Marking the 4th Anniversary of the Kidnapping
of the Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo
Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim

The Faithful Presence of the Syrian Orthodox in a Challenging Milieu: *Sayfophobia*, Citizenship, IDPs 1915-2015, and Beyond

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2017

Mor Gregorios Cultural Legacy Foundation

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Aziz Abdul-Nour

> Between 1914 and 1918, my church [the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch] lost almost 100,000 faithful in the 'Sayfo' [Year of the Sword], and nearly the same number were uprooted from their homeland … The continuing memories of suffering from wounds that have not healed will keep historians busy throughout the third millennium.
>
> Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, 2001

This study, which is dedicated to Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, the abducted Archbishop of Aleppo since 22 April 2013 (Oez & Abdul-Nour, 2016), mainly focuses on the geopolitical span of half a century (1873-1923) between the Treaty of Berlin 1878 and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. This includes significant multi-transitional events and turning points which had lasting effects on our interpretation of the historical and present religious freedom, and our understanding of future co-existence of Christians in general, and the Syrian Orthodox in particular. The purpose of these endeavours was for Christians to maintain their identity and 'zero conflict' with their neighbours in their increasingly challenging Middle Eastern milieu. After centuries under the Ottoman Empire's rule, state-sponsored reforms and acculturation, Ottoman Christians were subjected to violent geopolitical practices, uprooted, ethno-religiously cleansed and they became critically endangered in their homeland (Parry, 1895; Joseph, 1983; Saka, 1983; O'Mahony, 2006; Brock, 2016, 2008; Sato, 2017).

Those who survived the deportation orders ('*Tehcīr* Law') and ('*Safar Barlek*') the Exodus of apocalyptic dimensions of 1915 resettled mainly in Syria and Iraq (Luck, 1925, Asfar, 2012). They embraced the painful

and fearful past with a measure of selective amnesia (Sato, 2005, 2006). They sought to acclimatize in order to survive and recover in the safety of Iraq and Syria, as well as in Lebanon, Trans-Jordan, Palestine and Turkey (Loosley, 2009; Dinno, 2017). A century later, Christians became again the collateral damage of comparable geopolitical violence which has rendered them now almost entirely 'internally displace persons' (IDPs) in a volatile region (OHCHR, 2014, 2015; MRG, 2015; UNHCR, 2016). Like their forefathers in 1915, they were back to square one, entering the third millennium in the last 'deportation caravan' (Namiq, 1991) assigned to 'displaced persons' camps, in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. They endured the lowest status of human existence under the UN Charter, deprived of dignity, integrity, and humanity. Basically, these Middle East Christians were a demographic pawn in a tumultuous region with no clear prospect of resettlement in their ancient homeland which is again now a political flash point. This article seeks to reposition those 'Living Stones', all those forgotten innocents, especially the Syrian Orthodox, whose story has been missing from the overall picture, in order to find synergies in paradoxes. Moreover, the Treaty of Lausanne 1923, which was the most intractable diplomatic negotiation after the First World War that ended the conflict, defined and established modern borders. It recognised Turkish sovereignty. Essentially, the deed of New Turkey, which offset the *Miṣāk-i Milī* ('National Pact, or National Oath') made by the last meeting of the Ottoman Parliament known as the Chamber of Deputies, *Meclis-i Mebusân*, on 28 January 1920 was a development that worried the allies. The Treaty of Lausanne is now approaching its centenary with an anticipated geopolitical paradigm shift which poses a grave challenge to the status quo.

This paper focuses particularly on the Syrian Orthodox Christians in their historical heartlands on the ancient trade routes as they crossed the idyllic Syriac corridors of the Fertile Crescent (Parry, 1892; Bell, 1913, 1982; Griffith, 2013). The geopolitical region in question embraces the three main Ottoman Eastern frontiers provinces *(wilāyāt)* facing the wider Arab world: Mosul, Aleppo, and Amid (Diyarbekir). These three units, historically, geographically, demographically and culturally, formed the Upper Mesopotamia triangle. Recently, special media attention has been given for different reasons to various portions of this triangle. Aleppo's corner emerged as the trophy of the fratricidal

attrition in the battle for Syria (Phillips, 2016). The Mosul apex within Iraq was given the intriguing name the 'Sunni triangle.' Although the term may have been coined and used in the narrow academic circles of Iraqi specialists, it was not until a month after the fall of Baghdad did this term become widespread and popularised when used in a *New York Times*' article on 10 June 2003. This depicted an omen of the impending deluge of sectarianism in Iraq post 2003. This strategically important economic-geopolitical bridge straddles the Tigris and Euphrates and acted as an East and West connection with the old world. Politically it has been the musical chair of many belligerent empires millennia before the arrival of the Ottomans (Kinross, 1977). Starting from the first emerging empire of the Assyrians in Nineveh, the destruction of its great capital was predicted by the prophet Nahum in 612 BC: 'Nineveh lay in ruins, who will pity you?' (Nahum 1: 7). This earned Nahum an eternal place in the Old Testament. All emperors were eager to mint coins with their head on them to proclaim that Mesopotamia had been conquered and subjugated to their power. There was not only a clash of civilisations but also cultural encounters and cross fertilisation (Frankopan, 2016).

Alexander the Great, who ruled most of the known ancient world of his day from a notional capital at Babylon, shot to fame in 330 BC when he defeated his Persian rival King Darius III of the Achaemenid Empire. This was in the vicinity of the city of Mosul-Nineveh, in the Valley of Nineveh, 'the valley of tears and blood', where most Christian towns and villages are located. The Valley of Nineveh has been the battlefield of successive inroads of all these empires and beyond. Now, as we go to press, the battle for Mosul's destiny is currently fought from house to house in these deserted Christian villages of the Valley of Nineveh, Mosul's eastern bank and the entire eastern hinterland of Mosul.

This region was and still is an important agricultural, commercial and cultural centre. Christianity reached this region if not—according to tradition—with the returning Magi, then definitely with the returning Mesopotamians who were present at the Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:9). Naturally, the converts were both Jews and Gentiles. They were then first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 6:26), they endeavoured to live peacefully side-by-side in relative healthy, wealthy and tranquil co-existence.

The pagan house in Mosul city centre where St Thomas the apostle resided during his stay in Mosul-Nineveh, eventually became the Church of St Thomas. This oldest functioning Syrian Orthodox Church in Iraq became a worldwide destination for pilgrims when the relic of St Thomas was discovered during the church restoration work directed in 1963 by Bishop Zakka Iwas (later Patriarch Zakka I, 1980-2014) (Ibrahim, 1981, Abdul-Nour, 2005). Alas, the bell of the last Eucharist celebrated in this church rang on the eve of the fall of Mosul on 9 June 2014. Since then entire Christian community members of Mosul, regardless of their denominations, were ethno-religiously cleansed and were given an ultimatum to leave the city of Mosul by noon on 19 June 2014 and eventually the Valley of Nineveh on 7 August 2014. This brought to a close two millennia of Christianity in Mosul-Nineveh. Mosul has not since heard a single toll of any bell from its ancient churches; not a single Christian is left in the city. The private properties and ecclesiastical endowments of the Syrian Orthodox were confiscated. Each house was branded with the Arabic letter N (ن) to depict that the citizen-N who once lived here was a Nazarene—*Naṣārā,* which is a pejorative Arabic word for Christians. Unfortunately for Christians in the Near East, their ancient homeland has been and still is one of the most challenging regions in the world. This is a result of the long-lasting entanglement and ongoing plethora of conflicts that the Christians have had to (and continue to) endure. (For Christianity in the Middle East, see O'Mahony and Loosley, 2010 and O'Mahony, 2014.)

The advent of Islam and the Arab conquest of the region from the seventh century took place under the Rightly Guided Caliphs (632-661), and their successors, the Umayyads (661-750) and the 'Abbāsids (750-1258).

Muslim rulers were not interested in dogmatic differences between Christians in their domains or in the outcome of the Council of Ephesus (431) or Christianity's crossroads at Chalcedon (451). The resultant three-way split in Eastern Christianity was effectively fossilised and cut off from the Chalcedonian tradition (Constantinople and Rome), from the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Church of the East. Christians were all living under Muslim rule (Brock, 2005). Christians were officially regarded as *ahl al-dhimmah*—(*dhimmīs*) (Bosworth, 2012). The state was obliged to protect the people who

were basically known to Muslims as 'people of the Book' (Jews and Christians) including the community's life, property, and freedom of religion and worship. In exchange, *dhimmīs* were required to be loyal to the empire and to contribute to its coffers by paying the capitation or poll tax *(Jizyah)*, while Muslim subjects paid *Zakāt*, a set proportion of one's wealth to charity (Tritton, 1930; Bosworth, 2012). The *dhimmī* concept regulated inter-faith relationships among subjects who were governed by reciprocal tolerance, although this fluctuated from time to time, place to place, and ruler to ruler. There was little change in the status quo (Morony, 1974, 1984).

The Seljuk Turks seized power in Baghdad in the eleventh century, only to be overthrown by the Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan (1162-1227) which started the Mongol invasions that conquered most of Eurasia. A successor Hulagu Khan (1218-1265) was supposed to be friendly towards Christians. His mother and wife were Christians of the Ancient Church of the East. Hulagu Khan conquered Baghdad on 10 February 1258, he pillaged the great and glorious city; the waters of the Tigris ran red and then black with the ink of the treasure of the Grand Library of Baghdad. Then Timur the Lame (1336-1405) had his turn. The invaders were, again, indiscriminate in their persecution of the populace in general and Christians in particular. The consecutive campaigns of the Mongols and others had a great impact on the Syrian Orthodox Church especially after the ransacking of Baghdad and the ancient city of Tikrit, (Fiey, 1980). Tikrit was the long established see of the Syrian Orthodox Catholicos (or Maphrian) of the East, the second in ecclesiastical command after the Patriarch (Oez, 2012). The entire Syrian Orthodox Church community of Baghdad and Tikrit were dislodged *en masse* together with their Catholicos. The survivors reached the safety of Mosul. Tikrit never recovered its status as a see of the Catholicos of the East and a stronghold of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Iraq. The Catholicosate (or Catholicoi) of the East alternated its seat between Mosul and the fourth-century ancient monastery of Mor Matta, (Yacoub III, 1961) until the abolition of the Catholicosate in the Syrian Orthodox Church in 1856.

The Ottomans emerged fully after the fall of the ancient city of Byzantium, Constantinople, the then capital city of the shrunken Byzantine empire on 29 May 1453. The 90th Patriarch of Antioch and all the East for the Syrian Orthodox, Mor Ignatius Behnam Al-Hadaly

of Bartella (1445-1454), was 681 miles or 1096 km away, as the crow flies, celebrating the Eucharist of the 8th anniversary of the succession in the church of the citadel-like Monastery of Dair al-Za'faran ('Saffron Monastery', or the Monastery of St Ananias). This monastery was established in 493 AD and then in 1165 AD it became the Syrian Orthodox's Patriarchal headquarters, in Mardin in the province of Diyarbekir, South East Turkey (Zakka I, 1983;Yacoub III, Parry, 1895). Initially, such changes may have brought about an ecclesiastical sigh of relief at the discomfort of having to live with an established church which evolved and existed since the Council of Chalcedon 451 AD. It looked down on the rest of Christendom from the capital of the Byzantine Empire (Menze, 2008). However, there was a half century of a political tug-of-war in the region and plenty of water mixed with blood passed under the Mesopotamian bridges. Political and cultural repercussions of a new era and new reality were marked by such a major event in history in the Near East where then most of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox co-existed (Norwich, 1995, 1997).

Sultan Selim I (1512-1520) was best known as Selim the Grim. He was the first Sultan to inherit the Sultanate of the House of Ottoman by eliminating his brothers, which were traditional and legalised acts of succession. This seems to have begun with Bayezid I (1389-1402). Such practices remained a legal standard (Fisher, 1964). Historians oversimplified this period by concentrating on blood thirsty conquests. This may have obscured Selim I's intellectual, artistic and shrewd traits and interests in foreign relations. He befriended and respected men of learning and used their talent in his government. By the age of fifty, Selim I emerged victorious in the Battle of Chaldiran, 23 August 1514 (Akçe, 2015), over Shah Ismail I (1505-1524), the founder of the Safavid Empire. Ismail I converted Iran from Sunni to Shi'ah and played a key role in the rise of Twelver Shi'ah Islam, (Newman, 2008). No one could deny that it was Selim's conquests of Persia, Anatolia and Egypt which paved the way for the Ottoman Empire to reach its pinnacle under his son Suleiman I (1520-1566) (Magnificent) the Lawgiver (*Qānūnī*). He brought all provinces in Eastern Anatolia together encompassing Western Armenia and Mesopotamia, the Levant in 1533. Symbolically, Baghdad, not Constantinople, is the seat of the Caliphate of the Sunni world. To claim the Caliphate and assume the title of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques *(Khādim al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn),* it was

paramount for Suleiman I to be present when his army re-conquered Baghdad. Suleiman I entered the old capital of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate victoriously and immediately ordered the restoration of the tomb of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah (767-699). The founder of the Sunni Ḥanafī school of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and other Sunni shrines were destroyed by Ismail I. It seems what we witnessed of indiscriminate destruction, sacrileges and urbicide in Mosul and Aleppo are not recent practice. (Kinross, 1977).

Bringing the region and its multi-ethno-religious communities together under a new reality was ushered in by the hegemony and eventual permanent conquest of the emerging Ottoman Empire. This ruled the region through many wars and treaties until the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 and its aftermath (Harrow, 2015).

Reaya of the Ottoman Millet System and the effect of *Tanẓīmât* and Capitulations

For three centuries, the three multi-ethno-religiously diverse eastern *Wilāyahs* lived a static life. Politics were the concern of only a few in the centres of the *Wilāyahs*, most of them local notables and Turkish officials. The rural and tribes people were disenfranchised from participation in political life and force was the only language used between them and the authorities. The ancient Christian communities, subjects of the Ottoman Empire, initially essentially belonged to the Orthodox Churches, both Oriental Orthodox (Ephesian) and Eastern Orthodox (Chalcedonian). They were all considered *Dhimmī*, their denominations were completely ignored and they were all dealt with uniformly. Shortly after the fall off Constantinople, the Ottomans introduced the millet system (from the Arabic word *millah* which means 'nation, community') to regulate the administration of different millet within the empire. It gave religious/ethnic/geographical communities a sort of communal autonomy with a limited amount of power to regulate their own affairs under the overall supremacy of the Ottoman administration. The millet system was not only oblivious to dogma and denominations but also deprived Dhimmi of all forms of political participation (Bin Talal, 1994; Harrow, 2014; Gibbons, 2014).

The millet system in the Ottoman Empire, however, did allow people or confessional communities to be grouped by religious confession as opposed to nationality or ethnicity, which was more consistent with the existing social structure. People were able to represent themselves more effectively within a group rather than as individuals.

For indigenous Orthodox Christians of the empire, however unsatisfactory the millet system, under the circumstances it was eminently suitable and functional system that eliminated the religious Apartheid of the Byzantine Empire. The millet system successfully compartmentalised, on an equal footing, the entire indigenous Orthodox communities, whether urban or rural, formed within the Ottoman Empire into a class called: *the Reaya* (from Arabic *raʿāyā*—a plural of *raʿiyah,* 'flock, subject'). The Orthodox *Raʿa*ya belonged to two main ecclesiastical/temporal authorities: the *Rum Millet (millet-i Rūm)*, the then established Church of the Byzantium Empire with a long established Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Phanar quarter of Constantinople, which until 1453, had been the centre of Orthodox Christianity, (Anagnostopoulos, 2014). The Armenian Orthodox *Ermeni Millet (millet-i Ermeni)* was a non-established Church and never previously allowed to officially operate from Constantinople during the Byzantine Empire. In implementing the institutionalisation of the millet system through only two of the main Christian *Dhimmī* communities living in the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman addressed this issue in 1461 by inviting Bishop Yovakim of Bursa (1461-78) to Constantinople and bestowing upon him the title of patriarch, entrusting him with the ecclesiastical and civil government of all Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. In effect, the unification of the Armenian people was formally legitimised by the institution of the *Ermeni millet* (Nersessian, 2015). The Jewish community the *Millet-i Yahud* was entrusted to the Grand Rabbi of Istanbul. The millet system operated according to pyramidal and hierarchical principles. The Ottoman authorities recognised the patriarch as the highest religious and political leader of a loyal people or nation *(millet-i sadıka),* since they lived in harmony with the new rulers of Anatolia. Both patriarchs were equally granted *Imperial bérats* (titles of privileges given to the lay or clerical officials on behalf of the Ottoman state) the official title of *Millet-Bashi* (ethnarch) of their respective churches. They were also recognised and mandated under

the millet system with the official responsibility to look after the ecclesiastical and temporal affairs of all other indigenous Orthodox denominations which became subjects of the Sultan.

The Ecumenical Patriarch, at Constantinople of the *Rum Millet (millet-i Rūm)* looked after all Eastern Orthodox Churches in the Ottoman Empire (Albanians, Arabs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Russians, Serbs and Vlachs Orthodox).

The successful Armenian patriarchs who now also resided at and operated from Constantinople were granted officially temporal responsibility for the Oriental Orthodox (Armenians, Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian Orthodox) and all ethnic Armenians irrespective of whether they belonged to the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church or the Armenian Protestant Church (which was formed in the nineteenth century).

If and when a new patriarch is elected to any of those Churches, the patriarch would have to apply in person for their official *bérats or Firmān* through the office of the *Millet-Bashi* in Istanbul who is responsible for the temporal affairs of that particular Church. Who would launch the application for *bérats* at the Sublime Porte (*Bāb-ı Hümāyūn* or *Bāb-ı ʻĀlī*). Considering that the elected patriarch had to go in person to Istanbul to initiate the bureaucratic process of obtaining the Imperial *bérat*, this could take a very long time. In addition to all the expenses involved was the potential danger of travelling between the patriarchate headquarters in Mardin and Istanbul. Many Syrian Orthodox patriarchs in the past decided to bypass this demanding process and simply said that: 'The Cross is my best *bérat*.'

The millet system kept evolving further as it was implemented under different Sultans. Ottoman scholars differ in their interpretation of both this specific administrative system, the *Dhimmī* and *Millet*, some may consider this as religious apartheid, at best 'second class'. Others consider the millet an example of pre-modern religious pluralism (Hasluck, 1925).

The Anglo-Ottoman Trade Pact of 1838 signed by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) opened the empire's market to imports of Western products. This imposed a new phase of reforms which have become known in history as the *Tanẓīmāt*—'reorganisation' or 'reform'.

The chronological starting point for these was the *Tanẓīmāt* Reform period (1839-1876). This is considered to be the issuing of the imperial decree of 'The Illustrious Rescript' (known as *Haṭṭ-i Şerif*)

in 1839 under auspices of Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) who was proclaimed as Mahmud the Just. However, these were brought about in tandem in co-operation between his Grand Vizer Reşid Mehmed Pasha (1829-1833) and Sir Stafford Canning (1786-1880), the long-time British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (Lane-Poole, 1890).

Haṭṭ-i Şerif contained declarations of equality, freedom, and isonomy by which the Ottoman state bound itself to treat its non-Muslim subjects. The reforms sought to grant emancipation to non-Muslim subjects of the empire and to integrate non-Turks more thoroughly into Ottoman society by enhancing their civil liberties and granting them equality throughout the empire. The reforms encouraged Ottomanism among the diverse ethnic groups of the empire, attempting to stem the tide of nationalist movements within the multi-national Ottoman Empire.

Sultan Abdul-Majid (1839-1861) swiftly rejected a Russian ultimatum claiming protectorate over Christians in Turkey. He declared his commitments to reform immediately following the end of the Crimean War (1853-1856). The Ottomans under Abdul-Majid passed the sweeping famous decree of the Imperial Rescript known as *Haṭṭ-i Hümayūn* in 1856 (Davidson, 1963). Scholars list some of the key elements of *Haṭṭ-i Hümayūn*: the guarantee of freedom of religion; abolition of distinction based upon language, race, or religion; the replacement of *shari'ah* courts with mixed courts for commercial and criminal suits involving Muslims and non-Muslims (historians point out that in practice formal and informal discriminations against non-Muslims continued unchecked [Masters, 2001]); and the dropping of the terms *ahl al-dhimmah* or *reaya* in favour of *gayrimüslimler* (non-Muslims). (See Masters, 2001.)

The *Tanẓīmāt* era brought specific regulations called 'Regulation of the Armenian Nation' *(Nizâmnâme-i Millet-i Ermeniyân*) which was introduced on 29 March 1863, over the millet organization. This granted extensive privileges and autonomy concerning self-governance. Soon the Ottoman Empire passed another regulation over *Nizâmnâme-i Millet-i Ermeniyân* developed by the Patriarchate Assemblies of Armenians, which was named as the *Islahat Fermânı* ('Firman of the Reforms'). The 'Firman of the Reforms' gave immense privileges to the Armenians, which formed a 'governance in governance' to eliminate the aristocratic dominance of the Armenian nobles by development

of the political strata in the society (Nersessian, 2014; Gibbons 2014). This was not without serious repercussions and stress over Ottoman political and administrative structures.

During the governorship of Midhat Pasha (1869-1871) the reformer Grand Vizer of Sultan Abdul-Aziz (1861-1976), masterminded the first constitutional monarchic regime, and bargained with the 34th Sultan Abdulhamit (1876-1909) to start the constitutional process as a condition of his enthronement, a promise that was not kept and the First Constitutional Era (1876–1878) lasted for two years only. On 5 February 1878 Abdulhamit sent Midhat in to exile and adjourned the parliament indefinitely on 13 February 1878, (Midhat, 1909). This ushered in an era of absolute authoritarianism which lasted 30 years. The party of Union and Progress obliged Abdulhamit to promulgate once more the Constitutional Monarchy on 23 July 1908. Soon Abdulhamit was dethroned by five members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) *(Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti)*. They claimed that with their efforts democracy that is inspired by the French slogan of liberty, equality and fraternity was prevailing in Turkey (Karpat, 2001).

The *Tanẓīmāt* reforms affected the character of the millets. To understand the importance of the reforms it is necessary to understand the 'development' phases of each millet, or rather the new relationships created either between or within millets. In addition, their relations to the concessions system were provided by the Capitulations (extraterritorial rights of Europeans).

The Ottomans carefully considered their obligations under the Capitulations. This was an agreement that gave concessions and immunity to European powers in the Ottoman Empire. The earliest of these Capitulations is that of 1535 with Francis I (1494-1547) who formed a Franco-Ottoman alliance with Suleiman I. These concessions which initially were given to the French included ambassadors and consuls who were to have ex-territorial jurisdiction over their citizens, to enjoy inviolability of domicile, the liberty to travel in all parts of the Ottoman Empire, to carry on trade according to their own laws, to be free from all duties save of customs duties, to have religious freedom and liberty of worship. Eventually, the French and other nations had in effect *imperia in imperio* (Angell, 1901). Britain received such a concession in 1583, the Netherlands in 1609, and Austria in 1615.

The religious freedom clause invited an influx of Christian missionaries: Jesuit, Capuchin, Carmelites and Dominicans and then Protestants and Evangelicals to provide Ottoman citizens with educational and medical services. As open proselytising was forbidden among Muslims, therefore missionaries were most active among indigenous Christians in all three provinces under study. Soon a number of the Syrian Orthodox clergy and lay were proselytised, converted and entered into communion with Rome and formed their own Catholic Uniate Churches. Members of the the Church of the East formed the Chaldean Catholic Church (Ghanīmah, 1998; Joseph, 2000; Flannery 2008; Wilmshurst, 2011; Rassam, 2014).

Due to the difficulties of Ottoman imposed building regulations on new churches and places of worship, the French ambassador and consuls had to resort to exercising their power, privilege, protection and influence under the Capitulations to secure ecclesiastical properties for the Catholic Uniate. For this end Syrian Orthodox churches, monasteries, schools and cemeteries were confiscated in the provinces Mosul, Aleppo and Diyarbekir and their environs, leaving the Orthodox communities without churches, monasteries and cemeteries.

The Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire gave the European powers immunity to protect the rights of their citizens within the empire. These included the French Roman Catholics, British Protestants and other groups. The Russians became formal Protectors of Eastern Orthodox groups.

Furthermore, the French ambassador interfered with the sublime port and was successful in obtaining separate millet status for all the emerging Catholic Uniate Churches—Syrian, Armenian and Greek. During the reign of Mahmud II, an Imperial Edict dated 21 Rejeb 1246 AH correspond to 24 May 1831 was issued to established the Catholic as a separate millet in the Ottoman Empire (Frazee, 1982).

The British Vice-Consul HE Wilkie Young reflected in his interesting dispatch from Mosul on 28 January 1909 on the work of the Catholic and Protestant missions in the city of Mosul:

> A Roman Catholic Mission was established here by Capucins in the 17th century and has been maintained continuously since. It is now in the hands of 13 Dominican Fathers and numerous Nuns. They have a very fine church

> and admirable schools giving instruction free to over a thousand pupils.
> The Pope is represented in Mesopotamia by a Delegate, Monseigneur Drure, [Désiré-Jean Drure, OCD (5 Mar 1904–27 May 1917)], who resides at Mosul. The funds by which the Delegation is supported, with considerable state, were bequeathed for this express purpose by a French lady more than two centuries ago on condition that the Papal representative should always be a Frenchman. (Young, 1909)

Later the Church Missionary Society (CMS) established a printing press in Malta in 1815 to print Bibles and religious tracts in Arabic. CMS sent its Anglican missionaries, as early as 1820s, to those Ottoman provinces followed by missionaries from the Presbyterian Church in America co-ordinated by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission to work among the indigenous Christians communities of the Ottoman Empire (Southgate, 1844; Ghanimah, 1998).

The British Vice-Consul HE Wilkie Young also described the work of CMS in Mosul in his dispatch from Mosul in January 1909.

> The Church Missionary Society maintains a School here which is attended by about 200 pupils, Protestant, Jacobite [*Suryān or old Syrians* or Syrian Orthodox] and a few Moslem. The most important branch of its work, however, is its Medical Mission … . During two years this Missions seems to have earned the respect and gratitude of all classes of the population … . It is easy to understand the eagerness with which … the establishment of the proposed Hospital are awaited.
> Though, thanks to the efforts of the French and English Missions, the Christians have made some progress. (Young, 1909)

Almost 20 years after granting a full millet status to Catholics in the empire. An Imperial Edict, dated Moharrem 1267/November 1850, was issued during the reign of Sultan Abdul-Majid to establish the emerging Protestant Churches and its community as a separate

Protestant millet in the Ottoman Empire. For details of protestant and evangelical missionaries Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire, (see Southgate, 1844; Joseph, 1983, 2000; Coakley, 1992; Ghanīmah, 1998).

In the same dispatch of 28 January 1909 Wilkie Young reflected on the diverse demographic spectra of Jews, Christians and Muslims living within the wall of the city of Mosul:

> Anything approaching an exact estimate is not obtainable, the population having hitherto successfully resisted all attempts to register their women: and, as usual in oriental cities but perhaps more so in Mosul than elsewhere, a very large proportion of the children not being entered at all. The total cannot, however, be far short of 100,000 of these; nine-tenths are Moslems and the remainder Christians and Jews.
>
> The total of the Christians in Mosul probably does not exceed 9,000. They are distributed among the following denominations: about 3,000 Chaldean Catholics, they have seven churches, twenty-one Priests and four schools which are attended by about 350 pupils. The rest of the children of this denomination attend the schools of the Dominican Mission. 2,500 Syrian Catholics, they have three churches, fifteen Priests and three Schools. There were 3,000 Jacobites or old Syrians [Syrian Orthodox]. They have four churches, four Priests and three schools attended by about 200 children, the rest of them attend the School of the English Mission. 40 Armenian families, 27 Protestants families and 8 Greeks Orthodox families, each have its Church. (Young, 1909)

Considering Wilkie Young estimated statistics, collated various data from many travelogues and other sources, it shows that the Syrian (Orthodox and Catholic) communities were the largest, most thriving and influential indigenous group in Mosul and other important Mesopotamian urban centres, with links to Syrian Orthodox networks along the Mesopotamian Syriac corridors from Istanbul to India. Genealogical studies have shown that missionary activities along these Syriac corridors were most active among the Syrian Orthodox. So

the entire Syrian Catholic and most of the Protestant communities were drawn from the Syrian Orthodox community and to a lesser degree from the Church of the East. (For a genealogical study, see: Ghanīmah, 1998.)

Vice-Consul Wilkie Young went further to document his impression of the Syrian Orthodox community in the city of Mosul.

> The Old Syrians or Jacobites are one of the most ancient and interesting of the Eastern Churches. In spite of persecution they have stoutly maintained their independence for sixteen centuries, steadily refusing to sacrifice their convictions and freedom for the advantages offered by Rome. When it is remembered that these advantages would include payment of their Priests and Bishops, free education for their children and, above all, the steady protection of their interests by the French Government, this unbending attitude is the more remarkable in a comparatively small community ...Their Head is the Patriarch Ignatius [Abdulla (1906–1915)] who lately had the honour of being received by His Majesty the King [Edward VII (1901-1910)] (v. 'Times' Dec.). He resides at the Monastery of Deir Zeforan near Mardin. There are several thousand Jacobites in India. (Young, 1909)

Meanwhile, the ancient indigenous Christians the Syrian Orthodox Church who kept a faithful presence in the Ottoman Empire and maintained the independence of their Church, tradition and dogma and had no link with or advocate among the beneficiaries of the capitulations system. They found themselves the last to be considered by the Sublime Port for the long overdue granting of the separate millet status until late in 1873 (Peter III, 1873; Taylor, 2013; O'Mahony, 2014; Dinno 2017).

Countdown to the *Sayfo* 1915

As relations with European countries started to deteriorate, and the ghost of war loomed on the horizon, the Turkish government decided to abrogate the Capitulations on 8 September 1914. This ended a concurrence which governed the commercial and judicial rights of the Europeans in the Ottoman Empire for more than three centuries.

On 2 November, 1914 Russia and the Ottoman Empire declared war on each other.

HMS *Espiegle* and *Dalhousie* entered the Shatt al-Arab and British troops landed in Fao on 5 November 1914 and advanced north declaring the start of the Mesopotamia campaign. On 11 November, Sultan Mehmed V declared Jihad against the alliance of entente countries (England, France and Russia). On the Russian front the Battle of Sarikamish started on 22 December. The year 1915 ushered in successive and massive militarily defeats for Turkey first with Russia, in the Caucasus, then Egypt and Sinai; meanwhile, the British were advancing north. On 25 April, British, French, Australian and New Zealand and Canadian troops landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Young Turk leadership considered the regime—indeed the empire to be in a state of dire peril. On the eve of Gallipoli the Young Turks implemented a decision taken earlier of arresting on the night of 24 April the Armenian leadership and intellectuals in Istanbul. That was the first act of a violent process of exterminations of Christians in the empire throughout 1915 and beyond. (For a timeline of events, see Bartrop and Jacobs, 2015.)

Eventually, the long co-existence concluded with an ugly campaign of mass deportations and annihilation for all Christians in the Ottoman Empire orchestrated by the Committee of Union and Progress, the Unionist or Ittihadist. On 2 May 1915 the Ottoman parliament passed the Dispatchment and Settlement Law (or the Tehcīr Law) or what became known as *Safar Barlik* ('Exile'), authorizing the deportation of Armenians (apparently, initially Armenian Orthodox only), from the Ottoman Empire. Ultimately, by 30 May 1915, enraged civilians and soldiers killed many of the arrested Armenian leaders and many others at holding centres or on the way to their exiles. These annihilations extended to all other Christians in the empire.

One of the few diplomats left in Istanbul the American Ambassador

Henry Morganthau who described, in one of his wired dispatches, the massacres of 1915 in the Ottoman Empire as:

> Evidently Turkish nationalistic policy is aimed at all Christians and not confined to Armenians. 'A campaign of race extermination is in progress.' (Morganthau, 1918)

A rare account by an ex-Ottoman official who was in Diyarbekir documented what he witnessed as the unionists and their loyal officers in the provinces were implementing the Tehcīr Law and its consequences. He wrote, of the campaign against Protestant, Chaldean and Syrian Orthodox.

> Slaughter of the Protestant, Chaldean and Syriac Communities: The slaughter was general throughout these communities, not a single protestant remaining in Diyarbekir. Eighty families of the Syriac Community were exterminated, with a part of the Chaldeans, in Diyarbekir, and in its dependencies, none escaped save those in Madiât and Mardîn. When latterly orders were given that only Armenians were to be killed, and that those belonging to other communities should not be touched, the Government held their hand from the destruction of the latter. (El-Ghusein, 1917)

El-Ghusein went further to describe the courageous resistance put up by the Syrian Orthodox community.

> The Syriacs.—But the Syriacs in the province of Madiât were brave men, braver than all the other tribes in these regions. When they heard what had fallen upon their brethren at Diyarbekir and the vicinity they assembled, fortified themselves in three villages near Madiât, and made a heroic resistance, showing a courage beyond description. The Government sent against them two companies of regulars, besides a company of gendarmes which had been despatched thither previously; the Kurdish tribes assembled against them, but without result, and thus

> they protected their lives, honour, and possessions from the tyranny of this oppressive Government. An Imperial Irâdeh *[Farmān]* was issued, granting them pardon, but they placed no reliance on it and did not surrender, for past experience had shown them that this is the most false Government on the face of the earth, taking back to-day what it gave yesterday, and punishing to-day with most cruel penalties him whom it had previously pardoned. (El-Ghussain, 1917)

Recent research substantiates the narrative of El-Ghussain regarding the Syrian Orthodox heroic resistance.

> At the time of Sayfo, in 1915, when the order came forth to kill all Christians in the region, Hannko be Yakup, the headman of Beth Qustan, a Christian village, commanded all villagers to stay put and defend themselves in the village.
>
> Haçove Khortuk was a renowned head of clan and a great Muslim leader in the region. He was a good friend of Hannko and urged him not to remain in the village. Beth Qustan is embraced by a defenceless plateau which render the people very vulnerable. He advised his friend to take refuge in the castle in the neighbouring village, Hah. Haçove took a stick in his hand and broke it into 2 pieces and said that this is a command beyond his power, and that he could no longer protect the Christian village, Beth Qustan.
>
> After a long discussion with Hannko, who was against taking refuge in Hah, Haçove convinced the villagers to move. On their way, the Christians were shot at by Muslims, but Haçove stopped the Muslims from killing any of the Christians on exodus, by advising them to go and plunder the village instead.
>
> When they arrived at the castle, they realised that there were Christians there from other villages too. The Christians defended themselves in this castle, which still exists today as a present icon of Syrian Orthodox heroic

> resistance. Those who survived have said that they were aided by some local friendly Muslims, who supplied them with buckets full of bullets to defend themselves. (Oez, 2016)

Reciprocal co-existence was always the safety valve of inter-faith for centuries and still is.

However, relations between Churches and their leaders fluctuated according to the policies of individual rulers and their sycophants, especially when political survival was at stake. This often reflected, challenged and compromised their demography.

Finally, after the Unionists (Ittihadist) accomplished their 'Tehcīr Law' campaign, the Young Turks' triumvirate known as the Three Pashas, Talaat (1874-1921) Minster of Interior, Enver (1881-1922) Minister of War and Çemal (1872-1922) Minister of the Navy, of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (Çemal, 2015) appeared. They endeavoured to institute a modernisation plan that would transform the multicultural Ottoman society into a much homogeneous Turkish one. Eventually, they could only drive those left in the Ottoman Empire in to the trenches of battlefields of the First World War to bring about the collapse and end of the Ottoman Empire (1453-1918).

The Unionist who dominated the Ottoman state's final decade proved to be the Ottoman bitterest poisoned chalice which was presented to the sick-man of Europe and his Christians subjects.

In addition to valuable eye-witness accounts, oral and documentary history, and manuscripts, much evidence now available in print will save valuable space narrating this atrocity which this article cannot possibly provide. (For comprehensive archival studies, see de Courtois, 2004; Qarabashi, 2005; Akçam, 2005; Gaunt, 2006; Ugur Ümit, 2011; Polatel, 2011, Ugur Ümit 2011; Akçam, 2012; Gasfield, 2012 and Gust, 2014.)

The Syrian Orthodox's diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference 1919

At the time when the future of the whole of civilisation seemed to be in the balance, the Allied victors of the First World War called for and convened a conference in Paris during the period 18 February

1919 to 21 February 1920. This became known later as the Paris Peace Conference or Versailles Peace Conference (Macmillan, 2002). Its intention was to set the peace terms for the defeated Central Powers following the Armistice of Mudros, a pact, which was concluded and signed at the port of Mudros, on the Aegean island of Lemnos on 30 October 1918. This ended hostilities in the Middle Eastern theatre of war between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies (Busch, 1976).

The Paris or Versailles Peace Conference is often narrated as a transformative moment in world history that heralded not just the end of the First World War but also the creation of a new international order based on the nation-state. The decisive dissolution of the system of empires—Ottoman, Habsburg, and Hohenzollern—had lost the war. While the institutional form of the nation-state was already prevalent in countries of Western Europe and North America, the victorious powers now endeavoured to extend it to the breakaway states created from the fallen empires. This was a momentous development in Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East particularly, where in excess of 100 million people were waiting in high expectation of being granted a state of their own. The Great Powers seemed to endeavour to link the guarantee of minority rights to territorial gain. They imposed clauses on minority rights which became requirements not only for recognition but were also conditions for receiving specific grants of territory.

The Conference involved diplomats from more than 32 countries and nationalities. All major decisions were taken by a joint emergency authority, the 'Council of Four' or the 'Big Four': David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom; Georges Clemenceau, nicknamed 'Père la Victoire' (Father Victory), the Prime Minister of France; President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, and Vittorio Emanuele Orlando Primer of Italy. These decisions were ratified by the others (Catalogue, 1926; Dockrill and Fisher, 2001).

The Conference concluded on 21 January 1920 with five major peace treaties and the inaugural General Assembly of the League of Nations. The government, effects and benefits for Middle Eastern communities who were represented in Paris and the effect and consequences of the Peace Conference on the Middle East and the emerging nation states and their inhabitants are still in need of comprehensive studies. However,

the most pivotal treaties for the Middle East were the Treaty of Sèvres (not ratified), the Treaty of Versailles 1919 and the Treaty of Lausanne 1923 (Martin and Reed, 2007).

From our comfortable distance we cannot appreciate what sort of thin ice Christians in the post-1918 Middle East have been skating on to maintain co-existence. Such a tranquil presence could only be achieved to varying degrees at different times in different milieus. The hopes of Christians in the Middle East were hanging on the outcome of the Peace Conference. Any minor perceptions of disturbances in law and order would undermine the necessary peace for their co-existence in these countries. An imbalance had the potential to trigger victimisation of Christians and other peaceful citizens on a huge scale in 1895 and 1915. That is indeed what happened a century later in Mosul in June 2014.

The organisers of the Paris Conference were keen to invite representatives of the affected spectra of indigenous peoples and citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Among the Syriac-speaking communities of the Ottoman Empire, official invitations were only sent to heads of Churches who had no affiliations with external ecclesiastical authority: Mor Ignatius Elias III (1917-1932) the war-time Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, residing in Homs Syria, then under French control, and the newly elected Mor Shimun XXII Paulos (1918-1920), the Patriarch of the Church of the East, residing in Iraq, then under British control.

Patriarch Elias III wrote back to the organisers of the Peace Conference to acknowledge and accept the invitation. Elias III confirmed that he could not attend but would mandate his representative and confidant Mor Severus Aphram Barsoum (1887-1957), the newly consecrated Archbishop of Syria and Lebanon, 'the Bishop of War and Peace time' to attend and advocate the case and cause of his people at the conference (Behnam, 1959; Ibrahim, 1996).

Patriarch Shimun XXII officially appointed his sister and confidante, Surma D'Bait Mar Shimun (1883-1975) better known as Surma Khanum, the Semiramis of her time, to officially attend and represent the Church of the East at the Paris Peace Conference, accompanied with by W A Wigram, a member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission to the Assyrians (Coakley, 1992). Surma Khatum

arrived in London on 11 October 1919 together with Wigram in good time to attend the Conference (Beth Shmuel, 2008; Stafford, 1935). There are no records of the presence of the Church of East official delegation at the Peace Conference. Few sources touched on this case, anecdotally suggesting that there were three different delegations mostly made up of laymen who went independently to Paris from different diasporas of the Church of the East. They hoped to attend and officially represent their vital causes and aspirations of the Church of the East and its people at that fateful geopolitical crossroads in the history of the region. Allegedly, they submitted in excess of five different memorandums to be considered by the Peace Conference (al-Haidari, 1977). The representational void of the 'Smallest Ally', the Church of the East, at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 presented more questions of concern than answers (Wigram, 1920; al-Haidari, 1977; Beth Shmuel, 2008, Fisher, 2008). A century later the available data still impair the formulation of informed academic opinion about how the case and cause of the Church of the East were presented at the Peace Conference.

Unfortunate events eclipsed Surma Khanum's trip to Paris via London. She did not attend the Peace Conference to represent her people. Her elder brother Patriarch Shimun XXI Benyamin (1887-1918) was murdered and his successor, her younger brother Mar Shimun XXII Paulos (1918-1920), died prematurely. Surma Khanum then became *de facto* regent during the Patriarchal succession of her 12-year-old nephew, Mar Shimun XXIII Eshai (1908–75). In London, Surma Khanim subsequently campaigned on behalf of her people and wrote a book on her Church and the genealogy of her Patriarchal dynasty (d'Bait Mar Shimun and Wigram, 1920).

Critical analysis of the diplomatic discourse, statements, memorandum, letters and interviews of Mor Severus Aphram Barsoum at the Paris Peace Conference 1919.

Barsoum, who was an extraordinary eyewitness, observed firsthand the successive atrocities of the late 1800s, which culminated in the 1915 Genocide.[1] He became convinced that what Christians were subjected to had never been denominationally specific. If any of the rest of the Christian denominations were victimised because of the privileged status that the millet system afforded the Armenians for centuries, this was in addition to the miscalculation of some of the Armenians. After the Young Turk revolution, many Armenians were emboldened to believe that they could now enjoy freedom of speech and assembly. Some expounded in nationalistic rhetoric, proclaiming that the centuries of Armenian servitude had passed and that it was now the right and duty of his people to learn to defend themselves, their families, and their communities.

Essentially, as a Syrian Orthodox Christian, Barsoum took no interest in an earthly Kingdom (Matt 6:12-15, Rev 11:15). He believed that 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36). A Maslawi multilingual scholar through and through who could communicate and network in French, English, Arabic, Syriac and Turkish without an interpreter, the young bishop was too shrewd, incisive and realistic not to be moved by the Parisian political fair. He soon realised that great powers had strategic, political and economic interests in the political settlement of the non-Turkish territories. What he was witnessing was the multiple interests at play in this political jamboree.

Barsoum was convinced, and rightly so, that different ethno-religious indigenous communities in the region were only invited to Paris to 'ice the cake', not to have a slice of it. There was nothing whatsoever for his community, he noted, and for that matter for many other hopefuls in the regions. Their objective was to go to the Peace Conference with a *fait accompli*. This was in anticipation that one of the nation-states on offer would be theirs. Especially, their appetite

1 Armala, 1910, 1919; Audo, 1919, de Courtois, 2004, Gasfield, 2012; and genocide El-Ghusein, 1917; Gaunt, 2006; Akçam, 2005, 2012; Gust, 2014.

for power was already whetted by President Woodrow Wilson and his fourteen points, particularly his concept of self-determination that seemed to promise to so many people the fulfilment of their long awaited dreams.

Indeed those dreams and perceptions were substantiated with circulations at the Peace Conference of a plethora of proposed maps, those instruments of power, showing the potential and overlapping geographical remits of a future home and nation-state for the Armenians (Fig. 1), for the Assyrian (Fig. 2), and the Kurds (Fig. 3). None of which has yet been geopolitically implemented.

However, having observed the unfolding atrocities throughout 1915, the British Prime Minster Herbert H Asquith (1908-1916) in a pre-emptive logistical move summoned Mark Sykes, the then British Conservative MP with vital expertise on the Ottoman Empire (on 16 December 1915) to 10 Downing Street to offer some advice on how to reconcile the British and French interests in the Middle East. Mark Sykes pointed to a map, with pencil in hand, and told the prime minister: 'I should like to draw a line from the 'e' in Acre to the last 'k' in Kirkuk' (Fig. 4).

Then the two men, Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot, secretly met and agreed, with the assent of the Russian Empire, to divide the Middle East between them as a pre-empted contingency plan for the immanent dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. Territory north of that stark line would go to France; land south of it to Britain. This secret deal was done and dusted and ratified on 16 May 1916. It appeared in good time on the desk for the arrival of the War Prime Minster David Lloyd George (1916-1922). This agreement was in judicious circulation two years and eight months ahead of the opening session of the start of the Paris Conference on 18 January 1919. The details of the agreement remained secret until the Bolsheviks exposed its contents to the public concurrently in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* on 23 November 1917 and in the British *Guardian* on 26 November 1917. Officially the 1916 Asia Minor Agreement, which is better known by the name of its negotiators as the Sykes-Picot agreement, still resonates with every political turn in the Middle East today. The exposé of these affairs was to the 'British embarrassment, the Arabs dismayed and the Turks delighted' (Firth, 1915; Fisher, 1998; Barr, 2012).

The unfinished geopolitical symphony of the Paris Conference kept, for the last century, sparked the imaginations, aspirations and the extrapolations on a range of maps.

Recently, a Bulgarian newspaper reported on a new map that was slipped in error into the geopolitical arena (School Map, 2012). The remerged map (Fig. 5) will challenge the Lausanne treaty and enliven the continuing geopolitical narrative of the ongoing Battles for Mosul and Aleppo (Danforth, 2016).

For Barsoum, the novel concept of self-determination was a mere 'dream' to ogle at by many during the Peace Conference. He was also well aware of the potential imbroglio which entangled his Church and communities if they were to be convinced that as an ancient and indigenous community they may end up on nationalistic grounds, territorial or ethnically, with a fair share of the then ongoing geopolitical bazaar. If the Syrian Orthodox people were to share the percolating illusions of other communities in the region their notion of an independent homeland was to be a mirage. They failed to capitalize on the concept of *Uti possidetis* (Latin for 'as you possess'). This was not the intention of this decimated, dismayed and Sayfophobic Syrian Orthodox community nor was the necessary geography available: it was neither accessible nor on offer to establish a homeland which could fulfil the dreams of other ethno-religious groups in the region, let alone for the Syrian Orthodox Christians who adhered to modest birth rates which rendered them demographically challenged.

Therefore, in his 'joint discourse' Barsoum pre-empted his collective appeal to the layers of identity at national, supra–national, regional, and religiously at the ecclesiastical and denominational levels. Such multi-faced identity was present in the psyche of the survivors of the genocide and *en masse* expulsions (Romeny, 2009). They were faced with the necessities of integration and assimilation into their new geopolitical realities with the aid of their language, religion and cultural ecology, within the framework of the emerging nation state, (Barsoum, 1952, 2006).

Barsoum submitted to the 'big four' a portfolio containing his credentials as the official delegate of the Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and the representative of his Syrian Orthodox Church and nation. Using his official archbishopric headed paper in French (Barsoum, 1920a), Barsoum confirmed that

he was present at the Paris Conference in his official capacity as the representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and the Syrian Orthodox Church and people. He was presenting himself as charged with a special mission by the Patriarch of Antioch to present the conditions and wishes of the people in Mesopotamia (Barsoum, 1920a).

Barsoum networked with other delegations from the region at the Peace Conference, especially with Prince Faisal the head of the Arab delegation (later King Faisal I of Syria 1919-1920 and King of Iraq 1921-1933) (Al-Jamil, 2017). Faisal promoted pan-Arabism and was inspired to create an Arab state that would include Iraq and Syria of the Fertile Crescent, with their ethnic and religious diversity that would be fully represented and participating on merit in its administration.

Barsoum had a previous encounter with Prince Faisal when he entered Damascus at the head of the Arab Army through Thabit Abdul-Nour (1890-1958) his cousin and classmate in Mosul, a Syrian Orthodox lawyer who joined the Arab revolt which began on 5 June 1916. He was a political aide of Faisal, who lead the Arab Army in the Battle for Petra and Jabal Mousa in Jordan. He later became minster in the first government of King Faisal in Damascus. He was the first ever Syrian Orthodox to be appointed as a minister in any of the Arab cabinets of the government of the newly established state in the Middle East (Atiyya, 1973; Al-Jamil, 2017).

The Hashemite dynasty looked with the deepest sympathy upon the victims of the Ottoman deportation orders and massacres. Prince al-Ḥusayn ibn ʻAlī al-Hāshimī (1854-1931), the Hashemite Grand Sheriff of Mecca from 1908 and King of the Hejaz from 1916 to 1924, who lead the Arab revolt, issued in 1917 an edict (see Appendix 1). Urging his son Prince Faisal and Prince ʻAbd al-ʻAziz al-Jarba, the Sheikh of Shammar (Williamson, 1999), to protect, offer hospitality and look after the Syrian Orthodox and Armenians 'who have been deported and will be passing through your territories on their way to Syria and Iraq.' Implementing such humanitarian gestures of tolerance had saved the lives of hundreds of Christians in their mass exodus. Most fatalities among Christian deportees occurred as a result of death marches and exposure to heat, thirst and starvation in the Syrian Desert.

Barsoum was well aware of the attentive solidarity of the Grand Sherif of Mecca and his son Prince Faisal who were simultaneously championing and defending the common causes and shared interests of

the Syriacs and the Arabs. Faisal and his Arab delegates seemed to have been impressed with the conduct, diplomacy and debates of the young bishop. Prince Faisal and his delegation, which included Lawrence of Arabia, often cheered Barsoum and called him*: Muṭran al-ʾUrūbah wa Qass al-Zamān*— 'The bishop of Arabism and priest of all time' (Bahnim, 1959; Moosa, 1965; Ibrahim, 1996; Abdul-Nour, 2001).

After the conference, Barsoum embarked on an advocacy tour in France, England and America.[2] Barsoum visited London at the beginning of 1920 prior to the convening of yet another peace conference which was scheduled to be held in London and before the conclusion of the Treaty of Sèvres on 24 April 1920. He resided during his visit in a hotel in the West End of London, which is strategically located between Whitehall, the nerve centre of the empire, and the British Museum and Library which house the largest collection of Syriac and Arabic Manuscripts. Barsoum's first port of call was a letter dated 2 February 1920 to Lord Curzon the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs asking for a short interview. The minutes of this meeting exhibited vividly the frustration and helplessness of a shepherd and the plight of his Syrian Orthodox community. Barsoum reiterated that:

> the Armenians had captured the ears of the world but no one realized that the Syrian Christians were being massacred too, no one listened to their cry and came to their help. His country was wrongly divided into two by the frontier drawn between the British and French spheres—in the French sphere no attempt was made by the French at protection. (Barsoum, 1920d)

A frustrating foggy February in London elapsed, during which Barsoum endeavoured to fulfil his mission and communicate with as many decisions-makers as possible in the British capital. Barsoum wrote letters together with a memorandum of six points and a list of damages and reparations (Appendix 2) to the Prime Minster, David Lloyd George, the President of the Supreme Council and the Speaker of the Parliament. Barsoum visited the British Library daily, absorbed

2 His political advocacy on behalf of his people who used to call them Nation (Barsoum, 1920a) can be traced and followed up through his correspondences with decision makers (Abdul-Nour, 2001).

for hours in studying the tomes of Syriac and Arabic treasures and what the Orientalists had translated and written about the subject. Probably a great deal of material for his future writings was collected during these hard and anxious days in London (Barsoum, 1979).

Finally, Lord Curzon's secretary officially replied to confirm to Barsoum that:

> Earl Curzon of Kedleston acknowledges your letter and memorandum of 8th March and conveys his Lordship's assurance that the interest of your people will not be lost sight of when the moment for their consideration arrives. (Barsoum, 1920b)

The Great Powers, in their attempt to remove minorities as pawns in world politics, tried to have it both ways. Both by internationalizing the problem and also containing it as best they could, 'they were leaving the unborn League of Nations the thankless task of turning confusing words into purposeful action' (Fink, 2004, p. 264). Later in 1932, Iraq with diverse spectra of indigenous communities was persuaded to accept minority obligations as part of the terms of its admission to the League of Nations (Preece, 1997). The League of Nations demanded and received from the Iraqi government a formal declaration promising to guarantee the rights of foreigners and minorities, as well as to allow freedom of conscience and religion. In October 1932, Iraq's membership of the League of Nations was approved by a unanimous vote of the League's Assembly. Iraq thus became the first of the League of Nations Mandates to achieve full independence as a sovereign state (Tripp, 2007, p. 73).

Incidentally, at the time of writing, the battle for Mosul-Nineveh was announced on 17 October 2016 and remains in its infancy, leaving very little room for intuitive and axiomatic extrapolation. If and when peace prevails, the fabric of this ancient city should always be reflected in the fabric of the soul of its original indigenous diversity, otherwise it may as well be a ghost city or a necropolis. Terrifyingly, the tug-of-war militarily, politically, ethnically, religiously and eventually diplomatically could easily revitalize a reminder of 'The Mosul Problem 1918-1926', a century old open wound left in the regional collective memory when the League of Nations granted Mosul to Iraq under a British mandate

in 1926. This may now provide the *raison d'être* to unpack the perilous legacies of the Treaties of Sèvres and Lausanne 1923 (Beck, 1981; Tripp, 2007; Al-Jamil, 2017).

The *Sayfo* Centennial Commemorations and the Canonization of its Martyrs

The long-serving Syrian Orthodox Church Patriarch Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas (1980-2014)[3] had observed and reflected on the unfolding crises in Iraq since 2003 and on the displacement and arrival of thousands of Iraqi refugees to the then safety of Syria. The octogenarian patriarch observed: 'We are back to square one!' We need to resettle again the necessary infrastructure to provide relief. The aid and relief programme that the Church established to meet the needs of the survival of the 1915 massacre are needed today. This time we must provide destitute Iraqi refugees with necessary humanitarian aid. This need reminds the Syrian Orthodox leadership of the days almost a 100 years ago when the Church in Syria, Iraq and Jerusalem had to contain the influx of refugees driven out of their villages and cities in Tur Abdin during the consecutive atrocities of the Hamidian Massacres that re-occurred in 1894, 1896, (Duguid, 1973) and then culminated in deportation orders and the 1915 Massacre of *Sayfo*. During this time, the Syrian Orthodox Church lost thousands of its faithful see (Appendix 2 and Fig. 6). When the Syrian Crisis of 2011 started and escalated, peaceful Christians and Muslim communities were targeted in ancient cities such as Homs, Ma'loula and Aleppo. It was apparent to Patriarch Zakka I that a second Genocide, a second *Sayfo* was unfolding. Kidnapping of religious leaders became an accessible and effective tool of war. For the Syrian Orthodox Church leadership this culminated in a severe blow with the kidnapping of the most senior Archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim the Metropolitan of Aleppo, together with Bishop Paul Yazigi on 22 April 2014 as they were returning from a humanitarian mission to release kidnapped clergy (Oez and Abdul-Nour, 2016). Mor Gregorios was a close confidant and aide of Patriarch Zakka I. His magnetic appeal to the youth and to scholarship earned him as a young deacon in Mosul

3 See Ibrahim, 1981 and Abdul-Nour, 2005.

the esteemed Syriac title *Malfono* (teacher or wise man). Mor Gregorios' inclusive approach made him the *Factorem Ecclesiastis in the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Kourieh, 2016). Mor Gregorios and the supreme head of the church led the Syrian Orthodox Church in tandem as Patriarch and Catholicos in the golden days. The blow of this highly selective kidnapping of Mor Gregorios and the deafening silence enshrouding it, took its toll on the octogenarian patriarch. As the second *Sayfo* was emerging steadily and just before the commemoration of the centenary of *Sayfo*, the Syrian Orthodox Church received a further blow by losing its long serving and experienced patriarch on 21 March 2014. The late Patriarch Zakka I Iwas had been holding the fort firm, steady and intact throughout the last 35 turbulent years. His collective leadership style is a very hard task to follow and will be missed. Soon after, the Syrian Orthodox Synod elected a young and enthusiastic bishop, a disciple of Mor Gregorios, Mor Ignatius Aphrem II to be the 122nd Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and all the East. Aphrem II was installed on 29 May 2014 to preside over the Antiochian See of Peter in a sombre and moving ceremony. This was attended by wide national and international representations of ecumenical and inter-faith in support of the injured and vulnerable ancient Church and its young patriarch, who was entrusted with the hard and profound task of ecclesiastical responsibilities and leadership in a tumultuous era. The current patriarchate and headquarters of the Syrian Orthodox Church has been situated at the heart of Damascus since 1957. However, in recent history the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate had to relocate for second time since 1915 from Mardin in Turkey to Homs in Syria to Damascus, the new Antioch, the current capital of Syria by the Late Patriarch Jacoub III (1957-1980).[4]

Like the Apostle Peter the first Patriarch of Antioch, his 122nd successor, the new Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church today has to navigate the *Via Recta*, 'the Straight [and narrow] Street', in Arabic *Al-Shāri' al-Mustaqīm*, which runs east west and provides an exit from the old city of Damascus. Medhat Pasha built a lead shade over the *Via Recta,* as a far sighted preservation measure.

On the eleventh day of the Patriarchate of Aphrem II the Syrian Orthodox Church was struck with an unprecedented blow after the fall of Mosul on 9 June 2014. The Christians of Mosul, the largest,

4 See *The Times*, obituary, 1980.

most prosperous ancient stronghold of the Syrian Orthodox Church and the oldest continually inhabited city in the Orient, received an ultimatum to leave their city. This was a mirror image and a painful reminder of what happened a century ago in 1915, its second *Sayfo*.

> In less than three months, millennia-old communities in Mosul were decimated and irrevocably tore the social fabric of the once-diverse region. Now almost no members of the minority groups … live in Nineveh province. (Kikoler, 2015)

Entrusted with the heavy mandate to steer the Church through indeed a second *Sayfo*, this was a trying time for the new patriarch. Most of the Syrian Orthodox faithful were critically endangered not only in Mosul but in each and every ancient archdiocese in the Middle East. They were re-subjected to a ruthless campaign of displacement, and relentless ethno-religious cleansing which amounted to genocide and rendered them endangered in their homeland.

The centenary commemoration of the *Sayfo* 1915 was at the top of the new patriarch's agenda. An impressive programme was set. A competition was announced to produce an icon and crest or logo as part of a remarkable year-long commemorative programme. A logo and an artist's impression icon depicting vividly the events of the *Sayfo* were chosen and adopted (Fig. 6).

Many events marked the centennial commemorations of the *Sayfo* 1915, such as lectures, conferences, the opening of the Martyrs' Garden in the centre of Damascus. Monuments were also erected in different locations in Syria and in the diaspora. A special issue of the Patriarchal Journal covered the *Sayfo* commemorations (*Sayfo*, 1915).

Fortunately, in concluding the programme of the commemorations of *Sayfo* 1915, on Tuesday 21 June 2016, Patriarch Aphrem II unveiled a *Sayfo* monument in Al-Qāmishlī, a city with a considerable Syrian Orthodox presence located not far from the track of the highly politicised and romantic 'Orient Express', the luxurious train (Eames, 2005; McMeekin, 2010). This 'Line in the sand' and its overgrowth currently represent the volatile international borders between Syria and Turkey according to the Treaty of Lausanne1923. In the vicinity where thousands of Syrian Orthodox deportees crossed in 1915 the

railway track at the ancient city of Nisibis (Nuṣaybīn), refugees are to be housed in the safety of Al-Qāmishlī (Asfar, 2012). Concluding the events, a man disguised as a Syrian Orthodox priest with an explosive belt attempted to mingle with the crowd to reach the patriarch and detonate the bomb. Luckily this assailant was spotted by bodyguards; the perpetrator detonated his explosive belt before reaching the patriarch, causing mayhem and multiple fatalities. That is how the commemorations of 'the Year of the Sword' concluded with the trauma of gathering again body parts of martyrs. The young man who blew himself up with the explosive belt believed he would be a martyr for destroying Christians' lives.

Again as in the three and half year kidnapping saga of Mor Gregorios, no one claimed responsibility for such mayhem. No alibi was ever established for the targeting of the Syrian Orthodox Church's leaders. Such mysteries remain behind a wall of silence. Such a perpetual chill is sent down the spine as a vivid reminder that the ongoing second *Sayfo* is not a myth, nor is the *Sayfophobia* an unjustified overreaction.

However, the English saying 'a smooth sea never made a skilled sailor' is a heartening reminder. Such a horrendous experience did not deter the new patriarch. Turning the other cheek (Luke 6:29) is a survival tactic to help these persecuted and displaced Christians to forgive, forget and integrate in their new environments.

Sato is one of the few anthropologists with field experience among the Syrian Orthodox communities in Aleppo and Al-Qamishli, Syria (Sato, 2017). She has described as 'selective amnesia' the way the Syrian Orthodox communities coped with the martyrdom and mass immigration of their families to Syria and Iraq in 1915 and the arrival of the last caravan of the Edessan community to Aleppo in 1924 (Namiq, 1991; Sato, 2005). What is important to them is forging a peaceful future in their new home; dwelling on the agonies of the past is unhelpful.

However, the Syrian Orthodox is a Church of martyrs. Their liturgy is associated with the cult of saints with the celebration of the Eucharist dedicated to a particular saint and on the feast day of that saint which attracts pilgrims long enshrined in the lectionaries.[5] As the centenary of the *Sayfo* 1915 was approaching, Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim was reminded of the need for a specific Remembrance Day for the Christian Martyrs of the *Sayfo*.

5 For Syrian Orthodox spiritualities, see Murray, 1975; Abdul-Nour, 2002.

In his address to the Assembly of the Special Synod of Bishops for the Middle East under the auspices of Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican, October 2010 (O'Mahony and Flannery, 2010; Sandri, 2016), Mor Gregorios highlighted the fact that:

> We are the Children of martyrs. We must not forget the martyrs of the 19th and 20th centuries. My proposal is that Your Holiness adopt the idea of a single feast for the Christian martyrs universally … a unified day to remember martyrs is … another step towards Christian Unity. (Sandri, 2016)

Since the kidnapping of Mor Gregorios on 22 April 2013, a day has been agreed unilaterally by the Syrian Orthodox Synod to commemorate Syriac Martyrs, '*Sayfo*'—on 15 June. The chosen date coincides with the birthday of Patriarch Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum.

Stringent canonical regulations govern the Canonizations and its liturgy in the Syrian Orthodox Church. However, the events of 1915 and the innocent martyrs challenged the Churches and consequently its canonisation process. However, the pre-occupations of the Church with the priorities of welfare and resettlement of hundreds of thousands of genocide survivors who were ethno-religiously cleansed and scattered all the neighbouring countries and in further distant diasporas led to the deferment of the synodical deliberations, and any discussion and decision on the issue of canonizing the Syrian Orthodox genocide martyrs. The notion of collective martyrdom was also promoted in preparation for the centenary commemoration and the Church decided to canonize all Syrian Orthodox martyrs of the *Sayfo*.

It is interesting that after a long respite, the Armenian Orthodox Church restored the canonisation rite and canonised all martyred victims of the genocide on their genocide day on 24 April 2015.

This day is enshrined in the Armenian Church Liturgical Calendar as the 'Remembrance Day of the Holy Martyrs who died for their Faith and Homeland during the Armenian Genocide'.

The Armenian Genocide Centennial Holy Mass was celebrated by the Holy Pontiff at St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican on 12 April 2015. Pope Francis emphasized the importance of recognising and

condemning the Armenian Genocide thus contributing to the prevention of crimes of genocide.

The Syrian Orthodox Church preceded the canonization of genocide victims. In 1989, Patriarch Zakka I Iwas canonised the late Patriarch Elias III (1917-1932). He served throughout the First World War and steered the Church from his headquarters at the Monastery of Zafaran in Mardin in the vicinity of Diyarbekir, through the last turbulent years of the Ottoman Empire and the decimation of his communities in Turkey. Elias III himself became victim of the genocide but not a martyr. He witnessed first hand the Massacres of Diyarbekır in 1895 and 1915. Elias gave refuge to approximately 7,000 Armenian refugees in the Monastery of Mor Quryaqos, Tur Abdin. He was forced in 1922 to desert his patriarchates and the Syrian Orthodox Church has never been able to restore his ancient see which served it for seven centuries. He initially relocated to the safety of Homs in Syria, then to Mosul in Iraq; he spent some time at St Mark in Jerusalem and then visited the Syrian Orthodox communities in India where he died. Elias III's shrine became a pilgrimage mausoleum for thousands of Indian Orthodox who visit his shrine annually on 13 February; his Feast day. 2017 will mark the centennial of the last Syrian Orthodox Patriarchal consecration at the Monastery of Zafaran (Turkey).

The Vatican canonised the Syrian Catholic Bishop Flavianos Michael Melke (1858-1915). The Eparch of the Diocese of Gazireh in Syria, he was martyred during the *Sayfo* 1915. Born in Qalat Mari near Mardin and consecrated as a Syrian Orthodox monk at the Monastery of Zafaran in 1868, Patriarch Peter III (1872-1894) appointed Melke curator of the library of the Monastery of Zafaran. He then joined the Syrian Catholic Church. Earlier he escaped martyrdom when his church and house in Tur Abdin were sacked and burned during the massacres of 1895 which also led to the murder of many members of his parish including his elderly mother. He was arrested by the Ottoman authorities on 28 August 1915, alongside the Chaldean bishop of the city, Orahim Pillipus Yaqub (1848-1915) and both were martyred the day after. On 8 August 2015, Pope Francis approved his beatification after he determined that Flavianos Melke was killed for his faith. Flavianos Melke was beatified on 29 August 2015, on the centenary of his martyrdom.

What's in a name?
The G-word, *Sayfophobia* and citizenship.

Genocide is equivalent to the old Syriac word *Qṭol'amo*. It is a single hybrid neologism, a combination of *génos* (Greek for 'race, people') and *-cide* (Latin for 'to kill or killing'). It was coined in 1943 by Raphael Lemkin (1900 –1959), who was dismayed by the tragic events and atrocities of 1915-1918 against Christians in the Ottoman Empire. It was intended to be an expressive, agile and a powerful détente term meaning 'the practice of extermination of nations and ethnic groups' It initiated the UN Genocide Convention in 1948, which concluded with the General Assembly resolution that 'genocide is a crime under international law which the civilized world condemns, and for the commission of which principals and accomplices are punishable.'

Genocide became the most powerful rhetorical device which immortalized in a generation. A Google search today gives you more than 50 million entries for Genocide. This word may describe today the plight of millions of effected people, many summarized chapters of contemporary atrocities. This eight letter word is a term that has acquired such power that some have refused to utter it aloud, calling it 'the G-word' instead (de Waal, 2015). The G-word of contention has become a perpetual irritant that continually annoys some world leaders and governments 'in the wrong way'. Alas, so far the civilized international community has collectively failed to make Genocide an obsolete word. Systematic campaigns of killing and ethno-religious cleansing continue to critically endanger people in our global village today. Cleansing brings about the total or partial extermination of a particular targeted group of people or any groups as unfortunate collateral damage. Whichever of the 'Fifty Shades of the G-Word' are used as euphemisms, all religions adhere to a commanding moral code: Do not kill, means do not kill.

Sayfophobia

Regardless of how others acknowledge these tragic events in history, as the Prime Minster of Turkey Erdogan mentioned in his statements marking the 90th anniversary of Christians massacred in 1915

confirming that 'we have a shared pain.' His statement is consolidated with the Turkish proverb: '*Ateş düştüğü yeri yakar*—Fire burns where it falls.' Indeed, the Syrian Orthodox Christians and other traumatized parties were at the receiving end of both fire and fear in 1915. The Armenians refer to the time when Christians were massacred as the 'Meds Yeghem' (Great Calamity or Catastrophe). Syriac-speaking people called this time '*Sayfo*' (or the year of the sword) or as the title of a recent book described it: *La Marcia Senza Ritorno* ('The March without Return') (Giansoldati, 2015). These events have their potent resonance and left an indelible mark in the collective psyche and history of those affected communities, who were described as 'the Swords leftover.'

The suffering and the endurance of centuries of traumatizing reminiscences of these consecutive and relentless atrocities left a toll of psychological scars and consternation on these communities. The fear of these helpless and peaceful communities of a possible repetition of similar atrocities developed what may be best described and defined as *Sayfophobia* which is a phenomenon, a syndrome or symptom of a chronic trauma suffered by the people who witnessed and survived the atrocity of the *Sayfo* 1915 and the generations of their offspring. 'Pigeon jitters' is how Hrant Dink, the slain editor-in-chief of the Armenian newspaper *Agos* in Istanbul, defined Armenian fears.

The victimised may resort to therapeutic effects of their experiences in mental comfort zones, a phenomenon which was described, as noted earlier in this article, by an anthropologist who worked with the Syrian Orthodox communities in Syria and Iraq as 'selective amnesia' (Sato, 2005).

However, *Sayfophobia* keeps simmering on back burners but never subsides. Memories of Genocide together with the current events are chilling.

Full citizenship not micro-minorities should be the civilised way forward

Syrian Orthodox Church members know how they have structured the fragments of their memories into a discourse which captures their

identity, inner fears and their ambivalent position as citizens. They have undergone a questionable and impaired model of citizenship in modern states where they find refuge (Sato, 2006, 2007; Taylor, 2013).

The topic of this article will not be complete without touching on the complex issue of identity.[6] In the BBC's 2016 Reith Lectures, Appiah who specialises in moral and political philosophy issues of personal and political identity said:

> We live in a world where the language of identity pervades both our public and our private lives … There is much contention about the boundaries of all of these identities … Indeed, almost every identity grows out of conflict and contradiction, and their borders can be drawn in blood. And yet they can also see to fade in the blink of an historical eye. The demands of identity can seem irresistible at one moment, absurd at the next. Most of us swim easily in the swirling waters of our multiple affiliations most of the time, but we can be brought up short in moments when the currents of identity tug us excruciatingly in opposite directions. (Appiah, 2016)

It is basically the trigger-happy nature *of uncertainty* of the way recent events have evolved after the fall of Baghdad in 2003 which foment the resulting *re-ethnicising* and *re-sectarianising* of the region. The Arab Spring, mass exodus of Christians from Mosul in 2008, the crisis in Syria since 2011 and the silent mass exodus of Christians from Homs 2012, Ma'loula and other cities in Syria are disasters. The attack on religious symbols, which is evidently on the increase, is manifesting clearly in the current Syrian crisis. Kidnapping is becoming an effective tool of war and civil strife. The kidnapping and detention, since 22 April 2013, of the Archbishops of Aleppo, Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim and Paul Yaziji, (Oez and Abdul-Nour, 2016) is a case in point. It is a subtle ethno-religious cleansing technique and without a shred of doubt a factor which is driving indigenous Christians out of the region. The commemorations of the kidnapping of the archbishops of Aleppo and the remembrance of the genocide will forever coincide with Eastertide or Paschaltide as

6 For a narrative on the Syrian Orthodox identity, see Taylor (2013).

a reminder of the contemporary Golgotha and sends chills down the spines of Christians in the Middle East, which is becoming the chief cauldron of this contemporary disorder. What seems to be witnessed and endured in the globalisation of today is the reincarnation process of anarchy, a perennial tension in the world between forces of order and forces of disorder, where usually innocent people get trapped in the unfolding chaos between them and the events which define each era's particular character and players (Bull, 1977).

Eventually the fall of Mosul in 2014 and the campaign of a total ethno-religious cleansing of its ancient Christian communities, and their housing resulted in Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Christians were left licking their wounds in the political ambiguity of the region. They have discovered lately that even hope, pinned on the democratisation process and on any constitutional protection and safety net, was in tatters. Apparently, the committee in charge of drafting the Iraqi constitution ratified in 2005 lacked a Syrian Orthodox representative. Although the Iraqi constitution considered Syriac as the third spoken language in Iraq, it failed to consider the Syrian Orthodox communities as a recognised faith community in comparison with their co-ethno-religionist denominations the Chaldean and Assyrian Churches of the East. In effect, the constitution did not even consider the ancient indigenous faith group of Christians among the ancient diverse spectra of Iraqi multi-religious society which embraced Jews, Christians and Muslims: Sunni, Shi'i, Syriac, Armenian, Chaldean, Assyrian, Yazidis, Sabaean-Mandeans, Shabak, Kaka'i, etc. (Ghanīmah, 2002).

Understandably, drafting a constitution requires expert knowledge and experience; it is a thorny task in the best and safest of circumstances, let alone in Iraq after 2003. The executives of the committee entrusted with drafting the constitution have to navigate uncharted territories since the writing of the first Iraqi constitution in 1920s (Khaddūrī, 1939). With all the limitations imposed, each and every one of the deputies tried their utmost to serve and conserve the interest of their constituencies and members of their communities and to the best of their abilities, while vying to find a foothold in the evolving accumulating sectarian sand dunes. The Syrian Orthodox community has always had a relatively high percentage of qualified professional and technocrats who contributed on meritocratic bases to their respective

countries from the outset of parliaments since the mandate system, in the 1920s. They were elected deputies, minsters of state, county councillors, senior civil servants, academics and bureaucrats who served their countries efficiently and effectively in both Syria and Iraq right to the fall of Baghdad in 2003. Unfortunately, numerous straitjackets have restricted the flexibility of the formulation of the constitutional committee that was fraught with inconclusiveness. It lacked representatives from the Syrian Orthodox community and other communities, even in the consultative capacities in the constitutional and parliamentary subcommittees. This clearly reflected on the inclusivity and eventually functional impairment of the Iraqi institution.

Woodrow Wilson once said, 'The Constitution was not made to fit us like a straitjacket. In its elasticity [and inclusivity] lies its chief greatness.'

Therefore, after two millennia of existence in Iraq and all that suffering to initiate the democratisation process, to their peril, they realised that according to the Iraqi constitution as it stands, the Syrian Orthodox citizen can only be categorised in the religion section of the New National Identity Card, not as *'Suryān'* but as 'Other!'

Little did Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, the kidnapped and occulted, Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo, predict this scenario when he wrote his bestseller 'Accepting the Other' *(qabūl al-akhir)* (Ibrahim, 2006). The day will come when his ancient community in Iraq will constitutionally be 'the Other' in their motherland. The absence of Mor Gregorios at this juncture highlights how important, effective and visionary Church leadership matters and important and significant his role was. Mor Gregorios would have without any doubt worn the cap of Aphram I Barsoum and brought together the entire Syrian Orthodox Church's leaders, Christian politicians and specialist lay advisers in an ecumenical round table a type of gathering which can only described as Pope Francis called it 'ecumenism of blood' *(maskīniyyāt al-dam)*. With this round table he would have unpacked all the intra- and inter-Church impediments that had not been explained sufficiently clearly and courageously to the constitutional committee. Mor Gregorios would have gathered public opinion at large to make an informed, fair and lasting decision. In the absence of Mor Gregorios, this responsibility is an urgent priority for the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate. Priorities are vital.

Where is the wisdom in commemorating the centenary-old *Sayfo* 1915 while passively observing the ongoing second *Sayfo*?

Adding salt to all these injuries, some specialists and strategists in Iraqi politics seem to be challenged, entangled and easily running out of vocabulary and terminology as they try to fit and fix the Christian components of the Iraqi demography in the ongoing political scenarios. Minorities are a modern political compartmentalisation of a specific demographic grouping. In 1910-1911, the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* had no entry for 'minority.' The post-First World War 14th edition was published in 1929 with an entry for this loaded new term 'minority' which runs to eleven pages. Now in 2016, it seems the best option available for think-tank specialists who are challenged with the demographically disrupted communities like Christians in Iraq and Syria is to consider them as a demographic surplus. Hence, Christians are described as the 'micro-minorities' of Iraq or those Iraqis in a 'micro-minorities' situation (Knights, 2016) in the hope that, whatever the ambiguities of such term it will pass as slightly more politically correct than the notion of 'demographic surplus.' At best, these alternating terms imply that Christians in the Middle East today who continue on a trajectory of precipitous decline into virtual extinction are now at best a negligible trace of a spent and depleted community of human beings; they belong to a story or narrative that does not count anymore. Striking are the historical similarities, those Christians who survived the *Sayfo* 1915 to start the twentieth century branded as 'the leftovers of the swords' and managed to thrive through the twentieth century. Now they find themselves in the globalised and technically connected twenty-first century being reduced after the fall of Mosul in 2014 to the status of Citizens N, the type of human you find in IDP camps. Now, when the battle for the liberation of their home city Mosul is under way, they are (politically correctly) introduced as 'micro-minority'! It remains to be seen if Christians will be further reduced to the status of a 'nano-minority' after the liberation of Mosul. Such expressively obnoxious terms are not only unpalatable for Christians and any other civilised human beings and polity but may also be illegal as they imply that micro-minorities can only produce micro-citizens; this is in violation of the UN Human Rights Declaration. Why are indigenous Christian citizens of a modern state denied full rights of citizenship?

Make ethno-religious cleansing, genocide and *Sayfophobia* history

If international law and constitutions of civilized states can enforce the ratified protection of critically endangered creatures like the giant panda, koalas, Amur leopard, black rhino, cross river gorilla, hawksbill turtle, Asian elephant, vaquita, etc., alas, the extinction of the Christians and Yazidis of Iraq and Syria represent a humanitarian imperative. These critically endangered peaceful citizens have never qualified for an entry in the UN list of endangered species like the World Wildlife Fund!

It is rather untenable for the civilized world of the global village to enjoy the luxury of indifference that they have been indulging in since 1915. It is the ethical responsibility of the UN to enhance the human rights of the obviously ethno-religiously cleansed Christians and Yazidis who are endangered in their homeland in Iraq, Syria and the rest of the Middle East. Here they are enduring being IDPs under the auspices of the UN in politically volatile and disputed regions with no light at the end of the tunnel to their plight.

What are the prospects for a citizens' safety net for the Syrian Orthodox community in Iraq post 2003? What is sufficiently watertight and secure enough to protect their futures—short of a UN resolution to consider the Christians and Yazidis of Iraq as ethno-religiously cleansed? This amounts to a genocide, rendering them critically endangered communities in their homeland. Their status must be established in the national constitution to provide them with the security and protection that the Red Indians of America and the Aborigines of Australia enjoyed, before it is too late. Clearly, the pace of these travesty of these events has its vital impact on the disparagement and deprecations of the integrity of their identity, dignity and presence and the re-examining of the validity of co-existence and the concept of citizenship must be re-established as a secure safety valve in the modern world and consolidate the fear of such uncertainty and its psychological impact on the psyche of the Christians in general and the Syrian Orthodox in particular. The prevailing scenario can best be described as *Sayfophobia*. All this is being played out while the international community still indulges in its perpetual indifference (GJC, 2016).

The rights to religious freedom and freedom of conscience are widely regarded as the jewel in the crown of democracy: granting

and guaranteeing the peaceful co-existence of religiously diverse populations, which is essential and for long indispensable for the survival of Christians throughout the geographical remits of this article and beyond. Their rights must be enshrined in national and regional constitutions, backed by international laws and binding treaties, sustained and monitored by the UN. The capacity to maintain one's choice of religion freely without coercion by the state or other institutions; and the creation of a polity in which one's economic, civil, legal, or political status should be unaffected by one's religious beliefs is a key criterion going forward. While all members of a polity are supposed to be protected by this right, modern wisdom has it that religious minorities are its greatest beneficiaries and their ability to practise their traditions without fear of discrimination is a critical marker of a tolerant and civilized polity. The right to religious freedom marks an important litmus test of democracy.

Mosul has experienced many misfortunes in its long history. But for the first time in history, it must confront the prospect of the decimation of its diverse indigenous communities. Mosul's original indigenous inhabitants whether Muslim or Christian have been subjected to what is in Syriac the equivalent of 'Persécution sans frontières'.

Will the church bells in Mosul ring tomorrow? The two million dollar question remains to be answered. Will the civilised world today allow what happened to Christians at the beginning of the twentieth century in 1915 to be repeated in the twenty-first century? Genocides are happening again both physically and psychologically. Is having been for so long situated in the crosshairs of the converging targets of the region simply enough to justify *sayfophobia*?

There is no doubt that these enormous tragedies must be remembered today. However, at this moment of reckoning, an abiding hope for Christians in the Middle East is that yesterday's lessons should stimulate a rational stand and action now. History is a potent force, and this juncture is its contemporary milestone, which makes such action the ultimate litmus test for both ecclesiastical and temporal leaders.

Clearly, procrastination is extremely detrimental. This time round there should be no excuses for inaction.

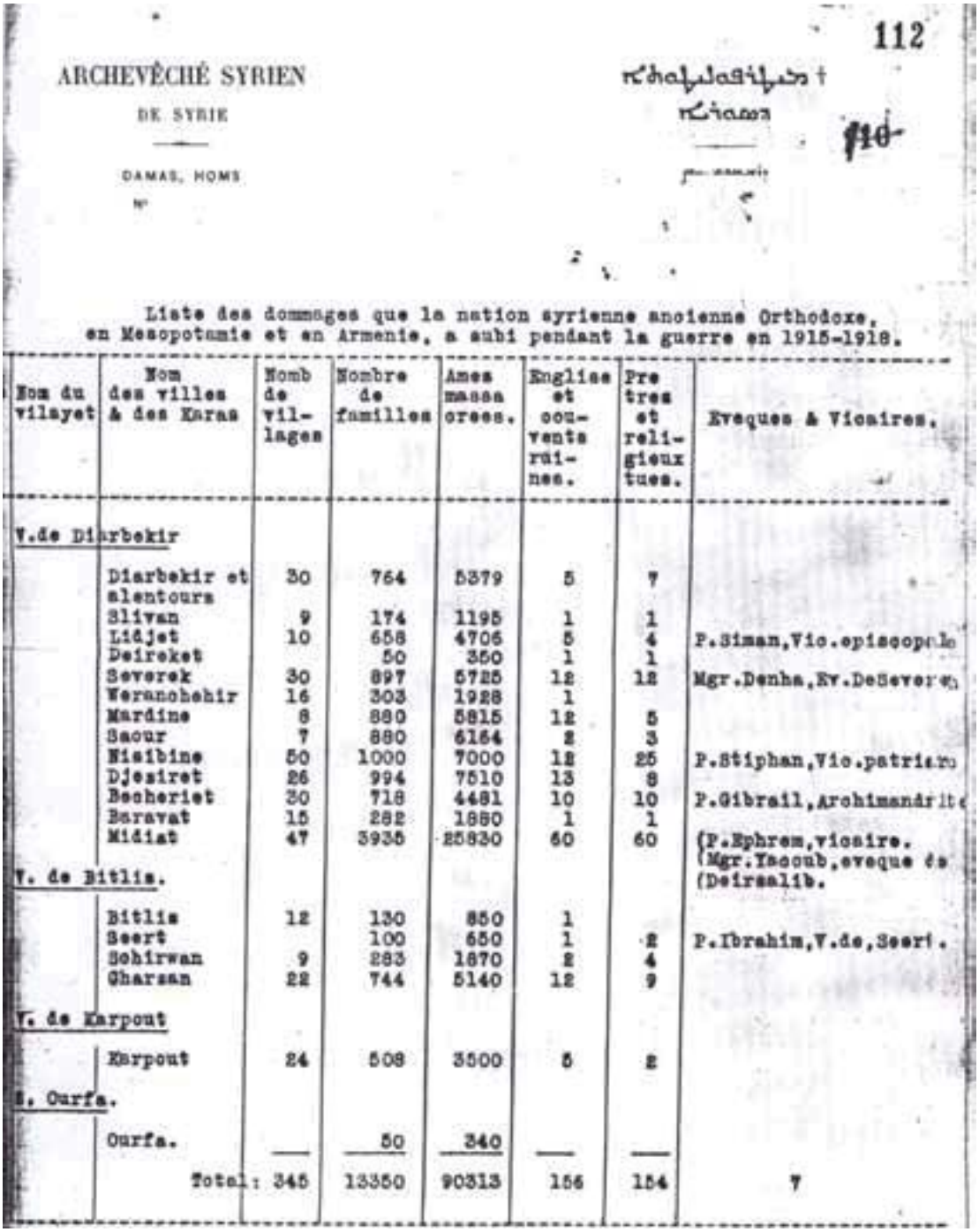
Appendix 1

Below is the translation of the Arabic text of the Hashemite Royal Court decree issued in 1917 by the Sharif of Mecca for the Protection of Syrian Orthodox and Armenians deportees from Turkey in to the Arab provinces (Mosul, Aleppo and Damascus), of the Ottoman Empire.

The Hashemite Royal Court
In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful.
We Thank Only God and No One but God.
From: Al-Husayn Ibn 'Ali, King of the Arab Home-Lands and Sheriff of Mecca and its Prince.
To: The Honourable and Admirable Princes. Prince Faisal [HRH The Hashemite Prince Faisal Ibn Al-Husayn bin Ali, later King Faisal I of Iraq (1921-1933)] and Prince Abd al-'Aziz al-Jarba [Sheikh of Shammar Tribe]
Greetings and the compassion of God and His blessings.
This letter is written from Umm Al-Qura (Mecca), on the 18th Rajab 1336, by the praise of God and no God except Him. We ask peace upon God's Prophet, His family and His companions (May peace be upon Him). We inform you that in our gratitude to Him we are in good health, strength and good grace. We pray to God that He may grant us, and you, His abundant grace.'
What is requested of you is to protect and take good care of everyone from the Jacobite [Syrian Orthodox] and Armenian communities living in your territories, frontiers and among your tribes; to help them in all of their affairs and defend them as you would defend yourselves, your properties and children, and provide everything they might need whether they are settled or moving from place to place, because they are the Protected People of the Muslims (Ahl Dimmat al-Muslimin)—about whom the prophet Muhammad (may God grant him His blessings and peace) said: 'Whoever takes from them even a rope, I will be his adversary on the day of Judgment.'
This among the most important things we require of you to do and expect you to accomplish, in view of your noble character and determination. May God be our and your guardian and provide you with His success. Peace be upon you with the mercy of God and His blessings'

Signed and sealed by
Al-Husayn Ibn 'Ali

Appendix 2



112

ARCHEVÊCHÉ SYRIEN

DE SYRIE

DAMAS, HOMS

Liste des dommages que la nation syrienne ancienne Orthodoxe, en Mesopotamie et en Armenie, a subi pendant la guerre en 1915-1918.

Nom du vilayet	Nom des villes & des Kazas	Nomb de villages	Nombre de familles	Ames massacrees.	Eglises et couvents ruines.	Pretres et religieux tues.	Eveques & Vicaires.
V.de Diarbekir							
	Diarbekir et alentours	30	764	5379	5	7	
	Slivan	9	174	1195	1	1	
	Lidjet	10	658	4706	5	4	P.Siman,Vic.episcopal
	Deireket		50	350	1	1	
	Severek	30	897	5725	12	12	Mgr.Denha,Ev.deSeverek
	Werancehir	16	303	1928	1		
	Mardine	8	880	5815	12	5	
	Saour	7	880	6164	2	3	
	Nisibine	50	1000	7000	18	25	P.Stiphan,Vic.patriar
	Djezaret	26	994	7510	13	8	
	Becheriet	30	718	4481	10	10	P.Gibrail,Archimandrite
	Baravat	15	282	1880	1	1	
	Midiat	47	3935	25830	60	60	(P.Ephrem,vicaire. (Mgr.Yacoub,eveque de (Deirzalib.
V. de Bitlis.							
	Bitlis	12	130	850	1		
	Seert		100	650	1	2	P.Ibrahim,V.de,Seert.
	Sohirwan	9	283	1870	2	4	
	Gharsan	22	744	5140	12	9	
V. de Kharpout							
	Kharpout	24	508	3500	5	2	
S. Ourfa.							
	Ourfa.	—	50	340	—	—	
	Total:	345	13350	90313	156	154	7

List of Damages and Losses in Lives and Properties Sustained by the Syrian Orthodox Community during 1915-1918. Document presented by Barsoum to Paris Peace Conference 1919. FO371/5130/2479/112. (Barsoum 1920c).

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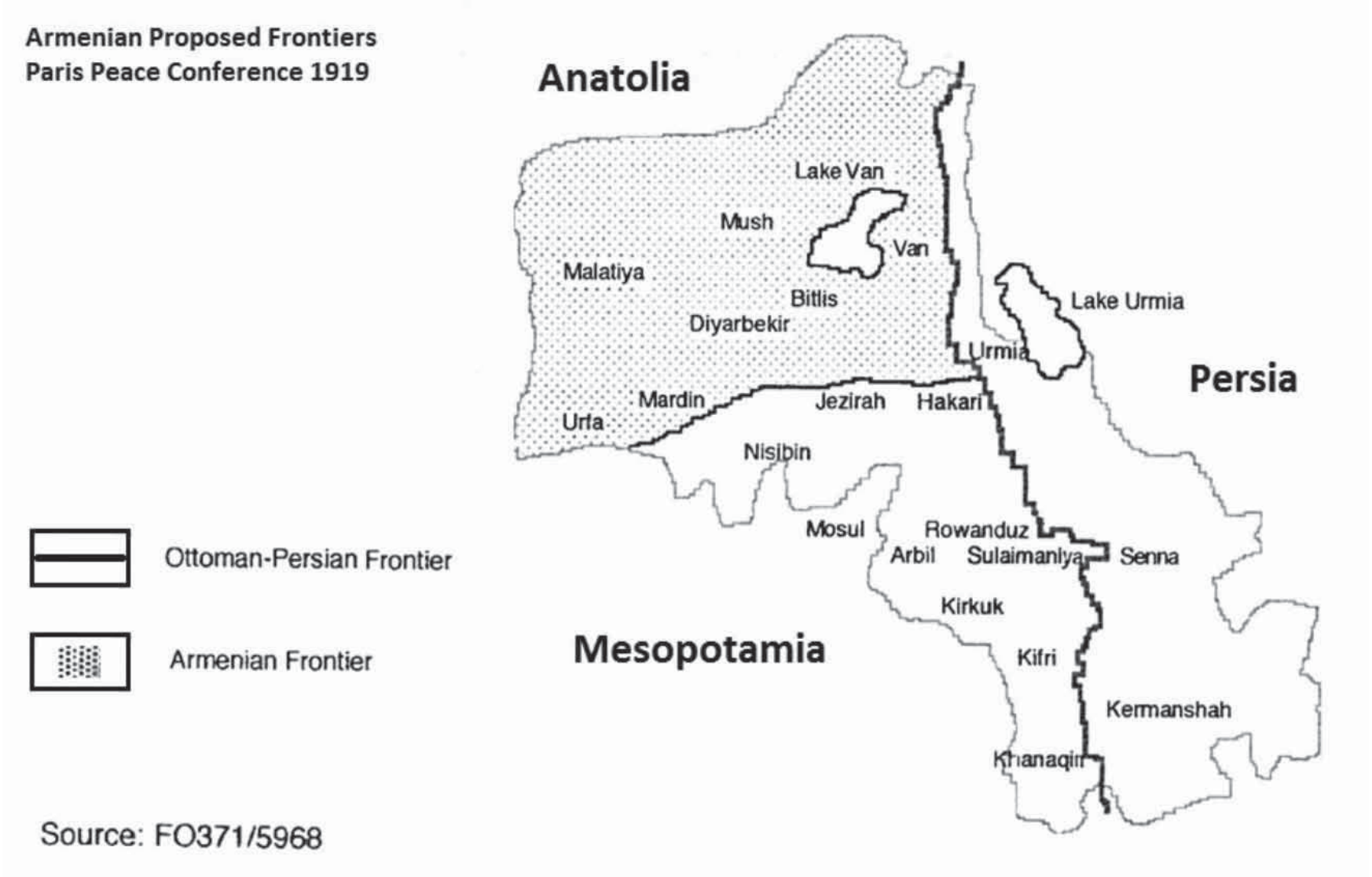


Fig. 1. Map of the Armenian Proposed Frontiers. Paris Peace Conference 1919.

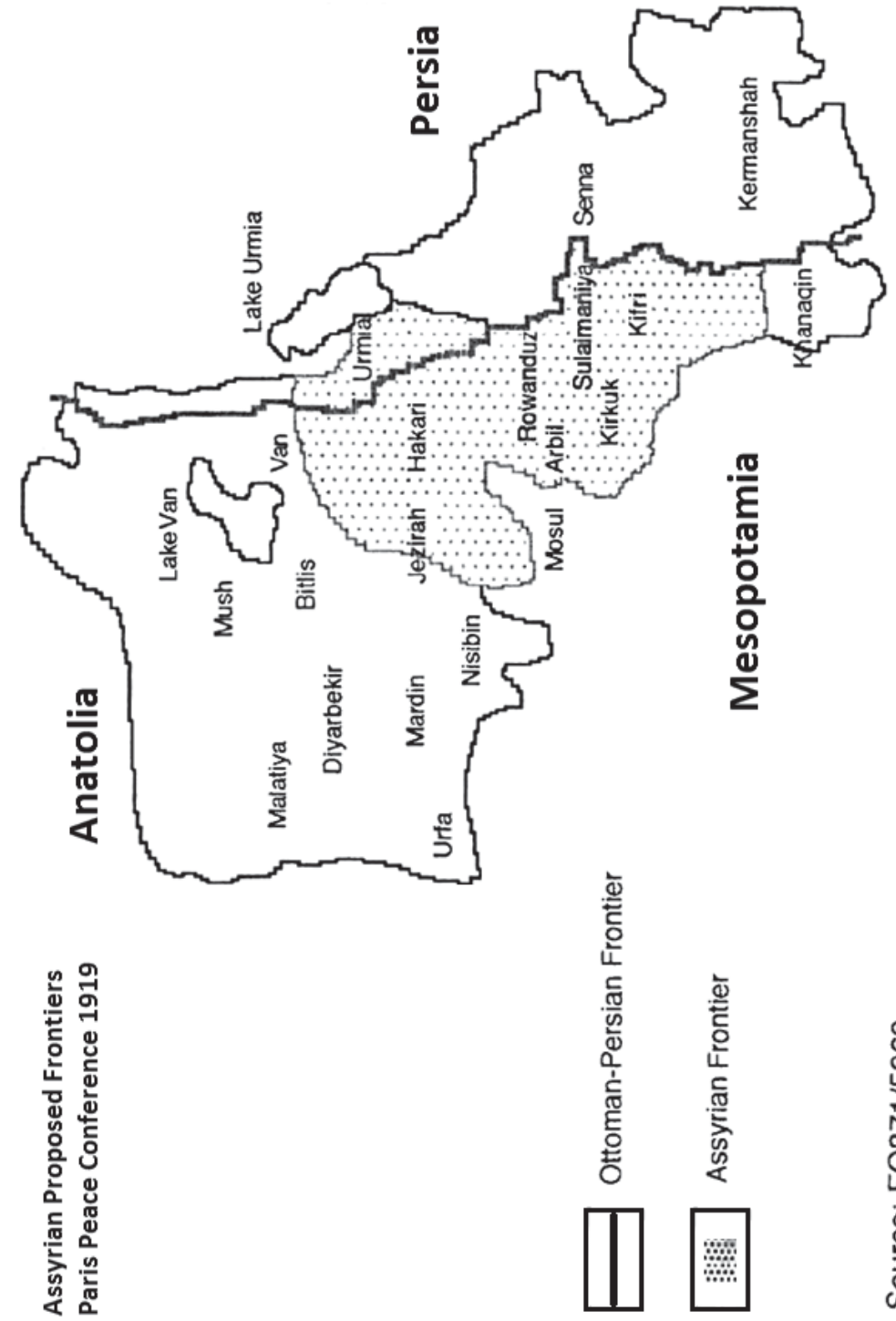


Fig. 2. Map of the Assyrian Proposed Frontiers. Paris Peace Conference 1919.

Fig. 3. Map of the Kurdish Proposed Frontiers. Paris Peace Conference 1919.

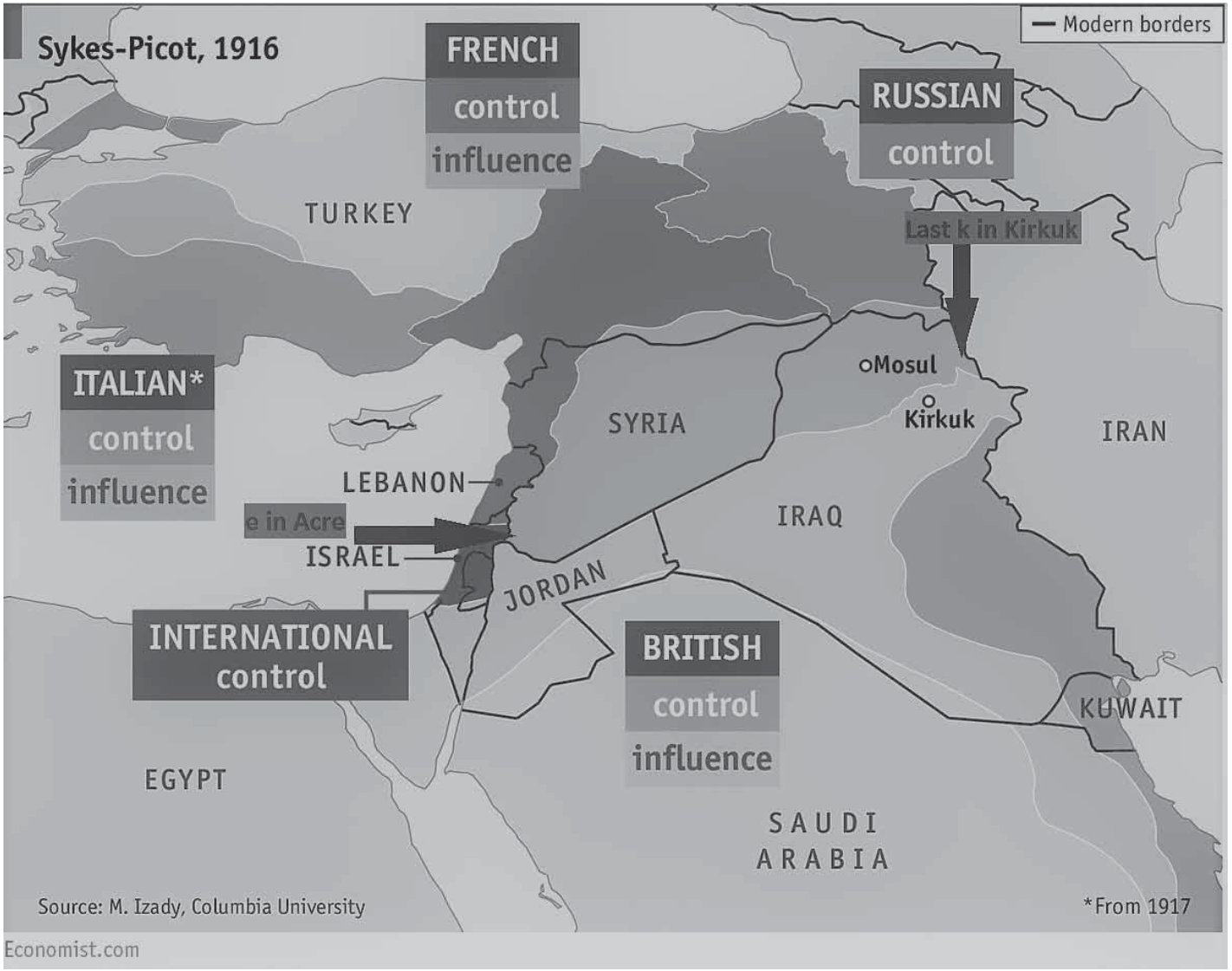


Fig. 4. Map of Sykes-Picot Agreement' Proposed Frontiers, 1916. The Economist May 16th 2016. http: www.economist.mblogs-graphicdetail201605daily-chart-13comblogsgraphicdetail201605daily-chart-13

Fig. 5. Newly Projected Geopolitical Map of the Region, (Danforth, 2016).

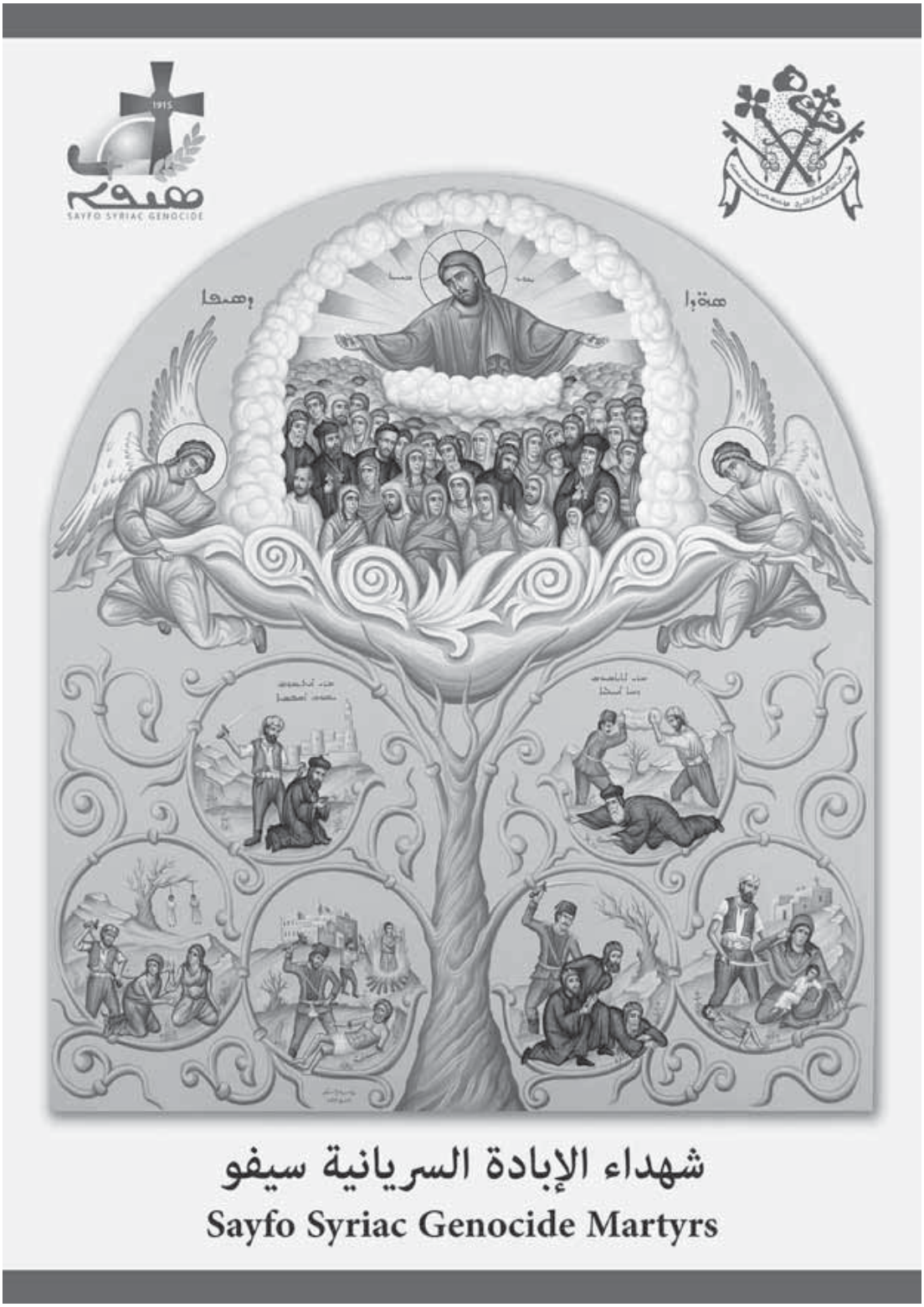


Fig. 6. Icon of the Sayfo Centenary 1915 - 2015. Adoted by the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. Crest of the Patriachate (top right). Sayfo Logo (top left).(© Syrian Orthodox Church.)

THE FAITHFUL PRESENCE OF THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX IN A CHALLENGING MILIEU: *SAYFOPHOBIA*, CITIZENSHIP, IDPS 1915-2015, AND BEYOND.

Aziz Abdul-Nour

> Between 1914 and 1918, my church [the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch] lost almost 100,000 faithful in the 'Sayfo' [Year of the Sword], and nearly the same number were uprooted from their homeland … The continuing memories of suffering from wounds that have not healed will keep historians busy throughout the third millennium.
>
> Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, 2001

This study, which is dedicated to Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, the abducted Archbishop of Aleppo since 22 April 2013 (Oez & Abdul-Nour, 2016), mainly focuses on the geopolitical span of half a century (1873-1923) between the Treaty of Berlin 1878 and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. This includes significant multi-transitional events and turning points which had lasting effects on our interpretation of the historical and present religious freedom, and our understanding of future co-existence of Christians in general, and the Syrian Orthodox in particular. The purpose of these endeavours was for Christians to maintain their identity and 'zero conflict' with their neighbours in their increasingly challenging Middle Eastern milieu. After centuries under the Ottoman Empire's rule, state-sponsored reforms and acculturation, Ottoman Christians were subjected to violent geopolitical practices, uprooted, ethno-religiously cleansed and they became critically endangered in their homeland (Parry, 1895; Joseph, 1983; Saka, 1983; O'Mahony, 2006; Brock, 2016, 2008; Sato, 2017).

Those who survived the deportation orders ('*Tehcīr* Law') and ('*Safar Barlek*') the Exodus of apocalyptic dimensions of 1915 resettled mainly in Syria and Iraq (Luck, 1925, Asfar, 2012). They embraced the painful

and fearful past with a measure of selective amnesia (Sato, 2005, 2006). They sought to acclimatize in order to survive and recover in the safety of Iraq and Syria, as well as in Lebanon, Trans-Jordan, Palestine and Turkey (Loosley, 2009; Dinno, 2017). A century later, Christians became again the collateral damage of comparable geopolitical violence which has rendered them now almost entirely 'internally displace persons' (IDPs) in a volatile region (OHCHR, 2014, 2015; MRG, 2015; UNHCR, 2016). Like their forefathers in 1915, they were back to square one, entering the third millennium in the last 'deportation caravan' (Namiq, 1991) assigned to 'displaced persons' camps, in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. They endured the lowest status of human existence under the UN Charter, deprived of dignity, integrity, and humanity. Basically, these Middle East Christians were a demographic pawn in a tumultuous region with no clear prospect of resettlement in their ancient homeland which is again now a political flash point. This article seeks to reposition those 'Living Stones', all those forgotten innocents, especially the Syrian Orthodox, whose story has been missing from the overall picture, in order to find synergies in paradoxes. Moreover, the Treaty of Lausanne 1923, which was the most intractable diplomatic negotiation after the First World War that ended the conflict, defined and established modern borders. It recognised Turkish sovereignty. Essentially, the deed of New Turkey, which offset the *Miṣāk-i Milī* ('National Pact, or National Oath') made by the last meeting of the Ottoman Parliament known as the Chamber of Deputies, *Meclis-i Mebusân*, on 28 January 1920 was a development that worried the allies. The Treaty of Lausanne is now approaching its centenary with an anticipated geopolitical paradigm shift which poses a grave challenge to the status quo.

This paper focuses particularly on the Syrian Orthodox Christians in their historical heartlands on the ancient trade routes as they crossed the idyllic Syriac corridors of the Fertile Crescent (Parry, 1892; Bell, 1913, 1982; Griffith, 2013). The geopolitical region in question embraces the three main Ottoman Eastern frontiers provinces *(wilāyāt)* facing the wider Arab world: Mosul, Aleppo, and Amid (Diyarbekir). These three units, historically, geographically, demographically and culturally, formed the Upper Mesopotamia triangle. Recently, special media attention has been given for different reasons to various portions of this triangle. Aleppo's corner emerged as the trophy of the fratricidal

attrition in the battle for Syria (Phillips, 2016). The Mosul apex within Iraq was given the intriguing name the 'Sunni triangle.' Although the term may have been coined and used in the narrow academic circles of Iraqi specialists, it was not until a month after the fall of Baghdad did this term become widespread and popularised when used in a *New York Times*' article on 10 June 2003. This depicted an omen of the impending deluge of sectarianism in Iraq post 2003. This strategically important economic-geopolitical bridge straddles the Tigris and Euphrates and acted as an East and West connection with the old world. Politically it has been the musical chair of many belligerent empires millennia before the arrival of the Ottomans (Kinross, 1977). Starting from the first emerging empire of the Assyrians in Nineveh, the destruction of its great capital was predicted by the prophet Nahum in 612 BC: 'Nineveh lay in ruins, who will pity you?' (Nahum 1: 7). This earned Nahum an eternal place in the Old Testament. All emperors were eager to mint coins with their head on them to proclaim that Mesopotamia had been conquered and subjugated to their power. There was not only a clash of civilisations but also cultural encounters and cross fertilisation (Frankopan, 2016).

Alexander the Great, who ruled most of the known ancient world of his day from a notional capital at Babylon, shot to fame in 330 BC when he defeated his Persian rival King Darius III of the Achaemenid Empire. This was in the vicinity of the city of Mosul-Nineveh, in the Valley of Nineveh, 'the valley of tears and blood', where most Christian towns and villages are located. The Valley of Nineveh has been the battlefield of successive inroads of all these empires and beyond. Now, as we go to press, the battle for Mosul's destiny is currently fought from house to house in these deserted Christian villages of the Valley of Nineveh, Mosul's eastern bank and the entire eastern hinterland of Mosul.

This region was and still is an important agricultural, commercial and cultural centre. Christianity reached this region if not—according to tradition—with the returning Magi, then definitely with the returning Mesopotamians who were present at the Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:9). Naturally, the converts were both Jews and Gentiles. They were then first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 6:26), they endeavoured to live peacefully side-by-side in relative healthy, wealthy and tranquil co-existence.

The pagan house in Mosul city centre where St Thomas the apostle resided during his stay in Mosul-Nineveh, eventually became the Church of St Thomas. This oldest functioning Syrian Orthodox Church in Iraq became a worldwide destination for pilgrims when the relic of St Thomas was discovered during the church restoration work directed in 1963 by Bishop Zakka Iwas (later Patriarch Zakka I, 1980-2014) (Ibrahim, 1981, Abdul-Nour, 2005). Alas, the bell of the last Eucharist celebrated in this church rang on the eve of the fall of Mosul on 9 June 2014. Since then entire Christian community members of Mosul, regardless of their denominations, were ethno-religiously cleansed and were given an ultimatum to leave the city of Mosul by noon on 19 June 2014 and eventually the Valley of Nineveh on 7 August 2014. This brought to a close two millennia of Christianity in Mosul-Nineveh. Mosul has not since heard a single toll of any bell from its ancient churches; not a single Christian is left in the city. The private properties and ecclesiastical endowments of the Syrian Orthodox were confiscated. Each house was branded with the Arabic letter N (ن) to depict that the citizen-N who once lived here was a Nazarene—*Naṣārā,* which is a pejorative Arabic word for Christians. Unfortunately for Christians in the Near East, their ancient homeland has been and still is one of the most challenging regions in the world. This is a result of the long-lasting entanglement and ongoing plethora of conflicts that the Christians have had to (and continue to) endure. (For Christianity in the Middle East, see O'Mahony and Loosley, 2010 and O'Mahony, 2014.)

The advent of Islam and the Arab conquest of the region from the seventh century took place under the Rightly Guided Caliphs (632-661), and their successors, the Umayyads (661-750) and the 'Abbāsids (750-1258).

Muslim rulers were not interested in dogmatic differences between Christians in their domains or in the outcome of the Council of Ephesus (431) or Christianity's crossroads at Chalcedon (451). The resultant three-way split in Eastern Christianity was effectively fossilised and cut off from the Chalcedonian tradition (Constantinople and Rome), from the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Church of the East. Christians were all living under Muslim rule (Brock, 2005). Christians were officially regarded as *ahl al-dhimmah*—(*dhimmīs*) (Bosworth, 2012). The state was obliged to protect the people who

were basically known to Muslims as 'people of the Book' (Jews and Christians) including the community's life, property, and freedom of religion and worship. In exchange, *dhimmīs* were required to be loyal to the empire and to contribute to its coffers by paying the capitation or poll tax *(Jizyah)*, while Muslim subjects paid *Zakāt*, a set proportion of one's wealth to charity (Tritton, 1930; Bosworth, 2012). The *dhimmī* concept regulated inter-faith relationships among subjects who were governed by reciprocal tolerance, although this fluctuated from time to time, place to place, and ruler to ruler. There was little change in the status quo (Morony, 1974, 1984).

The Seljuk Turks seized power in Baghdad in the eleventh century, only to be overthrown by the Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan (1162-1227) which started the Mongol invasions that conquered most of Eurasia. A successor Hulagu Khan (1218-1265) was supposed to be friendly towards Christians. His mother and wife were Christians of the Ancient Church of the East. Hulagu Khan conquered Baghdad on 10 February 1258, he pillaged the great and glorious city; the waters of the Tigris ran red and then black with the ink of the treasure of the Grand Library of Baghdad. Then Timur the Lame (1336-1405) had his turn. The invaders were, again, indiscriminate in their persecution of the populace in general and Christians in particular. The consecutive campaigns of the Mongols and others had a great impact on the Syrian Orthodox Church especially after the ransacking of Baghdad and the ancient city of Tikrit, (Fiey, 1980). Tikrit was the long established see of the Syrian Orthodox Catholicos (or Maphrian) of the East, the second in ecclesiastical command after the Patriarch (Oez, 2012). The entire Syrian Orthodox Church community of Baghdad and Tikrit were dislodged *en masse* together with their Catholicos. The survivors reached the safety of Mosul. Tikrit never recovered its status as a see of the Catholicos of the East and a stronghold of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Iraq. The Catholicosate (or Catholicoi) of the East alternated its seat between Mosul and the fourth-century ancient monastery of Mor Matta, (Yacoub III, 1961) until the abolition of the Catholicosate in the Syrian Orthodox Church in 1856.

The Ottomans emerged fully after the fall of the ancient city of Byzantium, Constantinople, the then capital city of the shrunken Byzantine empire on 29 May 1453. The 90th Patriarch of Antioch and all the East for the Syrian Orthodox, Mor Ignatius Behnam Al-Hadaly

of Bartella (1445-1454), was 681 miles or 1096 km away, as the crow flies, celebrating the Eucharist of the 8th anniversary of the succession in the church of the citadel-like Monastery of Dair al-Za'faran ('Saffron Monastery', or the Monastery of St Ananias). This monastery was established in 493 AD and then in 1165 AD it became the Syrian Orthodox's Patriarchal headquarters, in Mardin in the province of Diyarbekir, South East Turkey (Zakka I, 1983;Yacoub III, Parry, 1895). Initially, such changes may have brought about an ecclesiastical sigh of relief at the discomfort of having to live with an established church which evolved and existed since the Council of Chalcedon 451 AD. It looked down on the rest of Christendom from the capital of the Byzantine Empire (Menze, 2008). However, there was a half century of a political tug-of-war in the region and plenty of water mixed with blood passed under the Mesopotamian bridges. Political and cultural repercussions of a new era and new reality were marked by such a major event in history in the Near East where then most of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox co-existed (Norwich, 1995, 1997).

Sultan Selim I (1512-1520) was best known as Selim the Grim. He was the first Sultan to inherit the Sultanate of the House of Ottoman by eliminating his brothers, which were traditional and legalised acts of succession. This seems to have begun with Bayezid I (1389-1402). Such practices remained a legal standard (Fisher, 1964). Historians oversimplified this period by concentrating on blood thirsty conquests. This may have obscured Selim I's intellectual, artistic and shrewd traits and interests in foreign relations. He befriended and respected men of learning and used their talent in his government. By the age of fifty, Selim I emerged victorious in the Battle of Chaldiran, 23 August 1514 (Akçe, 2015), over Shah Ismail I (1505-1524), the founder of the Safavid Empire. Ismail I converted Iran from Sunni to Shi'ah and played a key role in the rise of Twelver Shi'ah Islam, (Newman, 2008). No one could deny that it was Selim's conquests of Persia, Anatolia and Egypt which paved the way for the Ottoman Empire to reach its pinnacle under his son Suleiman I (1520-1566) (Magnificent) the Lawgiver (*Qānūnī*). He brought all provinces in Eastern Anatolia together encompassing Western Armenia and Mesopotamia, the Levant in 1533. Symbolically, Baghdad, not Constantinople, is the seat of the Caliphate of the Sunni world. To claim the Caliphate and assume the title of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques *(Khādim al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn),* it was

paramount for Suleiman I to be present when his army re-conquered Baghdad. Suleiman I entered the old capital of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate victoriously and immediately ordered the restoration of the tomb of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah (767-699). The founder of the Sunni Ḥanafī school of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and other Sunni shrines were destroyed by Ismail I. It seems what we witnessed of indiscriminate destruction, sacrileges and urbicide in Mosul and Aleppo are not recent practice. (Kinross, 1977).

Bringing the region and its multi-ethno-religious communities together under a new reality was ushered in by the hegemony and eventual permanent conquest of the emerging Ottoman Empire. This ruled the region through many wars and treaties until the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 and its aftermath (Harrow, 2015).

Reaya of the Ottoman Millet System and the effect of *Tanẓīmât* and Capitulations

For three centuries, the three multi-ethno-religiously diverse eastern *Wilāyahs* lived a static life. Politics were the concern of only a few in the centres of the *Wilāyahs*, most of them local notables and Turkish officials. The rural and tribes people were disenfranchised from participation in political life and force was the only language used between them and the authorities. The ancient Christian communities, subjects of the Ottoman Empire, initially essentially belonged to the Orthodox Churches, both Oriental Orthodox (Ephesian) and Eastern Orthodox (Chalcedonian). They were all considered *Dhimmī*, their denominations were completely ignored and they were all dealt with uniformly. Shortly after the fall off Constantinople, the Ottomans introduced the millet system (from the Arabic word *millah* which means 'nation, community') to regulate the administration of different millet within the empire. It gave religious/ethnic/geographical communities a sort of communal autonomy with a limited amount of power to regulate their own affairs under the overall supremacy of the Ottoman administration. The millet system was not only oblivious to dogma and denominations but also deprived Dhimmi of all forms of political participation (Bin Talal, 1994; Harrow, 2014; Gibbons, 2014).

The millet system in the Ottoman Empire, however, did allow people or confessional communities to be grouped by religious confession as opposed to nationality or ethnicity, which was more consistent with the existing social structure. People were able to represent themselves more effectively within a group rather than as individuals.

For indigenous Orthodox Christians of the empire, however unsatisfactory the millet system, under the circumstances it was eminently suitable and functional system that eliminated the religious Apartheid of the Byzantine Empire. The millet system successfully compartmentalised, on an equal footing, the entire indigenous Orthodox communities, whether urban or rural, formed within the Ottoman Empire into a class called: *the Reaya* (from Arabic *raʿāyā*—a plural of *raʿiyah,* 'flock, subject'). The Orthodox *Raʿa*ya belonged to two main ecclesiastical/temporal authorities: the *Rum Millet (millet-i Rūm)*, the then established Church of the Byzantium Empire with a long established Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Phanar quarter of Constantinople, which until 1453, had been the centre of Orthodox Christianity, (Anagnostopoulos, 2014). The Armenian Orthodox *Ermeni Millet (millet-i Ermeni)* was a non-established Church and never previously allowed to officially operate from Constantinople during the Byzantine Empire. In implementing the institutionalisation of the millet system through only two of the main Christian *Dhimmī* communities living in the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman addressed this issue in 1461 by inviting Bishop Yovakim of Bursa (1461-78) to Constantinople and bestowing upon him the title of patriarch, entrusting him with the ecclesiastical and civil government of all Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. In effect, the unification of the Armenian people was formally legitimised by the institution of the *Ermeni millet* (Nersessian, 2015). The Jewish community the *Millet-i Yahud* was entrusted to the Grand Rabbi of Istanbul. The millet system operated according to pyramidal and hierarchical principles. The Ottoman authorities recognised the patriarch as the highest religious and political leader of a loyal people or nation *(millet-i sadıka),* since they lived in harmony with the new rulers of Anatolia. Both patriarchs were equally granted *Imperial bérats* (titles of privileges given to the lay or clerical officials on behalf of the Ottoman state) the official title of *Millet-Bashi* (ethnarch) of their respective churches. They were also recognised and mandated under

the millet system with the official responsibility to look after the ecclesiastical and temporal affairs of all other indigenous Orthodox denominations which became subjects of the Sultan.

The Ecumenical Patriarch, at Constantinople of the *Rum Millet (millet-i Rūm)* looked after all Eastern Orthodox Churches in the Ottoman Empire (Albanians, Arabs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Russians, Serbs and Vlachs Orthodox).

The successful Armenian patriarchs who now also resided at and operated from Constantinople were granted officially temporal responsibility for the Oriental Orthodox (Armenians, Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian Orthodox) and all ethnic Armenians irrespective of whether they belonged to the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church or the Armenian Protestant Church (which was formed in the nineteenth century).

If and when a new patriarch is elected to any of those Churches, the patriarch would have to apply in person for their official *bérats or Firmān* through the office of the *Millet-Bashi* in Istanbul who is responsible for the temporal affairs of that particular Church. Who would launch the application for *bérats* at the Sublime Porte (*Bāb-ı Hümāyūn* or *Bāb-ı ʻĀlī*). Considering that the elected patriarch had to go in person to Istanbul to initiate the bureaucratic process of obtaining the Imperial *bérat*, this could take a very long time. In addition to all the expenses involved was the potential danger of travelling between the patriarchate headquarters in Mardin and Istanbul. Many Syrian Orthodox patriarchs in the past decided to bypass this demanding process and simply said that: 'The Cross is my best *bérat*.'

The millet system kept evolving further as it was implemented under different Sultans. Ottoman scholars differ in their interpretation of both this specific administrative system, the *Dhimmī* and *Millet*, some may consider this as religious apartheid, at best 'second class'. Others consider the millet an example of pre-modern religious pluralism (Hasluck, 1925).

The Anglo-Ottoman Trade Pact of 1838 signed by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) opened the empire's market to imports of Western products. This imposed a new phase of reforms which have become known in history as the *Tanẓīmāt*—'reorganisation' or 'reform'.

The chronological starting point for these was the *Tanẓīmāt* Reform period (1839-1876). This is considered to be the issuing of the imperial decree of 'The Illustrious Rescript' (known as *Haṭṭ-i Şerif*)

in 1839 under auspices of Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) who was proclaimed as Mahmud the Just. However, these were brought about in tandem in co-operation between his Grand Vizer Reşid Mehmed Pasha (1829-1833) and Sir Stafford Canning (1786-1880), the long-time British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (Lane-Poole, 1890).

Haṭṭ-i Şerif contained declarations of equality, freedom, and isonomy by which the Ottoman state bound itself to treat its non-Muslim subjects. The reforms sought to grant emancipation to non-Muslim subjects of the empire and to integrate non-Turks more thoroughly into Ottoman society by enhancing their civil liberties and granting them equality throughout the empire. The reforms encouraged Ottomanism among the diverse ethnic groups of the empire, attempting to stem the tide of nationalist movements within the multi-national Ottoman Empire.

Sultan Abdul-Majid (1839-1861) swiftly rejected a Russian ultimatum claiming protectorate over Christians in Turkey. He declared his commitments to reform immediately following the end of the Crimean War (1853-1856). The Ottomans under Abdul-Majid passed the sweeping famous decree of the Imperial Rescript known as *Haṭṭ-i Hümayūn* in 1856 (Davidson, 1963). Scholars list some of the key elements of *Haṭṭ-i Hümayūn*: the guarantee of freedom of religion; abolition of distinction based upon language, race, or religion; the replacement of *shari'ah* courts with mixed courts for commercial and criminal suits involving Muslims and non-Muslims (historians point out that in practice formal and informal discriminations against non-Muslims continued unchecked [Masters, 2001]); and the dropping of the terms *ahl al-dhimmah* or *reaya* in favour of *gayrimüslimler* (non-Muslims). (See Masters, 2001.)

The *Tanẓīmāt* era brought specific regulations called 'Regulation of the Armenian Nation' *(Nizâmnâme-i Millet-i Ermeniyân*) which was introduced on 29 March 1863, over the millet organization. This granted extensive privileges and autonomy concerning self-governance. Soon the Ottoman Empire passed another regulation over *Nizâmnâme-i Millet-i Ermeniyân* developed by the Patriarchate Assemblies of Armenians, which was named as the *Islahat Fermânı* ('Firman of the Reforms'). The 'Firman of the Reforms' gave immense privileges to the Armenians, which formed a 'governance in governance' to eliminate the aristocratic dominance of the Armenian nobles by development

of the political strata in the society (Nersessian, 2014; Gibbons 2014). This was not without serious repercussions and stress over Ottoman political and administrative structures.

During the governorship of Midhat Pasha (1869-1871) the reformer Grand Vizer of Sultan Abdul-Aziz (1861-1976), masterminded the first constitutional monarchic regime, and bargained with the 34th Sultan Abdulhamit (1876-1909) to start the constitutional process as a condition of his enthronement, a promise that was not kept and the First Constitutional Era (1876–1878) lasted for two years only. On 5 February 1878 Abdulhamit sent Midhat in to exile and adjourned the parliament indefinitely on 13 February 1878, (Midhat, 1909). This ushered in an era of absolute authoritarianism which lasted 30 years. The party of Union and Progress obliged Abdulhamit to promulgate once more the Constitutional Monarchy on 23 July 1908. Soon Abdulhamit was dethroned by five members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) *(Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti)*. They claimed that with their efforts democracy that is inspired by the French slogan of liberty, equality and fraternity was prevailing in Turkey (Karpat, 2001).

The *Tanẓīmāt* reforms affected the character of the millets. To understand the importance of the reforms it is necessary to understand the 'development' phases of each millet, or rather the new relationships created either between or within millets. In addition, their relations to the concessions system were provided by the Capitulations (extraterritorial rights of Europeans).

The Ottomans carefully considered their obligations under the Capitulations. This was an agreement that gave concessions and immunity to European powers in the Ottoman Empire. The earliest of these Capitulations is that of 1535 with Francis I (1494-1547) who formed a Franco-Ottoman alliance with Suleiman I. These concessions which initially were given to the French included ambassadors and consuls who were to have ex-territorial jurisdiction over their citizens, to enjoy inviolability of domicile, the liberty to travel in all parts of the Ottoman Empire, to carry on trade according to their own laws, to be free from all duties save of customs duties, to have religious freedom and liberty of worship. Eventually, the French and other nations had in effect *imperia in imperio* (Angell, 1901). Britain received such a concession in 1583, the Netherlands in 1609, and Austria in 1615.

The religious freedom clause invited an influx of Christian missionaries: Jesuit, Capuchin, Carmelites and Dominicans and then Protestants and Evangelicals to provide Ottoman citizens with educational and medical services. As open proselytising was forbidden among Muslims, therefore missionaries were most active among indigenous Christians in all three provinces under study. Soon a number of the Syrian Orthodox clergy and lay were proselytised, converted and entered into communion with Rome and formed their own Catholic Uniate Churches. Members of the the Church of the East formed the Chaldean Catholic Church (Ghanīmah, 1998; Joseph, 2000; Flannery 2008; Wilmshurst, 2011; Rassam, 2014).

Due to the difficulties of Ottoman imposed building regulations on new churches and places of worship, the French ambassador and consuls had to resort to exercising their power, privilege, protection and influence under the Capitulations to secure ecclesiastical properties for the Catholic Uniate. For this end Syrian Orthodox churches, monasteries, schools and cemeteries were confiscated in the provinces Mosul, Aleppo and Diyarbekir and their environs, leaving the Orthodox communities without churches, monasteries and cemeteries.

The Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire gave the European powers immunity to protect the rights of their citizens within the empire. These included the French Roman Catholics, British Protestants and other groups. The Russians became formal Protectors of Eastern Orthodox groups.

Furthermore, the French ambassador interfered with the sublime port and was successful in obtaining separate millet status for all the emerging Catholic Uniate Churches—Syrian, Armenian and Greek. During the reign of Mahmud II, an Imperial Edict dated 21 Rejeb 1246 AH correspond to 24 May 1831 was issued to established the Catholic as a separate millet in the Ottoman Empire (Frazee, 1982).

The British Vice-Consul HE Wilkie Young reflected in his interesting dispatch from Mosul on 28 January 1909 on the work of the Catholic and Protestant missions in the city of Mosul:

> A Roman Catholic Mission was established here by Capucins in the 17th century and has been maintained continuously since. It is now in the hands of 13 Dominican Fathers and numerous Nuns. They have a very fine church

> and admirable schools giving instruction free to over a thousand pupils.
> The Pope is represented in Mesopotamia by a Delegate, Monseigneur Drure, [Désiré-Jean Drure, OCD (5 Mar 1904–27 May 1917)], who resides at Mosul. The funds by which the Delegation is supported, with considerable state, were bequeathed for this express purpose by a French lady more than two centuries ago on condition that the Papal representative should always be a Frenchman. (Young, 1909)

Later the Church Missionary Society (CMS) established a printing press in Malta in 1815 to print Bibles and religious tracts in Arabic. CMS sent its Anglican missionaries, as early as 1820s, to those Ottoman provinces followed by missionaries from the Presbyterian Church in America co-ordinated by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission to work among the indigenous Christians communities of the Ottoman Empire (Southgate, 1844; Ghanimah, 1998).

The British Vice-Consul HE Wilkie Young also described the work of CMS in Mosul in his dispatch from Mosul in January 1909.

> The Church Missionary Society maintains a School here which is attended by about 200 pupils, Protestant, Jacobite [*Suryān or old Syrians* or Syrian Orthodox] and a few Moslem. The most important branch of its work, however, is its Medical Mission … . During two years this Missions seems to have earned the respect and gratitude of all classes of the population … . It is easy to understand the eagerness with which … the establishment of the proposed Hospital are awaited.
> Though, thanks to the efforts of the French and English Missions, the Christians have made some progress. (Young, 1909)

Almost 20 years after granting a full millet status to Catholics in the empire. An Imperial Edict, dated Moharrem 1267/November 1850, was issued during the reign of Sultan Abdul-Majid to establish the emerging Protestant Churches and its community as a separate

Protestant millet in the Ottoman Empire. For details of protestant and evangelical missionaries Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire, (see Southgate, 1844; Joseph, 1983, 2000; Coakley, 1992; Ghanīmah, 1998).

In the same dispatch of 28 January 1909 Wilkie Young reflected on the diverse demographic spectra of Jews, Christians and Muslims living within the wall of the city of Mosul:

> Anything approaching an exact estimate is not obtainable, the population having hitherto successfully resisted all attempts to register their women: and, as usual in oriental cities but perhaps more so in Mosul than elsewhere, a very large proportion of the children not being entered at all. The total cannot, however, be far short of 100,000 of these; nine-tenths are Moslems and the remainder Christians and Jews.
>
> The total of the Christians in Mosul probably does not exceed 9,000. They are distributed among the following denominations: about 3,000 Chaldean Catholics, they have seven churches, twenty-one Priests and four schools which are attended by about 350 pupils. The rest of the children of this denomination attend the schools of the Dominican Mission. 2,500 Syrian Catholics, they have three churches, fifteen Priests and three Schools. There were 3,000 Jacobites or old Syrians [Syrian Orthodox]. They have four churches, four Priests and three schools attended by about 200 children, the rest of them attend the School of the English Mission. 40 Armenian families, 27 Protestants families and 8 Greeks Orthodox families, each have its Church. (Young, 1909)

Considering Wilkie Young estimated statistics, collated various data from many travelogues and other sources, it shows that the Syrian (Orthodox and Catholic) communities were the largest, most thriving and influential indigenous group in Mosul and other important Mesopotamian urban centres, with links to Syrian Orthodox networks along the Mesopotamian Syriac corridors from Istanbul to India. Genealogical studies have shown that missionary activities along these Syriac corridors were most active among the Syrian Orthodox. So

the entire Syrian Catholic and most of the Protestant communities were drawn from the Syrian Orthodox community and to a lesser degree from the Church of the East. (For a genealogical study, see: Ghanīmah, 1998.)

Vice-Consul Wilkie Young went further to document his impression of the Syrian Orthodox community in the city of Mosul.

> The Old Syrians or Jacobites are one of the most ancient and interesting of the Eastern Churches. In spite of persecution they have stoutly maintained their independence for sixteen centuries, steadily refusing to sacrifice their convictions and freedom for the advantages offered by Rome. When it is remembered that these advantages would include payment of their Priests and Bishops, free education for their children and, above all, the steady protection of their interests by the French Government, this unbending attitude is the more remarkable in a comparatively small community ...Their Head is the Patriarch Ignatius [Abdulla (1906–1915)] who lately had the honour of being received by His Majesty the King [Edward VII (1901-1910)] (v. 'Times' Dec.). He resides at the Monastery of Deir Zeforan near Mardin. There are several thousand Jacobites in India. (Young, 1909)

Meanwhile, the ancient indigenous Christians the Syrian Orthodox Church who kept a faithful presence in the Ottoman Empire and maintained the independence of their Church, tradition and dogma and had no link with or advocate among the beneficiaries of the capitulations system. They found themselves the last to be considered by the Sublime Port for the long overdue granting of the separate millet status until late in 1873 (Peter III, 1873; Taylor, 2013; O'Mahony, 2014; Dinno 2017).

Countdown to the *Sayfo* 1915

As relations with European countries started to deteriorate, and the ghost of war loomed on the horizon, the Turkish government decided to abrogate the Capitulations on 8 September 1914. This ended a concurrence which governed the commercial and judicial rights of the Europeans in the Ottoman Empire for more than three centuries.

On 2 November, 1914 Russia and the Ottoman Empire declared war on each other.

HMS *Espiegle* and *Dalhousie* entered the Shatt al-Arab and British troops landed in Fao on 5 November 1914 and advanced north declaring the start of the Mesopotamia campaign. On 11 November, Sultan Mehmed V declared Jihad against the alliance of entente countries (England, France and Russia). On the Russian front the Battle of Sarikamish started on 22 December. The year 1915 ushered in successive and massive militarily defeats for Turkey first with Russia, in the Caucasus, then Egypt and Sinai; meanwhile, the British were advancing north. On 25 April, British, French, Australian and New Zealand and Canadian troops landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Young Turk leadership considered the regime—indeed the empire to be in a state of dire peril. On the eve of Gallipoli the Young Turks implemented a decision taken earlier of arresting on the night of 24 April the Armenian leadership and intellectuals in Istanbul. That was the first act of a violent process of exterminations of Christians in the empire throughout 1915 and beyond. (For a timeline of events, see Bartrop and Jacobs, 2015.)

Eventually, the long co-existence concluded with an ugly campaign of mass deportations and annihilation for all Christians in the Ottoman Empire orchestrated by the Committee of Union and Progress, the Unionist or Ittihadist. On 2 May 1915 the Ottoman parliament passed the Dispatchment and Settlement Law (or the Tehcīr Law) or what became known as *Safar Barlik* ('Exile'), authorizing the deportation of Armenians (apparently, initially Armenian Orthodox only), from the Ottoman Empire. Ultimately, by 30 May 1915, enraged civilians and soldiers killed many of the arrested Armenian leaders and many others at holding centres or on the way to their exiles. These annihilations extended to all other Christians in the empire.

One of the few diplomats left in Istanbul the American Ambassador

Henry Morganthau who described, in one of his wired dispatches, the massacres of 1915 in the Ottoman Empire as:

> Evidently Turkish nationalistic policy is aimed at all Christians and not confined to Armenians. 'A campaign of race extermination is in progress.' (Morganthau, 1918)

A rare account by an ex-Ottoman official who was in Diyarbekir documented what he witnessed as the unionists and their loyal officers in the provinces were implementing the Tehcīr Law and its consequences. He wrote, of the campaign against Protestant, Chaldean and Syrian Orthodox.

> Slaughter of the Protestant, Chaldean and Syriac Communities: The slaughter was general throughout these communities, not a single protestant remaining in Diyarbekir. Eighty families of the Syriac Community were exterminated, with a part of the Chaldeans, in Diyarbekir, and in its dependencies, none escaped save those in Madiât and Mardîn. When latterly orders were given that only Armenians were to be killed, and that those belonging to other communities should not be touched, the Government held their hand from the destruction of the latter. (El-Ghusein, 1917)

El-Ghusein went further to describe the courageous resistance put up by the Syrian Orthodox community.

> The Syriacs.—But the Syriacs in the province of Madiât were brave men, braver than all the other tribes in these regions. When they heard what had fallen upon their brethren at Diyarbekir and the vicinity they assembled, fortified themselves in three villages near Madiât, and made a heroic resistance, showing a courage beyond description. The Government sent against them two companies of regulars, besides a company of gendarmes which had been despatched thither previously; the Kurdish tribes assembled against them, but without result, and thus

> they protected their lives, honour, and possessions from the tyranny of this oppressive Government. An Imperial Irâdeh *[Farmān]* was issued, granting them pardon, but they placed no reliance on it and did not surrender, for past experience had shown them that this is the most false Government on the face of the earth, taking back to-day what it gave yesterday, and punishing to-day with most cruel penalties him whom it had previously pardoned. (El-Ghussain, 1917)

Recent research substantiates the narrative of El-Ghussain regarding the Syrian Orthodox heroic resistance.

> At the time of Sayfo, in 1915, when the order came forth to kill all Christians in the region, Hannko be Yakup, the headman of Beth Qustan, a Christian village, commanded all villagers to stay put and defend themselves in the village.
>
> Haçove Khortuk was a renowned head of clan and a great Muslim leader in the region. He was a good friend of Hannko and urged him not to remain in the village. Beth Qustan is embraced by a defenceless plateau which render the people very vulnerable. He advised his friend to take refuge in the castle in the neighbouring village, Hah. Haçove took a stick in his hand and broke it into 2 pieces and said that this is a command beyond his power, and that he could no longer protect the Christian village, Beth Qustan.
>
> After a long discussion with Hannko, who was against taking refuge in Hah, Haçove convinced the villagers to move. On their way, the Christians were shot at by Muslims, but Haçove stopped the Muslims from killing any of the Christians on exodus, by advising them to go and plunder the village instead.
>
> When they arrived at the castle, they realised that there were Christians there from other villages too. The Christians defended themselves in this castle, which still exists today as a present icon of Syrian Orthodox heroic

> resistance. Those who survived have said that they were aided by some local friendly Muslims, who supplied them with buckets full of bullets to defend themselves. (Oez, 2016)

Reciprocal co-existence was always the safety valve of inter-faith for centuries and still is.

However, relations between Churches and their leaders fluctuated according to the policies of individual rulers and their sycophants, especially when political survival was at stake. This often reflected, challenged and compromised their demography.

Finally, after the Unionists (Ittihadist) accomplished their 'Tehcīr Law' campaign, the Young Turks' triumvirate known as the Three Pashas, Talaat (1874-1921) Minster of Interior, Enver (1881-1922) Minister of War and Çemal (1872-1922) Minister of the Navy, of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (Çemal, 2015) appeared. They endeavoured to institute a modernisation plan that would transform the multicultural Ottoman society into a much homogeneous Turkish one. Eventually, they could only drive those left in the Ottoman Empire in to the trenches of battlefields of the First World War to bring about the collapse and end of the Ottoman Empire (1453-1918).

The Unionist who dominated the Ottoman state's final decade proved to be the Ottoman bitterest poisoned chalice which was presented to the sick-man of Europe and his Christians subjects.

In addition to valuable eye-witness accounts, oral and documentary history, and manuscripts, much evidence now available in print will save valuable space narrating this atrocity which this article cannot possibly provide. (For comprehensive archival studies, see de Courtois, 2004; Qarabashi, 2005; Akçam, 2005; Gaunt, 2006; Ugur Ümit, 2011; Polatel, 2011, Ugur Ümit 2011; Akçam, 2012; Gasfield, 2012 and Gust, 2014.)

The Syrian Orthodox's diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference 1919

At the time when the future of the whole of civilisation seemed to be in the balance, the Allied victors of the First World War called for and convened a conference in Paris during the period 18 February

1919 to 21 February 1920. This became known later as the Paris Peace Conference or Versailles Peace Conference (Macmillan, 2002). Its intention was to set the peace terms for the defeated Central Powers following the Armistice of Mudros, a pact, which was concluded and signed at the port of Mudros, on the Aegean island of Lemnos on 30 October 1918. This ended hostilities in the Middle Eastern theatre of war between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies (Busch, 1976).

The Paris or Versailles Peace Conference is often narrated as a transformative moment in world history that heralded not just the end of the First World War but also the creation of a new international order based on the nation-state. The decisive dissolution of the system of empires—Ottoman, Habsburg, and Hohenzollern—had lost the war. While the institutional form of the nation-state was already prevalent in countries of Western Europe and North America, the victorious powers now endeavoured to extend it to the breakaway states created from the fallen empires. This was a momentous development in Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East particularly, where in excess of 100 million people were waiting in high expectation of being granted a state of their own. The Great Powers seemed to endeavour to link the guarantee of minority rights to territorial gain. They imposed clauses on minority rights which became requirements not only for recognition but were also conditions for receiving specific grants of territory.

The Conference involved diplomats from more than 32 countries and nationalities. All major decisions were taken by a joint emergency authority, the 'Council of Four' or the 'Big Four': David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom; Georges Clemenceau, nicknamed 'Père la Victoire' (Father Victory), the Prime Minister of France; President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, and Vittorio Emanuele Orlando Primer of Italy. These decisions were ratified by the others (Catalogue, 1926; Dockrill and Fisher, 2001).

The Conference concluded on 21 January 1920 with five major peace treaties and the inaugural General Assembly of the League of Nations. The government, effects and benefits for Middle Eastern communities who were represented in Paris and the effect and consequences of the Peace Conference on the Middle East and the emerging nation states and their inhabitants are still in need of comprehensive studies. However,

the most pivotal treaties for the Middle East were the Treaty of Sèvres (not ratified), the Treaty of Versailles 1919 and the Treaty of Lausanne 1923 (Martin and Reed, 2007).

From our comfortable distance we cannot appreciate what sort of thin ice Christians in the post-1918 Middle East have been skating on to maintain co-existence. Such a tranquil presence could only be achieved to varying degrees at different times in different milieus. The hopes of Christians in the Middle East were hanging on the outcome of the Peace Conference. Any minor perceptions of disturbances in law and order would undermine the necessary peace for their co-existence in these countries. An imbalance had the potential to trigger victimisation of Christians and other peaceful citizens on a huge scale in 1895 and 1915. That is indeed what happened a century later in Mosul in June 2014.

The organisers of the Paris Conference were keen to invite representatives of the affected spectra of indigenous peoples and citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Among the Syriac-speaking communities of the Ottoman Empire, official invitations were only sent to heads of Churches who had no affiliations with external ecclesiastical authority: Mor Ignatius Elias III (1917-1932) the war-time Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, residing in Homs Syria, then under French control, and the newly elected Mor Shimun XXII Paulos (1918-1920), the Patriarch of the Church of the East, residing in Iraq, then under British control.

Patriarch Elias III wrote back to the organisers of the Peace Conference to acknowledge and accept the invitation. Elias III confirmed that he could not attend but would mandate his representative and confidant Mor Severus Aphram Barsoum (1887-1957), the newly consecrated Archbishop of Syria and Lebanon, 'the Bishop of War and Peace time' to attend and advocate the case and cause of his people at the conference (Behnam, 1959; Ibrahim, 1996).

Patriarch Shimun XXII officially appointed his sister and confidante, Surma D'Bait Mar Shimun (1883-1975) better known as Surma Khanum, the Semiramis of her time, to officially attend and represent the Church of the East at the Paris Peace Conference, accompanied with by W A Wigram, a member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission to the Assyrians (Coakley, 1992). Surma Khatum

arrived in London on 11 October 1919 together with Wigram in good time to attend the Conference (Beth Shmuel, 2008; Stafford, 1935). There are no records of the presence of the Church of East official delegation at the Peace Conference. Few sources touched on this case, anecdotally suggesting that there were three different delegations mostly made up of laymen who went independently to Paris from different diasporas of the Church of the East. They hoped to attend and officially represent their vital causes and aspirations of the Church of the East and its people at that fateful geopolitical crossroads in the history of the region. Allegedly, they submitted in excess of five different memorandums to be considered by the Peace Conference (al-Haidari, 1977). The representational void of the 'Smallest Ally', the Church of the East, at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 presented more questions of concern than answers (Wigram, 1920; al-Haidari, 1977; Beth Shmuel, 2008, Fisher, 2008). A century later the available data still impair the formulation of informed academic opinion about how the case and cause of the Church of the East were presented at the Peace Conference.

Unfortunate events eclipsed Surma Khanum's trip to Paris via London. She did not attend the Peace Conference to represent her people. Her elder brother Patriarch Shimun XXI Benyamin (1887-1918) was murdered and his successor, her younger brother Mar Shimun XXII Paulos (1918-1920), died prematurely. Surma Khanum then became *de facto* regent during the Patriarchal succession of her 12-year-old nephew, Mar Shimun XXIII Eshai (1908–75). In London, Surma Khanim subsequently campaigned on behalf of her people and wrote a book on her Church and the genealogy of her Patriarchal dynasty (d'Bait Mar Shimun and Wigram, 1920).

Critical analysis of the diplomatic discourse, statements, memorandum, letters and interviews of Mor Severus Aphram Barsoum at the Paris Peace Conference 1919.

Barsoum, who was an extraordinary eyewitness, observed firsthand the successive atrocities of the late 1800s, which culminated in the 1915 Genocide.[1] He became convinced that what Christians were subjected to had never been denominationally specific. If any of the rest of the Christian denominations were victimised because of the privileged status that the millet system afforded the Armenians for centuries, this was in addition to the miscalculation of some of the Armenians. After the Young Turk revolution, many Armenians were emboldened to believe that they could now enjoy freedom of speech and assembly. Some expounded in nationalistic rhetoric, proclaiming that the centuries of Armenian servitude had passed and that it was now the right and duty of his people to learn to defend themselves, their families, and their communities.

Essentially, as a Syrian Orthodox Christian, Barsoum took no interest in an earthly Kingdom (Matt 6:12-15, Rev 11:15). He believed that 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36). A Maslawi multilingual scholar through and through who could communicate and network in French, English, Arabic, Syriac and Turkish without an interpreter, the young bishop was too shrewd, incisive and realistic not to be moved by the Parisian political fair. He soon realised that great powers had strategic, political and economic interests in the political settlement of the non-Turkish territories. What he was witnessing was the multiple interests at play in this political jamboree.

Barsoum was convinced, and rightly so, that different ethno-religious indigenous communities in the region were only invited to Paris to 'ice the cake', not to have a slice of it. There was nothing whatsoever for his community, he noted, and for that matter for many other hopefuls in the regions. Their objective was to go to the Peace Conference with a *fait accompli*. This was in anticipation that one of the nation-states on offer would be theirs. Especially, their appetite

1 Armala, 1910, 1919; Audo, 1919, de Courtois, 2004, Gasfield, 2012; and genocide El-Ghusein, 1917; Gaunt, 2006; Akçam, 2005, 2012; Gust, 2014.

for power was already whetted by President Woodrow Wilson and his fourteen points, particularly his concept of self-determination that seemed to promise to so many people the fulfilment of their long awaited dreams.

Indeed those dreams and perceptions were substantiated with circulations at the Peace Conference of a plethora of proposed maps, those instruments of power, showing the potential and overlapping geographical remits of a future home and nation-state for the Armenians (Fig. 1), for the Assyrian (Fig. 2), and the Kurds (Fig. 3). None of which has yet been geopolitically implemented.

However, having observed the unfolding atrocities throughout 1915, the British Prime Minster Herbert H Asquith (1908-1916) in a pre-emptive logistical move summoned Mark Sykes, the then British Conservative MP with vital expertise on the Ottoman Empire (on 16 December 1915) to 10 Downing Street to offer some advice on how to reconcile the British and French interests in the Middle East. Mark Sykes pointed to a map, with pencil in hand, and told the prime minister: 'I should like to draw a line from the 'e' in Acre to the last 'k' in Kirkuk' (Fig. 4).

Then the two men, Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot, secretly met and agreed, with the assent of the Russian Empire, to divide the Middle East between them as a pre-empted contingency plan for the immanent dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. Territory north of that stark line would go to France; land south of it to Britain. This secret deal was done and dusted and ratified on 16 May 1916. It appeared in good time on the desk for the arrival of the War Prime Minster David Lloyd George (1916-1922). This agreement was in judicious circulation two years and eight months ahead of the opening session of the start of the Paris Conference on 18 January 1919. The details of the agreement remained secret until the Bolsheviks exposed its contents to the public concurrently in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* on 23 November 1917 and in the British *Guardian* on 26 November 1917. Officially the 1916 Asia Minor Agreement, which is better known by the name of its negotiators as the Sykes-Picot agreement, still resonates with every political turn in the Middle East today. The exposé of these affairs was to the 'British embarrassment, the Arabs dismayed and the Turks delighted' (Firth, 1915; Fisher, 1998; Barr, 2012).

The unfinished geopolitical symphony of the Paris Conference kept, for the last century, sparked the imaginations, aspirations and the extrapolations on a range of maps.

Recently, a Bulgarian newspaper reported on a new map that was slipped in error into the geopolitical arena (School Map, 2012). The remerged map (Fig. 5) will challenge the Lausanne treaty and enliven the continuing geopolitical narrative of the ongoing Battles for Mosul and Aleppo (Danforth, 2016).

For Barsoum, the novel concept of self-determination was a mere 'dream' to ogle at by many during the Peace Conference. He was also well aware of the potential imbroglio which entangled his Church and communities if they were to be convinced that as an ancient and indigenous community they may end up on nationalistic grounds, territorial or ethnically, with a fair share of the then ongoing geopolitical bazaar. If the Syrian Orthodox people were to share the percolating illusions of other communities in the region their notion of an independent homeland was to be a mirage. They failed to capitalize on the concept of *Uti possidetis* (Latin for 'as you possess'). This was not the intention of this decimated, dismayed and Sayfophobic Syrian Orthodox community nor was the necessary geography available: it was neither accessible nor on offer to establish a homeland which could fulfil the dreams of other ethno-religious groups in the region, let alone for the Syrian Orthodox Christians who adhered to modest birth rates which rendered them demographically challenged.

Therefore, in his 'joint discourse' Barsoum pre-empted his collective appeal to the layers of identity at national, supra–national, regional, and religiously at the ecclesiastical and denominational levels. Such multi-faced identity was present in the psyche of the survivors of the genocide and *en masse* expulsions (Romeny, 2009). They were faced with the necessities of integration and assimilation into their new geopolitical realities with the aid of their language, religion and cultural ecology, within the framework of the emerging nation state, (Barsoum, 1952, 2006).

Barsoum submitted to the 'big four' a portfolio containing his credentials as the official delegate of the Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and the representative of his Syrian Orthodox Church and nation. Using his official archbishopric headed paper in French (Barsoum, 1920a), Barsoum confirmed that

he was present at the Paris Conference in his official capacity as the representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and the Syrian Orthodox Church and people. He was presenting himself as charged with a special mission by the Patriarch of Antioch to present the conditions and wishes of the people in Mesopotamia (Barsoum, 1920a).

Barsoum networked with other delegations from the region at the Peace Conference, especially with Prince Faisal the head of the Arab delegation (later King Faisal I of Syria 1919-1920 and King of Iraq 1921-1933) (Al-Jamil, 2017). Faisal promoted pan-Arabism and was inspired to create an Arab state that would include Iraq and Syria of the Fertile Crescent, with their ethnic and religious diversity that would be fully represented and participating on merit in its administration.

Barsoum had a previous encounter with Prince Faisal when he entered Damascus at the head of the Arab Army through Thabit Abdul-Nour (1890-1958) his cousin and classmate in Mosul, a Syrian Orthodox lawyer who joined the Arab revolt which began on 5 June 1916. He was a political aide of Faisal, who lead the Arab Army in the Battle for Petra and Jabal Mousa in Jordan. He later became minster in the first government of King Faisal in Damascus. He was the first ever Syrian Orthodox to be appointed as a minister in any of the Arab cabinets of the government of the newly established state in the Middle East (Atiyya, 1973; Al-Jamil, 2017).

The Hashemite dynasty looked with the deepest sympathy upon the victims of the Ottoman deportation orders and massacres. Prince al-Ḥusayn ibn ʻAlī al-Hāshimī (1854-1931), the Hashemite Grand Sheriff of Mecca from 1908 and King of the Hejaz from 1916 to 1924, who lead the Arab revolt, issued in 1917 an edict (see Appendix 1). Urging his son Prince Faisal and Prince ʻAbd al-ʻAziz al-Jarba, the Sheikh of Shammar (Williamson, 1999), to protect, offer hospitality and look after the Syrian Orthodox and Armenians 'who have been deported and will be passing through your territories on their way to Syria and Iraq.' Implementing such humanitarian gestures of tolerance had saved the lives of hundreds of Christians in their mass exodus. Most fatalities among Christian deportees occurred as a result of death marches and exposure to heat, thirst and starvation in the Syrian Desert.

Barsoum was well aware of the attentive solidarity of the Grand Sherif of Mecca and his son Prince Faisal who were simultaneously championing and defending the common causes and shared interests of

the Syriacs and the Arabs. Faisal and his Arab delegates seemed to have been impressed with the conduct, diplomacy and debates of the young bishop. Prince Faisal and his delegation, which included Lawrence of Arabia, often cheered Barsoum and called him*: Muṭran al-ʾUrūbah wa Qass al-Zamān*— 'The bishop of Arabism and priest of all time' (Bahnim, 1959; Moosa, 1965; Ibrahim, 1996; Abdul-Nour, 2001).

After the conference, Barsoum embarked on an advocacy tour in France, England and America.[2] Barsoum visited London at the beginning of 1920 prior to the convening of yet another peace conference which was scheduled to be held in London and before the conclusion of the Treaty of Sèvres on 24 April 1920. He resided during his visit in a hotel in the West End of London, which is strategically located between Whitehall, the nerve centre of the empire, and the British Museum and Library which house the largest collection of Syriac and Arabic Manuscripts. Barsoum's first port of call was a letter dated 2 February 1920 to Lord Curzon the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs asking for a short interview. The minutes of this meeting exhibited vividly the frustration and helplessness of a shepherd and the plight of his Syrian Orthodox community. Barsoum reiterated that:

> the Armenians had captured the ears of the world but no one realized that the Syrian Christians were being massacred too, no one listened to their cry and came to their help. His country was wrongly divided into two by the frontier drawn between the British and French spheres—in the French sphere no attempt was made by the French at protection. (Barsoum, 1920d)

A frustrating foggy February in London elapsed, during which Barsoum endeavoured to fulfil his mission and communicate with as many decisions-makers as possible in the British capital. Barsoum wrote letters together with a memorandum of six points and a list of damages and reparations (Appendix 2) to the Prime Minster, David Lloyd George, the President of the Supreme Council and the Speaker of the Parliament. Barsoum visited the British Library daily, absorbed

2 His political advocacy on behalf of his people who used to call them Nation (Barsoum, 1920a) can be traced and followed up through his correspondences with decision makers (Abdul-Nour, 2001).

for hours in studying the tomes of Syriac and Arabic treasures and what the Orientalists had translated and written about the subject. Probably a great deal of material for his future writings was collected during these hard and anxious days in London (Barsoum, 1979).

Finally, Lord Curzon's secretary officially replied to confirm to Barsoum that:

> Earl Curzon of Kedleston acknowledges your letter and memorandum of 8th March and conveys his Lordship's assurance that the interest of your people will not be lost sight of when the moment for their consideration arrives. (Barsoum, 1920b)

The Great Powers, in their attempt to remove minorities as pawns in world politics, tried to have it both ways. Both by internationalizing the problem and also containing it as best they could, 'they were leaving the unborn League of Nations the thankless task of turning confusing words into purposeful action' (Fink, 2004, p. 264). Later in 1932, Iraq with diverse spectra of indigenous communities was persuaded to accept minority obligations as part of the terms of its admission to the League of Nations (Preece, 1997). The League of Nations demanded and received from the Iraqi government a formal declaration promising to guarantee the rights of foreigners and minorities, as well as to allow freedom of conscience and religion. In October 1932, Iraq's membership of the League of Nations was approved by a unanimous vote of the League's Assembly. Iraq thus became the first of the League of Nations Mandates to achieve full independence as a sovereign state (Tripp, 2007, p. 73).

Incidentally, at the time of writing, the battle for Mosul-Nineveh was announced on 17 October 2016 and remains in its infancy, leaving very little room for intuitive and axiomatic extrapolation. If and when peace prevails, the fabric of this ancient city should always be reflected in the fabric of the soul of its original indigenous diversity, otherwise it may as well be a ghost city or a necropolis. Terrifyingly, the tug-of-war militarily, politically, ethnically, religiously and eventually diplomatically could easily revitalize a reminder of 'The Mosul Problem 1918-1926', a century old open wound left in the regional collective memory when the League of Nations granted Mosul to Iraq under a British mandate

in 1926. This may now provide the *raison d'être* to unpack the perilous legacies of the Treaties of Sèvres and Lausanne 1923 (Beck, 1981; Tripp, 2007; Al-Jamil, 2017).

The *Sayfo* Centennial Commemorations and the Canonization of its Martyrs

The long-serving Syrian Orthodox Church Patriarch Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas (1980-2014)[3] had observed and reflected on the unfolding crises in Iraq since 2003 and on the displacement and arrival of thousands of Iraqi refugees to the then safety of Syria. The octogenarian patriarch observed: 'We are back to square one!' We need to resettle again the necessary infrastructure to provide relief. The aid and relief programme that the Church established to meet the needs of the survival of the 1915 massacre are needed today. This time we must provide destitute Iraqi refugees with necessary humanitarian aid. This need reminds the Syrian Orthodox leadership of the days almost a 100 years ago when the Church in Syria, Iraq and Jerusalem had to contain the influx of refugees driven out of their villages and cities in Tur Abdin during the consecutive atrocities of the Hamidian Massacres that re-occurred in 1894, 1896, (Duguid, 1973) and then culminated in deportation orders and the 1915 Massacre of *Sayfo*. During this time, the Syrian Orthodox Church lost thousands of its faithful see (Appendix 2 and Fig. 6). When the Syrian Crisis of 2011 started and escalated, peaceful Christians and Muslim communities were targeted in ancient cities such as Homs, Ma'loula and Aleppo. It was apparent to Patriarch Zakka I that a second Genocide, a second *Sayfo* was unfolding. Kidnapping of religious leaders became an accessible and effective tool of war. For the Syrian Orthodox Church leadership this culminated in a severe blow with the kidnapping of the most senior Archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim the Metropolitan of Aleppo, together with Bishop Paul Yazigi on 22 April 2014 as they were returning from a humanitarian mission to release kidnapped clergy (Oez and Abdul-Nour, 2016). Mor Gregorios was a close confidant and aide of Patriarch Zakka I. His magnetic appeal to the youth and to scholarship earned him as a young deacon in Mosul

3 See Ibrahim, 1981 and Abdul-Nour, 2005.

the esteemed Syriac title *Malfono* (teacher or wise man). Mor Gregorios' inclusive approach made him the *Factorem Ecclesiastis in the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Kourieh, 2016). Mor Gregorios and the supreme head of the church led the Syrian Orthodox Church in tandem as Patriarch and Catholicos in the golden days. The blow of this highly selective kidnapping of Mor Gregorios and the deafening silence enshrouding it, took its toll on the octogenarian patriarch. As the second *Sayfo* was emerging steadily and just before the commemoration of the centenary of *Sayfo*, the Syrian Orthodox Church received a further blow by losing its long serving and experienced patriarch on 21 March 2014. The late Patriarch Zakka I Iwas had been holding the fort firm, steady and intact throughout the last 35 turbulent years. His collective leadership style is a very hard task to follow and will be missed. Soon after, the Syrian Orthodox Synod elected a young and enthusiastic bishop, a disciple of Mor Gregorios, Mor Ignatius Aphrem II to be the 122nd Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and all the East. Aphrem II was installed on 29 May 2014 to preside over the Antiochian See of Peter in a sombre and moving ceremony. This was attended by wide national and international representations of ecumenical and inter-faith in support of the injured and vulnerable ancient Church and its young patriarch, who was entrusted with the hard and profound task of ecclesiastical responsibilities and leadership in a tumultuous era. The current patriarchate and headquarters of the Syrian Orthodox Church has been situated at the heart of Damascus since 1957. However, in recent history the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate had to relocate for second time since 1915 from Mardin in Turkey to Homs in Syria to Damascus, the new Antioch, the current capital of Syria by the Late Patriarch Jacoub III (1957-1980).[4]

Like the Apostle Peter the first Patriarch of Antioch, his 122nd successor, the new Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church today has to navigate the *Via Recta*, 'the Straight [and narrow] Street', in Arabic *Al-Shāri' al-Mustaqīm*, which runs east west and provides an exit from the old city of Damascus. Medhat Pasha built a lead shade over the *Via Recta,* as a far sighted preservation measure.

On the eleventh day of the Patriarchate of Aphrem II the Syrian Orthodox Church was struck with an unprecedented blow after the fall of Mosul on 9 June 2014. The Christians of Mosul, the largest,

4 See *The Times*, obituary, 1980.

most prosperous ancient stronghold of the Syrian Orthodox Church and the oldest continually inhabited city in the Orient, received an ultimatum to leave their city. This was a mirror image and a painful reminder of what happened a century ago in 1915, its second *Sayfo*.

> In less than three months, millennia-old communities in Mosul were decimated and irrevocably tore the social fabric of the once-diverse region. Now almost no members of the minority groups … live in Nineveh province. (Kikoler, 2015)

Entrusted with the heavy mandate to steer the Church through indeed a second *Sayfo*, this was a trying time for the new patriarch. Most of the Syrian Orthodox faithful were critically endangered not only in Mosul but in each and every ancient archdiocese in the Middle East. They were re-subjected to a ruthless campaign of displacement, and relentless ethno-religious cleansing which amounted to genocide and rendered them endangered in their homeland.

The centenary commemoration of the *Sayfo* 1915 was at the top of the new patriarch's agenda. An impressive programme was set. A competition was announced to produce an icon and crest or logo as part of a remarkable year-long commemorative programme. A logo and an artist's impression icon depicting vividly the events of the *Sayfo* were chosen and adopted (Fig. 6).

Many events marked the centennial commemorations of the *Sayfo* 1915, such as lectures, conferences, the opening of the Martyrs' Garden in the centre of Damascus. Monuments were also erected in different locations in Syria and in the diaspora. A special issue of the Patriarchal Journal covered the *Sayfo* commemorations (*Sayfo*, 1915).

Fortunately, in concluding the programme of the commemorations of *Sayfo* 1915, on Tuesday 21 June 2016, Patriarch Aphrem II unveiled a *Sayfo* monument in Al-Qāmishlī, a city with a considerable Syrian Orthodox presence located not far from the track of the highly politicised and romantic 'Orient Express', the luxurious train (Eames, 2005; McMeekin, 2010). This 'Line in the sand' and its overgrowth currently represent the volatile international borders between Syria and Turkey according to the Treaty of Lausanne1923. In the vicinity where thousands of Syrian Orthodox deportees crossed in 1915 the

railway track at the ancient city of Nisibis (Nuṣaybīn), refugees are to be housed in the safety of Al-Qāmishlī (Asfar, 2012). Concluding the events, a man disguised as a Syrian Orthodox priest with an explosive belt attempted to mingle with the crowd to reach the patriarch and detonate the bomb. Luckily this assailant was spotted by bodyguards; the perpetrator detonated his explosive belt before reaching the patriarch, causing mayhem and multiple fatalities. That is how the commemorations of 'the Year of the Sword' concluded with the trauma of gathering again body parts of martyrs. The young man who blew himself up with the explosive belt believed he would be a martyr for destroying Christians' lives.

Again as in the three and half year kidnapping saga of Mor Gregorios, no one claimed responsibility for such mayhem. No alibi was ever established for the targeting of the Syrian Orthodox Church's leaders. Such mysteries remain behind a wall of silence. Such a perpetual chill is sent down the spine as a vivid reminder that the ongoing second *Sayfo* is not a myth, nor is the *Sayfophobia* an unjustified overreaction.

However, the English saying 'a smooth sea never made a skilled sailor' is a heartening reminder. Such a horrendous experience did not deter the new patriarch. Turning the other cheek (Luke 6:29) is a survival tactic to help these persecuted and displaced Christians to forgive, forget and integrate in their new environments.

Sato is one of the few anthropologists with field experience among the Syrian Orthodox communities in Aleppo and Al-Qamishli, Syria (Sato, 2017). She has described as 'selective amnesia' the way the Syrian Orthodox communities coped with the martyrdom and mass immigration of their families to Syria and Iraq in 1915 and the arrival of the last caravan of the Edessan community to Aleppo in 1924 (Namiq, 1991; Sato, 2005). What is important to them is forging a peaceful future in their new home; dwelling on the agonies of the past is unhelpful.

However, the Syrian Orthodox is a Church of martyrs. Their liturgy is associated with the cult of saints with the celebration of the Eucharist dedicated to a particular saint and on the feast day of that saint which attracts pilgrims long enshrined in the lectionaries.[5] As the centenary of the *Sayfo* 1915 was approaching, Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim was reminded of the need for a specific Remembrance Day for the Christian Martyrs of the *Sayfo*.

5 For Syrian Orthodox spiritualities, see Murray, 1975; Abdul-Nour, 2002.

In his address to the Assembly of the Special Synod of Bishops for the Middle East under the auspices of Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican, October 2010 (O'Mahony and Flannery, 2010; Sandri, 2016), Mor Gregorios highlighted the fact that:

> We are the Children of martyrs. We must not forget the martyrs of the 19th and 20th centuries. My proposal is that Your Holiness adopt the idea of a single feast for the Christian martyrs universally … a unified day to remember martyrs is … another step towards Christian Unity. (Sandri, 2016)

Since the kidnapping of Mor Gregorios on 22 April 2013, a day has been agreed unilaterally by the Syrian Orthodox Synod to commemorate Syriac Martyrs, '*Sayfo*'—on 15 June. The chosen date coincides with the birthday of Patriarch Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum.

Stringent canonical regulations govern the Canonizations and its liturgy in the Syrian Orthodox Church. However, the events of 1915 and the innocent martyrs challenged the Churches and consequently its canonisation process. However, the pre-occupations of the Church with the priorities of welfare and resettlement of hundreds of thousands of genocide survivors who were ethno-religiously cleansed and scattered all the neighbouring countries and in further distant diasporas led to the deferment of the synodical deliberations, and any discussion and decision on the issue of canonizing the Syrian Orthodox genocide martyrs. The notion of collective martyrdom was also promoted in preparation for the centenary commemoration and the Church decided to canonize all Syrian Orthodox martyrs of the *Sayfo*.

It is interesting that after a long respite, the Armenian Orthodox Church restored the canonisation rite and canonised all martyred victims of the genocide on their genocide day on 24 April 2015.

This day is enshrined in the Armenian Church Liturgical Calendar as the 'Remembrance Day of the Holy Martyrs who died for their Faith and Homeland during the Armenian Genocide'.

The Armenian Genocide Centennial Holy Mass was celebrated by the Holy Pontiff at St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican on 12 April 2015. Pope Francis emphasized the importance of recognising and

condemning the Armenian Genocide thus contributing to the prevention of crimes of genocide.

The Syrian Orthodox Church preceded the canonization of genocide victims. In 1989, Patriarch Zakka I Iwas canonised the late Patriarch Elias III (1917-1932). He served throughout the First World War and steered the Church from his headquarters at the Monastery of Zafaran in Mardin in the vicinity of Diyarbekir, through the last turbulent years of the Ottoman Empire and the decimation of his communities in Turkey. Elias III himself became victim of the genocide but not a martyr. He witnessed first hand the Massacres of Diyarbekır in 1895 and 1915. Elias gave refuge to approximately 7,000 Armenian refugees in the Monastery of Mor Quryaqos, Tur Abdin. He was forced in 1922 to desert his patriarchates and the Syrian Orthodox Church has never been able to restore his ancient see which served it for seven centuries. He initially relocated to the safety of Homs in Syria, then to Mosul in Iraq; he spent some time at St Mark in Jerusalem and then visited the Syrian Orthodox communities in India where he died. Elias III's shrine became a pilgrimage mausoleum for thousands of Indian Orthodox who visit his shrine annually on 13 February; his Feast day. 2017 will mark the centennial of the last Syrian Orthodox Patriarchal consecration at the Monastery of Zafaran (Turkey).

The Vatican canonised the Syrian Catholic Bishop Flavianos Michael Melke (1858-1915). The Eparch of the Diocese of Gazireh in Syria, he was martyred during the *Sayfo* 1915. Born in Qalat Mari near Mardin and consecrated as a Syrian Orthodox monk at the Monastery of Zafaran in 1868, Patriarch Peter III (1872-1894) appointed Melke curator of the library of the Monastery of Zafaran. He then joined the Syrian Catholic Church. Earlier he escaped martyrdom when his church and house in Tur Abdin were sacked and burned during the massacres of 1895 which also led to the murder of many members of his parish including his elderly mother. He was arrested by the Ottoman authorities on 28 August 1915, alongside the Chaldean bishop of the city, Orahim Pillipus Yaqub (1848-1915) and both were martyred the day after. On 8 August 2015, Pope Francis approved his beatification after he determined that Flavianos Melke was killed for his faith. Flavianos Melke was beatified on 29 August 2015, on the centenary of his martyrdom.

What's in a name?
The G-word, *Sayfophobia* and citizenship.

Genocide is equivalent to the old Syriac word *Qṭol'amo*. It is a single hybrid neologism, a combination of *génos* (Greek for 'race, people') and *-cide* (Latin for 'to kill or killing'). It was coined in 1943 by Raphael Lemkin (1900 –1959), who was dismayed by the tragic events and atrocities of 1915-1918 against Christians in the Ottoman Empire. It was intended to be an expressive, agile and a powerful détente term meaning 'the practice of extermination of nations and ethnic groups' It initiated the UN Genocide Convention in 1948, which concluded with the General Assembly resolution that 'genocide is a crime under international law which the civilized world condemns, and for the commission of which principals and accomplices are punishable.'

Genocide became the most powerful rhetorical device which immortalized in a generation. A Google search today gives you more than 50 million entries for Genocide. This word may describe today the plight of millions of effected people, many summarized chapters of contemporary atrocities. This eight letter word is a term that has acquired such power that some have refused to utter it aloud, calling it 'the G-word' instead (de Waal, 2015). The G-word of contention has become a perpetual irritant that continually annoys some world leaders and governments 'in the wrong way'. Alas, so far the civilized international community has collectively failed to make Genocide an obsolete word. Systematic campaigns of killing and ethno-religious cleansing continue to critically endanger people in our global village today. Cleansing brings about the total or partial extermination of a particular targeted group of people or any groups as unfortunate collateral damage. Whichever of the 'Fifty Shades of the G-Word' are used as euphemisms, all religions adhere to a commanding moral code: Do not kill, means do not kill.

Sayfophobia

Regardless of how others acknowledge these tragic events in history, as the Prime Minster of Turkey Erdogan mentioned in his statements marking the 90th anniversary of Christians massacred in 1915

confirming that 'we have a shared pain.' His statement is consolidated with the Turkish proverb: '*Ateş düştüğü yeri yakar*—Fire burns where it falls.' Indeed, the Syrian Orthodox Christians and other traumatized parties were at the receiving end of both fire and fear in 1915. The Armenians refer to the time when Christians were massacred as the 'Meds Yeghem' (Great Calamity or Catastrophe). Syriac-speaking people called this time '*Sayfo*' (or the year of the sword) or as the title of a recent book described it: *La Marcia Senza Ritorno* ('The March without Return') (Giansoldati, 2015). These events have their potent resonance and left an indelible mark in the collective psyche and history of those affected communities, who were described as 'the Swords leftover.'

The suffering and the endurance of centuries of traumatizing reminiscences of these consecutive and relentless atrocities left a toll of psychological scars and consternation on these communities. The fear of these helpless and peaceful communities of a possible repetition of similar atrocities developed what may be best described and defined as *Sayfophobia* which is a phenomenon, a syndrome or symptom of a chronic trauma suffered by the people who witnessed and survived the atrocity of the *Sayfo* 1915 and the generations of their offspring. 'Pigeon jitters' is how Hrant Dink, the slain editor-in-chief of the Armenian newspaper *Agos* in Istanbul, defined Armenian fears.

The victimised may resort to therapeutic effects of their experiences in mental comfort zones, a phenomenon which was described, as noted earlier in this article, by an anthropologist who worked with the Syrian Orthodox communities in Syria and Iraq as 'selective amnesia' (Sato, 2005).

However, *Sayfophobia* keeps simmering on back burners but never subsides. Memories of Genocide together with the current events are chilling.

Full citizenship not micro-minorities should be the civilised way forward

Syrian Orthodox Church members know how they have structured the fragments of their memories into a discourse which captures their

identity, inner fears and their ambivalent position as citizens. They have undergone a questionable and impaired model of citizenship in modern states where they find refuge (Sato, 2006, 2007; Taylor, 2013).

The topic of this article will not be complete without touching on the complex issue of identity.[6] In the BBC's 2016 Reith Lectures, Appiah who specialises in moral and political philosophy issues of personal and political identity said:

> We live in a world where the language of identity pervades both our public and our private lives … There is much contention about the boundaries of all of these identities … Indeed, almost every identity grows out of conflict and contradiction, and their borders can be drawn in blood. And yet they can also see to fade in the blink of an historical eye. The demands of identity can seem irresistible at one moment, absurd at the next. Most of us swim easily in the swirling waters of our multiple affiliations most of the time, but we can be brought up short in moments when the currents of identity tug us excruciatingly in opposite directions. (Appiah, 2016)

It is basically the trigger-happy nature *of uncertainty* of the way recent events have evolved after the fall of Baghdad in 2003 which foment the resulting *re-ethnicising* and *re-sectarianising* of the region. The Arab Spring, mass exodus of Christians from Mosul in 2008, the crisis in Syria since 2011 and the silent mass exodus of Christians from Homs 2012, Ma'loula and other cities in Syria are disasters. The attack on religious symbols, which is evidently on the increase, is manifesting clearly in the current Syrian crisis. Kidnapping is becoming an effective tool of war and civil strife. The kidnapping and detention, since 22 April 2013, of the Archbishops of Aleppo, Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim and Paul Yaziji, (Oez and Abdul-Nour, 2016) is a case in point. It is a subtle ethno-religious cleansing technique and without a shred of doubt a factor which is driving indigenous Christians out of the region. The commemorations of the kidnapping of the archbishops of Aleppo and the remembrance of the genocide will forever coincide with Eastertide or Paschaltide as

6 For a narrative on the Syrian Orthodox identity, see Taylor (2013).

a reminder of the contemporary Golgotha and sends chills down the spines of Christians in the Middle East, which is becoming the chief cauldron of this contemporary disorder. What seems to be witnessed and endured in the globalisation of today is the reincarnation process of anarchy, a perennial tension in the world between forces of order and forces of disorder, where usually innocent people get trapped in the unfolding chaos between them and the events which define each era's particular character and players (Bull, 1977).

Eventually the fall of Mosul in 2014 and the campaign of a total ethno-religious cleansing of its ancient Christian communities, and their housing resulted in Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Christians were left licking their wounds in the political ambiguity of the region. They have discovered lately that even hope, pinned on the democratisation process and on any constitutional protection and safety net, was in tatters. Apparently, the committee in charge of drafting the Iraqi constitution ratified in 2005 lacked a Syrian Orthodox representative. Although the Iraqi constitution considered Syriac as the third spoken language in Iraq, it failed to consider the Syrian Orthodox communities as a recognised faith community in comparison with their co-ethno-religionist denominations the Chaldean and Assyrian Churches of the East. In effect, the constitution did not even consider the ancient indigenous faith group of Christians among the ancient diverse spectra of Iraqi multi-religious society which embraced Jews, Christians and Muslims: Sunni, Shi'i, Syriac, Armenian, Chaldean, Assyrian, Yazidis, Sabaean-Mandeans, Shabak, Kaka'i, etc. (Ghanīmah, 2002).

Understandably, drafting a constitution requires expert knowledge and experience; it is a thorny task in the best and safest of circumstances, let alone in Iraq after 2003. The executives of the committee entrusted with drafting the constitution have to navigate uncharted territories since the writing of the first Iraqi constitution in 1920s (Khaddūrī, 1939). With all the limitations imposed, each and every one of the deputies tried their utmost to serve and conserve the interest of their constituencies and members of their communities and to the best of their abilities, while vying to find a foothold in the evolving accumulating sectarian sand dunes. The Syrian Orthodox community has always had a relatively high percentage of qualified professional and technocrats who contributed on meritocratic bases to their respective

countries from the outset of parliaments since the mandate system, in the 1920s. They were elected deputies, minsters of state, county councillors, senior civil servants, academics and bureaucrats who served their countries efficiently and effectively in both Syria and Iraq right to the fall of Baghdad in 2003. Unfortunately, numerous straitjackets have restricted the flexibility of the formulation of the constitutional committee that was fraught with inconclusiveness. It lacked representatives from the Syrian Orthodox community and other communities, even in the consultative capacities in the constitutional and parliamentary subcommittees. This clearly reflected on the inclusivity and eventually functional impairment of the Iraqi institution.

Woodrow Wilson once said, 'The Constitution was not made to fit us like a straitjacket. In its elasticity [and inclusivity] lies its chief greatness.'

Therefore, after two millennia of existence in Iraq and all that suffering to initiate the democratisation process, to their peril, they realised that according to the Iraqi constitution as it stands, the Syrian Orthodox citizen can only be categorised in the religion section of the New National Identity Card, not as *'Suryān'* but as 'Other!'

Little did Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, the kidnapped and occulted, Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo, predict this scenario when he wrote his bestseller 'Accepting the Other' *(qabūl al-akhir)* (Ibrahim, 2006). The day will come when his ancient community in Iraq will constitutionally be 'the Other' in their motherland. The absence of Mor Gregorios at this juncture highlights how important, effective and visionary Church leadership matters and important and significant his role was. Mor Gregorios would have without any doubt worn the cap of Aphram I Barsoum and brought together the entire Syrian Orthodox Church's leaders, Christian politicians and specialist lay advisers in an ecumenical round table a type of gathering which can only described as Pope Francis called it 'ecumenism of blood' *(maskīniyyāt al-dam)*. With this round table he would have unpacked all the intra- and inter-Church impediments that had not been explained sufficiently clearly and courageously to the constitutional committee. Mor Gregorios would have gathered public opinion at large to make an informed, fair and lasting decision. In the absence of Mor Gregorios, this responsibility is an urgent priority for the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate. Priorities are vital.

Where is the wisdom in commemorating the centenary-old *Sayfo* 1915 while passively observing the ongoing second *Sayfo*?

Adding salt to all these injuries, some specialists and strategists in Iraqi politics seem to be challenged, entangled and easily running out of vocabulary and terminology as they try to fit and fix the Christian components of the Iraqi demography in the ongoing political scenarios. Minorities are a modern political compartmentalisation of a specific demographic grouping. In 1910-1911, the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* had no entry for 'minority.' The post-First World War 14th edition was published in 1929 with an entry for this loaded new term 'minority' which runs to eleven pages. Now in 2016, it seems the best option available for think-tank specialists who are challenged with the demographically disrupted communities like Christians in Iraq and Syria is to consider them as a demographic surplus. Hence, Christians are described as the 'micro-minorities' of Iraq or those Iraqis in a 'micro-minorities' situation (Knights, 2016) in the hope that, whatever the ambiguities of such term it will pass as slightly more politically correct than the notion of 'demographic surplus.' At best, these alternating terms imply that Christians in the Middle East today who continue on a trajectory of precipitous decline into virtual extinction are now at best a negligible trace of a spent and depleted community of human beings; they belong to a story or narrative that does not count anymore. Striking are the historical similarities, those Christians who survived the *Sayfo* 1915 to start the twentieth century branded as 'the leftovers of the swords' and managed to thrive through the twentieth century. Now they find themselves in the globalised and technically connected twenty-first century being reduced after the fall of Mosul in 2014 to the status of Citizens N, the type of human you find in IDP camps. Now, when the battle for the liberation of their home city Mosul is under way, they are (politically correctly) introduced as 'micro-minority'! It remains to be seen if Christians will be further reduced to the status of a 'nano-minority' after the liberation of Mosul. Such expressively obnoxious terms are not only unpalatable for Christians and any other civilised human beings and polity but may also be illegal as they imply that micro-minorities can only produce micro-citizens; this is in violation of the UN Human Rights Declaration. Why are indigenous Christian citizens of a modern state denied full rights of citizenship?

Make ethno-religious cleansing, genocide and *Sayfophobia* history

If international law and constitutions of civilized states can enforce the ratified protection of critically endangered creatures like the giant panda, koalas, Amur leopard, black rhino, cross river gorilla, hawksbill turtle, Asian elephant, vaquita, etc., alas, the extinction of the Christians and Yazidis of Iraq and Syria represent a humanitarian imperative. These critically endangered peaceful citizens have never qualified for an entry in the UN list of endangered species like the World Wildlife Fund!

It is rather untenable for the civilized world of the global village to enjoy the luxury of indifference that they have been indulging in since 1915. It is the ethical responsibility of the UN to enhance the human rights of the obviously ethno-religiously cleansed Christians and Yazidis who are endangered in their homeland in Iraq, Syria and the rest of the Middle East. Here they are enduring being IDPs under the auspices of the UN in politically volatile and disputed regions with no light at the end of the tunnel to their plight.

What are the prospects for a citizens' safety net for the Syrian Orthodox community in Iraq post 2003? What is sufficiently watertight and secure enough to protect their futures—short of a UN resolution to consider the Christians and Yazidis of Iraq as ethno-religiously cleansed? This amounts to a genocide, rendering them critically endangered communities in their homeland. Their status must be established in the national constitution to provide them with the security and protection that the Red Indians of America and the Aborigines of Australia enjoyed, before it is too late. Clearly, the pace of these travesty of these events has its vital impact on the disparagement and deprecations of the integrity of their identity, dignity and presence and the re-examining of the validity of co-existence and the concept of citizenship must be re-established as a secure safety valve in the modern world and consolidate the fear of such uncertainty and its psychological impact on the psyche of the Christians in general and the Syrian Orthodox in particular. The prevailing scenario can best be described as *Sayfophobia*. All this is being played out while the international community still indulges in its perpetual indifference (GJC, 2016).

The rights to religious freedom and freedom of conscience are widely regarded as the jewel in the crown of democracy: granting

and guaranteeing the peaceful co-existence of religiously diverse populations, which is essential and for long indispensable for the survival of Christians throughout the geographical remits of this article and beyond. Their rights must be enshrined in national and regional constitutions, backed by international laws and binding treaties, sustained and monitored by the UN. The capacity to maintain one's choice of religion freely without coercion by the state or other institutions; and the creation of a polity in which one's economic, civil, legal, or political status should be unaffected by one's religious beliefs is a key criterion going forward. While all members of a polity are supposed to be protected by this right, modern wisdom has it that religious minorities are its greatest beneficiaries and their ability to practise their traditions without fear of discrimination is a critical marker of a tolerant and civilized polity. The right to religious freedom marks an important litmus test of democracy.

Mosul has experienced many misfortunes in its long history. But for the first time in history, it must confront the prospect of the decimation of its diverse indigenous communities. Mosul's original indigenous inhabitants whether Muslim or Christian have been subjected to what is in Syriac the equivalent of 'Persécution sans frontières'.

Will the church bells in Mosul ring tomorrow? The two million dollar question remains to be answered. Will the civilised world today allow what happened to Christians at the beginning of the twentieth century in 1915 to be repeated in the twenty-first century? Genocides are happening again both physically and psychologically. Is having been for so long situated in the crosshairs of the converging targets of the region simply enough to justify *sayfophobia*?

There is no doubt that these enormous tragedies must be remembered today. However, at this moment of reckoning, an abiding hope for Christians in the Middle East is that yesterday's lessons should stimulate a rational stand and action now. History is a potent force, and this juncture is its contemporary milestone, which makes such action the ultimate litmus test for both ecclesiastical and temporal leaders.

Clearly, procrastination is extremely detrimental. This time round there should be no excuses for inaction.

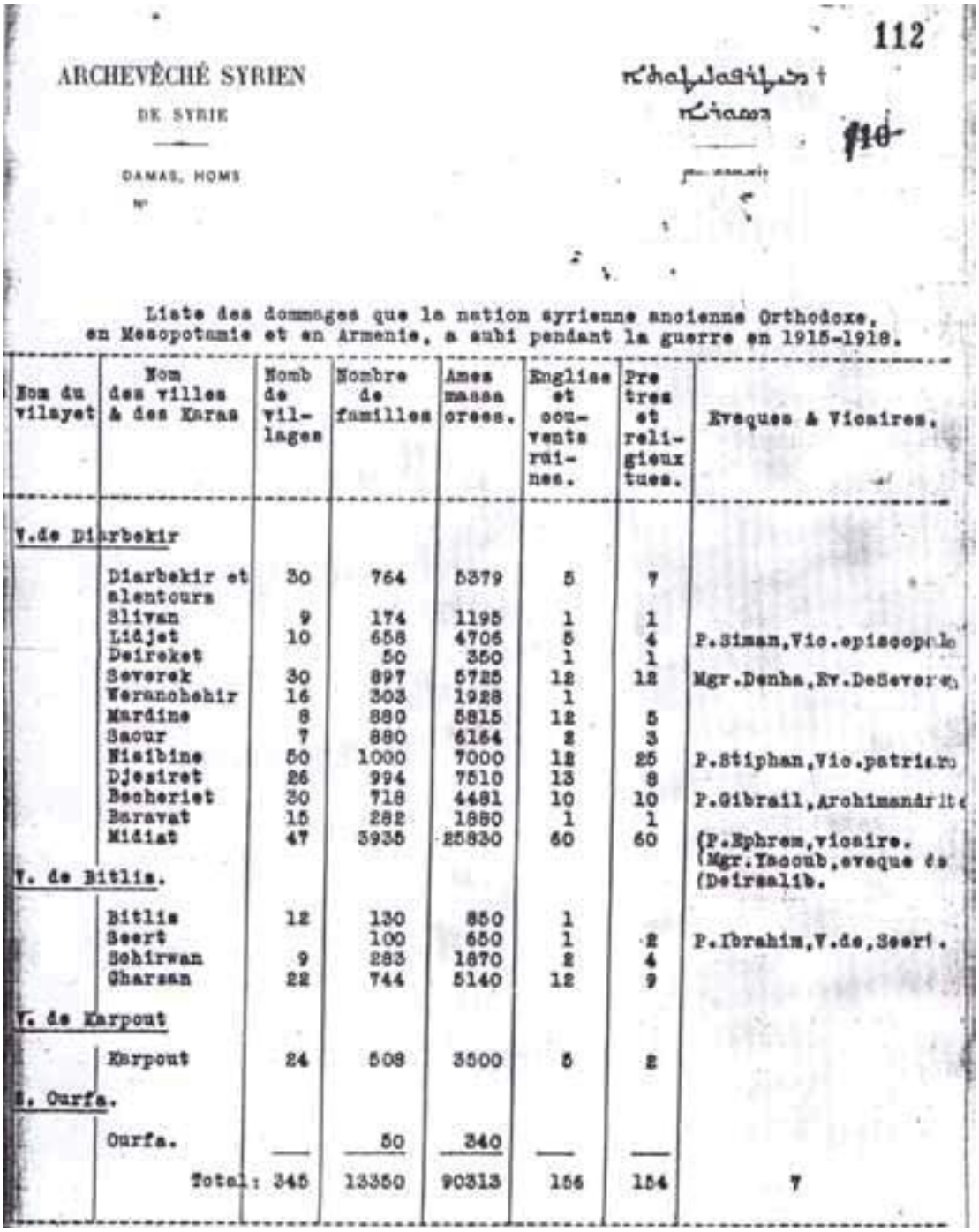
Appendix 1

Below is the translation of the Arabic text of the Hashemite Royal Court decree issued in 1917 by the Sharif of Mecca for the Protection of Syrian Orthodox and Armenians deportees from Turkey in to the Arab provinces (Mosul, Aleppo and Damascus), of the Ottoman Empire.

The Hashemite Royal Court
In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful.
We Thank Only God and No One but God.
From: Al-Husayn Ibn 'Ali, King of the Arab Home-Lands and Sheriff of Mecca and its Prince.
To: The Honourable and Admirable Princes. Prince Faisal [HRH The Hashemite Prince Faisal Ibn Al-Husayn bin Ali, later King Faisal I of Iraq (1921-1933)] and Prince Abd al-'Aziz al-Jarba [Sheikh of Shammar Tribe]
Greetings and the compassion of God and His blessings.
This letter is written from Umm Al-Qura (Mecca), on the 18th Rajab 1336, by the praise of God and no God except Him. We ask peace upon God's Prophet, His family and His companions (May peace be upon Him). We inform you that in our gratitude to Him we are in good health, strength and good grace. We pray to God that He may grant us, and you, His abundant grace.'
What is requested of you is to protect and take good care of everyone from the Jacobite [Syrian Orthodox] and Armenian communities living in your territories, frontiers and among your tribes; to help them in all of their affairs and defend them as you would defend yourselves, your properties and children, and provide everything they might need whether they are settled or moving from place to place, because they are the Protected People of the Muslims (Ahl Dimmat al-Muslimin)—about whom the prophet Muhammad (may God grant him His blessings and peace) said: 'Whoever takes from them even a rope, I will be his adversary on the day of Judgment.'
This among the most important things we require of you to do and expect you to accomplish, in view of your noble character and determination. May God be our and your guardian and provide you with His success. Peace be upon you with the mercy of God and His blessings'

Signed and sealed by
Al-Husayn Ibn 'Ali

Appendix 2



112

ARCHEVÊCHÉ SYRIEN

DE SYRIE

DAMAS, HOMS

Liste des dommages que la nation syrienne ancienne Orthodoxe, en Mesopotamie et en Armenie, a subi pendant la guerre en 1915-1918.

Nom du vilayet	Nom des villes & des Kazas	Nomb de villages	Nombre de familles	Ames massacrees.	Eglises et couvents ruines.	Pretres et religieux tues.	Eveques & Vicaires.
V.de Diarbekir							
	Diarbekir et alentours	30	764	5379	5	7	
	Slivan	9	174	1195	1	1	
	Lidjet	10	658	4706	5	4	P.Siman,Vic.episcopal
	Deireket		50	350	1	1	
	Severek	30	897	5725	12	12	Mgr.Denha,Ev.deSeverek
	Werancehir	16	303	1928	1		
	Mardine	8	880	5815	12	5	
	Saour	7	880	6164	2	3	
	Nisibine	50	1000	7000	18	25	P.Stiphan,Vic.patriar
	Djezaret	26	994	7510	13	8	
	Becheriet	30	718	4481	10	10	P.Gibrail,Archimandrite
	Baravat	15	282	1880	1	1	
	Midiat	47	3935	25830	60	60	(P.Ephrem,vicaire. (Mgr.Yacoub,eveque de (Deirzalib.
V. de Bitlis.							
	Bitlis	12	130	850	1		
	Seert		100	650	1	2	P.Ibrahim,V.de,Seert.
	Sohirwan	9	283	1870	2	4	
	Gharsan	22	744	5140	12	9	
V. de Kharpout							
	Kharpout	24	508	3500	5	2	
S. Ourfa.							
	Ourfa.	—	50	340	—	—	
	Total:	345	13350	90313	156	154	7

List of Damages and Losses in Lives and Properties Sustained by the Syrian Orthodox Community during 1915-1918. Document presented by Barsoum to Paris Peace Conference 1919. FO371/5130/2479/112. (Barsoum 1920c).

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Barsoum, Aphram (1920c) National Archive. List of damages. FO 371/5130/2479/112.

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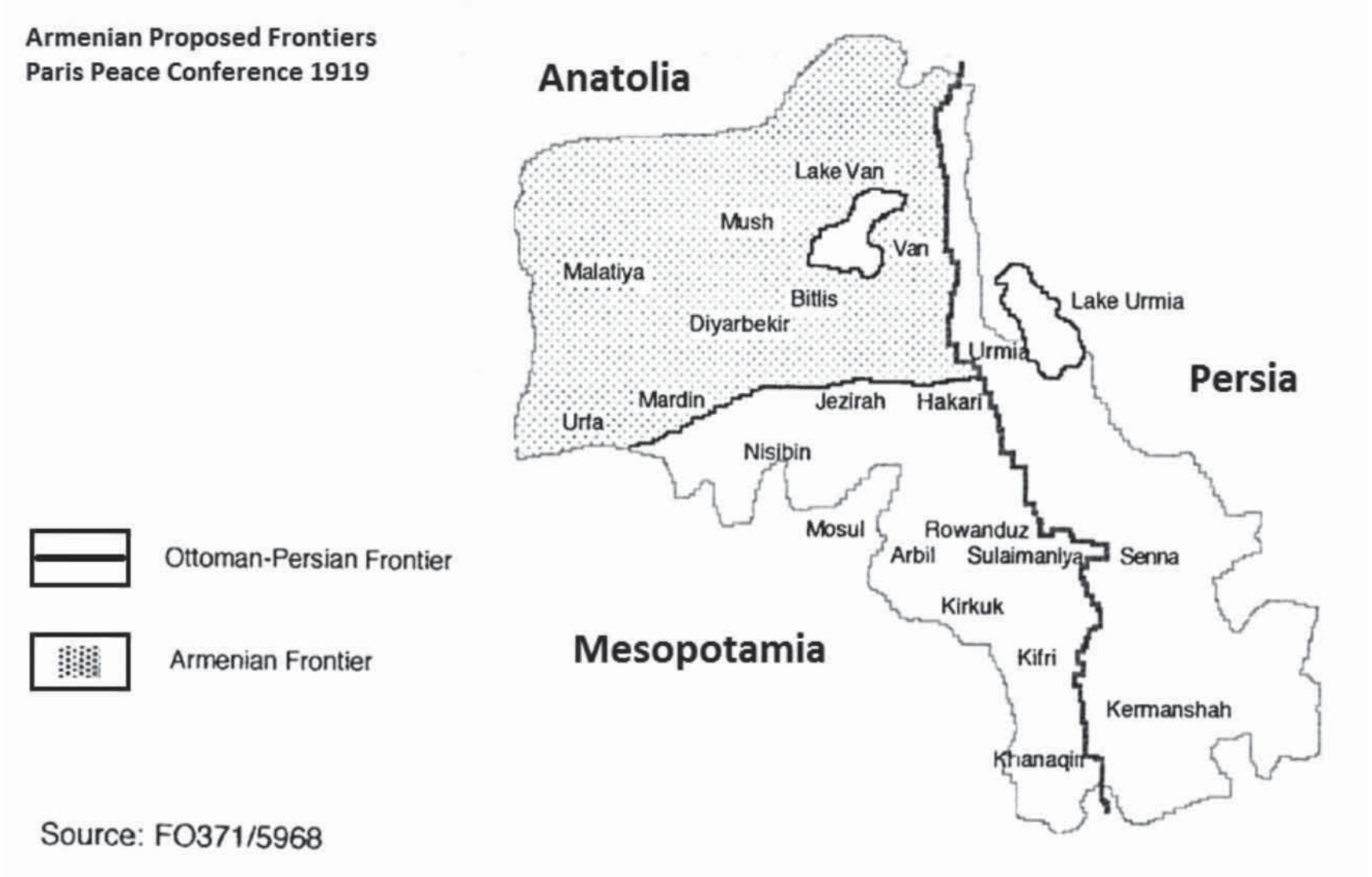

Fig. 1. Map of the Armenian Proposed Frontiers. Paris Peace Conference 1919.

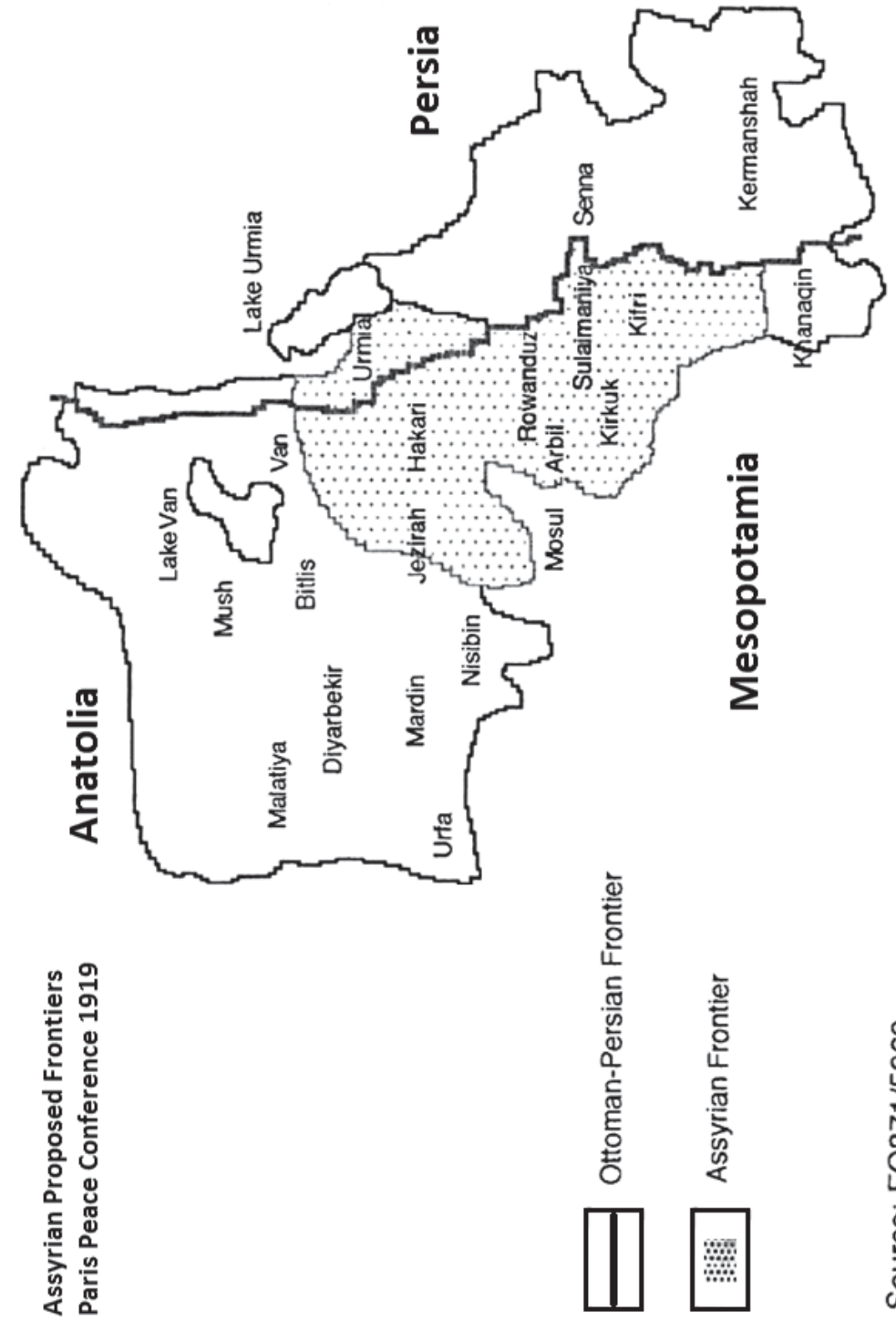

Fig. 2. Map of the Assyrian Proposed Frontiers. Paris Peace Conference 1919.

Fig. 3. Map of the Kurdish Proposed Frontiers. Paris Peace Conference 1919.

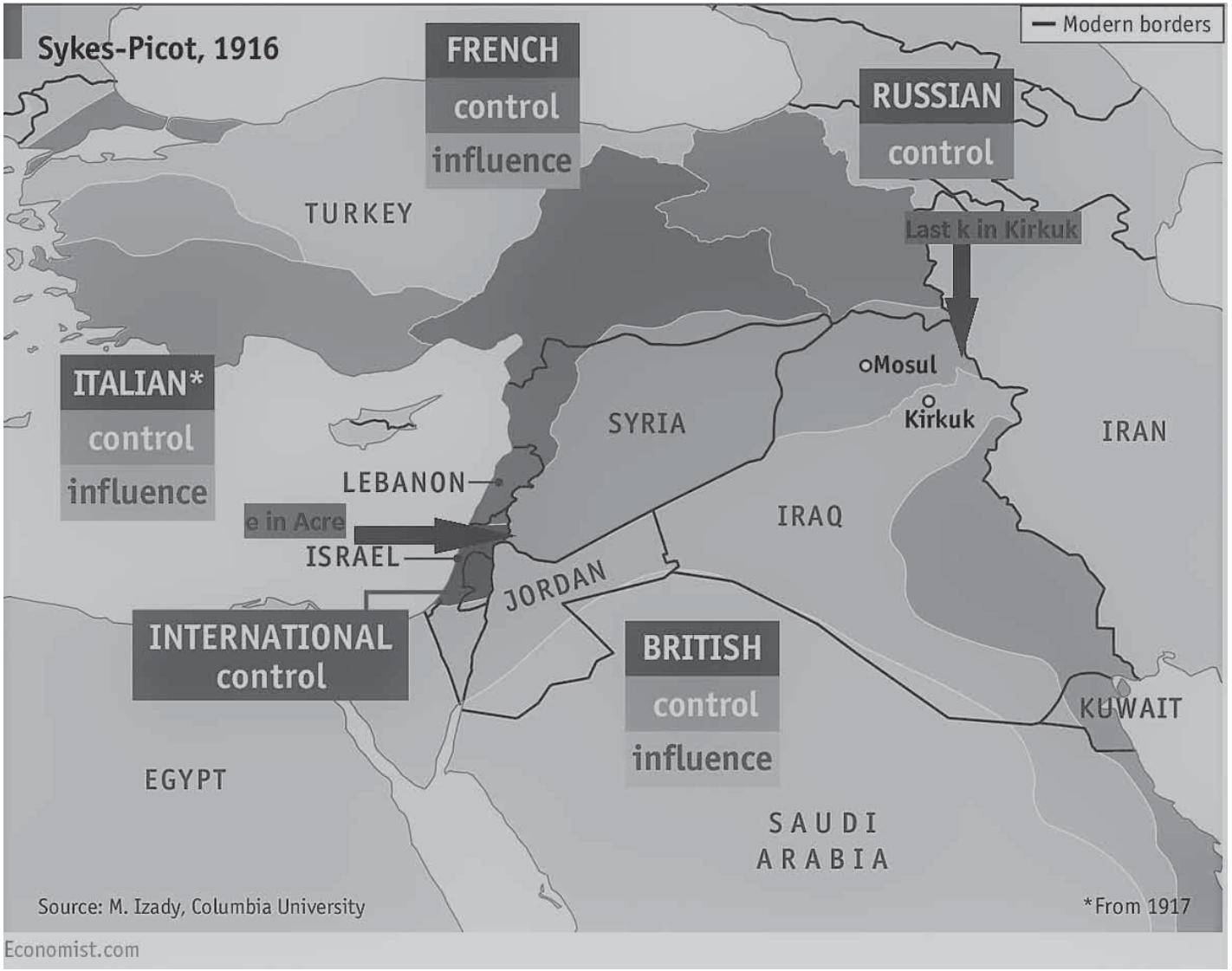

Fig. 4. Map of Sykes-Picot Agreement' Proposed Frontiers, 1916. The Economist May 16th 2016. http: www.economist.mblogs-graphicdetail201605daily-chart-13comblogsgraphicdetail201605daily-chart-13

Fig. 5. Newly Projected Geopolitical Map of the Region, (Danforth, 2016).

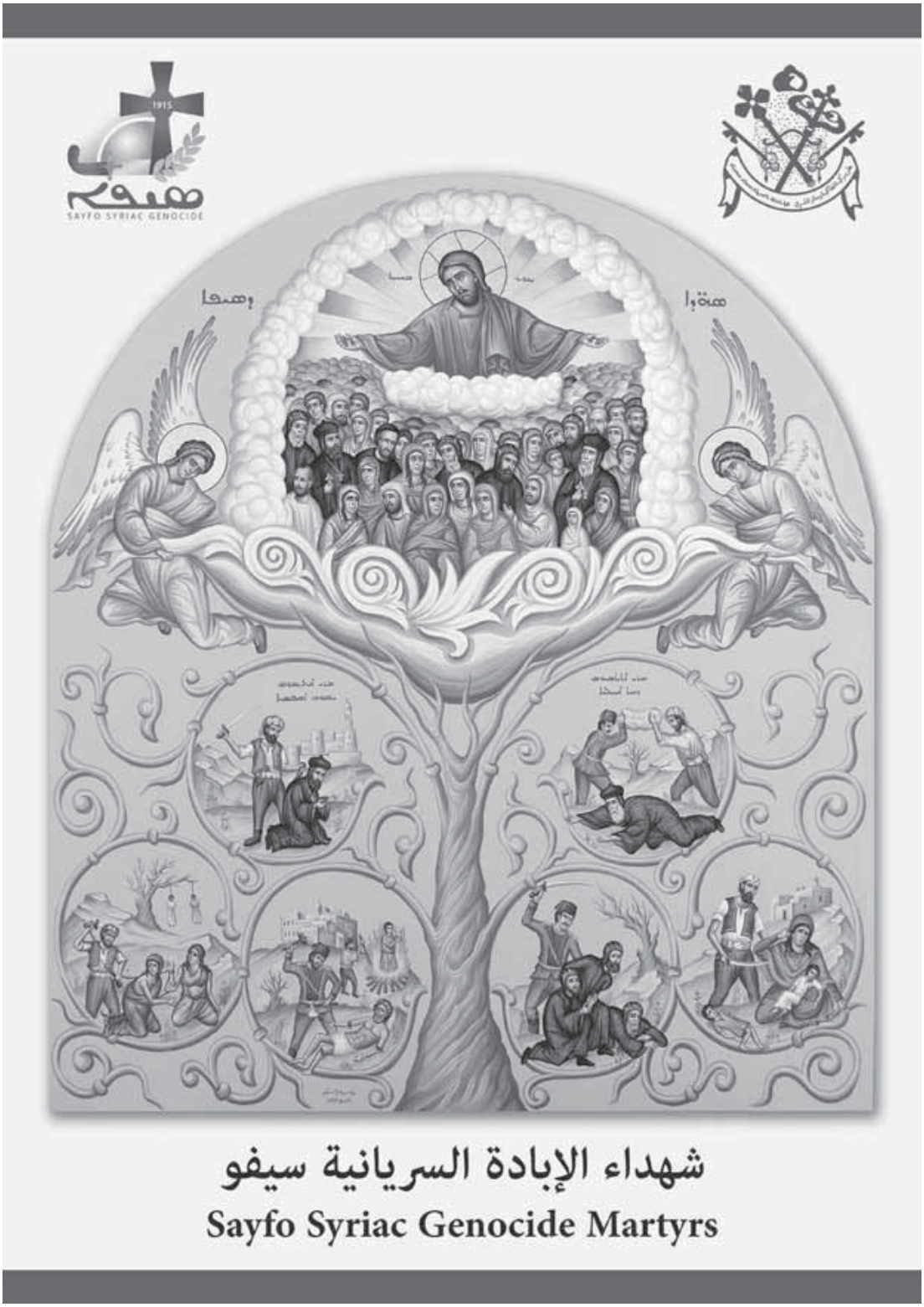

Fig. 6. Icon of the Sayfo Centenary 1915 - 2015. Adoted by the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. Crest of the Patriachate (top right). Sayfo Logo (top left).(© Syrian Orthodox Church.)