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## ANKARA TREATY AND MIGRATION OF CILICIAN ARMENIANS

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### ABSTRACT

*During World War I, Armenians carried out raids and acts of intimidation against the Ottoman Empire on the side of the Allied Powers. With the signing of the Armistice of Mudros, Armenian attacks against Muslims in Adana, Urfa, Aintab, and Marash increased. After the Battle of Sakarya; France, realizing it could not hold onto Adana and the region, began seeking reconciliation with the Ankara Government. An agreement was signed in Ankara on October 20, 1921, with Franklin Bouillon representing the French. According to the sixth article of this treaty, the Ankara Government expected to adhere to the minority rights outlined in the Misak-ı Milli. With the signing of the Ankara Treaty, the French started evacuating the region. Due to the severe attacks against Turks during the Armistice years, Armenians became concerned about their situation. The French, wanting local Armenians to remain in their homes, included a general amnesty provision in the Ankara Treaty. Franklin Bouillon assured the Armenians that the Ankara Government had forgiven the atrocities committed before the treaty. However, despite these assurances, Armenians, fearing retaliation for their actions, began migrating from Adana and its surroundings. The number of Armenians leaving Türkiye reached tens of thousands, some departing by ferries from Mersin and others by trains to Aleppo. This study evaluates the migration of Armenians from Cilicia based on official documents.*

**Key Words:** Ankara Treaty, Ankara Government, France, Cilicia, Armenians.

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## Uluslararası Siyaset Dergisi

U S J o u r n a l

### ANKARA ANTLAŞMASI VE KİLİKYA ERMENİLERİNİN GÖÇÜ

#### ÖZET

*Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Ermeniler İtilaf Devletleri yanında Osmanlı Devleti'ne karşı içeride çetecilik ve tedhiş hareketlerinde bulunmuştur. Hatta bazı Ermeniler İtilaf Devletleri ordularında savaşmıştır Mondros Mütarekesi'nin imzalanmasıyla Adana, Urfa, Antep, Maraş'ta Ermenilerin yöredeki Müslümanlara dönük saldırıları artmıştır. Sakarya Zaferi'nin ardından Adana ve havalisinde tutunamayacağını anlayan Fransa, Ankara Hükümeti ile uzlaşma yollarını aramaya başlamıştır. Fransızları temsilen Ankara'ya gelen Franklin Bouillon ile 20 Ekim 1921 tarihinde Ankara'da bir antlaşma imzalanmıştır. Bu antlaşmanın altıncı maddesine göre, Ankara Hükümeti Misak-ı Milli'de belirlenen azınlık haklarına bağlı kalması öngörülmüştü. Ankara Antlaşması'nın imzalanmasıyla Fransızlar yöreyi boşaltmaya başlamıştı. Mütareke yıllarında bölgedeki Türklere yönelik ağır saldırılar nedeniyle Ermeniler bu sefer de kendi durumlarından endişeye düşmüştür. Yöre Ermenilerinin yerlerinden ayrılmamalarını isteyen Fransızlar, Ermenileri kendileri için bölgede dayanak, Türklere karşı ise kargaşa kaynağı olarak tutmak istiyorlardı. Bu yüzden Ankara Antlaşması'na genel af ilanını bir madde olarak koydurtmuşlardı. Franklin Bouillon Ermenilere dönük, Ankara Hükümeti'nin antlaşma öncesinde yapılan fenalıkları affettiğini ve bu konuda kendilerine güvence verildiğini söylemişti. Fakat verilen tüm garantilere rağmen yaptıkları zulümlere karşılık verileceğinden korkan Ermeniler Adana ve civarından göç etmeye başlamıştı. Bir kısmı Mersin'den vapurlarla diğerleri de Halep'e giden trenlere binerek Türkiye'den ayrılan başlayan sayısı on binlere ulaşmıştır. Bu çalışmada Ermenilerin Kilikya bölgesinden göçleri resmi belgeler ışığında değerlendirildi.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ankara Antlaşması, Ankara Hükümeti, Fransa, Kilikya, Ermeniler.

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## Introduction

Based on the 7th and 24th articles of the Mudros Armistice, after the British occupation of the Çukurova region, Adana, Aintab, Marash, and Urfa were left to the French with the Anglo-French agreement. There were 10.000 Armenian soldiers among the French soldiers. Armed local Armenians welcomed the French who entered Adana like an army of liberation. On the other hand, Armenian immigrants brought from America, Egypt, Syria, and France by French ships began to settle in Turkish villages.<sup>1</sup> On 8 December 1919, Mustafa Kemal Pasha, in a telegram he sent to the mufti of Urfa, ordered the Turks not to engage in armed attacks unless the Armenians and the French caused them.<sup>2</sup> However, the French occupation forces were arming the Armenians to intimidate the Muslim villagers.<sup>3</sup> The Muslims in Adana and its surroundings began to be massacred due to the Armenian attacks. While this situation caused the Muslims to take up arms to oppose the French and the Armenians under the French uniform, the activities of the Armenian gangs completely disrupted the security in the region.<sup>4</sup> The occupation of Cilicia by the French required the capture of the Taurus passes, which constituted the strategic and historical defense of Syria. The French Government claimed to organize the administration of Cilicia in a way that would largely secure the rights of the Armenian minority as well as the Turkish majority. French Prime Minister Briand believed that leaving Cilicia would endanger the lives of thousands of Armenians who were deprived of the French flag. According to Briand, if the Turkish nation were exposed to the “Scottish Shower”, patriotic feelings would rise and this would manifest itself in gangs.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, an operation started against the French and British occupation in Syria and Iraq. According to Mustafa Kemal Pasha, a tactician, the Kuva-yi Milliye (Turkish Irregular National Forces) in Cilicia would be relieved with the help to be given to the resistance fighters in Syria. With the French army stuck in Syria, the French government began to seek ways to agree with the Ankara Government.<sup>6</sup> As a result, a temporary armistice was signed with the French in May 1920. However, the truce was broken and the conflicts continued when the French dismissed the Muslims in their civil duties, made the Armenians attack the Muslims, and landed soldiers in Zonguldak Ereğli to force the Ankara Government to open a new front.<sup>7</sup> In this article, the Armenian migration that started with the signing of the Ankara Agreement by France will be examined. The study designed as a “descriptive research design”, “content analysis method” was used. In addition, by applying “document analysis”, one of the qualitative research methods, the topics related to the period of Peyam-ı Sabah, Tevhid-i Efkar, İkdam, İleri, Vakit, The New York Times, The Times, newspapers were analyzed. In addition to newspapers, archival documents and various copyrighted and research works are among the sources consulted.

<sup>1</sup> Süleyman Beyoğlu, “Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı”, içinde *Modern Türkiye Tarihi*, ed. Süleyman Beyoğlu, Ali Satan (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014), 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Atatürk'ün Tamim ve Telgraf ve Beyannameleri*, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2006), 143.

<sup>3</sup> Mim Kemal Öke, *Ermeni Sorunu*, (İstanbul: İz Yayınları, 1996), 266.

<sup>4</sup> Selahattin Tansel, *Mondros'tan Mudanya'ya Kadar- II*, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Kültür Müsteşarlığı Yayınları, 1973), 207-208.

<sup>5</sup> Gotthard Jaesche, *British Documents Related to the War of Independenc* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1986), 212.

<sup>6</sup> *Atatürk'ün Tamim ve Telgraf ve Beyannameleri*, 228.

<sup>7</sup> Kemal Çelik, *Millî Mücadele'de Adana ve Havalisi*, (PhD Thesis, İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 1993), 337. The interim agreement in 1920 found voice in the United Kingdom. As a matter of fact, in British documents, this temporary agreement in Cilicia was considered as taking the French troops to the Mersin-Adana line and leaving the Armenians in the hands of "tyrants". Upon this, the Amanus Armenians declared their independence and claimed that they were a part of Armenia. See, Bilal Şimşir, *Atatürk in British Documents II*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1975), 177.

## 1. Negotiations during the London Conference

In the negotiations in London in 1921, Armenians were represented by Bogos Nubar Pasha and Avetis Aharonian. Times magazine saw the Treaty of Sèvres as the only base of Armenian independence. Times described the current situation in Armenia as fateful. In the 1920s, Bolshevism was established in the northern part of Armenia. In some parts of the south, there were the troops of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. According to the Times, the first prerequisite for the establishment of an Armenian state was an Armenian stronghold in the southern parts of Anatolia. However, the Western states did not guarantee the security of the Armenian lands. According to the Times, for Armenia under Turkish rule in the western part of Cilicia, a Christian administration could be established under French auspices. The Times suggested to Armenia that eastern and western Cilicia should be united if France evacuated Cilicia. Thus, an autonomous administration could be established under Ottoman rule and with the administrative and economic assistance of France.<sup>8</sup> At the session of the London Conference, chaired by Lord Curzon on February 26, 1921, Bogos Nubar made a statement on behalf of the Armenians of Türkiye and Aharonyan on behalf of the Armenians of Yerevan. Bogos Nubar, who wanted the Treaty of Sevres to be preserved, requested guarantees from the Ankara Government for the Armenians of Cilicia. On the other hand, French Prime Minister Briand declared her intention to obtain guarantees to protect the interests of the Cilician Armenians.<sup>9</sup> Bogos Nubar said at the conference that Armenians make up the majority in the region with 150,000 people. He wanted Cilicia not to be ruled by Türkiye because Armenians made up the majority. At the Paris and Spa Conferences, Turkish delegates were told that Turks could not manage foreign nations. Foreign delegates said this was clear in Cilicia. The debt to Armenians who sided with the Allies and suffered during the World War I also had to be paid.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Signing of Ankara Agreement and Reactions

As of October 1921, the French public began to see the Turks as a persecuted nation that defended their homeland against Constantine's invasion. According to the French, the Turks wanted their independence and were determined to protect it.<sup>11</sup> The French public opinion, who did not want French blood to be shed in Cilicia anymore, thought that the power of Bolshevism was increasing in Ankara. Especially the signing of the Moscow Treaty increased this uneasiness considerably. Additionally, there were reactions in France's Muslim colonies against the war in Anatolia.<sup>12</sup> With the victory of the Battle of Sakarya, the French had no choice but to make peace.

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<sup>8</sup> *The Times*, 21 February 1921, .2. Cilicia is claimed by both Armenians and Syrians, in each case by a minority which didn't exceed 25 per cent in 1914. Reason are stated above for not giving it to the former. It is unimportant to Syria as an outlet, since that area has many ports. But it's very valuable to the areas both at the northeast and the north. The region between Cilicia and Armenia, containing Albistan, Malatia and Kharput is claimed by the Armenians, but should also be left with Anatolia. It contained in 1914 a mixture of Turks, Kizilbash, Armenians, Sunnite Kurds and others, proportioned apparently in the order named. Strong mandatory control would be difficult because of the distance from the coast across rough, mountainous country. The region become a hunting ground for Turkish, Kurdish Armenian bands, each anxious to acquire the territory for its people. See. *The New York Times*, 4 December 1922, 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Peyam-ı Sabah*, 5 March 1921,.2.

<sup>10</sup> Bilal Şimşir, *Atatürk in British Documents III*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1975), 191; Prime Minister's Ottoman Archive of Republic of Turkey (BOA), Political Department of the Foreign Ministry (HR. SYS), 2310/11.

<sup>11</sup> Yahya Akyüz, *Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı ve Fransız Kamuooyu (1919-1922)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1988), 263-64.

<sup>12</sup> Akyüz, *Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı*, 263-264.

The Turkish-French war ended with the signing of the Ankara Treaty. The signatory states had undertaken to declare a general amnesty in the lands to be evacuated. In the agreement, the Turkish Grand National Assembly Government accepted the recognition of minority rights clearly defined in the National Pact. In this regard, the Ankara Government would act under the principles in international agreements.<sup>13</sup> Prime Minister Briand made a statement to the press about the Ankara Agreement. Briand said that France had 90,000 soldiers in Cilicia, most of whom were French, and pointed out that the expense of this army was a great burden for a state that emerged from World War I. According to Briand, the French had carried out a brief pacification mission in Anatolia. Briand touched upon the difficulties in meeting the necessary food needs of the French troops. Briand emphasized that it was not possible to face a victorious Turkish Army of 300-400,000 men. Moreover, no criticism was made against the Italians who had previously made peace with the Turks. According to Briand, there was no other option for France other than withdrawing its troops and negotiating with the Turks. Controversial situations could be resolved by discussion<sup>14</sup>. With the signing of the Ankara Treaty, movement was observed among the Cilician Armenians. It was stated in the Turkish press that Armenians had the right to live in Türkiye as much as Turks. According to the Turkish press, if there was a common goal for the destiny of the country, this excitement should have ended. Christian citizens were advised to prudently rely on assurances from the authorities. Meanwhile, Muslim citizens should also pay attention to certain issues. From this point of view, words that would offend non-muslims should be avoided and the past should not be mentioned.<sup>15</sup>

After the Ankara Treaty, the evacuation of French-occupied Cilicia began, to be completed in two months. Muhiddin Pasha, Ankara Government's Ministry of Internal Affairs Undersecretary Mr. Hamit, and the commission accompanying them were tasked with the evacuation by the Ankara Government. On the French side, Franklin Bouillon, Colonel Mougin, and their delegation were authorized. After the peace treaty, an amnesty was to be declared for all the people of Adana and Cilicia, and Christians would not be drafted into the military. The population of Cilicia in those years; consisted of 546,000 Muslims, 130,000 Armenians, 36,000 Greeks, and 18,000 others<sup>16</sup>.

### **3. Hamit Bey Franklin Bouillon Meeting and Statement Regarding the Cilician People**

On 22 November 1921, Franklin Bouillon and Mr. Hamit held a meeting in Yenice. Representatives of various Christian residents of Adana, Mersin, and Tarsus also attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to provide all kinds of guarantees to Christian minorities by France and to officially confirm Mr. Hamit's verbal statement in his interview dated November 19, which included giving assurances to Christians. At the meeting, Franklin Bouillon stated that when France left Cilicia, the Turkish Government had received the same guarantees for the Christian minorities that various minorities in Europe had received. Bouillon also spoke to Mustafa Kemal Pasha about the confidence he had gained from four months of negotiations. According to Mr. Hamit's assurances, a law would be promulgated that the inhabitants of the occupied cities would not be conscripted for three months. The

<sup>13</sup> İsmail Soysal, *Türkiye'nin Siyasal Antlaşmaları -I*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1983), 50-51.

<sup>14</sup> *Tevhid-i Efkâr*, 27 December 1921, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *İkdam*, 28 November 1921, p.1. In his report to Paris, Labonne, a French major in Adana, criticized the French government for its excessively pro-Armenian policy and expressed the complaints of Muslims against Armenians. Labonne also added that the Armenians, who were sure that they would not be punished, tried to take revenge on Turks under the wings of the French occupation army and their excesses cost France dearly. See, Bige Yavuz, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Döneminde Türk-Fransız İlişkileri*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 1994), 60-61.

<sup>16</sup> *İkdam*, November 1921, 1.

implementation of this law for Cilicia would begin on January 4, 1922, the end of the evacuation. The promised general amnesty would be complied with from the moment the Turks took over the administration. The 40 % law of national offers would be abolished and a special commission would be established to protect the property and residences of people who migrated. All local and immigrant Christians would be allowed to stay in Cilicia or return to their original hometowns. Those who had left Cilicia would be given full freedom to return to Cilicia. According to Bouillon, Cilicia would be governed by peace, equality, and justice. Additionally, Bouillon emphasized that those who would disrupt the public order and the peace of their citizens would be brought to justice, regardless of their position. In the meantime, when the community leaders expressed their doubts, Hamid Bey gave them the assurances they requested. Bouillon instilled reassuring words about the future of the country and the welfare and happiness of its citizens.<sup>17</sup>

After the meeting, a statement was declared by Muhiddin Pasha, Mr. Hamit, and Franklin Bouillon, addressed to the people of Cilicia in Adana. It is reminded that according to the agreement made to ensure peace in the east, France, which respected the law of the majority, returned Cilicia to Türkiye. In the declaration, it was emphasized that the French and Ankara Governments, who equally wish to comply with minority law, agreed on all the guarantees contained in the Ankara Agreement. Before these assurances were given, those who were against peace started a tremendous propaganda to force the Christian population to leave Cilicia. That's why thousands of families left their homes and started to migrate, prompting both governments to take action. After this, the French and Ankara Governments decided to make efforts to put an end to the propaganda. Propaganda claims that the general amnesty would have no effect and that people could not travel freely were frightening the public. In the declaration, it was pointed out that there was no cause for concern and that what was done in the past was forgotten. The Ankara Agreement ensured that both the personal freedoms and property of minorities would be protected. All Cilician Armenians had already received travel permits from the French administration. In the declaration, which emphasizes not to believe the propaganda that the Ankara Government will confiscate 40% of the properties of the minorities under the name of tax, it is reminded that the law in point was implemented and abolished during the Sakarya War. The Turkish administration's military recruitment process was postponed for three months. The declaration provided all guarantees to prevent Armenians from leaving their homeland. A mixed Turkish-French commission, including representatives of the Christian community, was appointed to protect the abandoned properties. According to the declaration, any plunder would be severely punished and all Muslims and Christians were to respect the law.<sup>18</sup>

#### **4. Activities of Armenian Delegations in Western States**

Despite the guarantees of both the French and Turkish governments, with the news of the withdrawal of the French troops, the Cilician Armenians, fearing that the Turks might take revenge and feeling that they had been abandoned, began to migrate from the region. The inhabitants of the region did not feel secure prior to the French occupation and the activities of the Armenian Legion. Armenian immigrants were going to Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon on the ships of the Allied Powers. According to Armenian leaders in the West, Turkish nationalist agents were also encouraging emigration. Avetis Ahorian and Gabriel Noradounghian visited French Prime Minister Aristide Briand to reproach him for the evacuation of Cilicia.<sup>19</sup> Briand, on the other hand, attributed the reason for the Armenians

<sup>17</sup> *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 16 December 1921, 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 16 December 1921, 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 9 December 1921, 2.

leaving Cilicia to the propaganda of committees and some unauthorized persons. In Briand's view, this would place France in a position of being perceived as having failed to protect the Armenians by the international community. This would undoubtedly damage France's reputation. Briand also highlighted that France was the only state that had protected the Armenians and taken care of their needs. According to him, the Armenians' decision to emigrate was futile despite the Turks' fulfillment of their promises and lack of aggression towards the Armenians. Noradounghian asserted that the Armenians' flight was not a result of propaganda but rather a consequence of Turkish domination and the pervasive fear it instilled. Aharonian explicitly stated that the Armenians' departure from Cilicia was motivated by the fear of retribution from the Turks.<sup>20</sup>

Noradounghian informed French Prime Minister Aristide Briand that the Kemalists were responsible for the murder of Armenians and that the Armenians would not trust them and would not live under their rule. Noradounghian expressed his dismay at the French government's decision to enter into an agreement with the Turkish government. He further stated that he had spent twenty-five years in the Turkish government, where he had gained considerable insight into the minds of many of its officials. He claimed that, with a few exceptions, these individuals were Pan-Islamist, Pan-Turanist, and xenophobic in their outlook. In Noradounghian's view, the assurances proffered by the Ankara government lacked credibility, and the Turks had not been held to account for their misdeeds. Noradounghian expressed bewilderment at the decision to extend an invitation to the Ankara Government representative, who had traveled to London, to partake in a tea ceremony with Lloyd George. This gesture, he asserted, was perceived as an affront by the Armenian population. He posited that the instigators of the nationalist movements in Anatolia were imbued with the mentality of Abdul Hamid II, and that the belief in the words of the Ankara government would inevitably result in the extermination of Armenians. Indeed, Abdul Hamid II's style of administration was widely recognized throughout Europe. Briand stated that he empathized with Noradounghian's sentiments but asserted that France could not persist in concealing its resources and casualties due to its defeat in Cilicia. France was compelled to enter into this treaty due to the inadequacy of its resources to sustain an expensive military apparatus. It is unlikely that any state on the scale of France would be willing to accept such an expense. The anticipated Greek invasion did not materialize, and the Greeks were even expelled from Smyrna. Naturally, in the event of a Greek defeat, the Turks would then direct their military forces against the French. He asserted that the French lacked both the motivation and the resources to engage in conflict with the Turks. It was unlikely that the French public would endorse such a war. In light of these circumstances, the only viable option for France was to withdraw its military forces from Cilicia. Furthermore, the Treaty of Sevres stipulated that France was obliged to cede Cilicia to the Turks. Briand underscored that all necessary precautions had been taken to ensure the safety of the Armenians and that officers would be present to implement the requisite measures. Primarily, Christians would be exempt from the obligation to perform military service. Briand asserted that the Turks were astute enough to realize that taking action against Christians would have the unintended consequence of alienating European public opinion. In accordance with the terms of the Ankara Treaty, the Ankara Government proclaimed a general amnesty for the entire region of Anatolia, including Cilicia, on December 5, 1921.<sup>21</sup> Despite the numerous assurances provided, Avetis Aharonian

<sup>20</sup> Stanford Shaw, "Ermeni Lejyonu ve Kilikya'daki Ermeni Topluluğunun Tahribatı", içinde *Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Ermeniler*, ed. Türkkaya Ataöv (Ankara: TBMM Kültür Sanat Yayın Kurulu Yayınları, 2002), 180.

<sup>21</sup> Shaw, "Ermeni Lejyonu ve Kilikya'daki", 185-188. An appeal was made to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the British spiritual directorate, by the Armenian representatives of Egypt and Smyrna for the Armenians migrating from Cilicia. Lord Curzon, who was informed about the appeal, wrote in his reply to the bishop that the

and Gabriel Noradounghian proceeded to London with the intention of persuading the British to exert pressure on France to abandon the Ankara Treaty.<sup>22</sup> On November 19, Noradounghian met with Lord Curzon and reiterated that the Cilician people had fought on the same side as the Allies in order to secure their victory. Furthermore, he emphasized that 150,000 Armenians had returned and settled in Cilicia based on the assurances provided by the Allies. Noradounghian asserted that the transfer of the Armenians to Turkish custody would inevitably result in their massacre. The Turkish-French Treaty would diminish the prestige of the Allies and encourage the Turks. If France encountered financial difficulties, 150,000 Armenians could be saved by providing some aid to France. Noradounghian asserted that the nationalists in Anatolia, whom he described as bandits, were Bolshevik allies, Pan-Islamists, and Pan-Turanists. Noradounghian characterized the unilateral settlement of the Cilicia issue as a calamitous outcome for the Armenians. He advocated for the Treaty of Sevres and envisioned a unified Armenian state encompassing Caucasian Armenia on Turkish territories, as initially promised to the Armenians. The primary concern of the Supreme Council was not the well-being of the Armenian populace but the assurance of the Armenian state's stability. Armenians anticipated that France would restore the territories it had seized from them.<sup>23</sup> A letter containing 116 signatures was delivered to Prime Minister Poincaré by the French-Armenian League, requesting the establishment of a national homeland in the areas inhabited by Armenians in Asia Minor. In the letter, the sufferings of the Armenian nation and the service rendered by Armenians to the Allies during the war were mentioned. Furthermore, the letter emphasized that the establishment of an independent national homeland in accordance with national aspirations was a sacred duty of humanity.<sup>24</sup> The Armenian delegation, which continued its activities in Western capitals, demanded that the Armenian state be judged based on the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres, taking into account that the Western states had previously recognized Armenia as an independent state. Moreover, the Armenian state was to be constituted within the borders delineated by Wilson, and its territory was to be evacuated from Turkish troops. Additionally, the Armenian delegation requested financial assistance for the Armenian government in the form of a loan at its establishment and a special form of administration for Cilicia under Allied control.<sup>25</sup> Despite the efforts of the Armenian delegation, which engaged in negotiations during the Lausanne Conference, they were unable to achieve any results.

## 5. Guarantees Given by the Ankara Government to the Armenians

Mustafa Kemal Pasha published a declaration for the local population in light of the transfer of Adana and its surrounding territories to the Turkish Grand National Assembly Government. In the declaration, it was first emphasized that various nations have historically coexisted in harmony within Turkish lands. Mustafa Kemal Pasha further posited that the strongest social ties are those based on shared interests and collective memories. Mustafa Kemal Pasha asserted that, despite the existence of numerous common ties, some individuals were engaged in activities that were detrimental to the peace of the country. These individuals were influenced by external forces and had resorted to actions that were not in accordance

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Armenian refugees would be transferred to a safe neighbourhood by the UK and that all their needs would be met and that there was no need to worry. Curzon stated that he believed that Turkish nationalists would keep their promises and that Turks would not engage in illegal activities at the expense of alienating Turkey from civilization. Curzon also advised against paying attention to contrary propaganda. See, *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 30 December 1921, 2.

<sup>22</sup> BOA, HR. SYS, 2310/11.

<sup>23</sup> Shaw, "Ermeni Lejyonu ve Kilikya'daki", 188.

<sup>24</sup> *Vakit*, 10 February 1922, 2.

<sup>25</sup> *İleri*, 5 March 1922, 2.

with the interests of the nation. In response, Mustafa Kemal Pasha declared a general amnesty to eliminate such temporary situations that could occur between families. Mustafa Kemal Pasha underscored that the general amnesty was intended to eliminate circumstances that might give rise to misunderstandings between the sons of the homeland. In the declaration, it was emphasized that the Grand National Assembly was a government of the people, regardless of gender or sect. In his appeal to the people, Mustafa Kemal Pasha underscored the necessity for full cooperation between the members of the nation and the government in matters of national interest. The country's need for peace was of paramount importance. It was therefore necessary to refute the ideas of the enemy who sought to sow discord. Mustafa Kemal Pasha requested that the general amnesty be made known to the international community so that it would be clear that all members of the same nation were included. Additionally, Mustafa Kemal Pasha emphasized that it is the primary responsibility of the citizen to defend the country's interests at all times and in all circumstances.<sup>26</sup> Mr. Hamit issued a statement to journalists in Adana. He posited that the general amnesty, explicitly delineated in the accord with France, would impede the recollection of specific eras in the past. Mr. Hamit emphasized that past incidents would never be allowed to resurface. He further stated that those who acted in contravention of the treaty would be subject to severe penalties. The Ankara government plans to establish composite commissions with the objective of resolving such cases. The objective of these commissions is to resolve the issues in a manner that is satisfactory to all parties involved. Furthermore, the Ankara government had also abolished war taxes. Mr. Hamit reminded the audience that non-Muslims were exempted from military service by the Ankara Government for a certain fee. Those who could not pay the price were employed in light work in the nearest military detachment. In addition, Mr. Hamit gave assurance that military service would be postponed for a certain time. He also added that there would be no intervention against those who decided to leave the country despite all the assurances given by Turkish and French officials.<sup>27</sup> Despite the meticulousness of the Ankara Government in the selection of civil servants, the precautions it took, and the compassion it showed in protecting the Christian element, the local Christians were determined to leave Cilicia. Furthermore, the counsel provided by Franklin Bouillon and his delegation was similarly ineffectual. The Christian minorities were adamant in their decision to leave their homeland, citing external provocations as the primary reason for their departure. A commission was established by Turkish and French officials with the objective of safeguarding the real estate and property of Christians who had migrated from Cilicia. Furthermore, the Ankara Government's exemption of Christians from military service for a period of six months served as tangible evidence of its benevolent intentions.<sup>28</sup> A telegram was sent by the Vatican to Mustafa Kemal Pasha regarding the security of eastern Christians. In his reply, Mustafa Kemal Pasha provided a comprehensive account of the assurances extended by the Ankara government to the Eastern Christians. Additionally, the Vatican received similar assurances from the French government.<sup>29</sup>

## **6. Guarantees Given by France to Armenians and Precautions Taken**

Franklin Bouillon published a declaration addressed to the people of Cilicia, in which he delineated the scope of the guarantee extended by France to Christian minorities. In the aforementioned declaration, while referencing the security environment that emerged with the implementation of the agreement, Christian elements were advised to maintain composure

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<sup>26</sup> İkdâm, 8 December 1921, pp.1

<sup>27</sup> İkdâm 12 December 1921, pp.2.

<sup>28</sup> İkdâm, 29 December 1921, pp.1.

<sup>29</sup> Şimşir, *Atatürk in British Documents* III, 592-593.

and avoid undue alarm. Bouillon underscored the necessity of a general amnesty to facilitate the forgetting of the past, emphasizing that personal liberty, property, and assets would remain inviolate. Bouillon asserted that passports issued by French officials would be recognized unconditionally by the Ankara Government and that the law allocating 40% of real estate revenues implemented during the Sakarya War was annulled. Bouillon also took the opportunity to remind the Ankara Government of its commitment to exempt Christian minorities from military conscription. Bouillon stated that general peace would be established in the near future. The Ankara agreement was more favorable than the agreements granted to minorities in Europe. Bouillon cautioned Christians against succumbing to the propaganda that urged them to leave the region. Bouillon elucidated the measures implemented to safeguard the abandoned goods and properties of the immigrants. Furthermore, he guaranteed that the Turkish-French commission would supervise this matter. Furthermore, the declaration asserted that those who attempted to plunder would be severely punished and called for the Christian population to remain calm and return to their hometowns.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the guarantees of safety provided by the Ankara Agreement and the presence of French officials, Christian minorities were prepared for migration. Consequently, French officials initiated a series of measures. The most significant of these measures was the transportation of immigrants to Syria by ferries that had been rented by the French government. Secondly, it was determined that the refugees would be separated, gathered in suitable locations, and distributed to various cities in Syria according to their professions. Those who were wealthy were permitted to select their place of residence at their discretion. Furthermore, immigrants who were unable to support themselves would be settled in vacant buildings and barracks provided by the military.<sup>31</sup>

As reported in the press, an Armenian journalist inquired of Franklin Bouillon regarding the status of Armenians remaining in Cilicia. Bouillon reassured the journalist that the situation of Armenians was favorable and that France was providing comprehensive assistance to both those who emigrated and those who remained. Bouillon additionally noted that while Cyprus, Egypt, and Greece had closed their borders to immigrants, France had accepted them and hosted them in Syria. He added that French soldiers had evacuated Cilicia without encountering any significant difficulties. The reporter inquired about the number of Armenians who remained in Cilicia and whether there had been any incidents in Dörtyol, a district of Hatay. Bouillon replied that approximately 35,000 Armenians had been safely transferred to Syria, and that those who remained in Cilicia had been given full guarantees. Bouillon was then asked whether the assurances provided by the Ankara government were deemed sufficient. In response, he asserted that the Armenians were treated fairly by the Ankara government and that there was no doubt about this. The reporter then inquired about the Paris newspapers' assertion that the migration commenced due to external provocations. In this regard, Bouillon stated that the prevailing circumstances served as evidence to support this claim.<sup>32</sup>

## **7. Appeals of Armenian Religious Leaders to the Western Public**

On November 29, 1921, the Catholicos of Sis (Kozan) wrote a letter from İskenderun (Alexandretta) to the National Armenian delegation in Paris. The Catholicos indicated that a resolution could not be achieved in the negotiations conducted with the representatives of all the cities in the occupied zone following the onset of panic among the Armenians in response

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<sup>30</sup> *İkdam*, 8 December 1921, 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 18 December 1921, 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Vakit*, 29 December 1921, 2.

to the Ankara Agreement. This was due to apprehensions about the potential for a massacre with the arrival of the Kemalists. The Catholicos indicated that Armenians were engaged in internal deliberations regarding their future course of action and potential strategies, while the Kemalists were not inclined to encourage a mass exodus of Armenians. The Catholicos of Sis stated that he had met with Kemalist agents and that they had provided guarantees to the Armenian community. According to the Catholicos, the Ankara Treaty did not include a specific article that guaranteed the lives of Christians. Moreover, although the Turkish delegation was sincere in its intentions, this did not constitute a guarantee since it did not have an official status. In the letter, it was stated that while the Armenian population was fleeing the city at an accelerated pace, schools were closed and only civil servants and patients remained in Adana. Additionally, the Catholicos met with the French consul, Laporte. Laporte informed the Catholicos that every guarantee had been given for them to remain in Adana, and that Armenian immigration would be perceived as disloyalty to France. During the meeting, the consul stated that France had sustained 5,000 casualties among its military forces in the Armenian conflict. In response, the Catholicos stated that 30,000 Armenians had perished for France since the armistice.<sup>33</sup> In a telegram to President Harding, the Armenian Bishop of Smyrna drew attention to the circumstances of the 150,000 Armenians who lived in misery. The bishop asserted that, following the departure of the French, Armenians were concerned about the possibility of massacres at the hands of Turkish forces.<sup>34</sup> The Armenian National Union in America requested international protection for the Armenians in Cilicia in its telegram to the League of Nations. The telegram emphasized that the Armenians would be exposed to impending disaster due to the French evacuation of Cilicia.<sup>35</sup> The Armenian National Union of America mobilized all available resources to influence American public opinion. In a telegram to President Harding on December 22, 1921, the Armenian National Union asserted that the Turks would construct a mosque in Cilicia on the remains of Armenians as soon as the French withdrew on January 4. Consequently, the Armenian National Union requested the President's intervention to halt the French evacuation. The telegram asserted that, following the French withdrawal, the Armenian population would be subjected to a massacre of unspeakable proportions and that Armenian girls would be forcibly conscripted into the Turkish harem. It warned that, in the absence of presidential intervention, the catastrophe facing the Armenians, who had endured immense suffering for decades and fought courageously alongside the Allies, would be "averted with difficulty."<sup>36</sup>

## 8. Acceleration of Emigration from Cilicia

Following the French evacuation of Cilicia within a two-month period, Turkish officials assumed the role of administrators. There were no incidents during the handover. The treaty between the Ankara Government and France caused fear among the Armenians living in the region. However, according to the Turkish press, 49,884 Christians had emigrated. The number of those who remained in the hometown was confirmed as 3,828 people. The total population of Cilicia was 300,000, while the Christian population was 53,712.<sup>37</sup> The French consul in Mersin made a statement to the Armenians gathered in Mersin for migration, indicating that those who wished to proceed to Syria were at liberty to do so. The Armenians of Dörtyol were also permitted to emigrate to Syria. Zaven Der Yeghiayan, the Apostolic Armenian Patriarch in the Ottoman Empire, issued a statement on behalf of the Armenian immigrants who had arrived in Istanbul from Cilicia. Armenian Patriarch Zaven Effendi

<sup>33</sup> Kasım Ener, *Çukurova Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Adana Cephesi*, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1996), 248.

<sup>34</sup> *New York Times*, 14 November 1921, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *New York Times*, 8 December 1921, 2.

<sup>36</sup> *New York Times*, 23 December 1921, 2.

<sup>37</sup> *İkdam*, 11 January 1922, 1.

extended an invitation to affluent Armenians to provide assistance to the refugees, despite the fact that a considerable number of refugees did not ultimately arrive in Istanbul. Effendi had previously reported that some immigrants had been accepted into Greek territory on the condition that their sustenance was not charged to Greece. According to Effendi, it was inequitable to anticipate that the Greeks would bear the full burden. Additionally, Effendi observed that there were indications of efforts underway in Western countries to provide assistance to the refugees.<sup>38</sup> One of the places where Cilician Armenians migrated was Istanbul. As a matter of fact, on December 14, 1921, approximately 200 Armenian refugees from Cilicia came to Istanbul with their families on an Italian-flagged ferry.<sup>39</sup> Accommodation problems of the refugees were tried to be solved in various ways. Some Armenian refugees had built shacks on the land belonging to the Armenian church in the Ortaköy Mecidiye neighborhood. Churches and schools were also used as temporary settlements.<sup>40</sup>

Prior to his departure for Paris, Franklin Bouillon had issued a statement to journalists in Istanbul. Bouillon highlighted that the Armenian population in Cilicia was experiencing a favorable situation, with France offering comprehensive support to both those who had emigrated and those who remained in their homeland. During this period, the governments of Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece accepted Armenian refugees. According to Bouillon, at that time, France opened its doors to the Armenians, welcomed them into Syria, and met all their needs. Bouillon refuted reports that some unfortunate incidents had occurred in Dörtyol, asserting that the transfer of refugees to Syria was proceeding in an orderly manner. Bouillon stated that he was unable to estimate the number of Armenians who remained in Cilicia. He did, however, indicate that the number of refugees was close to 35,000 individuals. Bouillon asserted that robust guarantees had been made for the remaining Christians, that their military service had been postponed until April, and that the property and possessions of those who had emigrated were being protected. Bouillon also noted that French officials would remain in Cilicia for six months to monitor the terms of the treaty. Finally, Bouillon stated that the Ankara Government had a favorable attitude towards the refugees and that he had no doubts about this.<sup>41</sup>

In his statement to journalists, General Gouraud served from 1919 to 1922 as representative of the French Government in the Middle East and guaranteed that all the needs of the Cilician Armenians would be met. Thereupon, a thank you message addressed to General Gouraud was published by the Cilician Orthodox Patriarch. The patriarch thanked France for taking care of the refugees from Cilicia and advised them not to rely on false news on this issue.<sup>42</sup> Half of the Armenians of Aintab, about 5,000, remained in their homes due to bad roads and bad weather. The Armenians of Kilis remained in their homes for the same reasons, while all the Armenians of Dörtyol emigrated.<sup>43</sup> The deadline for the French to evacuate Cilicia, as previously stipulated, expired on January 10, 1922. As both governments adhered to their commitments, there were no fatalities or injuries. Some press organs had disseminated propaganda asserting that the evacuation of French troops from Cilicia would result in massacres. The Armenians were influenced by the writings that Cilicia was a country entirely inhabited by Christians and that France had acted in a manner that was perceived as being detrimental by returning this country to an Islamic government. A total of 49,884 Armenians

<sup>38</sup> *İkdam*, 24 December 1921, 2.

<sup>39</sup> *BOA*, Navigation Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (DH.EUM.SSM), 47/48.

<sup>40</sup> *BOA*, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Local Affairs and Provincial Directorate Documents (DH.UMVM), 165/57.

<sup>41</sup> *İkdam*, 29 December 1921, 1.

<sup>42</sup> *İkdam*, 6 January 1922, 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Vakit*, 9 January 1922, 2.

had begun to emigrate as a result of distressing propaganda or for other reasons. A total of 3,828 Armenians who had migrated temporarily subsequently remained in their hometowns. The population of Christians in Cilicia, where an estimated 300,000 individuals resided, constituted 53,712 individuals.<sup>44</sup> In Syria, the French general Dufieux welcomed the Armenian refugees. The US, Britain, and Greece had sent ships for refugees. Due to the bad political situation in Egypt, the refugees were not taken there. On the other hand, Malta and Palestine opened their doors to refugees.<sup>45</sup> French sources indicate that between December 1, 1921, and January 4, 1922, approximately 60,000 Christians emigrated from the areas evacuated by the French.<sup>46</sup> In a report dated 31 May 1924 prepared by Fridtjof Nansen of the League of Nations Refugee Aid Commission, it was stated that 100,000 Armenians from Cilicia had crossed into Syrian and Lebanese lands by the spring of 1922<sup>47</sup>.

## Conclusion

The signing of the Ankara Agreement and the start of the evacuation of Cilicia by the French was enough to worry the local Armenians. Because the persecution of Cilician Muslims during the First World War and the Armistice of Mudros was one of the biggest reasons for the migration of Armenians. Despite both the assurance that Turkish laws would be applied equally to Muslims and Christians and the general amnesty, the Armenian migration could not be stopped. The French government, with the confidence and honor of being a great state, was concerned that abandoning the Cilician Armenians would turn world public opinion against France. Therefore, it made every effort to prevent the emigration of Cilician Armenians. Despite the assurances given, some Armenians who participated in or were instrumentalised by the gangs were afraid of retaliation for their actions. Therefore, fearing that the Kemalists would take revenge on them, they decided to emigrate. The Ankara Government had set up a joint commission with the French to safeguard the property left behind by the Armenian refugees. This situation showed that the Ankara Government respected the rights and laws of its citizens. Of course, propagandists also had an effect on Armenians' emigration by provoking them. It was a disappointment for the Armenian immigrants to encounter misery wherever they went.

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<sup>44</sup> *Vakit*, 11 January 1922, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Du Veou, *La Passion De La Cilicie*, (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste, 1937), 285.

<sup>46</sup> Yavuz, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Döneminde Türk-Fransız İlişkileri*, 157.

<sup>47</sup> Halil Özşavlı, "Türkiye'den Son Toplu Ermeni Göçü Sancak Ermenilerinin Lübnan'a Taşınması 1938-1939", *Belleten* 81, no. 290, (April 2017): 248. Brought to Aleppo with great promises, these Armenians were only given a piece of black wheat bread three times a day. See Özşavlı, 245.

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