

THE MIGRATION OF ALBANIANS TO SYRIA AS A RESULT OF THE BALKAN WAR (1912-1913)

During 1908-1912, Albanians took an active part in the events of that time, whether in the armed gangs in the mountains of Macedonia or in other protests, as happened in the large gathering held in Ferizaj, in July 1908. All this influenced the decision of Sultan Abulhamid II to promulgate the constitution on July 23, 1918.

Despite the enthusiasm that appeared everywhere in the Ottoman vilayets for the revival of the constitution and parliamentary elections, the situation in the Albanian-majority vilayets, especially in Kosovo, did not stabilize after the counter-revolution of April 1909, in which Albanians were present on both sides.

Although the Balkan War was followed by nationalist slogans for the “liberation of the brothers”, it also had an anti-Muslim dose, especially in the areas under Serbo-Montenegrin occupation, manifested by killing and violent crucifixion of Muslim Albanians in Kosovo.

In this context, during 1912-1914, many Albanian families horrified by these stormy changes, accompanied by violence and massacres, were forced to leave their homeland and move towards the East, respectively to Istanbul and further to Damascus.

This article is based on the first manuscript's author, Abdulrahim Shabani (1912-2007), who left Kosovo in 1914, as it has much more information about the circumstances of leaving the homeland and the situation of the Albanians who took the road through Anatolia, until their finale destination, Damascus.

The manuscript has 7 pages and is entitled “Biographical fragment of Abdulrahim Shabani, born in 1912”. The manuscript shows that he was only two years old when his family moved from Kosovo, so we have valuable memories of the first years of arrival and settlement of Albanians in the new country, of their suffering after the end of Ottoman rule and implementation of the French mandate in those areas.