

C.567.1933.I.

II. OBSERVATIONS OF THE IRAQI DELEGATION.

Geneva, October 5th, 1933.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter 4/6523/3314, of September 26th, transmitting copy of your letter 4/6801/3314, of the same date, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Baghdad, with three petitions from the Mar Shimun, dated respectively August 16th, August 30th and September 12th, 1933; also of your endorsement of October 2nd, 1933, transmitting copy of your letter 4/6746/3314, of the same date, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a fourth petition from the Mar Shimun, dated September 24th, 1933.

Since the matter dealt with is to be considered by the Council at an early date, I have thought desirable to prepare my observations immediately, in the light of such information as is already in the possession of the Iraqi delegation at Geneva, rather than to await the comments of the departments in Baghdad concerned.

(Signed) Yassin Pasha AL HASHIMI,

First Iraqi Delegate.

A. PETITION OF AUGUST 16TH, 1933.

1. This petition gives cover to an "official report" by the Mar Shimun, dated August 4th, 1933, on the Assyrian situation. The writer divides his report into four parts by dates, and a fifth part headed "Conclusions".

2. The first part appears to cover events which have already been considered by the Council at the sixty-ninth session.¹ The Iraqi delegation therefore only feels called upon to comment upon the last paragraph. The phrase "breaking the power of the people's chosen leaders" is not understood: the Government wished to work through the Patriarch, bishops and other natural leaders, including Luko and the father of Yaku; when some of these refused to co-operate, it was naturally obliged to work through such leaders as were willing (see Blue Book, Part I, paragraphs 1 to 4, and documents there referred to).²

3. The second part deals with the proceedings of the sixty-ninth session of the Council, October to December 1932, or earlier, and appears to be primarily an attack on the Council of the League of Nations itself. The Iraqi delegation therefore does not feel called upon to comment. It may, however, be noted that the quotation of a "Statement of Proposals" by Sir Henry Dobbs in 1924 has been characteristically made in such a manner as to distort its true meaning entirely. Reference to the whole statement, which is reproduced on page 268 of the special report of the United Kingdom Government to the Council of the League of Nations on the progress of Iraq during the period 1920-1931, will show that "the latter class of persons" referred to consisted only of such ex-Ottoman "scattered Assyrians" as might remain after the Tiyari, Tkhuma, Jilu and Baz had been settled in their original mountains, which it was then hoped to include in Iraq, not all the Assyrians. Attention may also be drawn to the reference to a petition, dated December 16th, 1932, to the Permanent Mandates Commission, which bears out the statement in paragraph 2 of Nouri Pasha's letter 8765 of September 20th, 1933 (document C.544.1933.VI), that the Mar Shimun refused to acquiesce in the Council's decision of December 15th, 1932.

4. The third and fourth parts deal with a period already covered by the Blue Book, where the true facts are set forth. The documents published therein effectively dispose of the accusation of the Mar Shimun that the aim of the Government was to "stage a sham settlement scheme" and "ignore the people's real leaders". A reference to documents 18 and 19 will show that the Government invited the Mar Shimun and his party to suggest representatives to serve on the local Settlement Board, and that the Board was free to make any recommendations it wished regarding the settlement of the Assyrians. The Mar Shimun not only did his best to stultify the work of the Board and of the Settlement Committee; he also failed, in spite of requests from the Government and from Major Thomson, the Land Settlement Expert, to produce any alternative scheme of settlement. The observations on the first part above are also relevant.

5. Under the heading "Conclusions", reference is made to speeches in Parliament and articles in the Press. The anxiety of the political-minded classes, caused by the unconstitutional claims of the Mar Shimun, was certainly reflected in Parliament and in the Press. Both these

¹ See *Official Journal*, December 1932 (Part II), pages 1962 and 1984.

² See document C.544.1933.VI — Note by the Secretary-General.

institutions are free, and the Government is in no way responsible for speeches in the Chamber or for articles in the Press.

6. Under the same heading, "Conclusions", the petitioner asks: "Can anyone wonder why the Assyrians chose to leave Iraq, when they were told to go if they were not satisfied?" The question is disingenuous. The whole trend of the statements made at the Mosul meetings was to emphasise the difficulties attending the schemes of mass migration long canvassed by the Mar Shimun and his adherents, and the need in any case of making careful preliminary arrangements with the State to which it was desired to migrate; at the same time, it was explained that the Iraqi Government, for its part, would facilitate the execution of any arrangements that might be made for settlement elsewhere (see Council's resolution of December 15th, 1932, penultimate paragraph, and Blue Book, document 63, paragraph 5, and enclosure II). It is understood that the French authorities also made it clear to the Mar Shimun and other enquirers that an Assyrian immigration into Syria would not be accepted. The petitioner goes on to say that the Assyrians had no alternative to accepting "the Government policy" but fighting for their rights or leaving the country. There was a third alternative—namely, to inform the League that they were unwilling to settle in Iraq and invoke its help in finding a new home, the alternative the Council had itself contemplated. As has already been pointed out in the earlier Observations, circulated to the Council under document C.545.1933.I,¹ the Mar Shimun preferred a furtive movement designed to force the hand of the French mandatory authorities in Syria or of the League. The movement was the more unjustifiable because Major Thomson had not yet submitted his recommendations to the Government.

7. The last paragraph appears to be a later interpolation, in this document dated August 4th. Fighting only started late on the evening of the 4th; no Assyrian villages had suffered in any way at that date; the first batch of agitators was not removed from Mosul until the 6th, after the outbreak of the fighting, for reasons that appear from document 82 of the Blue Book. See also paragraph 19 below.

8. In conclusion, attention may be drawn to two passages in the "unbiased report from a reliable European in the Mosul Liwa" referred to in the first paragraph of the petition: "They began to revolt; Yaku son of Malik Ismail defied the Government in Baghiry, Malik Luiko of Tkhuma resisted the Qaimaqam of Dohuk, Shleman of Tiary and Kasha Ishaq evaded arrest in Mosul. . . . Those who left will not return to Iraq. If forced, they will fight, try to go to Turkey or disperse in the mountains."

B. PETITION OF AUGUST 30TH, 1933.

9. The disingenuous claim that the Assyrian exodus to Syria resulted from a decision "to obey the Government instructions . . . by leaving Iraq" has been disposed of in paragraph 6 above.

10. Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of this petition give an entirely distorted account of the causes and manner of the outbreak of the fighting. The facts regarding the belated groups of Assyrians who endeavoured to join Yaku are given in Blue Book, Part I, paragraph 13, and in 5 of the earlier Observations referred to above (document C.545.1933.I). There was no fighting west of the Tigris; east of the Tigris, belated parties of Assyrians making for Syria were turned back from July 27th onwards in consequence of the objections of the French authorities to further crossings, but there was no fighting; fighting only started on August 4th, when Yaku re-crossed the Tigris and attacked. It is interesting to note from paragraph 6 of the petition that Yaku's re-crossing of the Tigris was conceived as an expedition to break the military cordon on the Tigris and let the other Assyrians through, not a peaceful move homewards as has been represented elsewhere.

11. It is established that, in spite of the fact that the Assyrians of Yaku's band left a large number of villages without able-bodied men, not a single untoward incident occurred during the two weeks between the date of the exodus and the outbreak of fighting on August 4th.

12. The operations that followed, and certain regrettable excesses that occurred during the operations, will form the subject of a statement to be made by the Iraqi delegate, which it is unnecessary to anticipate.

13. The petitioner has endeavoured to give an entirely false idea of the relief measures instituted by the Iraqi Government. The reports of Major Thomson, the Settlement Expert, who was placed in charge of relief, dated August 28th and September 15th, are appended. It may be noted that Major Thomson has medical as well as administrative qualifications; he describes the health of the inmates of the camp as good; there has been no sign of any epidemic. In addition to the organisation of the relief camp, local committees were formed to facilitate the return of refugees to their abandoned villages and to assess damage. On September 16th, the President of one of the Land Settlement Committees, a high British official with long administrative experience, was

¹ See Annex 1478a.

placed on special duty to speed up the work before the arrival of winter. No detailed report is to hand, but large sums had already been paid out, and considerable progress had been made, when the delegation left Baghdad.

14. The rôle of the temporary police posts has been deliberately misrepresented. They were established after the outbreak and with the sole object of protecting Assyrian villages from marauders. The number was twenty-four; a map is attached showing the permanent posts in red and the new posts in blue.¹ No Assyrian police were drafted out of the area in the circumstances alleged.

15. The statements regarding "contemplated massacres" and the "assassination of the Patriarch" planned in May 1933 are too fantastic to require comment; they are definitely untrue. There are, on the contrary, indications that the Mar Shimun was himself working to provoke bloodshed with a view to reinforcing his complaints and forcing a reversal of the Council's decision of December 15th, 1932 (see, for example, Blue Book, document 65, paragraph 5).

16. Fracas between Assyrian and other employees occurred on three dates between August 9th and 16th at the camp of the Iraq Petroleum Company at Baiji. Immediate and vigorous steps were taken by the police, in consultation with the management of the company, to prevent serious developments. By August 16th, the Assyrian employees had been partly transferred to other stations, and partly, in their own interests and at their own request, evacuated to Baghdad. Seventy of the Arab and Turk employees involved were also removed to Kirkuk. See also paragraph 24 below.

17. At Kirkuk no incident occurred, in spite of the bitter memories of the affair of 1924.

18. There is no justification for the possession of arms in Baghdad city. The statement that the Assyrians in Baghdad were disarmed is nevertheless untrue.

19. As regards the deportation of the Mar Shimun, the Government was faced with three alternatives: (1) sending him to the courts on the criminal charge of fomenting rebellion, or (2) requiring him, under the provisions of the Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulations, to live in some distant part of the country, where his power for further mischief would be limited, or (3) deporting him out of Iraq. The last, and most lenient, course was chosen as the least likely to offend religious susceptibilities. The British Government kindly agreed to accept him into British territory. The eight men required to live at Masiriya are the agitators referred to in paragraph 7 above; the Mar Shimun's father and brother were subsequently brought to Baghdad on August 12th, and left for Cyprus with him on August 17th; Surma Khanum, the Mar Shimun's aunt, was also required to leave; she was accompanied voluntarily by a number of females and children of the Patriarchal family. His late Majesty King Faisal himself undertook to grant the deportees an allowance from his privy purse.

C. PETITION OF SEPTEMBER 12TH, 1933.

20. The Iraqi delegation in Geneva is not able to comment in detail on the statements contained in the Annex to this document; it is, however, unfortunately true that a most regrettable incident occurred at Simel involving serious loss of life (see paragraph 12 above).

21. There was never any question of the establishment of a refugees camp in Dohuk by the British Air Officer Commanding in Iraq for the collection of all unsupported refugees; this was done in Mosul by Major Thomson on behalf of the Iraqi Government (see paragraph 13 above). The Air Officer Commanding sent a committee of officers to Mosul to collect any destitute families of serving levies for despatch to Baghdad. While public opinion was still inflamed, the Minister of the Interior saw certain objections to the establishment of camps in the districts by a formal committee of foreign uniformed officers. All the resources of the administration, including the services of the British Administrative Inspector and other British civilians in the employ of the Iraqi Government at Mosul, were, however, made available for this work. Subsequently, a British Air Force officer was detailed to accompany the Administrative Inspector.

22. The explanation of the death of the prisoners here admitted to have been captured alive by the Assyrians will not carry conviction. During the attack on Dairabun a picket was captured, three wounded men being left behind by the survivors who escaped; when the picket was recaptured, the bodies, including those of the men left wounded, were found mutilated and burned.

¹ This map is kept in the archives of the Secretariat at the disposal of the members of the Council.—Note by the Secretary-General.

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Intercepted letters from Syria describing the action contain boasts that prisoners were killed with knives and that dead bodies and wounded were burned. These atrocities in the very first action contributed powerfully to inflame feeling.

D. PETITION OF SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1933 (see Annex 1478c).

23. This petition reached the Iraqi delegation at Geneva on October 3rd, 1933, and it is therefore not in a position to comment on the detailed allegations. See also paragraphs 12 and 20 above.

24. Attention may be drawn to the statement F attached to this petition (see Annex 1478c) in connection with paragraph 13 above. Even this partisan statement is a tribute to the vigorous steps taken by the authorities to suppress the trouble, and to protect the Assyrians at Baiji.

Appendix I.

Office of the Assyrian Settlement
Mosul, August 29th, 1933.

No. T/A/119.

To the Minister of the Interior.

Excellency,

I beg to submit the following short note on the arrangements in Mosul for dealing with Assyrian refugees.

The Assyrian refugees relief committee was formed on August 20th, 1933.

A site for the camp was selected on the north-western edge of Mosul and eighty tents procured locally were erected. A water supply was laid on to the camp and the necessary sanitary arrangements were made.

A house adjoining the camp was also rented.

This house accommodates some 200 refugees, with store-rooms, kitchens of the refugees camp, ablution-rooms and guardroom of the police post.

Water is also laid on to this building.

On Monday, August 21st, the first consignment of refugees arrived from Dohuk, and has continued daily as hereunder stated:

August: 21st	200	} Dohuk
22nd	560	
23rd	200	
24th	183	
25th	75	} Al Qosh
26th	Nil	
27th	70	
28th	80	
29th	200	

I attach a list marked A showing the number of refugees in the Mosul camp on the evening of August 28th.

The total number of tents now occupied is 102.

The procedure for dealing with convoys on arrival is as follows: Parties are put into their tents, all the children are given milk directly they arrive, an issue is made to each family of plates, spoons, mugs, water-tins, blankets, grass mats, earthenware chattles, and soap sufficient for their requirements.

The medical officer, Flight-Lieutenant Dixon, who has been kindly detailed by the Air Officer Commanding for duty in this camp, examines all parties immediately on arrival and gives any treatment required. He also conducts a dispensary daily for all sick.

Food is issued three times daily:

At 8 a.m.:	Bread, tea and sugar to adults; milk to children.
12 noon:	Bread and fruit—melon, grapes or figs.
5 p.m.:	Meat stew with vegetables, either marrow, bedigan, onions, or bamia and rice; milk to children.

The food is ample in quantity and excellent in quality.

I consider that the general state of these refugees is satisfactory and their health is good.

I anticipate that there will be, in the course of the next few days, some 1,600 women and children in the camp, which should be all that is necessary to deal with.

(Signed) D. B. THOMSON (Major),
Assyrian Settlement

A.

Villages	Males	Females	Total
Simail	78	228	306
Badi	1	1	2
Mafan	17	44	61
Sayid Dhahir	19	37	56
Qasir Yazdin	26	56	82
Mansuriyah	2	5	7
Chamah Kor	1	—	1
Karfil	24	71	95
Sarshoor	14	26	40
Nassairiyah	6	28	34
Kharab Kolak	1	8	9
Hailanah	2	2	4
Chamchaman	50	107	157
Noordinawah	34	44	78
Masiki	33	73	106
Al Qosh	87	131	218
Dari	27	79	106
Grand total	422	940	1,362
Men sent to Dohuk			6
			1,368

Number of families who joined the levies			Number of families who joined their relatives		
Women and girls	Children	Total	Males	Females	Total
81	71	152	13	17	30

Abstract.

The total number of families who have come in . . .	1,368
Number of families who joined the levies . . .	152
Number of families who joined their relatives . . .	30
	182
Balance	1,186

Appendix II.

No. T/A/131.

MEMORANDUM.

Office of the Assyrian Relief
Committee,
Mosul, September 15th, 1933.

To the Ministry of the Interior,
Baghdad.

Subject: Assyrian Refugees.

In reply to your letter No. S/1957 of the 11th instant, I send you a note on the refugee camp for Assyrian destitutes in Mosul, and will send a weekly statement as requested in future.

(Signed) D. B. THOMSON (Major),

*President of Relief Committee.**Note.*

1. The state of the refugees is satisfactory and their health is good.
2. The general condition in the camp is as it was when visited by the Minister, but the question of dealing with the refugees when the cold weather starts needs consideration. It is hoped that, by that time, a considerable number will have been evacuated, and those left can be accommodated in the present buildings and in the closed tents. A further issue of blankets will be necessary.

3. There are at present in the camp 1,563 persons, as follows:

In camp on August 29th, 1933	1,186
Arrivals on:	
August 30th	108
September 2nd	74
September 5th	98
September 6th	122
September 10th	29
	<hr/>
	1,617
Births	5
	<hr/>
	1,622
Number of persons taken by the Air Force on September 7th, 1933	19
Number of persons taken by their relatives on different dates	24
Deaths	16
	<hr/>
	59
	<hr/>
In camp on September 14th, 1933	1,563

4. I do not anticipate receiving many more refugees.

5. Steps have already been taken to have all refugees who have relatives removed from the camp.

6. There are in the camp 302 women and children whose relatives are at present in Syria.

7. Up to date 1,200 Iraqi dinars has been expended. Much of this amount is non-recurrent, as it involved purchase of equipment for the refugees.

8. It is estimated that the future expenditure will be at the rate of approximately 200 Iraqi dinars per week, but this amount will decrease as refugees are removed from the camp.

9. There are twenty-seven orphan boys and girls in the camp with no known relatives. I have taken up the question of the disposal of these children with the Dominican fathers in Mosul, who may be able to help in the matter.

ANNEX 1478 c.

C.556.1933.I.

PROTECTION OF MINORITIES IN IRAQ.

I. SUPPLEMENTARY PETITION, DATED SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1933, FROM THE MAR SHIMUN, "CATHOLICOS" PATRIARCH OF THE ASSYRIANS, CONCERNING THE SITUATION OF THE ASSYRIAN MINORITY IN IRAQ.

NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL.

By document C.519.1933.I, the Secretary-General communicated to the Council a telegram, dated September 16th, 1933, from the Mar Shimun, "Catholicos" Patriarch of the Assyrians, concerning the situation of the Assyrian minority in Iraq.

The Secretary-General now has the honour to circulate, for the examination of the Council, a letter from the same source, with appendices, dated September 24th, 1933, and concerning the same question.

The text of this communication is being sent at the same time to the Iraqi Government for such observations as it may desire to make. The Secretary-General will not fail to forward to the Council any observations that Government may present thereon.

Assyrian Patriarchate, Nicosia, Cyprus,
September 24th, 1933.

In confirmation of my telegram, dated September 16th, 1933,¹ which ran as follows:

"Twenty-eight more known Assyrians including women massacred between August 20th and September 3rd. Large number individual murders continue. Detailed report follows",

¹ See document C.519.1933 I

