


giants Muslim and Bukhari in their *Sahihs* with alternate, but equally short, chains of transmission.

Overall, this book is an important step in presenting Ibn ‘Asakir and Damascus at the time of the Crusaders to a wider audience. The author effectively presents the political and religious role Ibn ‘Asakir played in a 12th-century Syrian Sunni renaissance. Now, one awaits a study that contextualizes the scholar and his sprawling oeuvre within the broader world of post-canonical hadith culture and examines his magnum opus, the *Tarikh*, and his choices therein.

doi:10.1017/S0020743822000630

## The Resistance Network: The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Syria, 1915–1918

**Khatchig Mouradian (Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2021). Pp. 262. \$24.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781611863949**

Reviewed by Elyse Semerdjian , Department of History, Whitman College, Walla Walla, WA, USA ([semerdve@whitman.edu](mailto:semerdve@whitman.edu))

Historians of the Armenian Genocide have long labored within what Talin Suciyan has called “a post-genocide habitus of denial,” the normalization of denial that affects minorities living inside Turkey and sometimes spills into academia. Within this context, Armenian Genocide historians encounter a cruel irony: Ottoman documents belonging to the perpetrator archive are often given more value than the wealth of published and unpublished sources generated by the victim community. The devaluing of Armenian sources extends to survivor testimony, typically the gold standard for evidence in genocide studies. Pushing back against these trends, Khatchig Mouradian’s impressive first book, *The Resistance Network*, highlights the rich potential that Armenian sources hold not only for Armenian Genocide studies but for scholars of mass violence, more broadly. The result is a stunning piece of scholarship that boldly suggests that the defining story of the Armenians is not so much the Armenian Genocide but their resistance to it.

The Armenian of *The Resistance Network* is no longer the passive victim marching off to her slaughter, but someone who renounces the dominance of the génocidaire from within the depths of necroviolence. Mouradian models the possibility of simultaneously recognizing these events as the story of a crime and a story of resistance. In so doing he not only challenges the notion that Armenians were passive recipients of state violence; he also confronts the dominant narrative that they were saved solely by Western humanitarianism. These historiographic interventions are interwoven throughout the text and supported by Mouradian’s skillful use of Western Armenian language sources alongside better-known English, French, German, and accessible Ottoman sources.

*The Resistance Network* focuses on Syria, where the foundations of Armenian humanitarianism could be found in an earlier Armenian diaspora community in Aleppo, a community exempted from deportation. As Mouradian writes, the resistance “did not just take place in Aleppo—it was of Aleppo,” so much so that one survivor called the city “a life raft” (xxvi, 7). Several institutions acted to save Armenian deportees, who began pouring into the city in 1915. Armenian Apostolic Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic churches mobilized alongside organizations at home and abroad to house, feed, clothe, and nurse refugees in Armenian hospitals and orphanages, and on the balconies, roofs, and courtyards of private homes.



A community under assault, deported from its ancestral homeland, dispersed, and confined in concentration camps, defied the plans of Ottoman authorities by clandestinely saving its own through nonviolent humanitarian resistance. This emphasis on nonviolence, it is worth noting, stands in stark contradiction to the prevalent image of the bandolier-sporting Armenian fedayee who embraced armed resistance against conscription and genocide in places like Urfa and Van. Documents from Aleppo's Armenian Apostolic Church Council for Refugees held in the collections of the now-closed archives of Aleppo's Armenian Prelacy offer insights into Armenian humanitarian mobilization. In addition to these sources, Mouradian makes use of the "Andonian Files," which contain a wealth of primary documents, telegrams, interviews, diaries, sketches, and testimonies collected by journalist and archivist Aram Andonian, who later founded the Nubarian Library in Paris, where these materials are currently archived.

Focusing on 1915 to 1918, the book documents Armenian responses to evolving CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) policies designed to demographically engineer a Muslim Turkish empire. It concentrates on Aleppo and ends with the Syrian Desert, where the bulk of the extermination campaign unfolded. The book unfolds in three parts. Part 1 examines "Genocide and Urban Resistance," in which Mouradian's use of Armenian sources illuminates Armenian mobilization inside Aleppo beginning with the brothers Onnig and Armenag Mazlumian, who sheltered deportees in the famous Hotel Baron. The Altunyan Hospital offered medicine and care from its staff of volunteer physicians, including Dr. Khachig Boghosian, who was charged by Cemal Pasha to help control the spread of typhus, a disease outbreak that emerged as the mass killings began. Dr. Boghosian saved deportee Elmasd Santoorian from typhus and, after obtaining immunity, she nursed Armenians suffering from the same disease back to health. The few lines afforded the nurse effectively writes an unsung heroine back into the historical record.

Part 2, "From the City to the Desert," examines the little studied concentration camps inside the city of Aleppo in the districts of Sebil and Karlık, and the camps situated eastward in Al-Bab and Meskene, which were scattered along the Euphrates River along the line of deportation. Whereas historian Raymond Kévorkian laid the groundwork for the empirical study of the camps, in which deportees were exposed without shelter and deprived of food and water, Mouradian is interested in "the use of internment as a weapon of annihilation" (58). In a comparative analysis, he examines German use of concentration camps in South-West Africa against the Herero and Nama from 1904 to 1907. The framing of both this chapter and the book's introduction is sure to entice scholars and students outside the field of Armenian studies and will make the text worthy of adoption in comparative genocide studies courses.


At the same time, Mouradian does not emphasize humanitarian assistance, a topic on which historians of the Armenian Genocide have already written, so much as humanitarian resistance, the way in which local Armenian resistance networks actively organized to counter the campaign of death that befell their fellow Armenians. Examples include Armenians disguising themselves to sneak into concentration camps to provide Armenians with food, money, and medical assistance. We also learn how within the Armenian concentration camps Armenians organized their own networks for sanitation and the burial of the dead to protect the living from emerging diseases. Part 3, "Der Zor Bound," illuminates the final line of deportation in the Syrian Desert, including the model extermination at Ras al-Ayn, which Mouradian calls "the dress rehearsal" because the success of extermination tactics there were adopted in Der Zor. The examples harvested by Mouradian from Armenian sources are powerful and sure to influence how we tell the story of Armenian survival moving forward. Among the most powerful episodes is an account of a group of deportees near Shaddadi who rather than passively march to their deaths resisted by striking the Chechen irregular units leading their convoy with tent poles. Although they were killed for resisting, four deportees in the convoy were able to escape.

*The Resistance Network* brings into relief the calculations made to murder en masse the Armenian population of Anatolia. Contrary to a single deportation of Armenians, we learn that there were multiple redeportations that diminished chances of survival to advance what Agamben calls the real goal of the camp: the production-bare life that ultimately results in the production of the corpse. At times, Mouradian's narration is evocative of Primo Levi's description of the "grey zone" and the memory of Jewish prisoner functionaries (*kapo*) at Auschwitz. The line between victim and perpetrator was similarly blurred in the painful memory of Armenian collaborators (*bekçi*, or *guards*) who, for the sake of their own survival, betrayed their people by controlling, intimidating, and procuring the population so that they could be sexually abused by gendarmes (63, 75). Writing Armenian collaborators into the historical record further complicates our understanding of the category of victim.

By reframing this cataclysmic moment, Mouradian, ultimately, renarrativizes the defining story of the Armenian Genocide as one of *survivance*, a neologism of Native American scholar Gerald Robert Vizenor that blends together survival and resistance to represent an indigent subject who refuses the terms upon which victimhood is premised. *The Resistance Network* captures such a refusal and will surely provoke conversations among scholars and students of genocide for years to come.

doi:10.1017/S0020743823000338

**Transnational Palestine: Migration and the Right of Return before 1948. Nadim Bawalsa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022). Pp. 296. \$28.00 paper, \$90.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781503632264**

Reviewed by Randa Tawil , Department of Women and Gender Studies, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, USA ([Randa.Tawil@tcu.edu](mailto:Randa.Tawil@tcu.edu))

Nadim Bawalsa's *Transnational Palestine* is a significant contribution to the history of Mandate Palestine, and illuminates the role of British citizenship laws in the dispossession of Palestinians. By exposing the ways Palestinians living abroad (referred to as the *mahjar*) were denied citizenship by the British Empire during their mandate over Palestine, Bawalsa effectively reframes the fight for right of return of Palestinians both historically and geographically, and reveals its emergence as a response to British imperial governance. *Transnational Palestine* underscores citizenship as a tool in settler colonial projects where relationship to land does not guarantee rights within it or to it.

Palestinians demand the right of return to their homeland, and cite the Geneva Convention's 1949 and 1972 resolutions, which "reaffirm . . . the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted, and calls for their return."<sup>1</sup> Bawalsa further reveals that Palestinians were articulating their right to return far earlier than 1949. When the British established control over Palestine after World War I, they created citizenship laws that would give Palestinians and Jewish immigrants citizenship to Mandate Palestine. Palestinians in the *mahjar* could only gain citizenship through intentionally complicated and confusing procedures, effectively leaving them without any state representation. Combining archival research in

<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3236 (1972).