

FROM DEPORTATION TO INTEGRATION: ARMENIAN SURVIVORS AND STATE FORMATION IN FAISAL IBN HUSSEIN’S SYRIA (1918-1920)

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Abstract

This article examines the policies of Emir Faisal ibn Hussein toward Armenian Genocide survivors in post-Ottoman Syria between 1918 and 1920, focusing on the intersection of humanitarian assistance, minority protection, and state formation. Following the collapse of Ottoman rule, Syria became a principal refuge for tens of thousands of Armenian deportees who had survived the Armenian Genocide and remained in conditions of acute vulnerability due to famine, disease, displacement, and legal uncertainty. Against this backdrop, Faisal’s administration adopted a series of political, administrative, and humanitarian measures aimed at alleviating the suffering of Armenian survivors and incorporating them into the emerging socio-political framework of postwar Syria.

Drawing on archival sources, memoirs, contemporary press accounts, and official correspondence, the article analyzes Faisal’s personal engagement with Armenian communal leaders, institutional relief measures, decrees concerning food distribution, debt relief, and the protection and recovery of Armenian women and children subjected to forced assimilation. It further explores the tensions and limitations of these efforts, including the February 1919 anti-Armenian violence in Aleppo, local social frictions, and the broader geopolitical constraints imposed by British and French imperial competition.

The study argues that Faisal’s policies represented an important early attempt to transform humanitarian relief into a more structured framework of minority protection and civic inclusion, while simultaneously serving the political project of Arab state-building. Although ultimately constrained by regional instability and the collapse of Faisal’s Syrian rule, these initiatives contributed significantly to the stabilization, integration, and long-term institutional development of the Armenian community in Syria, laying part of the foundation for one of the most significant Armenian diaspora centers in the Middle East.

Keywords: Armenian Genocide; Armenian deportees; genocide survivors; Emir Faisal; Armenian-Syrian Relations; post-Ottoman statecraft; Armenian Diaspora

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Introduction

A pivotal period in the political history of Syria occurred in 1918 with the de facto collapse of the Ottoman Empire.¹ Following the end of World War I, Emir Faisal ibn Hussein (1885-1933),² the son of the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein ibn Ali, emerged as a key figure in shaping the future of Syria.³ On 1 October 1918, the allied forces of General Edmund Allenby, Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in the Middle East, and Emir Faisal entered Damascus. The raising of the flag of the Arab Revolt over the city hall served as a symbolic demarcation of a new political epoch in the Levant. Following the definitive end of Ottoman hegemony, Faisal played a decisive role in the establishment and consolidation of a Hashemite administration. Crucially, his leadership proved instrumental in ameliorating the socio-economic conditions and securing the legal status of the Armenian deportees who had been exiled to the Syrian desert during the Armenian Genocide.

On 5 October 1918, with the authorization of Edmund Allenby, Faisal ibn Hussein established an Arab Military Government in Damascus. In his inaugural proclamation

1 From 1516 to 1918, Syria formed part of the Ottoman Empire. During these four centuries, the Ottoman authorities divided the region into various administrative units. Following the administrative reforms of 1864, these consisted primarily of the vilayets of Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut; the province of Jerusalem; and the autonomous mutasarrifate of Mount Lebanon. With the exception of Mount Lebanon – which enjoyed a distinct degree of cohesion and autonomy due to its Maronite population – these divisions possessed little significance beyond administration. It is important to note that modern territorial concepts such as Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Syria, and even the broader “Arab world” emerged only in the late Ottoman period, while Lebanon itself existed only in embryonic form. See Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria, The History of an Ambition* (New York: Oxford University Press 1992), 25.

2 Sharif Hussein bin Ali, a highly respected spiritual and political figure in the Arab world, held the title of Sharif by virtue of his Hashemite lineage and direct descent from Muhammad, regarded by Muslims as a prophet. In 1880, while residing in Constantinople, Hussein fell out of favor with Sultan Abdul Hamid II after Ottoman intelligence suspected his uncles of conspiring with European powers to secure the Sharifate under foreign protection. To avoid the Sultan’s wrath, Hussein returned to Mecca, then ruled by the rival Zaid clan. He remained there until February 1892, when the Ottoman Porte, following an investigation into family disputes conducted by the Sultan’s aide-de-camp Ratib Pasha, ordered his return to Constantinople. The summons served both to ease tensions in the Hijaz and to uphold the long-standing Ottoman policy of keeping potential claimants to the Sharifate under close imperial supervision.

In March 1893, Hussein’s family, including his sons Faisal, Ali bin Hussein, and Abdullah I of Jordan, joined him in the capital after traveling from Jeddah aboard the steamer Izzeddine. By order of the Sultan, Hussein and his sons remained under effective house arrest in Constantinople for more than a decade. Their confinement ended in 1908, when the Young Turk government appointed Hussein Emir of the Hijaz, restoring his authority over this strategically and religiously significant province. See Ali A. Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 13-14.

3 On 23 October 1918, Edmund Allenby formally divided the occupied eastern territories of the former Ottoman Empire, excluding Mesopotamia and the Hijaz, into three administrative zones. Occupied Enemy Territory South (OETS) comprised Palestine, including Jerusalem, Acre, and Nablus, and was placed under direct British administration. Occupied Enemy Territory North, later renamed Occupied Enemy Territory West (OETW), encompassed Mount Lebanon and the Syrian coast from Acre to Iskenderun and was administered directly by the French. Finally, Occupied Enemy Territory East (OETE) included Damascus, the territories east of the Jordan River, and southern Aleppo. This zone was placed under Arab administration and became the core of the government headed by Faisal. Allawi, *Faisal*, 153.

addressed to the “People of Syria,” Faisal thanked the population for welcoming what he described as “our victorious troops” and affirmed loyalty to Sherif Husain, who was described in the proclamation in highly honorific terms as “our Lord,” “the Sultan,” and “the Prince of the Faithful.” He further announced the establishment of an “Arab Constitutional Government... fully and absolutely independent, in the name of our Lord, Sultan Husain,” asserting authority over all Syria under the leadership of Ali Rida al-Rikabi.⁴ Alongside appeals for public order and stability, Faisal sought to reassure minority communities by emphasizing that his administration would be founded upon principles of justice and equality, guaranteeing equal rights to all Arabs, whether Muslim, Christian, or Jewish.⁵

On 6 October 1918, with the participation of the 3rd Armenian Legion of the Eastern Legion,⁶ formed in November 1916 from Armenian exiles, Faisal liberated Beirut. By October 25, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo came under Faisal’s control. Five days later, news arrived of the armistice concluded with the Ottoman Empire.

While the victorious powers of World War I confronted the challenges of establishing peace and security, the Armenian people faced the catastrophic consequences of genocide. As a result of the deportations and massacres, approximately 880,000 Armenians found themselves “resettled” in Syria by the summer and autumn of 1915.⁷ By early 1916, however, the number of surviving deportees had already fallen sharply. According to a report by Jesse Jackson, the American consul in Aleppo, dated 3 February 1916, approximately 486,000 Armenian deportees remained in Syria.⁸ By October 1918, this

4 Ali Rida al-Rikabi (1866-1942) served as governor of Jerusalem and later as governor and military commander in Medina. In 1914, he was forced into retirement after criticizing the Ottoman government’s decision to enter World War I. During the war, he joined the nationalist society *al-Fatat* while concealing his sympathies for the Arab Revolt through outward displays of loyalty to Djemal Pasha, who later appointed him head of the Damascus municipal council. Prior to the fall of Damascus, al-Rikabi, in coordination with al-Fatat, intensified his contacts with Faisal ibn Hussein of Iraq in preparation for assuming a role in the emerging Arab administration.

5 Zeine N. Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence Western Diplomacy and the Rise and Fall of Faisal’s Kingdom in Syria* (New York: Caravan Books Delmar, 1977), 33-34.

6 The Eastern (Orient) Legion—also briefly referred to as the Armenian Legion—was a military unit of Armenian volunteers established within the French army in 1916. Its formation followed an agreement signed in London between the chairman of the Armenian National Delegation, Poghos Nubar Pasha, and Entente representatives Mark Sykes and Georges Picot. On November 15, 1916, the French War Ministry issued a decree creating the unit, officially named the “Eastern Legion,” which was approved by the French government on November 26. The decree stipulated that the Legion would be formed in Cyprus and composed primarily of Western Armenian volunteers serving under the French flag. The Legion’s objectives were to participate in the liberation of Cilicia, to advance Armenian national aspirations for the re-establishment of statehood in this historic region, and to serve as the nucleus of a future Armenian army. Active in Palestine, Lebanon, and Cilicia, the Legion not only engaged in military operations but also played a significant humanitarian role, including the rescue of Armenian women held in captivity and the relocation of orphanages from the Levant to Cilicia. See Tigran Poyadjian, *Հայկական Լեգիոնը* [The Armenian Legion] (Watertown: Paykar, 1965), 164-165; Susan Paul Pattie, *The Armenian Legionnaires: Sacrifice and Betrayal in World War I* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018).

7 Raymond Kevorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 630-631.

8 *United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide 1915-1917*, com. by Ara Safarian (Princeton and London: Gomidas Institute, 2004), 490.

number had declined dramatically. Of the surviving deportees, approximately 75,000 resided in Aleppo and northern Syria, 50,000 in Damascus and the Hauran region, 10,000 in Hama and Homs, 4,500 in the Latakia–Kessab region, 2,500 in Alexandretta and Baylan, and 8,000 in Lebanon. Another 10,000 deportees were dispersed across nearby areas, bringing the total number of Armenians in the region to approximately 160,000.⁹

The deportees faced rapidly increasing mortality rates as a result of famine, epidemics, and the unsanitary conditions of the tent cities. Between 1918 and 1919, the Armenian population in Syria declined further, as severe socio-economic hardship compelled many survivors to relocate to Cilicia in the hope of resettlement under French administration. Unlike the local population, which was primarily concerned with postwar recovery, Armenian deportees continued to live in a state of uncertainty and transience, sustained by the hope of eventually returning to a restored homeland. At the same time, the struggle for basic survival, including access to food, shelter, and employment, gradually encouraged their integration into both the broader Syrian environment and the local Armenian community.

During his administration, Faisal ibn Hussein undertook significant efforts to alleviate these difficulties and to promote Armenian-Syrian Arab coexistence. However, these local humanitarian initiatives were increasingly overshadowed by the shifting paradigms of international diplomacy. Emir Faisal's administration in Syria operated within a volatile environment defined by internal factionalism and the competing geopolitical interests of Great Britain and France. French policy following the Armistice of Mudros provides a clear example of this dynamic: Armenian survivors were strategically redirected toward Cilicia both to mitigate potential social instability in Syria and to establish a loyal demographic base for French territorial claims.

Consequently, the management of displaced populations was not merely a humanitarian concern but a foundational element in the political formation of the modern Syrian state.

From Humanitarian Assistance to Institutional Protection: Armenian Deportees in Faisal's Syria

Faisal's approach toward Armenian deportees was shaped by both political pragmatism and a broader commitment to interethnic cooperation. His favorable attitude toward the Armenians stemmed not only from humanitarian considerations but also from strategic efforts to cultivate alliances with minority communities within the framework of post-Ottoman state-building. As early as 1908, while serving alongside his brother Abdullah I of Jordan as parliamentary representatives for the Arab provinces of Jeddah and Mecca in the Ottoman Parliament, Faisal expressed support for the initial reform program

⁹ Byuzand Yeghiayan, *Ժամանակակից պատմություն Կաթողիկոսության Հայոց Եկիկյոյ 1914-1972* [Contemporary History of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1914-1972] (Antelias: Publication of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1975), 245.

advanced by the Young Turks.¹⁰ This moderate stance earned the sympathy of Armenian parliamentary representatives and laid an early foundation for Armenian-Arab political cooperation.

Furthermore, even before the large-scale arrival of Armenian deportees in Syria, segments of the Arab leadership had already expressed solidarity with the Armenian cause. At the Arab Congress convened in Paris in June 1913, attended by prominent Arab nationalist leaders and intellectuals, a resolution was adopted that included explicit support for Armenian reforms. Article 8 of the resolution stated: “The Congress approves and expresses its solidarity with the demands of the Armenians of Turkey, which are based on the principle of decentralization.”¹¹ This declaration reflected a broader commitment to minority rights and political reform within a decentralized Ottoman framework and foreshadowed Faisal’s subsequent efforts to assist and protect Armenian refugees during his administration in Syria between 1918 and 1920.

As early as 26 June 1916, when Sharif Hussein bin Ali formally proclaimed the independence of the Arab territories from the Ottoman Empire, his declaration carried particular significance for the Armenian deportees. In addition to announcing Arab secession from Ottoman rule, Hussein explicitly referred to the suffering of the Armenians within the empire. Condemning the Young Turk regime, he argued that it had “deviated from the legal path” by abandoning the fundamental principles of Sharia upon which the Ottoman state had ostensibly been founded.¹² He further denounced the systematic destruction of Armenian men, women, and children, stating that the Ottoman authorities had left only one-tenth of the Armenian population alive.¹³

Of particular importance was a subsequent directive issued by Sharif Hussein bin Ali in 1918, which later served as a point of reference for the administrative policies of Faisal.¹⁴ On 28 April 1918 (18 Rajab 1336 AH), Hussein addressed a formal proclamation to Faisal

10 Hovhannes Aghpashian, *Արաբական ազգային-ազատագրական զարթոնքը (համառոտ նોթեր)* [Arab National Liberation Awakening (Brief Notes)] (Beirut: Atlas, 1959), 14.

11 Ali Sultan, *At-Tarikh Suriya: Hukm Faisal ibn al-Husayn (1908-1918)* [History of Syria: The Reign of Faisal ibn Husayn (1908-1918)] (Damascus: Adzaluni, 1996), 176.

12 Muhammad Taher al-Omar, *Tārikh muqaddarāt al-Iraq al-Siyāsiyya* [Chronicles the Political Capabilities of Iraq] (Baghdad: Asriye, 1925), 265-266.

13 Taher al-Omar, *Chronicles*, 261.

14 Decree issued in 1918 by the Sharif of Mecca for the protection of Armenians: From Sharif Hussein bin Ali, King of the Arab Lands and Sharif and Emir of Mecca, to the honorable princes – Prince Faisal and Prince Abd al-Aziz al-Jarba – greetings and the mercy and blessings of God. Written in Umm al-Qura (Mecca) on 18 Rajab 1336 AH (29 April 1918). What is requested of you is that you protect and care for all members of the Jacobite Armenian community residing within your territories, frontiers, and tribes; assist them in all their affairs; and defend them as you would defend yourselves, your property, and your children. You are to provide them with whatever they may need, whether settled or in transit, for they are among the protected peoples of the Muslims (ahl dhimma al-muslimin). See the original Arabic text in Naim Al-Yafi, *Jamāl Bāshā l-saffāh* [Blood-Thirsty Djemal Pasha] (Latakia: Dar al-Hiwar Press, 1992), 68. Regarding the designation “Hakobikyan” (rendered as Yakubikyan in the original text), it is highly probable that Sharif Hussein bin Ali associated the term either with the Armenian Cathedral of Saint James – known in Arabic as al-Qiddis Ya‘qub – or conflated it with the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, historically referred to as the Jacobite Church.

and the tribal leader Abd al-Aziz al-Jarba, urging them to provide protection, support, and every possible form of assistance to Armenian deportees. This decree not only legitimized the presence of Armenians within Arab-controlled territories but also established an important framework for Faisal's later efforts to incorporate Armenian survivors into the emerging sociopolitical order of post-Ottoman Syria.

In addition, Faisal's political circle included several influential figures who were actively engaged in addressing the problems faced by the Armenian population. Among those who supported the implementation of policies favorable toward Armenian refugees were Sati al-Husri, Minister of Education;¹⁵ Faiz al-Ghusayn, Faisal's personal secretary and legal adviser;¹⁶ Shukri Pasha al-Ayubi, military governor of the Aleppo region;¹⁷ Hashim al-Atassi, a prominent political leader in Damascus;¹⁸ and the intellectual Omar Fakhuri.¹⁹ During the years of the Armenian Genocide, support for Armenian refugees was also consistently provided by Faris al-Khoury, an Ottoman parliamentarian from Damascus who later played a major role, alongside Faisal, in the formation of the Syrian state.²⁰

Such support was not confined to Faisal's political entourage; Faisal himself also engaged directly with Armenian survivors, demonstrating a personal interest in their plight. In early June 1917, Emir Faisal met with Armenian youths in Shoubak near Maan in Jordan. Archpriest Karapet Galfaian, who had endured the entire path of deportation, writes:

15 Sati al-Husri was a Syrian intellectual best known for formulating the idea of a unified Arab nation grounded in a shared language and culture rather than religion. In 1919, following the establishment of the independent Arab state in Syria under Faisal, al-Husri moved to Damascus, where he was appointed Director General of Education and later served as Minister of Education. He has been widely regarded as the foremost theoretician of Arab nationalism.

16 Faiz al-Ghusayn, a member of the Arab Sulut tribe from the Hauran region of southern Syria near the Jordanian border, served as kaymakam of the Kahta subdistrict in the province of Kharberd before the Armenian Genocide. An eyewitness to the genocide, he was arrested in July 1915 by order of Djemal Pasha on suspicion of anti-Turkish activities due to his involvement in the Arab nationalist society al-Fatat. He was initially exiled to Erzerum, but as Russian forces advanced toward the city, Djemal Pasha and Mehmed Reshid, governor of Diyarbekir, ordered his detention there instead, where he remained until February 1916. After a perilous journey, Faiz escaped to Der Zor, then to Basra, and eventually to India. See Faiz Al-Ghusein, *Beduin Notable of Damascus, Martyred Armenia* (London: George H. Doran, 1918), V–VII. He was an eyewitness to the genocide. His memoir was first published in Arabic in 1917 by the printing house of the *Al-Muqattam* newspaper in Cairo. Subsequently, it was translated and published in French (Geneva, 1917), English (London, 1918), German (Zurich, 1918), and Armenian (New Julfa, 1920).

17 Shukri Pasha al-Ayubi was likewise an early Arab nationalist figure. He was arrested during Djemal Pasha's crackdown on prominent Syrian nationalists in May 1916 and initially sentenced to death, although the sentence was later commuted. Al-Ayubi endured severe torture during his imprisonment and remained incarcerated until Djemal Pasha's departure from Syria. See Allawi, *Faisal*, 576.

18 Prior to the war, Hashim al-Atassi served as kaymakam of Hadjin in the Marash sanjak of the Adana vilayet. During the war years, he was appointed mutasarrif of Burdur in the Konya vilayet, where he frequently opposed Young Turk directives concerning anti-Armenian measures.

19 Omar Fakhuri, later regarded as one of the pioneers of modern Lebanese literature, was invited by Faisal I of Iraq from Beirut to Damascus to edit the official gazette *Al-Asima*. Writing for this and other periodicals under the pseudonym "Democratic Islam," Fakhuri published numerous articles documenting the plight of Armenian refugees and advocating closer Arab–Armenian relations and mutual solidarity.

20 Salih Zahr Ad-Din, *ʿAsāla al Arab wa al ʿUqfa al ʿArmani* [The Arabs' Gentry and the Armenians' Gratefulness] (Beirut, 2000), 326–327.

We all went and kissed the hem of his garment. He gave us an unexpected reception and said: “I know that the Armenians can rightly appreciate this movement of ours, because they, like us, have borne the bitter yoke of Turkish tyranny and, now deprived of their homes, are abandoned to famine and hunger; therefore, I recognize the Armenians as a liberty-loving people and invite them to cooperation.”²¹

Armenian deportees arriving in Damascus from Palestine, the Druze Mountains, and the Hauran frequently testified to the material, financial, and moral assistance provided through the efforts of Faisal.²² This support was at times accompanied by explicit gestures of political inclusion and solidarity. Faisal even suggested to a group of Armenians bound for Cairo that they accompany him to Damascus, stating: “If I enter the city in glory, you too shall enter it in glory with me.”²³ This symbolic gesture suggests that Faisal viewed the rehabilitation of the Armenian community not merely as a humanitarian obligation, but as an integral element of his broader vision for a unified and pluralistic Syrian state.

Faisal’s favorable attitude toward the Armenians was further demonstrated when he granted refuge to approximately one hundred Armenian deportees in a secure area on the outskirts of Damascus, providing a local Arab sheikh with the financial means and administrative authority necessary to ensure their protection and eventual transfer to the capital once conditions stabilized.

These efforts gradually attracted recognition beyond the regional sphere and were acknowledged by the international Armenian leadership. A notable example is a letter sent to Faisal in August 1918 by Boghos Nubar, in which the chairman of the Armenian National Delegation in Paris formally recognized Faisal’s protective role and humanitarian assistance toward Armenian deportees: “Thanks to the efforts of your valiant soldiers in southern Syria, the exiled sons and daughters of our nation have been reached. We pray for God’s blessing upon your army and for your victory to be enduring. Your soldiers bring added glory and honor to the Arab people; indeed, every Armenian, wherever they may be, stands in solidarity with the Arabs.”²⁴

In his reply, Faisal reaffirmed his support for the Armenian deportees and emphasized what he regarded as the moral and religious obligation of Arabs to assist the displaced:

21 Karapet Galfaian, *Գիրք ելից հայոց: Յիշատակ անշիրիմ նահատակաց հնոց և նորից, յայտից և անյայտից* [The Book of Armenian Exodus: In Memory of the Unburied Old and New, Known and Unknown Martyrs] (Beirut: Tōnikian, 1955), 421.

22 Allawi, *Faisal*, 132.

23 Eghishe bishop Chilinkirian, *Նկարագրությունք Երուսաղեմի-Հալեպի-Դամասկոսի զայլթականական և վանական զանազան դիպաց և անցքերու 1914-1918* [Descriptions of Miscellaneous Refugee and Monastic Incidents and Events in Jerusalem-Aleppo-Damascus, 1914-1918] (Jerusalem, 1927), 51.

24 Nora Arisian, *Aṣdā’ al-Ibāda al-Armaniyya fī al-Ṣaḥāfa al-Sūriyya (1877-1930)* [Echoes of the Armenian Genocide in Syrian Press 1877-1930] (Beirut: Az-Zaqira, 2004), 271-272.

Your letter to Emir Faisal is a sincere expression of friendship and goodwill. Indeed, the assistance provided by Emir Faisal to the exiles is a religious and moral duty incumbent upon every Arab. The Armenian people, and all others who suffer similar fates, are our allies in moments of both joy and sorrow. Above all, we pray to God to grant us the strength to extend a helping hand to the exiled, so that the true spirit of Islam and Muslim compassion may reach the entire world.²⁵

Emir Faisal's positive attitude toward Armenian refugees was also acknowledged by representatives of Armenian political circles. A group of Armenian youths in Damascus, including Aram Sahakyan, met with Faisal on several occasions.²⁶ In his memoirs, Sahakyan emphasized Faisal's sympathetic stance toward the Armenians, writing:

The Armenian people must remember King Faisal as a compassionate and sincere friend. Having a deep understanding of the Armenian people's values and contributions, he treated the scattered remnants of our nation with genuine care and unwavering respect. It is enough to recall his words: "After the Arab people, I consider the Armenian people my closest and most beloved."²⁷

This spirit of goodwill is further corroborated by the testimonies of Armenian ecclesiastics. Following the liberation of Syria in 1918, the transfer of power brought a broad political amnesty. Numerous Armenian political detainees were released alongside Arab nationalists previously imprisoned or condemned by the Ottoman authorities. Among them was Harutyun Yesayan, who had been arrested in June 1916 during a wider crackdown targeting more than sixty members of the Armenian community. Reflecting on these developments, Sahak II Khabayan wrote: "We were all released. A spirit of renewal filled the air... The community of 25,000-30,000 Armenian exiles has finally been able to breathe freely, thanks to the just governance of the Arab administration."²⁸

On the morning of 30 September 1918, after what he described as a restless and sleepless night, Sahak II Khabayan personally visited Emir Faisal. Upon greeting him, the Catholicos reportedly declared: "We are both joyful; we both are worthy of congratulations."²⁹

²⁵ Ibid., 272.

²⁶ In 1916, a group of Armenian youths in Damascus, including Aram Sahakyan, established a Dashnaksakan (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) committee aimed at maintaining contact with the Armenian diaspora and organizing assistance for Armenian refugees who had taken shelter in the Syrian desert. For a detailed account, see Aram Sahakian, «Դամասկոսէն մինչև Արապա (Յուշեր Մեծ Աղէտի օրերէն)» [From Damascus to Aqaba (Memoirs from the Days of the Great Catastrophe)], *Hayrenik* (Boston), 1950, no. 1: 21-33; no. 2: 73-85; no. 4: 56-66.

²⁷ Ibid., no. 4, 62.

²⁸ Yeghiayan, *Contemporary History*, 80.

²⁹ Byuzand Yeghiayan, *Ադանայի Հայոց պատմություն* [History of Armenians of Adana] (Antilias-Lebanon: Publication of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1970), 372.

The relationship between the Armenian ecclesiastical leadership and the emerging Arab administration was further strengthened through a series of meetings between Sahak II Khabayan and Emir Faisal. These high-level encounters resulted in repeated assurances of support and reflected the Syrian administration's intention to pursue a policy of protection and cooperation toward Armenian deportees.³⁰

During one such meeting, Faisal reflected on his nineteen years in Constantinople and expressed deep admiration for the Armenians' intellectual and socio-economic contributions. He reportedly stated: "I have long been impressed by the brilliance of the Armenian people and their development, as well as their exceptional abilities across all professions and crafts."³¹ Faisal further noted that some of his most "trusted and sincere" associates in the Ottoman capital had been Armenians. To illustrate this bond of trust, he recounted that while secretly fleeing Constantinople for Mecca, he had sought—and received—shelter in an Armenian household in order to evade the Ottoman authorities.³²

To mark the declaration of Arab independence, Faisal organized a reception at the offices of the influential Damascene newspaper *Al-Muqtabas*. Among the invited guests were Yeghishe Chilinkirian of the St. James Brotherhood of Jerusalem and Father Hovhannes, both of whom were received with particular respect and official recognition.³³

Institutionalizing Assistance for Armenian Deportees

Following Faisal's rise to power, assistance to Armenian deportees became increasingly institutionalized through formal decrees and administrative measures. A key indication of this emerging political framework was Faisal's first major political speech in Syria, delivered on 11 November 1918 at the Arab Club Hall in Aleppo. The address was particularly significant, as it articulated for the first time Faisal's vision for the future Arab state and his conception of Arab patriotism and nationalism.

Speaking before city officials and representatives of various communities, Faisal emphasized the importance of Arab unity (umma), arguing that it should be grounded in national identity rather than religious affiliation. He maintained that all religions fundamentally preached justice and the brotherhood of humanity, asserting that anyone seeking to sow division between Muslims, Christians, and Jews could not be considered a true Arab. For Faisal, justice constituted the central principle of governance, and he affirmed that all individuals were equal before the law regardless of their religious background.³⁴

30 Yeghiayan, *History of Armenians of Adana*, 95.

31 Chilinkirian, *Description*, 51.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 47.

34 Stephen H. Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1958), 48.

This inclusive vision was also reflected in symbolic public acts. While in Aleppo, Faisal attended, under his patronage and in the presence of Allied military officials and prominent Arab families, a concert performed by a choir composed of Armenian deportees. The ensemble had been organized through the efforts of the noted conductor and composer Barsegh Kanachyan, who sought to unite genocide survivors into a structured musical collective. The performance became both a powerful expression of Armenian cultural resilience and a symbolic embodiment of the inclusive civic ethos promoted by the emerging Arab administration.³⁵ By publicly supporting the event, Faisal incorporated the cultural expression of Armenian survivors into the civic life of post-Ottoman Syria and further strengthened the developing ties between the Armenian and Arab communities.

The Aleppo demonstration of 4 December 1918 stands as an important indicator of the changing political environment for Armenian survivors in the aftermath of World War I. The participation of approximately 50,000 Armenian deportees reflected their capacity to reorganize themselves as a visible and collective communal body after years of persecution and displacement. Equally significant was the fact that such a large-scale public gathering could only have taken place with the explicit approval of the Arab authorities, signaling a clear shift toward a policy of protection and support for the Armenian population. During the demonstration, Armenian participants formulated a seven-point memorandum of demands calling for the punishment of the Turkish authorities and the restoration of historical justice for the Armenian people, which was subsequently submitted to the Armenian National Delegation in Paris.³⁶

This evolving approach soon found more concrete administrative expression. Ali Nasser, a close associate of Emir Faisal, was appointed commander of the Arab forces in northern Syria and later became a senior commander in Faisal's Northern Arab Army. In December 1918, accompanied by the garrison commander Ali Cevdet,³⁷ he traveled to Aleppo, where he initiated measures to formalize the distribution of material aid and relief supplies to Armenian deportees, thereby incorporating humanitarian assistance into the responsibilities of the regional military administration.

Ali Nasser later met in an official capacity with Ashtchian and Father Yeghise Ayvazyan. According to their testimonies, the commander received them with “notable warmth” and outlined his intention to gather Armenian deportees for transfer to Aleppo.

35 S. Seza, «Դրվագներ Բ. Կանաչեանի կեանքէն» [Episodes from the life of B. Kanachyan], *Nairi* (Beirut), 1957, no. 35, 5, 15; *Բարսեղ Կանաչեան. կեանքի մը երաժշտացումը (1885-1967)* [Barsegh Kanachian: Musification of Life], ed. Antranik Dakessian (Beirut: Vahe Setian, Haygazian press, 2017), 320.

36 «Հայկաի Հայկական Միութեան Ա. Շաժում» [The Armenian Union Movement A. of Aleppo], *Hay Dzayn* (Aleppo), 6 December, 1918.

37 Ali Cevdet, a former Ottoman officer and early participant in the Arab Revolt, later commanded Syrian forces in the Beqaa Valley and subsequently served as a provincial governor and minister under Faisal I of Iraq. At the beginning of World War I, Ali Cevdet was also among the founding members of the “Armenian-Arab Brotherhood” society established in Cairo to promote Armenian–Arab cooperation, alongside Mushegh Serobian and Boghos Nubar. See «Հայ արաբական յարաբերութիւնն» [Armenian-Arab Relations], *Hay Dzayn*, 15 February 1919.

Importantly, Nasser pledged to facilitate the relocation through vehicles and logistical resources provided directly by the Arab administration.³⁸ In addition, Nasser issued formal instructions to the local governor, Haydar Bey, ordering the systematic distribution of grain supplies to Armenian deportees in Manbij.³⁹ Through this measure, the support and sustenance of Armenian survivors became incorporated into the official responsibilities of the regional administration.

This evolving administrative framework also helps explain why, in late 1918 and early 1919, senior Syrian officials repeatedly addressed the condition of Armenian deportees in formal governmental settings. On 20 December 1918, Harutyun Yesayan met with Military Governor of Aleppo Shukri al-Ayubi and Ali Rida Pasha. During the meeting, al-Rikabi reaffirmed the administration's support, declaring: "We are firmly convinced that the Armenians possess a legitimate right to existence, and we shall not refrain from fulfilling every fraternal obligation, particularly in light of our shared suffering."⁴⁰ Such statements transformed Armenian relief from a purely humanitarian concern into a recognized state responsibility grounded in principles of intercommunal solidarity.

In response to expressions of gratitude from the Armenian clergy, Shukri Pasha al-Ayubi assured them that additional administrative assistance would be provided as circumstances allowed.⁴¹ Harutyun Yesayan also met with Tawfiq Shami Bey, a senior diplomatic official, who reaffirmed that Armenian deportees in Syria were under the direct protection and patronage of the Syrian authorities.⁴² These exchanges culminated on 21 December 1918 in a reciprocal visit by Arab officials to the Armenian Prelacy. During the meeting, Ali Rida al-Rikabi reiterated that the Armenian community could rely upon the goodwill and support of the Arab population.

During the same discussions, Father Harutyun formally requested the punishment of Nazmi Bey for his brutal treatment of children in the Aleppo orphanage.⁴³ In response, Ali Rida promptly ordered his arrest and punishment, demonstrating the willingness of the new administration not only to express solidarity with Armenian survivors but also

38 «Աշնեան քնյ. Եզնիկ, Այվազեան քնյ. Եղիսէ. Ն. Բ. Շէրիֆ Նասրը եւ Մէնսպունի հայերը» [Father Yeznik Ashjian, Father Yeghise Ayyazian – His Highness Sharif Nasir and the Armenians of Manbij], *Hay Dzayn*, 16 December, 1918.

39 Ibid.

40 «Սիրալիր յարաբերութիւն հայ եւ արաբ ազգերու» [Cordial Relations Between the Armenian and Arab Nations], *Hay Dzayn*, 23 December, 1918.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 The authorities in Aleppo adopted a brutal policy toward Armenian orphans by appointing Nazmi Bey as director of the city's orphanage, where children were subjected to systematic abuse and death. Following the entry of British forces into Aleppo, Nazmi was arrested after protests lodged by the Armenian Prelacy. During his interrogation, it emerged that of the approximately 3,000 orphans transferred to the institution, only fifty had survived. Nazmi reportedly admitted that he had intentionally spared those fifty children in order to preserve the appearance of a functioning orphanage and thereby continue receiving his salary and food rations. See Aram Antonian, *Մեծ ոճիրը: Հայկական վերջին կոտորածները եւ Թալէադ փաշա* [The Great crime. The Last Massacres of Armenians and Talaat Pasha] (Boston: Pahak Printing House, 1921), 185.

to exercise its authority in addressing abuses committed against them.⁴⁴

These measures were followed by additional administrative concessions aimed at facilitating the integration and protection of Armenian deportees within the emerging Syrian state structure. In early January 1919, during consultations between Ali Rida al-Rikabi and representatives of the Armenian community in Aleppo, Yeghishe Chilinkirian submitted a formal petition requesting that state authorities recognize and accept administrative documents written also in Armenian.⁴⁵ The request was approved, constituting a notable acknowledgment of communal linguistic rights and illustrating the Arab administration's broader attempt to accommodate the administrative integration of Armenian deportees within the emerging state framework.

This atmosphere of growing institutional recognition and cooperation was also reflected in the increasingly public participation of Armenians in the civic and political life of postwar Aleppo. On 20 January 1919, the Armenian leadership in Aleppo organized a large commemorative procession involving nearly ten thousand Armenians. The procession moved from the Cathedral of the Forty Martyrs to the Armenian cemetery and included prayers led by Father Bardughimeos of Furnuz (Zeytun). The afternoon gathering at the cathedral developed into a significant diplomatic occasion attended by French, British, and American military and diplomatic representatives, transforming the communal act of mourning into a broader appeal for international recognition and justice. The ceremony was attended by the full Aleppo City Council and senior regional officials, including Shukri Pasha al-Ayubi, Ali Nasser, Garrison Commander Ali Cevdet, and Chief of Staff Ziyad. Speeches were delivered by Hakob Voskan, chairman of the Protestant assembly, and Azniv Chilian. The gathering also featured addresses by Rizkallah Kneider and Paul Poret, editors of the Aleppine newspapers *At-Taqqaddum* and *Renaissance*, reflecting strong intellectual and journalistic support for the Armenian cause among segments of the local Arab elite.⁴⁶

These developments unfolded alongside broader diplomatic and humanitarian cooperation between the Armenian and Arab leaderships at the international level. In Paris on 12 December 1918, Faisal met with Boghos Nubar to coordinate relief efforts for Armenian deportees throughout Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. During the discussions, Faisal accepted financial assistance collected by Armenian diaspora communities in Manchester and Marseille. These funds were allocated to the Syrian authorities for the distribution of medical and food aid in Damascus, Aleppo, and Beirut, thereby formalizing a transnational humanitarian partnership between Arab and Armenian institutions.⁴⁷

44 "Cordial Relations Between the Armenian and Arab Nations," *Hay Dzayn*, 23 December, 1918.

45 Chilinkirian, *Description*, 66.

46 «Համազգային սգահանդէսը 1919 Յունվար 20» [The Great National Mourning Event of January 20, 1919], *Hay Dzayn*, 24 January 1919; Aramian, «Սգահանդէսին պատմական օրը» [The Historic Day of the National Mourning Ceremony], *Hay Dzayn*, 25 January 1919; «Համազգային սգահանդէս Հալէպի մէջ» [The Great National Mourning Event in Aleppo], *Arev*, 29 January 1919; Harutyun Marutyan, *Commemorating the Armenian Genocide* (London, New York, Oxford: I.B. Tauris, 2026), 63-64.

47 Yervand Najaryan, «Հայ-արաբական փոխհարաբերությունները Սիրիայում (1918 հոկտեմբեր-1919

In parallel with these diplomatic and humanitarian actions, practical mechanisms were being implemented at the local level, aimed at improving the living conditions of the deportees and facilitating their economic integration. Within this very context, In February 1919, the Syrian administration issued a decree authorizing monthly food rations for approximately 48,000 Armenian deportees. By explicitly attributing their displacement to the policies of the “former government”—that is, the Young Turk regime—the decree framed humanitarian assistance as a form of political and moral restitution. The document stated: “While the state budget cannot fully accommodate the comprehensive needs of the 48,000 deportees displaced by the former regime’s decisions, it is nonetheless imperative to proceed with a systematic distribution of sustenance. We must ensure that the most destitute among them receive the necessary provisions without delay.”⁴⁸

The Armenian press also petitioned Faisal regarding a moratorium on the debts of Armenian merchants in Aleppo. The resulting resolution, ratified on 26 March 1919, established that:

1. All financial obligations owed by Armenians would be deferred until the end of 1919, with repayment to occur in four later installments.
2. Armenian debtors seeking to emigrate were required to provide formal guarantees concerning their liabilities; without such documentation, departure would not be permitted.⁴⁹

This resolution enabled Armenian merchants to stabilize their financial situation while simultaneously serving as a strategic mechanism through which Emir Faisal sought to integrate the Armenian community into the socio-economic structure of the emerging Syrian state. The deferment of debts protected small-scale traders from insolvency, while the restrictions on emigration aimed to prevent capital flight and encourage the economic reintegration of Armenians into the new administration.

Thus, these developments indicate that assistance to Armenian deportees under Faisal’s administration evolved from immediate relief efforts into a more coherent administrative policy. The protection, accommodation, and socio-economic stabilization of Armenian survivors became intertwined with the broader processes of governance and state formation in post-Ottoman Syria, reflecting both pragmatic administrative concerns and a political vision of intercommunal coexistence.

հոմիխ) [Armenian-Arab relations in Syria (October 1918-June 1919)], *Oriental Studies Collection* 6 (1974): 158.

48 Published in the Syrian government’s official newspaper, *Al-Asima*, on 27 February 1919. See Arisian, *Echoes*, 354.

49 The resolution was published in the 8 April 1919 issue of *Al-Asima*. See Arisian, *Echoes*, 356-357.

The Stance of Faisal's Administration on the Recovery of Armenian Women and Children

The recovery of Armenian women and children occupied a distinct place within Faisal's broader policy toward Armenian Genocide survivors. Beyond immediate humanitarian relief, this issue addressed the enduring consequences of genocide, including forced assimilation, religious conversion, and the fragmentation of Armenian families and communities. Faisal's administration increasingly approached the matter as one of state responsibility, as reflected in formal decrees, the mobilization of provincial authorities, and support for Armenian-led recovery initiatives, though implementation remained constrained by local resistance and political instability.

In 1919, a series of important resolutions were adopted in Syria that played a significant role in the recovery and reintegration of Armenian women and children. In January 1919, Emir Faisal issued a formal executive order entitled "Decree of Emir Faisal regarding the Restitution and Rights of Armenian Women." The decree declared:

We have formally directed the Military Governor of Aleppo, Jafar Pasha, to enact a public decree mandating that all individuals harboring Armenian women, girls, or children must immediately return them to their communal representatives. Any refusal to comply with this repatriation effort shall result in severe legal penalties. The primary objective of this mandate is the systematic identification and recovery of these survivors; those who facilitate their return shall merit my highest personal and official regard.⁵⁰

To ensure the implementation of this mandate, Faisal dispatched official instructions to provincial governors, local administrators, and Harutyun Yesayan. In response to these directives, Jafar al-Askari, Military Governor of the Aleppo region, issued a formal declaration stating: "It is an honor to acknowledge the sovereign directive of His Majesty Emir Faisal regarding the restitution of Armenian orphans, women, and girls. The mandate has been disseminated through the relevant press organs, and rigorous administrative measures are being instituted to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the order."⁵¹

These administrative mandates and official commitments were subsequently reinforced through direct meetings, which allowed the Armenian leadership to engage with the Arab authorities at the highest level to address pressing concerns. In early June 1919, Faisal, accompanied by Jafar al-Askari, Military Governor of Aleppo Province, visited Aleppo, where Sahak II Khabayan organized a formal reception in his honor at the Armenian

⁵⁰ *Şafahāt Wathā'iqiyya min Jarīdat al-Taḡaddum al-Ḥalabiyya 'an al-Aḥwāl al-Armaniyya wa-l-'Arabiyya fī al-Dawla al-'Uthmāniyya wa-l-Bilād al-Shāmiyya* [Documentary materials from the Aleppine newspaper al-Taḡaddum on the conditions of Armenians and Arabs in the Ottoman Empire and Syria] (Aleppo: Dar al-Atlas, 1992), 324.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Prelacy.⁵² The gathering became an important diplomatic forum for addressing Armenian communal concerns in the postwar period. During the reception, Gabriel Gasparyan presented a formal petition to Faisal concerning Armenian women and children who remained dispersed among Arab communities in Iraq and Syria. The petition stated: “A large number of women, girls, and boys, deported from their homeland as a result of forced exile, currently remain among the marginalized and impoverished Arab populations of Iraq and Syria. The return of these unfortunate individuals is not only a pressing concern for their families and for the Armenian nation but also a humanitarian imperative and an inalienable right.”⁵³

In response to this appeal, the delegation urged Faisal to reaffirm and more broadly disseminate the proclamation issued in April 1918 by his father, Sharif Hussein bin Ali, which had called for the protection of Armenian refugees and the restoration of their civil rights. Underscoring the moral and political significance of the request, the delegation declared: “We ask that you resolve this issue once and for all, thereby ensuring your legacy among the many benevolent actions attributed to your leadership.”⁵⁴ Gabriel Gasparyan concluded his address in Arabic, in a symbolic gesture of Armenian-Arab solidarity, stating: “The Armenian and Arab peoples, hand in hand, have fought side by side against the forces of tyranny, oppression, and subjugation.”⁵⁵

During his visit Faisal also personally visited the Armenian orphanage in Aleppo’s Ram district, which at the time operated under French supervision. The visit carried important symbolic significance, projecting Faisal’s authority as a protector of the Armenians even within institutions administered by foreign powers. During the visit, he directly reassured the orphaned children of continued Arab protection and support.⁵⁶

The systematic recovery of Armenian deportees was facilitated through cooperation between Armenian rescue initiatives and segments of the Arab elite. Supported by Zaki Bey, a close associate of Faisal, and by the Druze leader Hussein al-Atrash, these efforts were able to navigate the instability of the postwar transitional period.⁵⁷ According to one testimony, Sheikh Hussein al-Atrash sent a delegation to escort Armenian representatives to his residence. After reading Faisal’s letter, he reportedly declared: “We will do everything possible for the safety and freedom of Armenians. We will sacrifice everything.”⁵⁸

On 25 June 1919, Faisal issued a formal decree authorizing the transportation of Armenian refugees, a measure that significantly facilitated ongoing rescue and recovery

52 Chilinkirian, *Descriptions*, 49.

53 «Էմիր Ֆէյսալ Հայէպի մէջ, հայ որբերն ու կիները վերադարձնելու հրաման» [Emir Faisal in Aleppo: The Decree for the Return of Armenian Orphans and Women], *Kilikia*, 27 July 1919.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 *The documentary material*, 323.

57 *Crows of the Desert: Memoirs of Levon Yotnakhparian*, ed. Levon Parian (Tujunga, CA: Parian Photographic Design, 2012), 65.

58 Ibid., 82-83.

operations involving deportees, particularly women and children. At the initiative of Levon Yotnakhparian, copies of the order were circulated throughout the Hauran region to ensure compliance by local authorities. The decree stated: “Mr. Levon Yotnakhparian is hereby granted permission to transfer all Armenians from the Hauran region and surrounding areas to Dera’a or Damascus via train station, free of charge. No one should stop them.”⁵⁹ Subsequently, around four thousand Armenians were relocated to the tent camp in Damascus.⁶⁰

This directive effectively guaranteed Armenian deportees access to regional railway infrastructure and authorized their free movement to Dera’a or Damascus under the protection of the Arab administration, thereby creating an official mechanism for the recovery and relocation of survivors. According to publications of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), Levon Yotnakhparian remained a central figure in these operations. Working alongside Karapet Kavafian, Hovhannes Kavafian, Yesayi Kereshekian, and his brother Tigran Yotnakhparian, he coordinated the difficult process of locating, recovering, and rehabilitating Armenian orphans. Contemporary accounts described their efforts in stark terms: “From one village to another, from one home to another, we were collecting Armenian orphans and sending them to orphanages or refugee shelters in Damascus.”⁶¹

The same sources further note that the Yotnakhparian expedition carried out an additional rescue mission near Hauran, transferring approximately twenty Armenian orphans to the AGBU orphanages in Damascus.⁶²

In his memoirs, Levon Yotnakhparian recounts another meeting with Faisal, during which the mission to recover Armenian orphans from Arab households and restore them to the Armenian community in order to preserve their identity and heritage was presented. Faisal approved the initiative, issued an official decree in support of these efforts, and ensured that the order was publicized in the Arab press. According to Yotnakhparian, the decree stated: “Whoever has Armenian orphans must surrender them to the committee headed by Mr. Levon Yotnakhparian.”⁶³

The governors of Aleppo and Damascus were instructed to provide full assistance to those involved in the rescue operations. Faisal’s decree was subsequently published in numerous Armenian and Arab newspapers. The newspaper *Kilikia*, for example, reported: “Given the decision to rescue Armenians, those sheltering Armenian deportees in their homes are required to inform the municipal police so that their names may be officially registered on a special list. Anyone who, after this announcement, continues to conceal a deportee will be subject to legal prosecution.”⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Ibid., 83, 91.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁶¹ Ibid., 97.

⁶² «Ազատագրուած հայերը» [The rescued Armenians], *Miutun* (Cairo), July-August, 1919, 51.

⁶³ *Crows of the Desert*, 98.

⁶⁴ «Հայերու ներգաղթը» [Armenian immigration], *Kilikia*, 23 May, 1919.

Yotnakhparian also noted that because of protests and unrest in Damascus, Faisal eventually requested that the orphan recovery operations be temporarily suspended, forcing the organizers to halt what he described as their “noble mission” after rescuing large numbers of children.⁶⁵

Activists such as Ruben Heryan and Parnak Shishikyan worked closely with Arab tribal leaders in support of the efforts to recover Armenian women and children.⁶⁶

Faisal’s intervention contributed to the rescue of thousands of Armenians who, after 1915, had been absorbed into Arab and Kurdish households, thereby creating opportunities for many survivors to reclaim their Armenian identity. Nevertheless, the reunification of women and children with their families remained a complex and often painful process.

The February 1919 Crisis and Its Aftermath

While Faisal consistently pursued a policy aimed at improving Armenian–Syrian Arab relations, the events of 28 February 1919 stood in stark contrast to the official policies promoted by his administration. The violence in Aleppo appears to reflect the tensions between the government’s broader conciliatory approach toward the Armenians and opposition from local actors within the fragile postwar transitional environment. On Friday, 28 February, violent attacks were carried out against the Armenian refugee population in Aleppo, resulting in significant casualties among a community composed entirely of genocide survivors and deportees.⁶⁷

The atmosphere in Aleppo had been growing increasingly tense in the weeks preceding the violence. The newspaper *Kilikia*, published in Adana, reported: “On Friday morning, February 28, at 6 o’clock, the massacre against the Armenians began from Jümma Pazarı, the location designated for the meeting previously announced by the Al Arab club and prohibited by the Entente authorities. Within an extremely short period of time, it spread to nearly all parts of the city.”⁶⁸ Eyewitness Aram Antonyan similarly recalled that on February 28, Muslim Arabs in Aleppo, encouraged by the Arab government and joined by Arab police officers and gendarmes, launched a large-scale attack against Armenians.⁶⁹

Some Arab eyewitnesses attributed the outbreak of violence to an alleged theft by Armenians in the Al-Jumaa market, a story that quickly spread across the city until British

⁶⁵ Ibid., 112–113.

⁶⁶ Narine Margaryan, «Միջագետքի անապատի հայ որբախույզները (1918–1923 թթ.)» [The Armenian Orphan-Seekers of the Mesopotamian Desert (1918–1923)], *Armenological Issues Bulletin* 1, no. 13 (2018): 39–57.

⁶⁷ For details see «Հալեպի ջարդը» [The Aleppo Massacre], *Veratsnund* (Paris), 15 April 1919, 123–124; «Հալեպի կոտորածը» [The Aleppo Massacre], *Kilikia*, 14 March, 1919; Ali Sultan, *History of Syria*, 114; Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq*, 218; Hovhannes Topuzyan, *Սիրիայի և Լիբանանի հայկական գաղթաբնակների պատմություն (1841–1946)* [History of the Armenian Diasporas in Syria and Lebanon (1841–1946)] (Yerevan: Armenian SSR AS publication, 1974), 214–220; Kamil ibn Husayn Al-Ghazzi, *Nahr al-Dhahab fī Tārīkh Ḥalab* [The River of Gold in the History of Aleppo], Book 3 (Aleppo: Maronite Press 1923), 721–725.

⁶⁸ «Հալեպի կոտորածը» [The Aleppo Massacre], *Kilikia* (Adana), 14 March, 1919.

⁶⁹ Aram Antonyan, “The Aleppo Massacre,” *Veradzenount* (Paris), 15 April 1919, no. 8, 123–124.

and French intervention prevented further escalation. Yet contemporary newspapers from Aleppo and Cilicia suggest that the violence had been preceded by a sustained atmosphere of hostility. A key source of tension was an article titled “The Armenian and the Arab,” published in early February in *Al-Arab* by its editor-in-chief Sami al-Sarraj after his visit to Adana.⁷⁰ The article advanced inflammatory accusations, claiming that Armenian parties and armed groups were persecuting and killing Arabs returning from Turkey.⁷¹

The Armenian press responded swiftly. *Taragir* was among the first to reject these allegations, followed by *Hay Dzayn*, which emphasized on February 23 that Armenians had expressed only gratitude toward the Arab government and people, sentiments that had resonated even abroad.⁷² On the eve of the violence, H. Aramyan, writing in *Hay Dzayn* under the title “*Armenian-Arab Brotherhood*,” warned readers not to fall prey to “the disgraceful intrigues of the Ittihadists,” urging Armenians and Arabs instead to seek mutual understanding and solidarity.⁷³

Scholars have proposed multiple explanations for the Aleppo massacres, pointing to political, economic, and social tensions. However, the most convincing interpretation identifies Turkish actors as the principal instigators, while recognizing that a full understanding of the events also requires consideration of the roles played by Arab, British, and French authorities.

Contemporary accounts provide varying casualty figures. The 12 March 1919 issue of the newspaper *Kilikia* reported 46 deaths and 85 injuries. In its 16 March issue, under the headline “The Massacre of Aleppo,” the newspaper, citing a medical bulletin, revised the figures to 51 dead and approximately 100 wounded, while noting that the number of missing remained unknown. The French press likewise reported on the events, stating that the Armenians suffered approximately 50 deaths and 150 injuries in less than an hour.⁷⁴

As the violence escalated, the Armenian barracks were besieged, and the Armenian orphanage in Aleppo also came under attack. Notably, the orphaned youths defended the institution for more than two hours, armed only with wooden rifles, underscoring both the desperation of the situation and the vulnerability of Armenian survivors, including children. In response to petitions submitted by the Armenian Prelacy, the British authorities established a special military tribunal to investigate the massacres. Nearly one hundred individuals implicated in the violence were arrested, numerous officials who had perpetrated or facilitated the attacks were dismissed from their posts, and thirty-five individuals were sentenced to death. Some perpetrators were reportedly pursued and held accountable even beyond the borders of Syria.⁷⁵

70 In the autumn of 1918, the society *Nadi al-Arab* (“Arab Club”) was founded by Arab Unionists (Ittihadists). Its official organ was the daily newspaper *Al-Arab*.

71 «Հալեպի կոտորածը» [The Aleppo Massacre], *Kilikia* (Adana), 14 March, 1919.

72 «Հայ արաբական յարաբերութիւնն» [Armenian-Arab Relations], *Hay Dzayn*, 23 February, 1919.

73 Ibid.

74 *L'illustration* (Paris), 5 April 1919.

75 «Կեանքը Հալեպի մէջ» [Life in Aleppo], *Kilikia*, 23 May, 1919; «Մահու պատիժ Հալեպի մէջ» [Executions in Aleppo], *Kilikia*, 17 June, 1919.

While attending the Paris Peace Conference, Faisal publicly condemned the incident, rejecting any characterization of the violence as representative of Arab policy or society. In a telegram addressed to his brother Zeid, he wrote: “This was committed out of ignorance, enmity, and for despicable motives. Such incidents will not succeed in the future. They were instigated by enemy agents.”⁷⁶

In the aftermath of the Aleppo violence, Faisal appears to have reaffirmed and strengthened his policy of conciliation toward ethnic and religious minorities, with particular attention to the Armenian deportees. This position was formally articulated in an address delivered at the Damascus Palace on 9 May 1919, in which he emphasized the responsibility of the emerging Syrian state to protect the civil rights and collective welfare of minority communities while preserving stable intercommunal relations.⁷⁷

Faisal’s speech also underscored the strategic importance of establishing a representative political order capable of securing international recognition. Within this framework, the protection of minorities was presented not merely as a moral obligation, but as a defining feature of legitimate statehood. As Faisal declared, “Greater commitment must be dedicated to the rights and requirements of minorities in order to rectify the systemic injustices and entrenched hostilities inherited from the Ottoman era.”⁷⁸ Addressing his audience, he further emphasized:

We are obliged to demonstrate to our Allies that we are a nation striving for independence—a nation committed to the protection of our elders, our children, our brothers and sisters, and our neighbors. We extend our respect to all who arrive in our country with the intent of working alongside us. I appeal to you with a special plea: let us unite. This unity is not only our collective duty but the sole foundation upon which all our future endeavors must be built.⁷⁹

Following Faisal’s address, the Armenian Prelate delivered a reciprocal speech expressing the Armenian community’s gratitude for the assistance and protection provided by the Arab population during the war years. He declared: “I convey my deepest gratitude to the Arab nation for their unwavering assistance and compassion throughout the tribulations of the past four years. These noble deeds shall be inscribed in golden letters within the annals of our shared history.”⁸⁰

Faisal’s declaration carried particular significance for Armenian survivors in Syria, as it publicly acknowledged their communal, religious, and national identity within the political

⁷⁶ Sultan, *History of Syria*, 114.

⁷⁷ Arab historian Ali Sultan records the date of the meeting as 5 May. For the complete text of the announcement, see Sultan, *History of Syria*, 431-442.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 440.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 441-442.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 440.

framework of the emerging Syrian state. His position reflected not merely sympathy toward the Armenian cause, but a deliberate political effort to stabilize Armenian–Arab relations and institutionalize cooperation through directives encouraging local authorities to maintain constructive relations with the Armenian population.

Armenian–Arab cooperation was further institutionalized through the establishment of the Armenian–Arab Friendship Committee in November 1919.⁸¹ Formed at the initiative of the Arab Council of Elders, the committee sought to counter what were described as “troubling rumors” circulating in Aleppo following the withdrawal of British forces and to prevent the reemergence of intercommunal tensions. Its broader objective was to transform the political rapprochement achieved at the leadership level into a more durable framework of social coexistence.

During the committee’s inaugural meeting, presided over by the Military Governor of Aleppo, Jafar al-Askari, Naji al-Suwaidi delivered a significant address on intercommunal coexistence and mutual reassurance. He declared: “Armenians and Arabs can be assured that no harm will come to them from one another... An Armenian can sleep peacefully in his home without fearing Islam.”⁸² Reflecting on the violence of 28 February 1919, al-Suwaidi characterized the events as a shared tragedy. While acknowledging that Armenians had been the principal victims of the massacres, he also referred to the imprisonment and execution of Arabs in Sudan, framing the violence within a broader context of political unrest and emphasizing the administration’s determination to prevent any recurrence. His remarks were warmly received, and he was subsequently elected chairman of the Armenian–Arab Friendship Committee.

According to the testimony of the orphan Hovakim Dishdishian,⁸³ “Caliph” addressed the children directly in the presence of the assembled dignitaries in order to reassure

81 Reflecting on the origins of the Armenian–Arab Friendship Committee, Mikael Natanyan wrote in the newspaper *Arev* (4 April 1924) that, once the shock of the “foreign-provoked” violence of February 1919 had subsided, Armenian and Arab elites sought to establish a formal mechanism capable of preventing renewed intercommunal conflict. This effort resulted in the formation of the Armenian–Arab Friendship Committee, an organization intended to overcome what were described as “involuntary misunderstandings” and to strengthen historical ties through active cooperation and advocacy. The committee, chaired by Naji Bey, included senior officials such as the Chief of Police and members of the influential Jabri family, underscoring its official and political significance. Natanyan further emphasized the committee’s effectiveness during the turbulent transition to French rule, describing it as an important platform through which Armenians expressed gratitude for the assistance they had received while reaffirming their commitment to contributing to the prosperity of Syria as their new homeland.

82 «Հայ եւ արաբ համերաշխ յարաբերութիւնները Հալէպի մէջ» [Armenian–Arab Relations of Solidarity in Aleppo], *Kilikia*, 30 November 1919.

83 Hovakim Dishdishian was born in 1906 in Zile, Sebastia Province. A survivor of the Armenian Genocide, he was the sole member of his family to escape and subsequently endured the hardships of the deportation routes through Arab and Kurdish regions. In Deir ez-Zor, he encountered Ruben Heryan, a dedicated rescuer and vorpakhuyz (orphan-seeker), engaged in locating Armenian children sheltered among Arab tribes. Heryan explained his rescue mission to Hovakim and offered to photograph him in the hope of facilitating his possible adoption in the United States. After leaving Deir ez-Zor, Hovakim eventually reached Aleppo, where he was admitted to the orphanage directed by Reverend A. Shirachian. See Hovakim Dishdishian, *Դէպ Զորի անապատներում* [In the Deserts of Deir ez-Zor] (Yerevan: Gututyun, 2006), 252–253.

them of the administration's protection. He reportedly attributed the February violence to Turkish provocation rather than Arab hostility and, invoking the shared suffering of Arabs and Armenians under Ottoman rule, pledged that such incidents would not recur. He further affirmed the continued support of the Arab administration for Armenian deportees and orphans. The decision to hold the gathering within the orphanage itself likely carried symbolic significance, particularly given reports of increased escape attempts by orphaned children in the aftermath of the Aleppo violence.

By late 1919, Armenian-Arab relations in Syria had achieved a relative degree of institutional stability. Although isolated incidents of violence and localized tensions persisted, they no longer appeared capable of fundamentally destabilizing the broader framework of intercommunal relations that had gradually emerged in the postwar period.

Geopolitical Realignments and the Limits of Armenian-Arab Cooperation

Faisal's rule in Syria was nevertheless shaped by persistent diplomatic and internal challenges. His administration struggled to secure international recognition and some meaningful form of Syrian independence while simultaneously confronting domestic tensions, particularly the rivalry between urban notables and Arab nationalist circles. These developments unfolded within the broader context of renewed Great Power competition in the Middle East, where the fate of post-Ottoman territories remained deeply contested.⁸⁴

In this environment, minority populations became central to the regional strategies of both Great Britain and France. The Allied powers sought to secure the cooperation of former Ottoman subjects in pursuit of their geopolitical objectives, frequently invoking the language of "minority protection" within broader imperial and diplomatic agendas. As one scholar has observed, "For various actors, the arrival and settlement of refugees in the mandate territories offered a means of resolving these fundamental uncertainties: during the mandate period and beyond, the modern state of Syria was formed around and against refugees."⁸⁵

For the Armenian population in Syria, the postwar period was marked by profound political uncertainty. Following the Armistice of Mudros, shifting priorities among the Great Powers reopened questions concerning the future of Armenian deportees. Encouraged by French promises regarding the possible establishment of an autonomous or independent Armenian entity in Cilicia, many refugees repatriated with renewed

⁸⁴ Murat Abus, "Imperial politics and Feisal's Arab Government in Syria, 1918-1920," *Journal of Historical Studies* 2 (2004): 55.

⁸⁵ Benjamin Thomas White, "Refugees and the Definition of Syria, 1920-1939," *Past & Present* 235, no. 1 (2017): 143-144.

expectations. This movement was not merely humanitarian in character but reflected broader geopolitical calculations. By redirecting Armenian survivors toward Cilicia, the French administration sought to reduce the likelihood of prolonged social and political tensions in Syria, where the permanent settlement of large numbers of deportees was perceived as potentially destabilizing. At the same time, French policymakers viewed the Armenian population in Cilicia as a potentially loyal demographic and political base that could reinforce French claims to a regional mandate.

These shifting alignments unfolded against the backdrop of the Ottoman Empire's military collapse. Following his appointment in August 1918, Mustafa Kemal attempted to establish the Taurus Mountains as a final defensive line against the Allied advance. The Armistice of Mudros, however, rendered this strategy largely obsolete in the face of Anglo-French occupation and accelerated the reconfiguration of political power across the region.

By 1 November 1919, a decisive geopolitical shift occurred as British forces in western Syria began withdrawing in favor of French troops. This pragmatic hierarchy was most notably encapsulated by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who remarked: "For us, the friendship of France is worth ten Syrias."⁸⁶

On 21 November 1919, the appointment of Henri Gouraud as High Commissioner of Syria and Commander-in-Chief of French forces in the Near East marked a significant escalation in the struggle over Syria's political future. In response, the Syrian Congress intensified its public opposition to French colonial ambitions and moved toward greater internal mobilization. Within this context, a national conscription law was enacted on 21 December 1919, requiring men between the ages of twenty and forty to enlist—a measure that generated considerable anxiety among Armenian deportees, whose political and legal status remained unresolved.⁸⁷

By early 1920, reports had reached Sahak II Khabayan in Damascus and Aleppo indicating that Armenian refugees might be included in the general mobilization. Concerned by this possibility, the Catholicos submitted a formal petition to Faisal on 7 February, requesting that Armenian conscription be postponed until the international status of the refugees had been clarified. Praising Faisal's prior support and benevolence, he argued that both the question of military service and the broader issue of Armenian civil rights should remain suspended pending the outcome of the Paris Peace Conference.⁸⁸

Concerned that the issue of conscription might undermine Armenian-Arab relations, Catholicos Sahak also reached out to Poghos Nubar Pasha in an effort to secure a favorable resolution. In practice, however, the military conscription law was never effectively enforced, even among the Arab population, and consequently had no direct impact on the Armenians.⁸⁹ The measure remained largely dormant until after the San Remo

⁸⁶ Pipes, *Greater Syria*, 221.

⁸⁷ Yeghiayan, *Contemporary History*, 96.

⁸⁸ Amin Said, *Восстания арабов в XXв.* [Arab Uprisings in the 20th Century] (Moscow: Progress, 1964), 86.

⁸⁹ Yeghiayan, *Contemporary History*, 96.

Conference, when the Hashemite Arab government began taking preliminary steps toward implementation through the establishment of administrative structures and the allocation of financial resources necessary to facilitate mobilization.

These mounting political tensions culminated on 8 March 1920, when the Syrian General Congress—convened in part to present a unified political front before the Inter-Allied Commission of Inquiry—formally proclaimed Syria's full independence as a constitutional monarchy under King Faisal.⁹⁰ This unilateral declaration represented a strategic attempt to preempt the decisions of the forthcoming San Remo Conference, at which the Allied powers were expected to finalize the post-Ottoman mandate system.

In July 1920, the Syrian political crisis reached its culmination. On 14 July, France issued an ultimatum demanding Faisal's formal acceptance of the French mandate and the suppression of anti-French resistance. Despite the Syrian General Congress's final reaffirmation of sovereignty on 19 July, Faisal's concessions proved insufficient to avert military confrontation. On 24 July, French forces decisively defeated the Arab army at the Battle of Maysalun, leading to the occupation of Damascus the following day. By early August, Faisal had been permanently expelled from Syria, and a new administration under Ala al-Din al-Darubi was installed to facilitate the consolidation of French mandatory rule and the dissolution of the national army.⁹¹

France's consolidation of its position in the region was accompanied by a strategic diplomatic realignment with Mustafa Kemal's nationalist movement, culminating in the 1921 Treaty of Ankara (Franklin-Bouillon Agreement). Under its terms, France recognized Turkish sovereignty over Cilicia and committed to a complete military withdrawal. By formalizing the Turco-Syrian frontier, this agreement stabilized the Franco-Turkish front and served as an important precursor to the broader territorial settlement later codified in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.⁹²

For the Armenian population, this geopolitical reconfiguration had devastating consequences. The French withdrawal from Cilicia triggered a second major wave of forced displacement, as Armenians who had repatriated under French protection were once again compelled to flee. In a letter dated 4 February 1922, Catholicos Sahak II informed Archbishop Torgom Gushakian that Armenian arrivals had reached 45,000 in Syria and 6,000 in Lebanon.⁹³ By 1922-1923, the Armenian population in Syria, distributed across

90 The Syrian Congress (1919) became a central political body aimed at articulating Syria's demand for independence and presenting it on the international stage. It brought together various political forces, while also exposing deep divisions, particularly over the issue of the French mandate. The Congress supported independence and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, reaffirming its position to the King-Crane Commission. However, internal disagreements and external pressures limited its effectiveness. Allawi, *Faisal*, 259-265.

91 French forces entered Damascus on 25 July 1920. In the aftermath, Faisal appointed Ala al-Din al-Darubi to head a new Syrian government, which subsequently accepted French demands concerning Faisal's deposition, the disbandment of the Syrian army, and the implementation of other mandatory conditions. Faisal departed Damascus on 28 July and left Syria permanently on 1 August 1920.

92 Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 129.

93 Yeghiayan, *Contemporary History*, 246.

Aleppo, Northern Syria, Alexandretta, Damascus, Beylan, Hama-Homs, and Kessab, had reached 111,250, of whom approximately 65,000 were concentrated in Aleppo alone.⁹⁴

The consolidation of the French Mandate created a new, albeit imposed, framework for the socio-economic integration of Armenians, who by that stage lacked any viable political alternative. This transition marked a decisive shift in the Armenian experience in Syria, transforming a condition of prolonged displacement into one of more permanent communal and economic settlement.

Conclusion: The Legacy of Faisal's Policies Toward Armenian Deportees

Although Emir Faisal ultimately suffered political defeat, his administration played an important role in shaping the post-genocide experience of Armenian survivors in Syria. His policies toward Armenian refugees reflected both humanitarian concern and broader state-building ambitions, yet any assessment of Armenian-Arab relations during this period must avoid overly idealized interpretations. Faisal's authority operated within a fragile and highly fragmented political environment, constrained by competing British and French interests, internal divisions, and localized structures of power.

While urban political elites in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama increasingly cooperated in the final years of the Ottoman Empire, effective political authority remained largely confined to these major centers. Beyond them, particularly in the desert regions of Deir ez-Zor, Rakka, and Ras ul-Ayn, where large numbers of Armenian deportees had been concentrated since 1915, power remained in the hands of tribal leaders rather than the Damascus administration. Despite the directives of Sharif Hussein bin Ali encouraging support for Armenian refugees, Faisal's practical ability to shape events across these territories remained limited, reflecting the broader decentralized nature of political authority in the late Ottoman Middle East.⁹⁵

Armenian-Arab relations during this period were marked by elements of mutual distrust rooted in broader historical and political realities. In the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, Armenians often remained cautious within predominantly Muslim environments, while segments of the Syrian Arab population viewed them with suspicion, fearing they might become instruments of French influence. Nevertheless, these tensions remained largely localized and did not fundamentally overshadow the broader pattern of cooperation between Armenian deportees, Arab society, and segments of the Arab political leadership.

During Faisal's administration, Armenian deportees gradually began integrating into Syria's socio-economic fabric under extremely precarious conditions shaped by war,

⁹⁴ Ibid., 248.

⁹⁵ David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001), 36.

famine, disease, and political instability. At the same time, Syria's fragmented and diverse social structure significantly influenced this process of adaptation. Despite these hardships, Armenians remained deeply committed to preserving their national and cultural identity, viewing communal cohesion as essential both for survival and integration.

This process was facilitated by targeted administrative and economic measures under Faisal's administration, including debt deferments and financial assistance programs, which helped alleviate immediate hardship and fostered a degree of institutional trust between the Armenian community and the emerging Syrian authorities.

Nevertheless, Armenian deportees continued to face significant obstacles to long-term economic advancement. The fragile postwar Syrian economy offered limited opportunities for large-scale commercial or industrial development, leaving most Armenians confined to subsistence-level livelihoods as laborers, artisans, or small-scale merchants. This economic marginalization reflected both the structural weakness of the host economy and the difficulties of rebuilding life after genocide and forced displacement.

Relations with segments of the local Syrian Arab population were likewise marked by occasional social tension, often driven by perceptions of economic competition over scarce resources and employment. Contemporary accounts, however, suggest that these frictions gradually diminished as the economic contributions of Armenians became more visible. As At-Taquaddum observed, Armenian deportees played a notable role in sustaining regional agricultural production and economic recovery.⁹⁶

Although resistance among segments of the local population gradually weakened as the economic contributions of Armenians became more apparent, questions surrounding their long-term settlement and social position remained sensitive within the evolving Syrian socio-political landscape. Arab historiography has often emphasized the comparatively rapid integration of Armenian deportees, attributing it to their communal cohesion, adaptability, and strong commitment to preserving cultural identity. Even under conditions of extreme hardship, Armenian survivors established schools, churches, charitable organizations, and other communal institutions to safeguard collective continuity.⁹⁷

Moussa Prince, the Lebanese-Arab jurist and historian who used the term "Armenocide," identified adaptability and viability as the defining qualities that enabled Armenians to overcome the trauma of genocide and sustain historical continuity.⁹⁸ Similarly, Nicola Migliorino has highlighted the survivors' determination to reconstruct a "symbolic Armenian homeland" within Syria through institutional rebuilding, communal solidarity, and a conscious resistance to assimilation.⁹⁹ A similar perspective was articulated by the Syrian historian Osman al-Turk, who emphasized the resilience and

⁹⁶ *The documentary material*, 185.

⁹⁷ Samir Arbash, *Armīniya: Arḍ wa Sha'b* [Armenia: Country and Nation] (Beirut: Dar ar-Rihani, 1991), 213.

⁹⁸ Moussa Prince, *Այսպիսի հեռանկար. Հայկական լինելիությունը* [Future Prospect: Armenian Existence], *Azduk* (Beirut), August 19, 1967.

⁹⁹ Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria: Ethnocultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis*, *Studies in Forced Migration*, Vol. 21 (Oxford, 2008), 46.

socio-economic contributions of Armenian deportees, noting that despite arriving with virtually no material resources, they gradually established livelihoods through hard work and became active contributors to Syria's economic and industrial development.¹⁰⁰

The legal status of Armenian deportees was a fundamental issue in their integration into Syrian society. Having been stripped of Ottoman citizenship without acquiring a new nationality, many existed in a condition of statelessness that severely restricted access to employment, education, property ownership, and freedom of movement. In Syria, some of these obstacles were gradually mitigated through administrative and legal measures that defined the rights and obligations of Armenian deportees within the emerging state framework.

At the same time, tensions with segments of the local Arab population persisted, driven by economic hardship, competition over scarce resources, and social anxieties toward a large refugee population differing in religion, language, and customs. These tensions were further shaped by the broader wartime context, including famine, disease, and hostile narratives promoted by local actors aligned with the Young Turk regime.¹⁰¹

Following the establishment of the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon, a more formal legal framework for minority protection emerged. While preserving the principle of local self-government, the mandate guaranteed legal equality, freedom of conscience, and communal educational rights, thereby creating a more structured basis for the long-term integration of Armenian refugees.¹⁰²

Moving beyond relative communal isolation, Armenians became increasingly engaged in Syria's economic, cultural, and political life. By the early 1920s, this participation extended beyond internal communal affairs, including collaboration with Arab political actors in emerging political movements such as the Communist Party of Syria. Despite a highly polarized political environment, the Armenian community gradually succeeded in institutionalizing its presence within Syria's public sphere.

The stabilization of the Armenian presence in postwar Syria was shaped in no small measure by the policies initiated during Faisal's administration. Moving beyond emergency humanitarian relief, these measures institutionalized protection, inclusion, and administrative support, facilitating the transition of Armenian survivors from temporary displacement toward more permanent settlement. By providing a degree of security and political legitimacy at a moment of profound instability, Faisal's administration created conditions that enabled Armenians to rebuild communal life and gradually integrate into Syrian society. In the decades that followed, the Syrian Armenian community emerged as one of the most active and institutionally developed centers of the Armenian diaspora in the Arab Middle East.

100 Osman At-Turk, *Pages of Armenian History* (Aleppo: Al-Ahram, 1960), 284.

101 Muhammad Kurd Ali, *Khuṭaṭ Al-Shām* [Sham plans, vol. 3] (Damascus: Al-Nuriya, 1983), 247.

102 On the citizenship and other rights of Armenian refugees in Syria, see Victoria Abrahamyan, "Citizen Strangers: Identity Labelling and Discourse in the French Mandatory Syria, 1920-1932," *Journal of Migration History* 6 (2020): 40-61.

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