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Telegram from High Commissioner Horace Rumbold to Foreign Office, 10 May 1922

Telegram from Sir H. Rumbold¹ to Foreign Office,

May 10, 1922.

I have interviewed at great length Dr. Ward of the Near East Relief Commission who has just arrived from Kharput which he left on March 15th. He fully corroborates statements as to the treatment of minorities contained in the telegram from Constantinople published in the Times of May 5.

The Turks appear to be working on a deliberate plan to get rid of Minorities. Their method has been to collect at Amassia Ottoman Greeks from the region between Samsoun and Trebizond. These Greeks are marched from Amassia via Toket and Sivas as far as Ceasarea and then back again until they are eventually sent through Kharput to the East. In this manner a large number of deportees die on the road from hardship and exposure. The Turks can say that they did not actually kill these refugees, but a comparison may be instituted with the way in which the Turks formerly got rid of the dogs at Constantinople, by landing them on an island where they died of hunger and thirst.

Large numbers of deportees, who were being sent to Van and Bitlis passed through Kharput between June and December last year. Now that spring has come, these deportations have begun again. One² these gangs have passed Diarbekir, which is the last American Relief Station, the Americans lose all track of them, but Dr. Ward has little doubt that many deportees die in the mountains East of that place. The Turks in preference choose wintry weather for driving these deportees into the mountains. The American Near East Relief was not allowed to shelter the children whose parents had died on the road. These children were driven forward with the other deportees. Dr. Ward himself last December counted 150 bodies on the road between Kharput and Malatia. A fellow-worker saw and counted 1,500 bodies on the road to Kharput. 2,000 deportees died on the road East of that place. Two-thirds of the Greek Deportees are women and children. At present fresh deportations and outrages are starting in all parts of Asia Minor, from the Northern Seaports to the South Eastern district.

The Turkish official at the head of the education Department at Kharput told Dr. Ward as an illustration of Turkish inefficiency, that in 1915, the Turks had not made a clean job of the massacres. He said that next time the Turks would take care to do their work thoroughly. Dr. Ward endorsed Signor Tuozzi's statement that the deliberate policy of the Turks is to exterminate Minorities. He considers that they are accelerating their activities in this respect

¹ Sir Horace George Montagu Rumbold (1869 - 1941) was the British High Commissioner at Constantinople

² Read "One" as "Once"

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before the peace settlement, and he stated that if action is not taken soon, the problem will be solved by the disappearance of Minorities.

I am confirmed in my belief that the two memoranda on Greek excesses, forwarded in my despatches Nos. 415 and 428 are designed to divert attention from the Turkish atrocities.

Dr. Peet who came with Dr. Ward, states that Dr. Gibbons formerly a professor at Robert College who has just been visiting the Greek front and went into the Turkish lines, reports that the Greeks have behaved well in the Afion Kara Hissar Aidin sectors; also that the Musulman population seems quite content with the Greek rule in those districts.
