bones of the Armenian martyrs. The name "Markadé" is derived from the Arabic word "Rakkadda" which means "the place where heaps of corpses lie"<sup>15</sup>.*



Deir-el-Zor

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Testimony. 382, pp. 543-544.



Martiros Ashekian  
(1927, Aleppo)

On 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 2008, precisely at the memorial complex of the Armenian Genocide in Montebello, Los Angeles, I have inscribed the testimony of **Martiros Ashekian** (b. 1927, Aleppo), where Arab Bedouin not only took him and showed the cave, Sheddadié, but also remembered the suffering of the Armenians: *“I, Martiros Ashekian, was born in 1927, in the Zeytounkhan Camp of Aleppo (Syria), where the survivors of the Armenian Genocide had arrived after going on foot, for weeks on end.*

*In 1948, I was working for the Syrian Petroleum Company, near Palmyra, in the desert of Dallaa where we were digging oil-wells.*

*While we were working in that camp, an Arab watchman used to come often there to take water. I and Garnik Norashkharian, Yerjanik’s son from Zeytoun, saw everyday small girls wearing Arab dresses who had blue eyes and fair hair. They came to watch how we were working.*

*One day that Arab watchman called these little girls and told them in Arabic: “Don’t be ashamed, come nearer, these are your uncles.”*

*We asked them: “Where is your mother?”*

*On the next day, they came with their mother, a lean woman about 40 years old, with a beautiful face, fair hair and blue eyes.*

*We asked her in Arabic: “How do you remember being an Armenian?”*

*“I only remember,” she answered, “we used to say ‘hots’ (hwg-hats- Arm.) for ‘khebez’ (bread - Arab.) and ‘jeor’ (շուր-joor - Arm.) for ‘maye’ (water - Arab.).”*

*From the dialect she spoke in we understood that she was from Zeytoun. We asked her: “Where did you live in Zeytoun?”*

*“We had a locality called Dsovk in Zeytoun. It was a valley, and a small river flowed in it.”*

*“Do you remember your parents’ family name?”*

*“Yes, it was Dovlatian.”*

*Then we definitely knew that she was an Armenian from Zeytoun.*

*We were transferred later to the right side of Dakka, on the road to Tetmor, where there was a field called Dallah. We dig pits. Then we were transferred to Jeziré.*

*In 1950, the British constructed a camp there, and we also moved to work there. That was on the east of the River Khabur, about 45-50 miles from the Iraqi border, before getting to Djebel (Mount) Sinjar. Part of this mountain is in Iraq and another part is in Syria. Our camp was called “Hunahuezia.” Everyday we went there to dig oil-wells. The British SBC company provided us with lunch every day. We ate and when we were satiated, we called the Arab Bedouin shepherds to partake of our lunch. They were members of an Arab nomadic tribe called Jbouri. We used to call them in their language: “Yawel henhen ho-ho! (Come here! - Arab.).”*

*One day an Arab shepherd came to our table. We asked him: "Where are your sheep?"*

*"Here," he replied. "They are not far away. My sheep are behind Nougret-el-Arman (the Armenians' Pit - Arab.)."*

*We pricked up our ears and asked: "Can you show us that place?"*

*He consented. I and my Armenian friend, Garnik, accompanied him there. It was about a mile away from our working-place, a locality called Jesser Sheddadié, on the River Khabur, near the bridge leading to Iraq, a place named Chibisi where, at one time, the Germans had started to dig oil-wells, but since they were defeated in the Second World War, they had left it unfinished and gone away, and we had taken up the job of drilling oil-wells in that region.*

*We went inside the dark cave. I had taken with me a torch and a sack. The Arab shepherd said: "We always enter this cave of Jesser Sheddadié, which is 7-8 miles long, to take out gold bracelets, tooth-crowns and other ornaments."*

*We went about 50-60 meters deeper in the cave and we came across a pit 10-15 meters in diameter. On one side, the cave continued deeper in the direction of the River Khabur.*

*The Arab continued: "After Der-Zor about 70 miles to the north-east there is a desert where there is no water and no sown fields. The Turks brought here about 40 thousand Armenian survivors miraculously saved from Der-Zor, tormenting them on the road, making them go on foot for 70 miles on the scorching sands of the desert without giving them a drop of water. They brought these poor Armenians, who were emaciated, and all skin and bones, and packed them all alive in this cave or threw them in this pit. Then they brought thorny bushes and tree-branches and covered the mouth of the pit and the entrance to the cave and set everything on fire. I am now 65 years old and I remember very well; I saw everything with my own eyes. The poor Armenians were about 'Arbayin alf nafar' (Forty thousand people - Arab.)."*

*We went deeper, about 200 feet, into the cave with our torch and the sack. Human bones and skulls were under our feet. We filled our sack with some bones and skulls. The light of our torch began to fade and finally went out. We were in total darkness and, holding each other's hand, we tried to find our way out of the cave. We groped our way, falling and getting up on the bumpy ground, down the grotto. At last we saw a glimmer of light. We were glad that God showed us that light and led us to the wide world. I recited the Lord's prayer and drew a large cross before the entrance of the cave. I took the sack of bones with me and kept it under my bed. I should have delivered the sack of bones to the church. But I was too young at that time and I did not know what to do. I buried it later in my deceased sister's grave"<sup>16</sup>.*

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Testimony. 383, pp. 544-545.





Barounak Shishikian  
(1902, Zeytoun)

Worthy of remembrance also is the impressive life-story of **Barounak Shishikian** (1902, Zeytoun - 1974, Edjmiadsin)<sup>17</sup>.

During the Armenian Genocide, when he was 13 years old, the Turks killed his father and his mother right in the front of his eyes. The Syrian Arab desert Bedouins found the solitary wandering teenager, they fed him and made him a member of their ashirat (tribe), where he started to graze the camels.

During that period, the clever and far-sighted youth, dressed in Bedouin garments, compiled the maps of the neighboring desert Arab villages, indicating the new Arabic and the previous Armenian names of all the Armenian orphan girls and boys living in those localities.

In 1918, after the Armistice, a great number of orphan-searching Armenians, responding to the call of the President of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Poghos Noubar pasha: "One Armenian orphan - one gold coin," scattered in the Syrian desert to search for the Armenian orphans in the various Arab tribes. Thanks to the maps and the lists of Armenian orphans compiled by Barounak Shishikian, numerous Armenian orphans were discovered and rescued and were returned to the bosom of the Armenian nation.

Subsequently, Barounak Shishikian requested a piece of land from the Syrian government and established there the settlement of Telbrak, where he gathered and housed, even married off those Armenian orphan girls and boys.

In 1947, Barounak Shishikian, together with his many-membered family, as well as with all those Telbraktsis, embarked the steamship "Pobeda" and was repatriated to Armenia. Their children attended, in the Motherland, Armenian schools, many of them received also a higher education and became useful citizens of Armenia.



Hakob Moutafian  
(1980, Deir-el-Zor)

Barounak Shishikian settled with his large family, in the village of Meymandar, Edjmiadsin Region and started to cure the sick with his bewitching prayers. He remained till the end of his days in his Arab Bedouin-like outfit, as a token of his deep gratitude toward the Arab people.

It is worthful to remember also the narrative of **Hakob Moutafian** (b. 1980, Deir-el-Zor) that I have inscribed in 2005, in Deir el-Zor: *"My father's father, Hakob, was forcibly deported with his parents in the days of the Armenian Genocide from the village of Karmounj, near Yedessia. Going on foot, hungry and thirsty, sun-scorched and exhausted, they had reached Der-Zor. There the Turks had started to cut*

*off the heads of the Armenians with axes and to throw them in the Euphrates River. It is said that the water of the Euphrates River was colored red by the Armenians' blood. My*

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 731.

*grandfather Hakob had miraculously escaped the slaughter. An Arab desert man had taken him as a shepherd to graze his sheep. After many years Hakob had married a girl, an orphan like him, and they had had three sons and two daughters. The three sons had named their firstborn sons Hakob in honor of their father. So, my name is also Hakob after my grandfather.*

*Our large Moutafian family, numbering 25 souls, lives up till now in Der-Zor and is well-known here by its prosperous situation.*

*There are also 10-15 other Armenian or semi-Armenian families in Der-Zor. The Armenians are in good friendly relations with the local Arabs. The latter are very kind and hospitable people. The Arab desert tribal chiefs often visit us. They always remember and tell us the narratives about the Armenian deportees they have heard from their fathers and grandfathers, about how the Turkish gendarmes had brought the poor Armenian exiles in groups to Der-Zor; they had massacred them and had thrown their corpses in the Euphrates River.*

*That is why the Armenians erected, in 1991, right in the center of today's Der-Zor the Saint Martyrs' Church-Memorial complex dedicated to the memory of one and a half million innocent Armenian martyrs.*

*There is a hill called Markadé, just a two-hour drive from Der-Zor. According to the testimony of Arab desert tribal chiefs, that name was given precisely by the Arabs at the sight of the slaughter of the Armenians. The name "Markada" is derived from the Arabic word "Rakkadda," which means "countless piled up corpses." It is said that the said hill had been formed by the corpses of the Armenians. In fact, up till the present day, if you dig the earth a little bit with your hand, you will find the bones of the Armenian martyrs. On that same place the Chapel of St. Harutyun was built, in 1996, on the relics of our martyrs, which are displayed in show-cases in every corner of the chapel.*

*A little farther, there is a large cave called "Sheddadié." Again, according to the testimony of Arab desert men, that name derives from the Arabic word "Shedda," which means "a place of terribly great tragic event." The elderly Arab desert men relate that the Turk gendarmes had brought the Armenian deportees, had packed them into that large cave, had shut its entrance and had set fire to it. There remained only the bones of the Armenians reduced to ashes...*

*Those, who come to Der-Zor, do not go back without seeing these places. But during the past few years, petroleum was found near Sheddadié, consequently the Syrian government has forbidden the visits to those places. But the names of these two localities, Markadé and Sheddadié, were given by the desert Arabs, who had witnessed the massacre of the Armenians with their own eyes.*

*During the massacres many Armenian girls and boys were able to escape, in various ways, from the Turkish murderers and find refuge, naked and hungry, at the Arab desert Bedouins. The latter had tattooed with blue ink the faces of many Armenian girls according to their custom, had made them Moslems and had kept them for years. Most of those Armenians had grown up, had forgotten their mother tongue, had become Arabs, but there are those among them, who still remember that their ancestors were Armenians.*

*Here is one example. A few years ago, two Arab young men, aged 20-22, knocked at our door. I opened the door and saw two Arab peasant boys and I guessed from their garments that they were from the villages of Der-Zor. I asked them to come in. They sat down and started to speak with great emotion. It turned out that the grandfather of one of them was an Armenian, named Karapet, who was miraculously saved from the slaughter. The other's grandmother was also an Armenian, named Mariam. Although the names of these young men were Arabic, but they said that there was a nickname added after their family names, "Karapet" and "Mariam" respectively, by which they were known in the villages they lived.*

*These two young men started to ask questions, whether what they had heard was right, that the Armenians had a country named Armenia, that Gharabagh (Artsakh) had been liberated from the Turk-Azeris, that after the Gharabagh victory it was possible to go there and to have the right to live there, that they would be given a piece of land for cultivation and money to build a house for themselves. Therefore, whom should they apply to go to Gharabagh and to settle there? I showed them the way with my advices and I told them that I and my two brothers were already students at the various universities of the capital of Armenia, Yerevan. And I told them that they should apply to the Armenian consul in Aleppo, and he could settle the matter...*

*Thus, there are thousands of assimilated, estranged Armenians in the Syrian deserts, but there are also many who have still retained their national identity, perhaps not evidently, but the organization of their relocation in Armenia and Gharabagh is, in my opinion, the sacred duty of our government"<sup>18</sup>.*

Following the Armenian Genocide, in the years 1915-1923, thousands of homeless and motherland-deprived miserable Armenians have found a warm, hospitable treatment by the governments and people of Arab countries (Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, etc.).

Taking advantage of that hospitable behavior, hundreds of thousands of Armenians have started a new life in those countries.

***Translated from Armenian  
by T. H. Tsoulikian***

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Testimony. 384, pp. 545-546.