

The Indian Muslims Red Crescent Society's Aid to the Ottoman State During the Balkan War in 1912

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Summary

The war that was declared in 1912 against the Ottoman Empire by Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece brought other disasters with it. The cholera outbreak that started during the war and spread rapidly among the Bulgarian Turks who were fleeing to Turkey left the Ottoman Empire in a difficult position. In these difficult days the Red Cross and the Red Crescent came to their aid. The Indian Muslims sent the money they had collected to the Red Crescent. Also the Indian Muslims who came to Istanbul along with the health staff gave excellent service. The help of the physician and statesman Dr. Muhtar Ahmed Ensârî Bey, who had fought for the independence of India, continued at the front and behind the front lines. Together with Muhammed Ali and Zafer Han he created a project funded by the Indian Muslims that would create a place for the immigrants to stay in Anatolia. The assistance of the Indian Muslims was not confined just to the Balkan War, but continued during World War I and the War of Independence.

Key Words; Indian Red Crescent, Ottoman Red Crescent, Balkan War (1912), Balkan War and Health Services (1912), Muhtar Ahmed Ensârî, Pakistan.

Introduction

The Red Cross and Red Crescent were founded to assist wounded soldiers, but in the ensuing years, services were expanded to assist humanity in other areas. The outbreaks of contagious diseases and the migrations of large populations were also added to the duties of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, as these were disasters caused by wars. In the last issue, aid from the Egyptian Red Cross to the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan War was discussed and in this issue help from the Indian Muslims to the Ottoman Red Crescent Foundation will be discussed.

The Ottoman Empire faced very difficult days during the 1912 Balkan War. Declaration of war by Montenegro on October 8, 1912, by Bulgaria and Serbia on October 17, and Greece on October 19, was the cause for many disasters for the Ottoman Empire. When the Eastern Army of the Ottomans was defeated by the Bulgarians and retreated to Çatalca, a cholera outbreak occurred. The cholera outbreak spread rapidly over a large area. (1,2,3), and the Ottoman Empire lost in this war due to the cholera outbreak (4).

Due to the war the refugees, whose numbers were in the hundred thousands, migrated from Bulgaria to

Istanbul and Anatolia. The problem of the wounded, the outbreak of cholera and the refugees who were left out in the open during the cold winter started a chain of disasters. There were so many wounded and sick in Istanbul that, including barracks and police stations, many government buildings were turned into hospitals, and mosques were given to the refugees.

The Military Medical Corps and the Ottoman Red Crescent Foundation worked very hard during the Balkan War and the Red Cross from Germany, America, Belgium, France, Holland, England, Sweden, Romania and Russia together with the Red Crescent that had been formed in Romania, England, Egypt and India came to help out (5). All the medical teams that had been sent by the different countries' Red Cross and Red Crescent were joined by the Ottoman Red Crescent and, according to the Military Medical Corps, they were placed in the area where they were most needed.

The medical teams that had tents and necessary medical supplies built mobile hospitals near the war zones. The teams that did not have tents and medical supplies were placed in hospitals in Istanbul. The teams were managed by either the Military Medical

Corps or the Red Crescent depending on which hospital they were working at treating the wounded and sick soldiers in Istanbul.

The Indian Muslims, now comprising the present-day country of Pakistan, had helped Turkey greatly during Tripoli (1911), World War I and the War of Independence (1914-1922) (6,7). The Indian Muslims also reacted immediately to help during the Balkan Wars. The team from India, headed by Dr. Muhtar Ahmed Ensârî Bey², assisted on the front lines and behind them, for six months in Istanbul. The medical teams they had sent during the Balkan War were very successful. Dr. Ensârî Bey and his friends travelled around Anatolia and by publishing in Indian newspapers what they saw enlightened the Indian population about Turkey. They were working together with the Ottoman statesmen to establish living quarters for the refugees who had immigrated to Turkey. The establishment of the "Foundation to Assist Rumeli Refugees" was a direct result of the suggestion of Muhammed Ali and Zafer Ali. After Dr. Muhtar Ahmed Ensârî Bey and Zafer Ali Han had been around Anatolia they decided that Adana was the most suitable place and they sent the money to Istanbul that had been collected in India to finance this project by the start of World War I. The Indian Muslims felt so close and loved the Ottomans Turks so much that the students cut rations of their food and the women sold their gold and jewellery to help the Ottomans defend themselves (6,7). Just one of the donations that came from the Indian Muslims to the Ottoman Red Crescent Foundation was 185,000 Ottoman liras. The Ottoman Red Crescent Foundation received the donations of the Indian Muslims through the consulates and embassies.



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Figure 1- Dr. Ensârî Bey, Head of the Indian Red Crescent Medical Team (*Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi, (Ottoman Red Crescent Yearbook) p.: 210*).

² Muhtar Ahmed Ensârî Bey (1880-1936): The physician and statesman Muhtar Ahmed Ensârî Bey, who worked for the independence of India, was a great friend to the Turks and a philanthropist. Ensârî Bey who came from a deeply rooted family went to secondary school at the Gazipur Victoria High School and to the Muir Central College in Allahabad. The Haydarâbâd Council who noticed his work sent him to England for medical school. He became the first Indian to work at one of London's more prestigious health institutions. He returned to India in 1910 to fight for the independence of his country. He worked with many famous people such as Gandhi, Nehru, Ecmel Han, Muhammed Ali and Sevket Ali Han. During the Balkan Wars the Indian Muslims started to assist Turkey. Ensârî Bey and the medical team he headed worked in Istanbul on and behind the front lines for six months. Ensârî Bey also assisted the refugees who immigrated to Turkey due to the Balkan Wars. After World War I, during the War of Independence he created committees to help the Turkish Red Crescent and even added Gandhi to these committees. Ensârî Bey also travelled across Anatolia and had his impressions published in Indian newspapers, informing the Indian people about Turkey. During his struggle for independence he was arrested by the British and thrown into prison. In Ensârî Bey's thesis for the struggle he wanted the independence of India without breaking its unity. Gandhi had said, "He is our right arm" about Dr. Ensârî. Abdur Raheem Kidwai: Muhtar Ahmed Ensârî; Encyclopaedia of Islam by the Turkish Islamic Religious Foundation Vol. 11. Besim Omer Akalin: We Have Lost a Great Friend; Awakening, Servetifunun, No. 2082/397, July 16, 1936, 46(80/16): 114.



هندستان بومیای قاری اسلامیہ حلال امر ہیٹ صیہی
اورتده قاپوطل سرطیب محمد حسین

Figure 2- The Bombay Red Crescent Medical Team for Assisting the Poor Muslims. In the middle, Head Physician Mehmed Hussein with a military greatcoat on (*Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, p.: 317).

But those who wanted to help did not have to go through consulates and embassies. Some of the names of people who donated are as follows: Hack Mehmed Asaf and partners from Madras; (Arabic); Kamer Sah; Hacı İsmail Han; Mehmed Hacı Nuri Mehmed from Calcutta; Zafer Ali Han, owner of the Zamandar newspaper from Lahore; Mehmed Fazil, owner of the Elmesir newspaper from Meradabad; the Serampur Red Crescent Foundation in Calcutta; Encumen-i Muhammed-ul Islam from Calcutta; Polikal newspaper from Bombay; Hacı Kasım Arif Efendi from Calcutta; the Mesrutiyet newspaper from Lahore; Mehmed Efendi and Mehmed İbrahim Veziri Efendi from Lahore; Hacı Abdullah Harun Efendi from Karachi; ٻيو بال حاڪمه سي، حضر نلری; Kamer Sah from Rampur; Vatan newspaper from Lahore; Ali Tahsin Efendi, owner of the Vekil newspaper from Lahore; Munire Hanımefendi, head of the Arab and Turkish Women in Bombay; Ekrem and Mehmed Nafi Efendi from Delhi; Han Mehmed Omer, Bami Efendi and Ahmed Minla Davud Efendi from Bombay. One of the people that handed these donations over at Babiali was Zafer Ali Han. The names of the people

that donated money are listed in the Prime Ministry's Ottoman Archives and the Yearbook of the Red Crescent Foundation (5,7).

The Indian Muslims sent to Istanbul 3 separate medical teams of which they paid all their costs. These teams were headed by Dr. Muhtar Ahmed Ensârî Bey.

The First Indian Medical Team

This first team consisted of young volunteers who were from rich families in India and were studying in London. They paid for all their own expenses including the costs of the Egyptian physician Selim Bey to come to Istanbul. They worked at the Haydarpasha Military Hospital at first and then they served at the front near Omerli.

The Medical Team consisted of:

Dr. Selim Bey, Egyptian, London

Abdullah Bey, South Hydarâbâd, student at Oxford



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Figure 3- A tent from the Indian Red Crescent Mobile Hospital (*Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, p.: 238).

Seyyid Al Umran; Sincor Province, student at Oxford

Seyyid Mehmed Hussein; South Hyderabad, student at Oxford

Seyyid Husnabid Ceferi; Akra in Delhi Province, student at Oxford (5).

The Second Indian Medical Team

“The Bombay Medical Team for Assisting the Poor Muslims” created with funds that were collected by “The Islamic Youth Foundation” and the “Ziyyayi Islam Council” from the city of Bombay, arrived in Istanbul on December 17, 1912. The medical team was placed at the Red Crescent Darulfunun (Charitable) Hospital. During the negotiations they stayed about one month and treated about 100 bedridden and accepted 135 patients.

The medical team that had excellent tents and mobile hospital equipment, established a mobile hospital with 100 beds near Çatalca at the chief front of Omerli, and accepted sick and wounded soldiers.

Many important people visited the mobile hospital that was established at Omerli and wrote down their gratitude in the hospital ledger.

Medical Team consisted of:

Dr. Feyzi; (director)

Dr. Mehmed Hussein Bey; (chief physician)

Dr. نیمکار Nimkar

Dr. مولکه ن

Dr. Nizar Ahmed

Dr. Selim

Pharmacist: Ruşen

Secretary: Seyyid Abdulvacid

Head nurse (man): Seyyid Mehmed Şerif Meshedi

Officier: Hekim Seraceddin

Cashier: Abdullatif

13 nurse (man) and three vice-nurses

The Third Indian Medical Team

The medical team that was established as “El vefd-el tibbi min bilad-el Hind”, “الوفد الطبي من بلاد الهند”, by the Indian Red Crescent in Delhi, was headed by Dr. Muhtar Ahmed Ensârî Bey and arrived in Istanbul on January 9, 1913. During the negotiation period they



Figure 4- Patients and staff from the second Indian Red Crescent Mobile Hospital (*Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, p.: 230).

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خسته لار و مأمورین تنفسده

stayed in a hospital in Kadirga, and then they established a mobile hospital in Omerli. When the war started for the second time, a group of them went down to Gallipoli to establish another mobile hospital.

Medical Team consisted of:

Dr. Muhtar Ahmed Ensârî (chief physician)

Dr. Ali Ezher Feyzi Bey (chief physician assistant)

Dr. Mehmed Naim Ensârî

Dr. Seyyid Abdülrahman

Dr. Seyyid Şemsülbari

Dr. Mahmudallah

Dr. Mirza Rıza Khan

Pharmacist Gulam Ahmed Khan, Nurulşems, Abdülvahid Khan, Hâmit Resul, Seyyid تونکر Hussein.

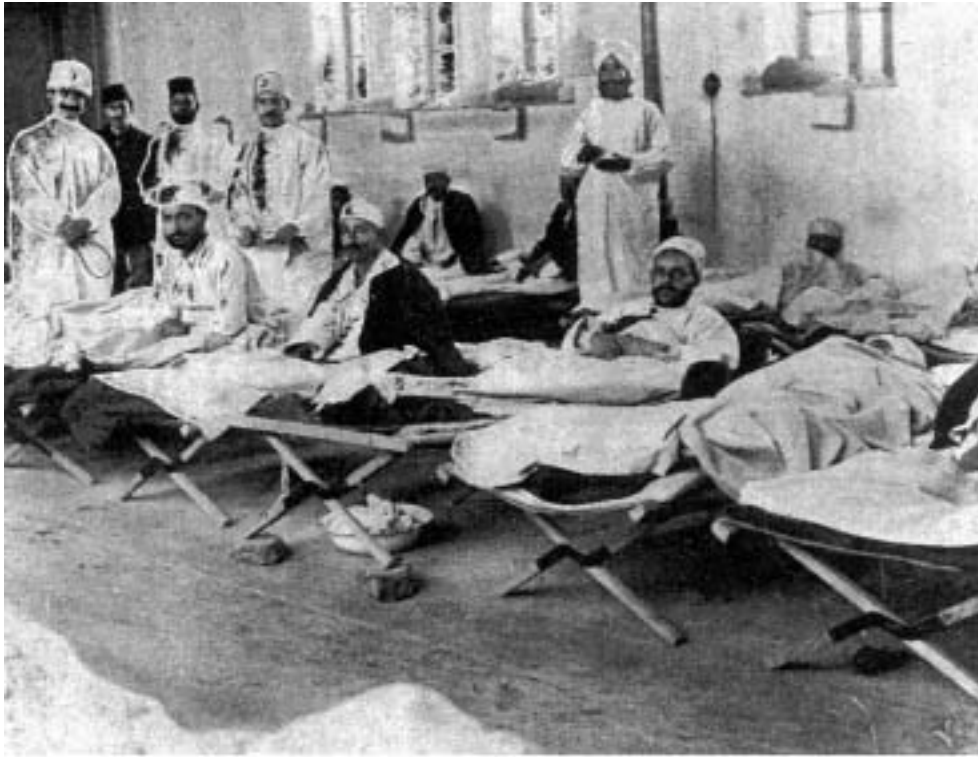
12 nurse (men) and two translators. (5,7,9).

After his service at the front, Dr. Ensârî Bey stayed in Turkey with a few of his friends, and together with Turkish statesmen he searched for a



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جامع شريف چادری و مناره سی

Figure 5- The Bombay Red Crescent Medical Team for Assisting the Poor Muslims' Mobile Hospital, Mosque and Minaret (*Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, p.: 323).



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Figure 6- A ward in the Indian Red Crescent Hospital. Behind on the left, Dr. Ensâri Bey with a white kalpak on (*Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, p.: 221).



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Figure 7- The Indian Red Crescent Medical Team at dinner (*Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, p.: 213).

suitable area in Anatolia to place the immigrants as has been mentioned above. He returned to India 6 months later and was given a white Ottoman kalpak (fur cap) with a crescent on it. Together with the gift and the speech he gave at the Foundation he was connected with regarding his insights of the War, he created great interest. We remember with gratitude the Indian Muslims and this great man who was a friend of the Turks and who fought for the independence and unity of India.

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