

"Turkish Army Officer Lieutenant Sayied Ahmed Mouktar Baas on the deportation of Armenians from Trebizond and Erzeroum, December 26, 1916

In April 1915 I was quartered at Erzeroum. An order came from Constantinople that Armenians inhabiting the frontier towns and villages be deported to the interior.... The massacres had not begun yet. In May 1915 I was transferred to Trebizond. In July an order came to deport to the interior all the Armenians in the vilayet of Trebizond. Being a member of the Court Martial I knew that deportations meant massacres.

The Armenian Bishop of Trebizond was ordered to proceed under escort to Erzeroum to answer for charges trumped up against him. But instead of Erzeroum he was taken to Baipurt and from there to Gumush-Khana. The governor of the latter place was then Colonel Abdul-Kadar Aintabli of the General Staff. He is famous for his atrocities against the Armenians. He had the bishop murdered at night. The Bishop of Erzeroum was also murdered at Gumush-Khana.

Besides the deportation order referred to above, an Imperial ""Iradeh"" was issued ordering that all deserters when caught, should be shot without trial. The secret order read ""Armenians"" in lieu of ""deserters"". The Sultan's ""Iradeh"" was accompanied by a "fatwa" from Sheikh-ul-Islam stating that the Armenians had shed Moslem blood and their killing was lawful. Then the deportations started.... When the first batches of Armenians arrived at Gumush-Khana all able-bodied men were sorted out with the excuse that they were going to be given work. The women and children were sent ahead under escort with the assurance by the Turkish authorities that their final destination was Mosul and that no harm will befall them. The men kept behind, were taken out of town in batches of 15 and 20, lined up on the edge of ditches prepared beforehand, shot and thrown into the ditches. Hundreds of men were shot every day in a similar manner. The women and children were attacked on their way by the ""Shotas,"" the armed bands organised by the Turkish Government, who attacked them and seized a certain number. After plundering and committing the most dastardly outrages on the women and children they massacred them in cold blood. These attacks were a daily occurrence until every woman and child had been got rid of. The military escorts had strict orders not to interfere with the ""Shotas"".

The children that the Government had taken in charge were also deported and massacred. The infants in the care of the American Consul of Trebizond were taken away with the pretext that they were going to be sent to Sivas where an asylum had been prepared for them. They were taken out to sea in little boats. At some distance out they were stabbed to death, put in sacks and thrown into the sea. A few days later some of their little bodies were washed up on the shore at Trebizond.

In July 1915 I was ordered to accompany a convoy of deported Armenians. It was the last batch from Trebizond. There were in the convoy 120 men, 700 children and about 400 women. From Trebizond I took them to Gumish-Khana. Here the 120 men were taken away, and, as I was informed later, they were all killed. At Gumish-Khana I was ordered to take the women and children to Erzinjian. On the way I saw thousands of bodies of Armenians unburied. Several bands of ""Shotas"" met us on the way and wanted me to hand over to the women and children.

But I persistently refused. I did leave on the way about 300 children with Moslem families who were willing to take care of them and educate them. The ""Mutessarrif"" of Erzinjian ordered me to proceed with the convoy to Kamack. At the latter place the authorities refused to take charge of the women and children. I fell ill and wanted to go back, but I was told that as long as the Armenians in my charge were alive I would be sent from one place to the other. However I managed to include my batch with the deported Armenians that had come from Erzeroum. In charge of the latter was a colleague of mine Mohamed Effendi from the gendarmerie. He told me afterwards that after leaving Kamach they came to a valley where the Euphrates ran. A band of Shotas sprang out and stopped the convoy. They ordered the escort to keep away and then shot every one of the Armenians and threw them in the river...."

-Lieutenant Sayied Ahmed Moukhtar Baas, "Report by an Eye-Witness" (1915) excerpt.