

[Incoming reports from unidentified writers – Armenian pastors?]

Erzingan, Dec. 21, 1895

I received your letter with the 15£ draft but it was impossible to cash it and so I return it to you. The only way is to send money by post. As this is the case you better send directly to Kemakh anything you decide to send there.

As to your question: As far as I have been able to find out there are 15,000 persons who are in need of bread and who cry out “bread, bread.” Some have food for a month, some for two weeks. As time passes, the destitute will greatly increase. At present we are in great fear and terror. Oh, we have become wearied with this uncertain life. Every day the fear of death is upon us. We call out, “My God, my God, has though forgotten us?” The pain of this terror is very great. To live upon the earth has become a weariness. What shall the end be? If you have a word of encouragement, write us quickly. &c.

Abstracts from letter from Arabkir
Dec. 28, 1895

It was a great comfort that some friends escaped the fatal massacre (Nov. 6) but the five Nalbandian brothers were taken by guile to the government house. They were bound together and shot and many others in the same manner. These have been killed and that is past but many others remain in prison hungry, naked and miserable and they have no means of comfort whatever. Call, oh call for assistance. There are women who were accustomed to dress well and adorn their persons with costly ornaments now naked and miserable hunt[ing] through the ruined buildings to collect the charred wood to sell to cover their nakedness. The churches and schools have become the refuge of many refugees who wander about from morning till evening begging and they return in the evening empty-handed, hungry, weary, cold, and almost dead and they sleep on the stones. Dear friend my eyes fill, my hand refuses to move and how can I write more? Hundreds of women and virgins are violated in Turkish houses. Some have become Islam because of their wretchedness and some have given their daughters to Turks. 1800 houses are being burned to ashes and 3000 persons have been sacrificed. The remainder are terrified by the awful threats of the Turks saying “Your turn is coming. We will massacre you later.” There is a rumor that some of the prisoners are to be taken to Harpoot. I fear very much they will be killed by the way. Just as my uncle was reported alive last week and is now reported dead. What cruelty! A man who takes refuge is slaughtered like a sheep – just as Arsen Hadji and Kakagee Agha. (These were covered with oil and burned.) Many were taken as if to work on the telegraph line and were killed. Hundreds of the wounded have tried to attend to their own wounds by washing with simple water and very many die. Many of the living are tortured on the plea that they have hid their money. Turkish examiners have gone about but to no end.

Erzingan, Dec. 28, 1895

I received your letter of the 11th enclosing the order on the Post office for 50£ which I at once secured. According to your order, in company with A. Agha we began the work of relief and have continued it each day since the 25th. We distributed the bread at about 4 P.M. We require

certificates from the [Arachnort?] (Bishop's vicar) for those we cannot ourselves examine. We will try to be as careful as possible to be. We will pay the baker each week and will obtain from him. Up to the present we are well. Special salutations &c.

Erzingan, Dec. 28, 1895

The money sent for relief of the suffering is being administered by Br. Tatsos Shagazian and Atam Agha Bolovian. To each person they give ten paras worth of bread each day. The number being so relieved is near 700 and there are many more to be written.

I take this opportunity to express my hearty gratitude to those benevolent friends in distant lands who spend this assistance. It is impossible to describe the suffering of the poor. Still, by giving a loaf of bread to each person you give life to that person. I do not hesitate to say that you are bringing the dead back to life. I assure [you] that these poor wretched, destitute people will remember to their last day and bless with their latest breath these benevolent and merciful benefactors. May their portion be in accordance with the word of the Lord, "Come ye blessed of my Father."

If I could describe the condition of the poor your heart would not be able to endure. Not alone in the city but in the villages the cry for bread swells to the very heavens. The wailing cry "Bread, bread" would melt the stoniest heart to tears. &c.

Erzingan, Dec. 28, 1895

Dear Sir:

By last post we received your last letter and the £50 which you forwarded. We began at once the distribution of bread to the hungry. For four days we have been giving bread to 530 persons. As much as possible we examine the applicants carefully and get certificates from the leading Armenians of the districts of the city from where the people come. The numbers are very great. If we should accept all who apply for relief, the money would soon be exhausted. To each person we give a daily portion of 100 drams of bread. Besides being hungry many are naked. (This means they have only scant clothing.) They have no bedding, they have no fuel, they have nothing. If it is possible and there is hope of more assistance, be pleased to give assistance in clothing and bedding and fuel. At present we give only bread. We can find no drafts here and the only way is for you to send money by post. We await encouraging news from you. With special salutations &c.

From Keghi
Dec. 29, 1895

I have begun to distribute the £50 which you sent. But the number of the plundered is more than 10,000 of whom 5000 are in the extremest destitution. To whom will I give this £50?

The government has begun to collect money by force in the plundered villages. It does not listen to entreaty. Up to the present the plunder returned is of little value. They are very careless in the matter of collecting the plunder for there are easy means at hand because the place of the plunder is well known. The people of Asdukh Pert of more than 120 houses have not yet returned to their houses. Also [Nopus?] people are still scattered. There are other villagers also who have not returned to their houses because they have neither food nor furniture. The Koords who did the plundering threaten to massacre the Armenians if the plunder is taken back. Denek and Hakusdun villages are not under this kaimakam but under Khuzu Chan the kaimakam of which is altogether careless. The danger of death from hunger and exposure is very great for the coming winter.

The Palu prisoners – 15 – are still in extreme misery in this prison. (These were imprisoned before the massacre for a petition to the Patriarch.)

Keghi, Dec. 29, 1895

Our condition is very bad and calls for immediate relief. The plunder remains still in the hands of the Koords. Though the officers have begun the work of collecting the plunder still no results are perceivable. Instead of collecting things for the protection of the life and person of the plundered, only a few worthless things appear. The government instead of assisting the plundered villagers to ways and means of living is using severe measures for collection of taxes. When the wretched people in danger of death from hunger and exposure take refuge with their families among the Koords and foul their honor, how can they pay their taxes? If this continues, after losing their possessions and honor they will lose their lives also.

The government officials have proposed to us a number of times to present papers of thanks to the proper places. We have not yet given an answer. But in all probability we will be forced to sign such a paper. Thousands entreat for assistance. The government returns show 13,853 Armenians in the district. It is estimated that there are 20,000.

Khanoos, Jan. 1, 1896

I received your last letter. --- the local government gives no permission for relief work and does not look on it with favor. On receiving your letter I sent to the Kaimakam. He said he had received no instructions from the Vali Pacha. Indeed this work is very dangerous. In official circles a different interpretation is given to it. They also say the report given by B. is the cause of this enterprise and in the name of benevolence other objects are being served and they use an adjective for B. that I consider unwise to write here. In fact, without a positive and direct order from the Vali Pacha this work is exceedingly dangerous.