

## ENCYCLICALS, CIRCULARS, AND APPEALS OF PATRIARCH ZAVEN OF CONSTANTINOPLE (1913-1922)

**Silvart Malhasyan\***

### **Abstract**

Patriarch Zaven, who twice ascended the age-old Patriarchal throne of the Armenians of Constantinople<sup>1</sup>, is one of the first students consecrated by the Armash Theological Seminary. Both periods of his tenure coincided with the most difficult years for the Western Armenians. As he himself attested in his memoirs, there had been no occupant among the Patriarchs of Constantinople who, like him, “had such a changeable fate and had seen days of glory and downfall”.<sup>2</sup>

Patriarch Zaven, both during his days as a provincial primate and during his two patriarchal periods, was always conscientiously devoted to the people. His foremost goals were the defense of the nation’s interests and the healing of the wounds of the suffering people. To achieve these goals, the Patriarch rallied all the national forces around him, making efforts to convene meetings, encouraging the formation of benevolent institutions, and publishing encyclicals and circulars, and directing appeals that explained the necessary work for the resolution of these issues.

**Keywords:** Patriarch Zaven, Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, encyclical, circular, appeals, Armenians of Constantinople, Mudros Armistice, loan

### **Encyclicals, Circulars, and appeals of Patriarch Zaven during his first Tenure**

The first period of Patriarch Zaven’s service began after his long experience as Primate in Karin, Van, and Diyarbekir (Tigranakert)<sup>3</sup>, with his election by the National

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\* *Silvart Malhasyan (Istanbul) is a PhD student of the Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia [msilvamalhasyan@yahoo.com](mailto:msilvamalhasyan@yahoo.com)*

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<sup>1</sup> Patriarch Zaven, whose baptismal name was Michael Yeghiaian, was born on September 8, 1868, in Mosul to the family of a native priest from Seghert. He was accepted as a student at the Armash Theological Seminary in 1890. In 1895, Zaven, having been re-called, was ordained a celibate priest by His Holiness Bishop Malachia Ormanian, and in 1896, he received the authority of the Archimandrite’s staff. Archbishop Zaven 1947: 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop Zaven 1947: 5.

<sup>3</sup> Archbishop Zaven served in Karin (Erzurum) from February 1898 to May 1906 as Patriarchal Vicar and Primate. In 1908, he was appointed Patriarchal Vicar of Van. During this term, upon being elected Primate of Diyarbekir (Tigranakert), he continued that position from 1908 until his election as Patriarch in 1913. Archbishop Zaven, *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Representative Assembly on August 30, 1913<sup>4</sup>, and the Sultan's imperial decree of confirmation issued by the Ottoman government on September 24, 1913.<sup>5</sup>

In the Holy Mother of God Cathedral in Kumkapı on November 8, 1913, the Patriarch performed his solemn oath in the presence of the National General Assembly and the public, stating: "Before God and in the presence of this National Assembly, I publicly vow to remain faithful to the government and to my nation, and to truly oversee the flawless implementation of the National Constitution." During the oath, he delivered a speech in which he declared that the interests of the Ottoman State and the Armenian Nation were in harmony with each other, and therefore, by serving one, the Patriarch would also be serving the other.<sup>6</sup>

The Patriarch reflected the aforementioned idea in his first encyclical, which was read under the arches of all Constantinople churches during the first week of June 1914. The encyclical was an expression of the Armenian people's national life and the Patriarch's intended direction, aspirations, and demands. Patriarch Zaven first addressed the shortcomings and sorrows of his flock, stating that the people had, in places, strayed from the churches and abandoned the schools. His first exhortation was to remain faithful to the Gospel and the Armenian Church, reminding them of the inseparable nature of the Armenian Church and the Armenian nation.<sup>7</sup> He emphasized the necessity of national education, urging the people to work towards the proliferation and improvement of schools, and he encouraged this as a sacred duty. In particular, he stressed the necessity of absolutely sending boys to Armenian primary schools. The Patriarch also spoke about the importance of forming Armenian families and the inappropriateness of intermarriage.<sup>8</sup>

As this encyclical coincided with the eve of the First World War, the Patriarch also addressed the civil duty of the nation's children and the new conscription law, appealing to every Armenian to fulfill their patriotic obligation.<sup>9</sup> Following the Patriarch's circular, the Armenian nation fulfilled its civic duties in every way and demonstrated its loyalty to the Ottoman homeland.

Patriarch Zaven also placed emphasis on the nation's economic life, focusing on the importance of organizing economically around commercial enterprises. The times had changed; small sums and capitals had no chance of long-term survival because large capitals would swallow them. Therefore, it was necessary to unite. According to Patriarch Zaven, "those who understood this reality and acted accordingly were the

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<sup>4</sup> Archbishop Zaven 1947: 10.

<sup>5</sup> BOA. A.DVNS.GMC.d., nr.11, p. 47-48: (This is an archival reference, likely from the Ottoman Archives - Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi - referring to a decree of the Imperial Council or Grand Vizierate).

<sup>6</sup> The Solemn Oath of His Holiness the Patriarch, "Zhamanak", 9-22. XI. 1913, Issue No. 16305, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Zaven, Servant of Jesus Christ, "Zhamanak", 1-14.VII. 1914, Issue No. 1857, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> The Encyclical of His Holiness the Patriarch Father, "Zhamanak", 2-15.VII.1914, Issue No. 1858, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> The Encyclical of His Holiness the Patriarch Father, "Zhamanak", 3-16.VII.1914, Issue No. 1859, p. 1.

most virtuous and useful compatriots, who knew the secrets of enriching themselves and serving the homeland”.<sup>10</sup>

The Patriarch made the issue of mutual understanding between the Patriarchate and the people a special point of attention, because harmony between the National Authority and the people was the primary condition for resolving issues concerning the people’s religious, national, and civic life. Starting with the primates, he requested all clergy and those serving in the provincial administrative councils to fulfill their religious and administrative duties with vigilance and dedicated activity. He also called upon the intellectual class—the writers and especially the journalists—to uphold their worth.<sup>11</sup>

Patriarch Zaven ascended the throne during a considerably difficult period, on the eve of the First World War. The leaders of the Ottoman State were the Ittihadists (Unionists), who pursued an erratic policy. The evidence of this was the country being thrown into the war on August 2, 1914. The Patriarch, as a far-sighted and experienced cleric, sensed in the first weeks of the summer of 1914 that the Ottoman State would soon participate in the war, and therefore he wanted to know the number of Armenian students in the state military academies (Idadiler)<sup>12</sup> in the provinces. For this purpose, he requested a list of those students from the provincial primates via a circular.<sup>13</sup> Shortly after this circular, the Ottoman State was already participating in the war and, with general conscription, was mobilizing the army.

In the last week of October of the same year, the Patriarch addressed a new circular to the dioceses in the provinces and the districts of Constantinople.<sup>14</sup> He referred to the telegrams and letters received from all corners of the province after the general conscription, which indicated that Armenians had complied with the mobilization of those between the ages of 15 and 32 and those without support, and at the same time had willingly participated in the fundraising proposed for the needs of the army or various government requirements.

In this circular, Primates, Vicars, Delegates, and official personnel were called upon to pay attention to a number of points. The first of these points was: On every occasion, both in writing and verbally, to exhort the people to fulfill their patriotic duty, as they had done for centuries. Especially since the country was now at war and needed assistance. The second important point was to instruct the people to participate willingly in providing material and moral assistance. Besides participating in material aid, the people were called upon not to spare even their lives when the Ottoman homeland was

<sup>10</sup> The Encyclical of His Holiness the Patriarch Father, “Zhamanak”, 3-16.VII.1914, Issue No. 1859, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> The Encyclical of His Holiness the Patriarch Father, “Zhamanak”, 3-16.VII.1914, Issue No. 1859, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> A school providing military education equivalent to the Lyceum (high school) level.

<sup>13</sup> The Patriarchate issued a circular, “Zhamanak”, 14-27. V.1914, Issue No. 1809, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> The Patriarchal Circular, Armenians and the War, “Dajar”, 12 November 1914, Issue No. 18, pp. 385-387. The Patriarchate’s Circular to the Primates, Armenians and the War, “Zhamanak”, 26.X-3.XI.1914, Issue No. 1973, p. 1.

in need of it. The Patriarch urged the people to demonstrate practically that they were worthy children of their ancestors.

One of the circular's main demands was the issue of alleviating the miseries inseparable from war. It stated that this duty fell to the central cities and official bodies, thus it was necessary to form new poor-relief bodies or strengthen the existing ones. At the same time, the people were called upon to show benevolence and patriotism to care for the unsupported families of those conscripted and to alleviate the misery of the poor and orphans, without making distinctions between nationality or religion.

The circular made a point of caution and specifically asked the Primates to cultivate cordial relations with local government officials, assist their efforts, and present their observations regarding the conduct of lawbreakers to the relevant officials with a courteous and concerned tone. Similarly, the Primates were instructed to urge their flocks to approach their neighbors and compatriots with understanding, to help them, and to be more far-sighted and circumspect than ever before, so as not to cause misunderstandings.

This circular made a good impression on Turkish circles. The French-language newspaper "Jeune Turc" spoke highly of the circular, and especially of Patriarch Zaven, saying that his words proved the idea of true Ottomanism.<sup>15</sup> The publication of patriotic articles in the Armenian press, parallel to the circular, also led to expressions of respect from the Turkish press.<sup>16</sup>

In response to the aforementioned circular, prayers for the success of the Ottoman army were held in various cities of the provinces under the leadership of the Primates or their delegates. In response to all patriotic demonstrations, the Ottoman Information Bureau communicated a declaration to the newspapers, which, with laudatory lines, exalted the patriotic sentiments of the Armenians and their devotion to the Ottoman government.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, news of aid initiatives also arrived from the provinces. Official letters from Erzincan (Yerznka), Palu, and Çarsancak provided detailed information about all the patriotic initiatives undertaken to meet the needs of the Ottoman army.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Archbishop Zaven 1947: 77.

<sup>16</sup> "Tasvir-i Efkar", referring to these articles, published a piece titled "Patriotic Activity Among Our Armenian Compatriots" ("Ermeni Vatandaşlarımızda Faaliyet-i Vatanperverane"), *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 11 Teşrinisani 1914, p. 3. Patriotic Activity Among Our Armenian Compatriots, "Azatamart", 30.X-12.XI.1914, Issue No. 1664, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> "Dajar", 31 December 1914, Issue No. 19, p. 424.

<sup>18</sup> Especially the Primate of Karin, Bishop Smbat Saatetian, the Vicar of Sebastia, Bishop Gnel Kalemkerian, and the Primate of Kharberd, Vartabed Psak Ter-Khorenian, encouraged the people of their districts to make efforts in this direction. In Erzincan, merchants donated their goods to the Ottoman army, farmers their entire labor, and artisans whatever they could. To establish a hospital, they placed 300 blankets and 310 pillows at the disposal of the army. Similar things were done by the people of Palu and Çarsancak. *Armenian News*, "Zhamanak", 18-31.I.1915, Issue No. 2053, p. 2.

According to a telegram received from Jerusalem, the former Patriarch Archbishop Malachia preached before a large crowd in the Holy Sepulchre (Surp Harutyun) and sent Patriarch Zaven's circular to all the dioceses connected to the Jerusalem Patriarchate.<sup>19</sup> In various districts of Constantinople, Armenian women began sewing undergarments for the soldiers with collected donations.<sup>20</sup> Ismail Hakkı, the Governor of Adana, who had known the Patriarch since his days as Primate of Diyarbakir, praised the sacrifices made by the Armenians for the Ottoman army, particularly the food aid from the people of Sis, in a personal letter addressed to the Patriarch.<sup>21</sup>

It is appropriate to mention here that the people of Constantinople and the provinces were making all these sacrifices while in a considerably tight financial situation, as the Armenian nation already had major problems helping the unsupported and the needy, and it was undertaking additional sacrifices to overcome them. To manage this difficult task, Patriarch Zaven, in the first months of 1915, issued a new circular instructing the district councils of the Constantinople churches to report the number of those in need so that the aid work could be placed on a firm foundation. He also instructed the collection plate to be circulated in the churches.<sup>22</sup> In connection with all these heavy financial issues, the Patriarch advised the people to also regularly pay their Homeland Tax<sup>23</sup> and lighten the financial burden of the Patriarchal See.<sup>24</sup>

While the Armenian nation was working diligently to fully fulfill its patriotic duties on one hand, on the other hand, all these sacrifices had no positive effect on the severe situation of the Armenians in the provinces. Letters of protest arrived one after another; the people and the Primates were anxious about the rumors of deportation. Finally, the order for forced relocation was announced.

Following the deportations and massacres, the Ittihadist (Unionist) government, by a decision dated July 17, 1916, abolished the Armenian National Constitution of 1863 and enforced the Statute of the Catholicos-Patriarch. The justification was that the Mother See (Etchmiadzin) was under the dominion of the Russian Empire, and thus exerted a negative influence on the life of Western Armenians. With the abolition of the Constitution, the ties between Constantinople, the religious-cultural and political center of Western Armenians, and Etchmiadzin were severed. The new arrangement also severed the Patriarchate's connection with the Armenians in the provinces, who were suffering in exile and agonizing pain. With the establishment of the Catholicos-Patriarch Statute, Patriarch Zaven was exiled to Baghdad. He departed the Ottoman capital with

<sup>19</sup> According to news received from Jerusalem, "Byuzandion", 28.X.-10.XI.1914, Issue No. 5491, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> For the Soldiers, "Byuzandion", 20.XI.-3.XII.1914, Issue No. 5499, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Letter to the Patriarch, "Byuzandion", 6-9.XII.1914, Issue No. 5499, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> National Life, "Dajar" 14.II.1915, Issue No. 21, p. 455. Palm Sunday Holiday, "Zhamanak", 16-29.III.1915, Issue No. 2110, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Malhasyan 2024a.

<sup>24</sup> Circular from the Patriarchate, "Zhamanak", 6-19.II.1915, Issue No. 2072, p. 2.

his brother and his daughter. After a terrifying journey, he reached Baghdad, and after staying there for five months, he was transferred to Mosul.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the encyclicals and circulars addressed to the people, the clergy, and national officials, Patriarch Zaven also issued special encyclicals to individuals during his first period of service. One of the most important issues for him was the education of the nation's children, and therefore, to remind people of the importance of education, and sometimes to thank and encourage the institutions or individuals who supported it, he published circulars or issued encyclicals. In this category was the Encyclical of Blessing given to Karapet Ef. Papazian in appreciation for his donation towards the construction of the national kindergarten in the Getikpasha district.<sup>26</sup> A similar encyclical was also given on the occasion of a donation made to the Armash Theological Seminary. The brother and sister of the late Abik Efendi Unjian, one of the Seminary's supporters—Matus Efendi and his sister—considering the difficult financial state of the monastery, donated a significant sum to the institution, for which the Patriarch sent an Encyclical of Blessing to the benevolent donors.<sup>27</sup>

### **Encyclicals, Circulars, and appeals of Patriarch Zaven's second tenure**

Patriarch Zaven's second period of rule began after the Mudros Armistice was signed on October 30, 1918, between the defeated Ottoman State and the victorious Allied Powers, changing the lives of Western Armenians. Following the signing of the Armistice, the administration of the city of Constantinople was handed over to the three Entente powers: England, Italy, and France. The Statute of the Armenian Catholicos-Patriarch ceased to be in force. The Armenian National Constitution of 1863 was re-established, and the Armenian Constitutional order began to be implemented.<sup>28</sup> With the help of the British, the Armenians of Constantinople succeeded in returning the exiled Patriarch to the city. Archbishop Zaven entered the Ottoman capital on February 19, 1919.<sup>29</sup>

The first encyclical-circular of the Patriarch's second tenure was read on Sunday, March 16, 1919, in all Armenian churches in Constantinople. The Patriarch first addressed the sufferings endured by the Armenian nation during the years of catastrophe and the powerful faith and will shown for survival. He announced that days of light had arrived with the end of the war. The nation had to prepare for a new rebirth, to achieve which great efforts and great sacrifices were again necessary.

<sup>25</sup> Archbishop Zaven 1947: 219, 225.

<sup>26</sup> The Donation of Karapet Efendi Papazian, "Zhamanak", 14-27.V.1914, Issue No. 1809, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> National Life, "Dajar", 14 February 1915, Issue No. 21, pp. 455-456.

<sup>28</sup> "Ardaramart", 21 November 1918, Issue No. 2-1816, p. 1. "Byuzandion", 8-21.XI.1918, Issue No. 7741. The Armenian Patriarchate Regulation dated 29 Ramazan 1279, Takvim-i Vekayi 20 Teşrinisani 1334, number 3399. The Armenian Patriarchate Regulation, Sabah, 7 November 1918, number 10421.

<sup>29</sup> A Happy Return After a Suffering Exile, "Nor Kyank", 21.II. 1919, Issue No. 124, p. 2.

Upon his return, the Patriarch found Constantinople full of large groups of Armenian widows, orphans, and deportees, whose numbers were noticeably increasing day by day. To place the work of material and moral assistance for them on a more regular basis, the National Benevolent Organization (Azgayin Khnamatarutyun) was formed.<sup>30</sup>

To succeed in this sacred work, the Patriarch advised the people to abstain from disputes, self-centered and vainglorious ambitions, division, and separation, and requested pan-national cooperation and solidarity.<sup>31</sup>

With the aim of obtaining accurate information on these issues, a circular dated March 18, 1919, was sent to the provincial Primates.<sup>32</sup> This official declaration was a printed questionnaire that, through the Primates, was to reach the national residents of villages and cities, and the answers provided would clarify the true picture of the nation's current state.

Besides the nationals residing in the provinces, the deportees who had gathered in Constantinople after the deportations, or the Armenians of Constantinople who had suffered losses due to the war, received this questionnaire from the Information Bureau of the Holy Trinity Church in the Pera district. The questionnaire focused on the following issues: liberation of orphans, verification of the status of orphanages, issues of deportees returning to their birthplace reclaiming their private properties, demanding Church properties back from the government, and identifying those who organized deadly movements and persecutions or committed acts of violence against the deported people during their journey.<sup>33</sup>

While Patriarch Zaven was still in exile, the entire Armenian nation experienced great joy with the Proclamation of the First Republic of Armenia on May 28, 1918, which took place almost a few months before the signing of the Mudros Armistice. The newly established republic certainly faced great difficulties. Therefore, upon arriving in Constantinople, the Patriarch took the first step toward material assistance for the Republic of Armenia by publishing an encyclical. The encyclical was a heartfelt appeal to the entire Armenian nation to send aid to the people of Armenia who were enduring suffering. With paternal exhortations, the Patriarch highlighted the debt of conscience every single Armenian owed to their nation. The encyclical was given to Hovhannes Kajaznuni, the Prime Minister of the First Republic of Armenia, to take with him to Europe and America, and was also sent to all districts and churches in Constantinople and the provinces to be read.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Official Declaration of the Political Assembly, "Zhamanak", 29.I.1919-7.II.1919, 3442, p. 1. National Benevolent Organization 1920: 73-75.

<sup>31</sup> Circular, Encyclical of Patriarch Zaven, "Zhamanak", 18.III.1919, Issue No. 108 (1929), p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Official Declaration of the National Patriarchate, "Zhamanak", 4-17.V.1919, Issue No. 3523, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Matenadaran, Arshak Alpoyajian Fund, file 55, document 58 (18).

<sup>34</sup> Aid to Armenia, "Zhamanak", 5-18.VI.1919, Issue No. 3549.

During the summer of the same year, Patriarch Zaven published new circulars, through which he offered advice, especially to the youth. Thus, the first of two circulars dated July 24, 1919, announced that Armenian young men, driven by need or other reasons, were appealing to a foreign power and enrolling as volunteer soldiers to be sent to distant colonies. It was instructed that these young men should not embark on such an undertaking without first obtaining the approval of the Patriarchate. The second circular concerned a security issue and was a translation of a warning document sent to the Patriarchate by the British High Commission. According to this warning, when arrests were made by the Turkish police or when a detainee was being escorted to a police station, Christians sometimes interfered, thereby obstructing the work of the police. The Patriarchate was asked to warn the Armenian people to refrain from such interference. These two circulars were read from the church pulpits and explained to the people.<sup>35</sup>

One of Patriarch Zaven's concerns was also the undeniable demand to raise new generations, as the nation had lost immense youthful strength due to deportation and war, and many of those who narrowly escaped death had lost their families and immediate kin. The responsibility for the upbringing of those saved from the catastrophe rested on the shoulders of the nation and the national schools. One of the circulars during the Patriarch's second tenure was about this very issue. Due to the war, the national schools had fallen into a state of disarray. The Patriarchate's Educational Council decided to regularize these schools by utilizing the financial capabilities of the districts where they were located. Therefore, this decision was communicated via a circular to the church district councils, asking them to provide all kinds of facilities to the work of the Educational Council.<sup>36</sup>

Patriarch Zaven was not the only one returning from exile. Armenians scattered across Mesopotamia and Syria also began to return from their places of exile after the Armistice. The Cilicians also returned to their homeland, encouraged by the French, who controlled the region at the time. A portion of Armenians exiled from other Armenian-populated areas also came and settled there.<sup>37</sup> The Cilicians, of course, were never able to regain their former life, being subjected to difficulties. With the responsibility of aiding the distressed Cilicians, a circular was published by the Patriarchate at the end of March 1920, bearing the signatures of the Chairman of the Religious Council, Archbishop Eghishe Tourian, and the Patriarchal Vicar, Bishop Mesrob Naroyan. The National Central Administration, while carrying out its duty to provide material assistance to the Cilicians, found it insufficient. Therefore, the circular called on the people to seek means to support their compatriots. The Religious Council of the Central Administration considered such a duty more important than participating in church ceremonies, which were valued as equivalent to alms. Especially since

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<sup>35</sup> Grigor Avak Priest Tamatian 2016: 260.

<sup>36</sup> Nor Kyank, 15.VIII.1919, Issue No. 270.

<sup>37</sup> Patriarch Zaven 1947: 279-280.



spiritual joys and festivities would not be understood when, on the other hand, their co-religionist brothers in Cilicia lacked aid. A decision was made to temporarily suspend church ceremonies, and an appeal was directed to the people to hasten to the aid of the victims of Cilicia and quickly complete the assistance for the unfortunate children and brothers of the Armenian nation.<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned above, the Patriarch was still in exile during the proclamation of the Republic of Armenia, and the community in Constantinople did not have the opportunity to express its satisfaction regarding the proclamation. On the second anniversary of independence, the community found this opportunity through the Patriarch's circular dated May 27, 1920, which ordered the opening of the churches, which had been closed for a long time due to the Cilician catastrophe, and to offer prayers for the proclamation of independence.<sup>39</sup>

One of the circulars published by the Patriarch in 1920, who was always caring for Armenia, concerned the loan related to the homeland's economy. The Armenians of Constantinople were already striving to send aid to the homeland through fundraising organized by their associations and institutions, or by other means on various occasions. Participation in the Republic's first loan was one of the most important initiatives in this direction. The Patriarch's circular invited the district councils of Constantinople to support this initiative. The circular was effective in speeding up the loan process.<sup>40</sup>

Patriarch Zaven approached every issue concerning the community with sensitivity and care. The subject and reason for one of his appeals was Armenians emigrating to America. A letter sent to the Patriarchate by the spiritual pastor of Paris, Vramshapuh T. Vartabed, recounted that provincial Armenians who had emigrated from Cilicia with hopes of going to America, and even those who had settled in the Ottoman capital of Constantinople for years with the same dreams, were gathering in the city of Marseilles. These Armenians were living a nomadic life in lodgings worse than stables. Many of them, having had their money extorted by fraudsters, had barely managed to reach Paris. There, too, they filled the courtyard of the Armenian church. Harrowing scenes were witnessed—having passports but lacking the money to buy tickets. To show the terrifying danger awaiting many nationals who had the urge to emigrate to America, the Patriarch Father published Vramshapuh T. Vartabed's heartbreaking letter verbatim in the newspaper "Zhoghovourdi Dzayn" and warned in an appeal that the consequence of such short-sighted steps was nothing but disillusionment and misery.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> "Circular," "Zhamanak", 29.III-11.IV.1920, Issue No. 3799, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> "Zhoghovourdi Dzayn", 14-27.V.1920, Issue No. 493. Churches are opened for festivities, "Verjin Lur", 20.V.1920, Issue No. 1885, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Circular of the Political Assembly for the loan, "Chakatamart", 7.IX.1920, Issue No. 547 (2368). "Decision of the Political Assembly regarding the Armenian loan, "Zhoghovourdi Dzayn", 23. VIII-5.IX.1920, Issue No. 572.

<sup>41</sup> Patriarch Zaven 1920.

For Patriarch Zaven and the Armenians of Constantinople, the issue of caring for orphans and deportees had always been a difficult problem to solve. In a circular during the last days of 1920, the Patriarch announced that, with the approval of the Political Assembly of the National Central Authority, the Economic Commission had established a Central Body for the Salvation of Orphans. This body was collecting aid for orphans and deportees by means it found suitable in all districts of Constantinople on the occasion of the Holy Nativity (Christmas) holiday of 1921.

In the circular mentioned, the Patriarch addressed the dire state of the National Economic Fund and stated that a sacred duty lay upon every Armenian, and everyone had to contribute their share of aid to remedy this situation. For this purpose, he also appealed in a circular to the district councils to offer their moral and material support to the Central Body for the Salvation of Orphans and to its branches to be opened in the districts, so that the humanitarian mission could be realized efficiently.<sup>42</sup> In response to this appeal, the District Councils began collecting assistance under the name “Orphans’ Salvation Week” on the occasion of the New Year and Holy Nativity.<sup>43</sup> According to the program’s provisions, the title “Father of Orphans” was to be given to the person who donated the highest sum. A memorial plaque with this title was also prepared, bearing the signatures of the three spiritual heads of the Armenian denominations and the photo of the donor.<sup>44</sup>

The Armenians of Constantinople were not only working to find remedies for their own sorrows but also extending a helping hand to all who sought assistance. When the administration of the Russian White Cross appealed to the Patriarchate, requesting material assistance for the Russian sick and needy who had taken refuge in Constantinople, Patriarch Zaven directed a circular to the church district councils, instructing them to circulate a special collection plate for the Russian refugees during the Octave of the Holy Nativity (the eight days following Christmas). The organization of the effort was entrusted to the administration of the Armenian Red Cross in Constantinople, and the translation of the circular was published in Russian and Armenian newspapers.<sup>45</sup>

Patriarch Zaven, who was always concerned about Armenia, continued the same behavior and published encyclicals and circulars for aid even after the establishment of the Soviet regime in November 1920. Among these was the circular published in May 1921, when the Mother See (Etchmiadzin) was in an extremely difficult financial state.

<sup>42</sup> Circular, “Zhmanak”, 18.XII. 1920-2.I.1921, Issue No. 3975, p. 4; Circular, “Chakatamart”, 29.XII.1920, Issue No. 644 (2465).

<sup>43</sup> The postponement of Orphans’ Week, “Chakatamart”, 1.II.1921, Issue No. 671 (2492).

<sup>44</sup> Father of Orphans, “Chakatamart”, 12.I.1921, Issue No. 656 (2477); 14.I.1921, Issue No. 658 (2479).

<sup>45</sup> Aid to Russian Refugees, “Zhoghovourdi Dzayn”, 18.XII.-2.I.1921, Issue No. 679; “Chakatamart”, 2.I.1921, Issue No. 648 (2469); 6.I.1921, Issue No. 651 (2472); 18.I.1921, Issue No. 660 (2481); 22.I.1919, Issue No. 6634 (2484). His Holiness the Patriarch, “Zhoghovourdi Dzayn”, 8-21.I.1921, Issue No. 693. Aid to Russian Refugees, “Zhoghovourdi Dzayn”, 13-26.I.1921, Issue No. 697.

As true children of the Armenian Church, it was a sacred duty for the Armenians of Constantinople to help the Mother See. On this occasion, the Patriarch instructed the district councils and the clergy of the Constantinople churches to kindly re-establish the placement of the offering box in the church for the Holy Etchmiadzin treasury, in accordance with ancient custom, and simultaneously circulate a special plate every Sunday and holiday, sending the proceeds to the Patriarchate.<sup>46</sup> The Patriarch focused on the famine in Armenia and the resulting deaths, deciding to hold a vigil service in all the city's churches on June 1, 1921.<sup>47</sup>

As noted above, the Patriarch kept every community issue within his circle of attention. Thus, in the last months of 1921, he published an appeal regarding the problem of young girls wishing to leave the country due to the political and economic situation. The issue was the increasing obstacles caused by young girls going abroad as brides. The Patriarch, in a written declaration, sought to preempt certain deceptions that were affecting girls traveling from Constantinople to America as brides on marriage proposals from America, which had painful consequences. The circular set a mandatory condition for nationals seeking marriage, either in person or through a representative, requiring them to possess a certificate from the Armenian Prelacy of America bearing the photograph of the groom. The certificate also had to confirm the individual's identity, age, birthplace, residential address, marital status (single or widowed), occupation, financial status, and health condition confirmed by a medical report. The circular announced that applicants for marriage without this certificate would not be permitted by the Patriarchate.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, Patriarch Zaven's second tenure, like the first, did not last long. The governance of the country had passed to the authority of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The administration's officials did not look favorably upon the Patriarch's policies after the Mudros Armistice and exerted pressure for him to resign. Under these pressures, Patriarch Zaven issued his final circular a few months before leaving the city, on October 3, 1922. In it, he advised the community to vigilantly follow the precautionary measures being implemented by the city authorities to maintain peace. He instructed them to maintain composure and trust in the current volatile conditions, not giving way to discord and panic, and to be careful of expressions that might be offensive to the feelings of others. He requested every national not to be satisfied merely with the implementation of the instructions, but also to be diligent in their own circle; if someone unconsciously disregarded the instructions, they should be zealous in correcting his behavior. He advised reporting any incident likely to disrupt order to the police, and in the case of fire incidents, to strictly follow the given instructions. The Patriarch particularly instructed the clergy and the district councils to be more than ever at the

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<sup>46</sup> Circular, "Zhoghovourdi Dzayn", 9-22.V. 1921, Issue No. 794 (4090), p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> For the aid of the Armenians of Constantinople to Armenia, see article: Malhasyan 2024b: 21-35.

<sup>48</sup> Circular, "Zhoghovourdi Dzayn", 22.XII.1920-4.I.1921, Issue No. 680 (3976), p. 2.

head of their duty and to explain the instructions to the people and ensure their flawless implementation.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, the Patriarch, without submitting a resignation, departed the Ottoman capital of Constantinople on December 10, 1922. On December 12, he sailed on the British ship *Brakka* to the city of Varna in Bulgaria. The Patriarch submitted his resignation in March 1923, thus closing his second patriarchal period as well.

### **Conclusion**

Patriarch Zaven, being a clergyman possessed of the Armashian spirit who sacrificed himself for the nation, had a single objective during both his periods as Primate and Patriarch, as well as during his life in exile: to care for the needs of his people, to be a remedy for their sorrows, to liberate the orphans and women, to find solutions for the problems of the deportees, and to ensure the education of the nation's children. To solve all these weighty problems, the Patriarch united the forces of every class of the nation and led them to work.

He demonstrated a caring attitude not only toward the Western Armenians but also toward the First Republic of Armenia and Soviet Armenia, publishing numerous encyclicals, circulars, and appeals in which he explained the necessary efforts for the resolution of these issues, rallied the members of the nation around the same goal, and successfully crowned the resolution of some of the problems that required attention.

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***Translated from Armenian by Gevorg Harutyunyan***