

Political Situation in Deir Ezzor City Under the British Rule 1919-1920

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Abstract

The population in Deir Ezzor suffered from misbehavior, management and dealings with the British. Which prompted them to launch a massive revolution against them, led by Ramadan Shalash. Which was sent by the Arab government in Damascus. The men of the Iraqi Al-Ahed Association tried to take advantage of the people's grievances and their hatred of the British rule in order to rid them of that rule and set off towards Iraq to get rid of their occupation. Ramadan Shalash was extremely hostile and hateful to the British. Together with his men, he was able to destroy Britain's reputation. Thus, the Deir Ezzor revolution became the main stimulus for the Iraqis to carry out the revolution. The movements of Yassin al-Hashemi are considered an important source of salvation from British rule, as he commissioned Ramadan Shalash, the fiercest enemy of the British, to incite clans and tribes against the British occupation.

Keywords: deir ezzor, ramadan shalash, yassin al-Hashemi, covenant society, british authorities, jumper.

Introduction

BACKGROUND: The entry of British forces into the city of Deir Ezzor and its control in 1919 was a pretext for control and mismanagement. Where the authority appointed a British military governor known as (Gambira). This ruler took advantage of his power and imposed heavy taxes on the people, which led to their discontent. It was also noted that cases of looting and theft increased, which led to an increase in protests and revolutions, which put them in bad conditions under the rule of the British forces. They therefore demanded their return under the shadow of the Arab government in Damascus. The Iraqi officers in Damascus had a role in supporting the people in Deir Ezzor in order to rid them of the British rule and then set off towards Iraq after their

attempts to persuade the British authorities to return to their country had been implemented. The leaders of the Iraqi national movement had an important role in urging Ramadan Shalash to prepare for the revolution against the British.

RESEARCH PROBLEM: The study aims to investigate the situation in Deir Ezzor under British rule and the political motives behind the revolution. Meanwhile, we are trying to find out how the political situation in Deir Ezzor 1919 was, and what are the reasons and factors for the revolution?

MATERIAL: The study relied on a variety of sources that dealt with the subject and were employed to enhance the information, including (The Forgotten Revolution of the author Zubair Sultan Qaddouri, as well as the memoirs of Ramadan Shalash, which are still handwritten and which are considered important documents.

METHODOLOGY: The study relied on the objective temporal approach.

Literature Review

The political situation in the city of Deir Ezzor under the British rule 1919-1920

The British occupation of Deir Ezzor and entry into its governance in 1919 (1, 2020) served as a cover for mismanagement and control. They set about appointing a British military governor known as (Gambira). who, using his position of authority, levied onerous levies on the residents of Deir Ezzor. He proceeded in his course of action and levied taxes on livestock, crops, and roadways. The British overlooked the incidents of looting and pillage that were committed by the natives among themselves, and people lived in turmoil. It resulted in a certain intentional disarray (al-Dhalali, 2014). The British government used the excuse that the treasury was empty to impose taxes and fines on the residents of Deir Ezzor. Which led to the imposition of taxes in order to enforce security in the city, particularly for trade convoys, secure highways for them, and stop their plundering and the looting by the tribes on the lines of communication. They employed many persons to patrol the caravans' roadways. The security situation has indeed improved. This needed material expenses, which the British thought would be solved by raising the penalties and forcing people to pay them with violence, which made them complain (Qaddouri, 2000).

In Deir Ezzor, protests and revolutions started to spread in 1919. The city's notables and leaders of the revolution convened and wrote to the Damascus government expressing their wish for Ramadan Shalash (al-Zarkali, 2006) to move to Deir Ezzor and help the locals there in opposing the British soldiers who worsened the situation (Khaddour, 2020). The people of Deir Ezzor demanded that they be returned to

the Arab government in Damascus (Farhan, 2020). With the increase in British pressures and harsh treatment, the people and clans began to develop a spirit of hatred and rejection of the British presence. Which is getting worse day by day. In addition to the emergence of a conscious patriotic generation that began to form in the city of Deir Ezzor, rejecting the British presence. Its formation was far from the control of the former notables and influential clan leaders during the Ottoman era.

His constellation started to develop into a semi-conscious Arab nationalist group. calls for the British occupation of Deir Ezzor to end. The desire to free the nation from the British brought them together despite their differences in class and intellectual affinity. The fight to realize the objectives of the Arab Revolution, to secure Arab freedom under a single free and independent state (Qaddouri, 2000). In an effort to overthrow British administration and end their occupation of Iraq, the members of Al-Ahed Al-Iraqi Society (Hassan, 1977) attempted to capitalize on the populace's unhappiness (Al-Fayyad, 1963). The Arab clans attacked the British army first. Due to those tribes abutting the Iraqi and Syrian borders, the border issues between the two countries have gotten worse (Wilson, 2013). The British and French border authorities were becoming concerned and embarrassed as a result of it (Abdullah, 2007).

A number of armed confrontations between the British forces and the Iraqi forces headed by Iraqi officers resulted from the conflicting demands of the Syrian government and the British administration in Iraq about the Deir Ezzor Brigade. As a result, the soldiers of the British and the French were able to temporarily agree on the borders between Iraq and Syria. In September 1919, the Khabour tributary was used as the dividing line between the two nations (Al-Akidi, 2002).

The general headquarters of the Iraqi Al-Ahed Party in Damascus therefore made the decision to liberate the monastery from the control of the British administration. to use it as a springboard for initiating the Iraqi revolution. The center requested that Ramadan Shalash be appointed as a military governor over al-Raqqa (Sweileh, 2000) and al-Khabour by the government of Damascus so that he could lead the effort to retake the monastery from the British from those positions. The government agreed (Al-Wardi, 1976).

On September 19, 1919, Shalash left Aleppo, heading to Raqqa, to take up his job (Al-Haboubi, 1989). Ramadan Shalash, like his teacher Yassin Al-Hashemi (Al-Qaisi, 1975), was very hostile and hateful to the British rule. He believes that a peaceful solution does not work with Britain, and that the use of violence and revolution against it will force it to acknowledge their demands. He does not trust their promise, so when he met Ramadan Shalash, he urged him to prepare for the revolution

in the Euphrates region, and Ramadan Shalash mentions, saying: "When I arrived in Damascus, I did not find Faisal, and Lieutenant General Yassin Pasha al-Hashemi was in Damascus, head of the Shura Council, so he asked me to meet him secretly and told me In a word, Ramadan, soon a day will come when we will fight the French and perhaps they will seek help from their British allies, so we will appoint you as a military governor for the region of Raqqa, Khabur and the Euphrates Valley, and you can do what your duty dictates towards your homeland" (Shalash's memoirs).

Ramadan Shalash began performing his duties as Raqqa's military governor. He received the appropriate orders from the men of the Covenant Society, who also gave him funds to use for the clans and to be ready for an armed uprising (Al-Wardi, 1977). Ramadan Shalash scoured the tribes near Raqqa and made covert contact with them. Gain access to several of the local clans through his relationships. He assembled a force of around 3,000 men (Shalash's memoirs). Yassin al-Hashemi's movements were to equip and modernize the army and assign Ramadan to incite clans and tribes against the British occupation. As they were planning to detonate the revolution in the Euphrates region to extend to Iraq. In July 1919, the British administration received reports that Shalash had been assigned by the (Al-Ahed) to stir up the Arab tribes in the region (Omar, 1983). The British leadership saw the danger of Yassin's remaining in his position affecting its plans and objectives. Miss Bell (Bell, 2003) mentioned in her report during her visit to Syria on November 15, 1919, in which she said, "Yassin is the driving spirit of the Iraqi covenant, in which there are about 300 of its members in the service of Faisal" (Qaddouri, 2000).

On October 22, 1919, the British command arrested Yassin al-Hashemi, Chief of Staff of the Arab Army, based on secret news. I deposited him in Ramla prison in Palestine (Sinan, 2018). In a report submitted by General Allenby (Barnks, 1990) to the British Ministry of War, he indicated the reasons for his arrest, including: his leadership of the extremist national party, openly defying his authority, his continued support for the forces of Sharif Hussein bin Ali in the Bekaa despite being prevented from doing so (Sultan, 1987), as well He expressed his support for the Al-Fadl tribe to attack a British detachment near Quneitra, which was small in number and was forced to withdraw. That this anti-British Arab position during this period was supported by Yassin al-Hashemi, and his continued disobedience to his orders that he sent to Damascus, and his public challenge to the authority of Allenby as commander-in-chief, so he decided to arrest him (Obeidat, 1993).

In 1919, Massive protests over Yassin al-Hashemi's detention took place in Syria and Iraq. In disapproval, Damascus likewise locked its doors. In Damascus, publications with black borders were distributed,

and their news and commentary reported on the Arab masses' rallies against al-Hashemi's detention. The national authorities also invoked the accreditors of the countries for this act that violates diplomatic principles. Considering that it took place without the permission of the government and because it is against the will of the people for unity and independence (Sultan, 1987). The British government received communiques from the national and Arab masses, organizations, and parties requesting the release of Lieutenant General Yassin al-Hashemi. His imprisonment is viewed as a slight against the Arabs, the Sharifian administration, and its army. As the Arab Army's Chief of Staff, Yassin al-Hashimi posed a serious danger to the strategies of Britain and France. With his theories opposing these plans and the unification of Syria and Iraq's independence. Because of this, when King Faisal told him of al-Hashemi's detention while he was in Paris resolving the Syrian and Arab crises jointly, Britain did not reply (Qaddouri, 2000).

He submitted a strong protest to the British authorities for the arrest of the Chief of Staff of his army. He made it clear to the British command that he was in charge of his command. If there are charges against him, the British authorities do not have the right to hold him accountable. The British government did not respond to Faisal's repeated requests to hand over Yassin to him, nor did the Arab public opinion, and Yassin al-Hashimi remained in detention until May 14, 1920. He returned to Damascus after France completed its military preparations for the occupation of Syria (Qaddouri, 2000).

One of the factors leading to the revolt in Deir Ezzor during British control was Sir Arnold Wilson's (Murad, 2004) emphatic rejection of establishing an Arab government in Iraq. even though it was governed by the British. In addition, he broke his pledge to the Basra people when he first met them in January 1919. He persisted in carrying out his plan to turn Iraq into a British protectorate overseen jointly by him and the Viceroy of India. He persisted in maintaining that Iraqis lacked the necessary qualifications, even for the lowest positions. Despite the efforts of British and Arab parties, particularly the British office (Al-Nama, 2010) in Cairo, to persuade him to modify his policy. They also include General John Phillby, Lawrence, and Young. Or from those working in the Delhi office such as Miss Bell, Churchill (Churchill, 1961), Hertzil, Lord Curzon (Ibish, 2014) and King Faisal. However, he insisted on his position and adhered to his strict policy. In the middle of 1919, he reached the division of Iraq into provinces and municipalities consisting of councils. Iraqis can serve in these councils (Qaddouri, 2000).

In May 1919, when Wilson was in Damascus, he met with an Iraqi group that comprised Yasin al-Hashimi, Naji al-Suwaidi (Nazmi, 1985),

and Nuri al-Saeed (Basri,) to talk about the country's political future. They made an effort to convince him to approve the establishment of an Arab administration in Iraq and to permit the Iraqi officers serving in Syria to come home and take part in running their nation's affairs. However, he gave a poor and stiff response to the delegation's suggestions. They were given the chance to join the local councils of Iraqi cities. However, this suggestion was met with contempt since it was out of character for the group, which held important positions in the Arab government in Damascus (Nazmi, 1985), (Qaddouri, 2000).

Prince Faisal made an effort to exert pressure on the British government to alter Wilson's policy to Iraq, requesting that he carry on prior commitments to create an Arab government. In order to persuade Wilson into changing his stance, which was the root of the worsening in ties between the Arabs and Britain, Prince Faisal sent General Allenby a note imploring him to do so. Additionally, the Iraqi officers responded by sending the British administration a note in June 1919 that contained information that was identical to Prince Faisal's letter to General Allenby (Qaddouri, 2000). Major Young, the British Foreign Office's Secretary at the time, received the message from the officers. It contained a request to hasten the installation of an Arab administration in Baghdad and take use of their knowledge if they were permitted to return to their nation, reminding the British government that they are its allies because they fought with it in the Arab Revolt Army during First World War.

However, Faisal's calls and attempts did not succeed in extinguishing the fuse of the explosion. Which began to become clear to him as a result of the severe treatment in the administration of Arnold Wilson to Iraq. The Iraqi officers and a number of patriots coming from Iraq began to divide their opinions between revolution or waiting. The supporters of the revolution, although they were a minority in June 1919, they are more influential. Supporters of waiting began to feel frustrated, although some of them did not lose hope in bringing about changes in British policy towards their country (Qaddouri, 2000). The prevention of Iraqi officers present in Damascus also had an impact on the revolution. It was only natural, after the end of World War I, that Iraqi officers longed to return to their homeland. Especially since the administration of Iraq is in dire need of Iraqi officers who were trained administrators (Fadel, 2001).

The Iraqi officers stayed in Syria as a result of Wilson's refusal to send them back to Iraq (Nazmi, 1985). Wilson was opposing the Arab nationalism movements and the Arab liberation movements. He could not stand the Iraqi officers stationed in Damascus at the same time, because they have libertarian and independent views. They also engaged in covert political resistance to the Ottoman Empire and armed activity during the Arab Revolution. Some of them are opposed

to the presence of the British and French. Wilson thus dreaded the presence of these officers in Iraq because they posed a serious threat to his hardline strategy intended to maintain direct British sovereignty over Iraq (Qaddouri, 2000).

The officers started to feel humiliated and terrified of the rivalry between the two groups following the separation of the Al-Ahed Society into the Iraqi Ahed and the Syrian Ahed (Qaddouri, 2000). It may escalate into a clash since some Iraqi personnel took on significant leadership roles in the Arab state created in Syria under Prince Faisal's (Nazmi, 1985) direction. Furthermore, the Iraqi officers aspired for Iraq to achieve what Syria did in terms of an independent Arab government, administration, and civil and military institutions that would make Syria a modern state. Many Iraqi officers had ambitions to establish Iraq, which established Syria. Moreover, a number of Iraqi officers and soldiers were discharged from the army after the end of the war, and they no longer had a resource to live from. Those demobilized wanted to return to their country to find job opportunities for them. Wilson's refusal prevented their hope from coming true. Which bequeathed in them a grudge against Wilson and British policy in general (Qaddouri, 2000).

Wilson was under pressure by Jaafar al-Askari and Nuri al-Saeed to change his mind about preventing their return to their nation. To negotiate with the British authorities for their return to the nation, they got in touch with a lot of Britons. They could sense the eagerness of some British authorities to sanction their return. They sent letters to inform their friends in Iraq, telling them that they would return soon, to form an Arab government in Iraq. This angered Arnold Wilson. So he sent a letter to the Ministry of India on May 14, 1919, warning against these letters and their return, because they violate his well-known policy. In his telegram, he said: "...People like Jaafar Pasha, Mouloud Mukhlis, Nuri Al-Saeed... and others have written to their friends and relatives in Baghdad, that they are coming to Baghdad after a short period of time to carry out a political campaign in order to establish an Arab government. And they have already sent a number of Representatives who make active secret propaganda on these grounds. At the same time with a strong prejudice against foreigners..we recommend that they and others with similar inclinations be informed that they are not, for the time being, allowed to return to this country (Nazmi, 1985)". Prince Faisal was more aware of the nature of the Iraqi officers staying with him in Syria. He was willing to return them to their country to end the problem of return and end the Syrian resentment.

In May 1919, Prince Faisal requested of Colonel Lawrence (al-Zarkali, 2002) that he work with his administration to find a solution to the

issue of returning Iraqi officers to their homeland. "His Majesty's administration approves to the return of your officers to Mesopotamia, since they can say anything they like as long as it does not contravene the directives of the police," Colonel Lawrence replied in a letter to Faisal (Qaddouri, 2000). Wilson, Baghdad's political leader, was alerted by this communication and he opposed the men's return. While initially refusing to return, he exerted pressure on the Ministry of India to stop Lawrence from making claims that were in conflict with him. On May 26, 1919, the Ministry of India telegraphed the British Foreign Office, stating that Colonel Lawrence's statement allowing the Baghdadi officers to say anything they pleased upon their return to Mesopotamia "would naturally stimulate their propagandist fervor" (Nazmi, 1985).

The British Foreign Office had received a message from Colonel Lawrence urging the repatriation of the Iraqi officers, especially considering that they are British allies. The information included in the document had a considerable impact on the British Foreign Office, which was headed by Lord Curzon. I thus urged the British government to work toward bringing them home. "...it is impractical to delay a decision about the homecoming of these officers, as they have been gone from their motherland for so long fighting the Ottomans," read the note dated June 16, 1919. His Excellency Lord Curzon regrets any action taken by the government of Her Majesty to prevent the troops who enlisted for the cause of the Allies and supported Allies' operations in Syria from returning home.

However, the Ministry of India was successful in convincing the British government to oppose repatriation by defending its stance. In addition to forcing the British officials at the Cairo office to stop aiding them and deny their request to leave. And to let Prince Faisal in Syria know about this (Qaddouri, 2000). On July 3, 1919, Naji al-Suwaidi was appointed by Britain to a prominent administrative position in Baghdad as a show of goodwill. However, Naji Al-Suwaidi submitted his resignation on July 14 of the same year and left Iraq for Syria. He showed that he thought that the request to come to Baghdad to provide assistance in forming a national government, as he resigned when he learned that (Khayoun, 2018), was in front of the reluctance and rejected the appeals by Wilson.

Iraqi officers felt that their calls were not being heard. Thus, the officers of the Covenant Society were divided in their opinions and directions in resolving this problem and how to force Wilson to change his policy and position. A group of them saw that the peaceful solution does not work with Britain and that violence and revolution must be used. This team was led by Yassin Al-Hashemi and Ramadan Shalash. While the other current categorically rejected violence and the use of any military means against the British. Hope was not lost that Britain

would fulfill its promises and that there would be no escape from engagement with Britain. This trend was led by Nuri al-Saeed and Jaafar al-Askari. While there was a mediating current that included the majority of Iraqi officers, they were at a loss. They saw that the revolution and violence had great dangers and they had no ability to confront Britain, in addition to the political means that had not yet been exhausted (Qaddouri, 2000). The military leaders decided that Deir Ezzor would be a field of collision with the British (Muhammad, 1987).

From what has been said thus far, it would seem that the British officials in Baghdad were adamant on keeping the Iraqi officers who were in Damascus. Britain demanded that they not return because it was believed that the upheaval in Deir Ezzor would eventually spread to Iraq.

Conclusion

1- The British approach, which mismanaged the city of Deir Ezzor and imposed levies under the guise that treasury coffers needed replenishment, did not succeed in administering the city. Clan and tribal conflicts grew over British politics.

2- A constellation of individuals, tribal sheikhs and notables appeared seeking to form an Arab nationalist intellectual organization calling for the liberation of Deir Ezzor from the British occupation. As a result of the ill-considered policy of the people of Deir Ezzor.

3- The movements of Yassin al-Hashemi are considered an important source of salvation from British rule, as he commissioned Ramadan Shalash, the fiercest enemy of the British, to incite clans and tribes against the British occupation.

4- One of the factors that helped fuel and spark a revolution in Deir Ezzor against the British was the arrest of the Army Chief of Staff, Yassin al-Hashemi, and Wilson's refusal to establish an Arab government in Iraq.

5- As a result of the conditions that occurred, the members of the Covenant Society were divided in their opinions to solve the problem. One group saw the use of violence and revolution, and another group rejected the use of violence, hoping that Britain would achieve their promises.

6- For fear of the revolt against British policies spreading from Syria to Iraq, the British authorities in Baghdad decided to prevent the return of the officers stationed in Damascus to Baghdad.

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