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To Bring About a "Moral of Renewal": The Deportation of Sex Workers in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War

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In January 1915 European consuls in Istanbul gave the city's police commissioner, Osman Bedri Bey, a list of names of known procurers. The accused traffickers included Russian, Argentinian, Romanian, American, Austrian, French, British, and Greek citizens. All but one of them were deported; 151 were banished from the country, 11 were sent to Sivas, and 5 were sent to Kayseri, cities in the interior of Anatolia that were far removed from the capital.[1] Bedri quickly rose through the ranks of Ottoman civil officialdom as he was a close friend of Talaat, the powerful interior minister who became grand vizier in 1917. Bedri was appointed as a prosecutor in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul in April 1912 and became police commissioner of Istanbul in 1914. As police commissioner, he was "equipped with the near dictatorial powers he was given over Constantinople's public life" by the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the secret society that plotted the 1908 Ottoman constitutional revolution and deposed Sultan Abdülhamid II a year later.[2] Bedri was therefore free to use his power as police commissioner to carry out deportations of madams, pimps, and

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[1] Istanbul Police Directorate to Interior Ministry, 30 September 1915, DH.EUM.ADL 12/16, T. C. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul (hereafter BOA). The list was appended to this letter. The list of deported traffickers, their nationalities, and their occupations can also be found at the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD; see Henry Morgenthau to William Jennings Bryan, Secretary of State, 24 March 1915, frame 867.1152/3, reel 39, RG 59.

[2] Rifat Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople, 1854–1922* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2008), 54.

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prostitutes. Many government officials and social commentators believed that the proliferation of prostitution in the Ottoman Empire between 1914 and 1918 was one of the greatest social and economic challenges that the empire faced. Public morality in Istanbul was of particular importance to regaining sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire, which had been compromised through territorial losses and foreign economic penetration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Bedri's actions suggest that the deportation of foreign subjects was part of this larger project.[3] Describing similar developments in nineteenth-century Egypt, Khaled Fahmy suggests, however, that when prostitutes faced scrutiny under the guise of protecting public morality, "there was something else that loomed in the background."[4] This article analyzes that something else.

I argue that Ottoman wartime policy toward sex workers was part of a broader initiative by the CUP to reshape the social geography of the empire, an effort of considerable importance for both the social and political history of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. Specifically, I consider the policy of deporting sex workers, primarily from the empire's capital, Istanbul, to the more sparsely populated and isolated areas of the interior of Anatolia. In the years after the first Balkan War in 1912, when the Ottoman Empire suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of a loosely organized alliance of smaller Balkan states and lost virtually all of its European territory, many government and military officials and intellectuals alike came to believe that the only way the Ottoman Empire could revive itself was through a Turkish brand of nationalism. World War I gave the Ottoman government the necessary pretext to more firmly establish the empire's ethnic composition as specifically Turkish in order to carry out the nationalist program.[5] This process of reshaping the empire entailed the creation of the National Economy, built around the promotion of Turkish-owned industry;[6] the forcible resettlement of Muslims, most notably Kurds, into predominately Turkish-speaking areas of Anatolia so as to assimilate them culturally and linguistically;[7] and, most radically, the extermination of Armenians. Morality also held a significant place in Turkish nationalist thought. According to Ziya Gökalp, a highly influential sociologist and poet, "The Turks have excelled in morals. Turkish history, from its

[3] Malte Fuhrmann, "'Western Perversions' at the Threshold of Felicity: The European Prostitutes of Galata-Pera (1870–1915)," *History and Anthropology* 21, no. 2 (2010): 161.

[4] Khaled Fahmy, "Prostitution in Egypt in the Nineteenth Century," in *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*, ed. Eugene L. Rogan (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 88.

[5] Fuat Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskân Politikası* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 62–64.

[6] See Zafer Toprak, *İttihad-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi: Savaş Ekonomisi ve Develetçilik* (Istanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2003).

[7] Üğür Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 107–69.

beginning, is an exhibition of moral virtues."[8] The idealized Turkish nation was therefore one that not only needed to be militarily powerful and ethnically homogeneous but also actively guarded its morality.

The years of World War I served as a crucible in which the CUP could test its theories about the destructive consequences of immorality for society and take action against what it considered immoral behavior.[9] Measures taken by the Ottoman government during World War I bear the imprint of the CUP itself and shed light on how the thought process behind Ottoman policy making had far-reaching effects across the empire. Many laws passed during the war were provisional and were crafted by a small cadre of government elites; even some of the most important ones were issued without providing detailed information about the laws to the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate, resulting in an empire-wide imposition of martial law that diminished the authority of civilian officials.[10] Historians such as Cafer Ulu and Muammar Göçmen have put the blame for what they view as a degeneration of morals in Istanbul on the shoulders of female Russian migrants, local religious and ethnic minorities, and Entente occupying forces.[11] These arguments are grounded in the writings of contemporary Turkish observers, who bemoaned the wanton morals of Russian female prostitutes in particular. These women were characterized as displaying "uninhibited attitude[s] and clothing" along with a propensity to drink alcohol.[12] Ottoman and Turkish antiprostitution policies were intended to stem the tide of foreign cultural mores.

In contrast to previous analyses, I recast Ottoman policies toward sex workers as an integral part of wartime social policy, which shared several characteristics with those of the empire's European cobelligerents. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate that the Ottoman Empire was integrated into what Hans-Lukas Kieser calls "larger Europe" and that Istanbul was a hub of wartime policy making.[13] I suggest that the policy of deporting sex workers

[8] Ziya Gökalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, trans. Robert Devereux (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 102.

[9] Çiğdem Oğuz, "The Struggle Within: 'Moral Crisis' on the Ottoman Homefront during the First World War" (PhD diss., Leiden University and Boğaziçi University, 2018), 22.

[10] Deniz Dölek Sever, *Istanbul's Great War: Public Order, Crime and Punishment in the Ottoman Capital, 1914–1918* (Istanbul: Libra, 2018), 337.

[11] Cafer Ulu, "I. Dünya Savaşı ve İşgal Sürecinde İstanbul'da Yaşanan Sosyal ve Ahlaki Çözülme (1914–1922)," *Tarih Dergisi* 58, no. 2 (2013): 87–129; Muammar Göçmen, "Mütareke Yıllarında Beyaz Rusların İstanbul'daki Sürgün Hayatları," *Süleyman Demirel Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1, no. 20 (2008): 199–216; İlbeyi Özer, "Mütareke ve İşgal Yıllarında Osmanlı Devletinde Görülen Sosyal Çöküntü ve Toplumsal Yaşam," *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Dergisi* 14 (2003): 247–71.

[12] D. Fatma Türe, *Facts and Fantasies: Images of Istanbul Women in the 1920s* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 44–45. See also Jak Deleon, *The White Russians in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1995), 33–37.

[13] Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Talaat Pasha: Father of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 32.

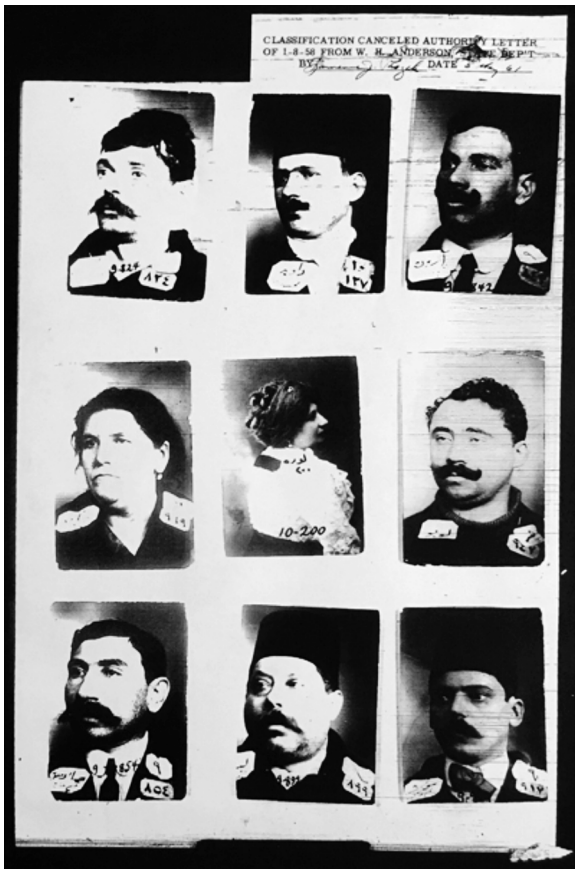

Figure 1. Mugshots of accused traffickers, provided by Bedri Bey to the American ambassador, 4 March 1915, frame 867.1152/3, reel 39, RG 59, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

was part of a broader effort to mold the population of the capital city into the CUP's vision of the Ottoman Empire in a postwar world, namely, a state that would be capable of mobilizing for war at any time to ensure its continued existence. Policy makers considered the production of moral individuals to be a prerequisite for the molding of patriotic citizens who would be the leaders of the new Ottoman nation in arms.[14] The policing

[14] Cevat Kara, "Guter Mensch, besserer Bürger? Die moralische und staatsbürgerliche Erziehung in den osmanischen Schulen der Jungtürkenzeit (1908–1914)," in *Religiöse Identität(en) und gemeinsame Religionsfreiheit: eine Herausforderung pluraler Gesellschaften*, ed. Marianne Heimbach-Stein, Rotraud Weilandt, and Reinhard Zintl (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2006), 137–55. The concept of a nation in arms was popularized in the Ottoman

of public morality was therefore a means to achieve the larger objective of surviving the First World War as a politically and militarily viable nation.

Since the only surviving documents about these policies were produced by government officials, finding the voices of individual prostitutes is challenging. This is further complicated by the fact that virtually all Ottoman women were illiterate, and even the petitions submitted by prostitutes were generally written by professional scribes (*arzuhalcı*), who followed the style guidelines of manuals for petition writing (*münşeat*) and adhered to narrow rules about how to address the authorities. Consequently, many of the petitions are similar in both style and content, and they mimic some of the Ottoman state's own lexicon of nationalism and patriotism. For instance, they frequently refer to female piety and male martyrdom.[15] These petitions are, however, fundamentally personal in nature, as they contain individual stories, reasoning processes, and demands, even though they were likely mediated through an *arzuhalcı*. They help shed light on how their authors understood their own responsibilities and those of their rulers, and they reveal common familial and economic problems.[16] These sources also reveal the flawed logic that underpinned the deportation policy. Contrary to the goal of improving public morals, the policy exacerbated poverty and deepened women's alienation from social support systems. The disorganized character of the deportations also led to confusion and conflict between provincial officials and the Istanbul government.

Wartime Morality and Larger Europe

Anxieties about morality in the Ottoman Empire predated the First World War, but, as in Britain, the effect of the war was to center these concerns on the promiscuity of women and children,[17] who were increasingly left to their own devices due to the mass conscription of men.[18] Susan Grayzel has pointed to male observers claiming to discover lax female sexuality in Britain and France during and after the First World War, and she argues that the

Empire by Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, a Prussian field marshal who assisted in early twentieth-century Ottoman military reorganization. F. A. K. Yasamee, "Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz and the Rebirth of the Ottoman Empire," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 9, no. 2 (1998): 91–128.

[15] Elif Mahir Metinsoy, *Ottoman Women during World War I: Everyday Experiences, Politics, and Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 7–8.

[16] Zeynep Kutluata, "Ottoman Women and the State during World War I" (PhD diss., Sabancı University, 2014), 72–73.

[17] Angela Woolacott, "'Khaki Fever' and Its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 2 (1994): 325–47.

[18] The Law of Military Obligation of May 1914 revoked exemptions to allow for a greater number of men to be conscripted. Yiğit Akın, "War, Women, and the State: The Politics of Sacrifice in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War," *Journal of Women's History* 26, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 17.

female body was a site upon which anxieties over wartime social disorder were expressed.[19] Similar attitudes prevailed among the Ottoman Empire's World War I allies. In Austria-Hungary, the wartime government coded lax female morality as treasonous and sought to regulate brothels to control the spread of venereal disease.[20] In Hapsburg-occupied Serbia, the sexuality of women, particularly prostitutes, became a "national battleground."[21] And in Germany, military, political, and religious leaders alike viewed the First World War as an opportunity to promote an idealized male citizen who was both patriotic and virtuous and who would therefore strengthen the moral composition of the country.[22]

Ottoman observers in the years preceding 1914 also blamed their recent military defeats on a perceived lack of morality. A 1914 article by Feride İzzet Selim in the journal *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's world) entitled "Why Were We Defeated?" argued that the Ottoman rout in the First Balkan War in 1912 was due not to deficiencies in war matériel or manpower but to moral weakness. The article connected this weakness to a lack of patriotism and affection for the homeland among Ottomans.[23] In a late 1914 diary entry, Ottoman soldier Abidin Ege similarly complained that the "Turkish people seem to have fallen into quite a mournful moral backwardness" and that people in Istanbul were merrily playing in parks, ignoring that the country was at war. "Where is the Turkish people's old moral purity?" he lamented.[24] The moral purity that individuals like Ege believed was lacking was most noticeably threatened by sex workers in the capital. Prostitutes were a highly visible part of the cityscape of early twentieth-century Istanbul. According to official statistics, 774 Muslim women were registered to work as prostitutes in the capital in 1915, although the actual number of prostitutes was undoubtedly much higher.[25] Based on fieldwork carried out

[19] Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 121–22.

[20] Nancy Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution in Late Imperial Austria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 210.

[21] Jovana Knežević, "Prostitutes as a Threat to National Honor in Habsburg-Occupied Serbia during the Great War," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 2 (2011): 314.

[22] Maren Röger and Emmanuel Debruyne, "From Control to Terror: German Prostitution Policies in Eastern and Western European Territories during both World Wars," *Gender & History* 28, no. 3 (2016): 689.

[23] Serpil Atamaz, "Call to the Rescue: World War I through the Eyes of Women," in *War and Collapse: World War I and the Ottoman State*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and Feroz Ahmad (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015), 419.

[24] Abidin Ege, *Çanakkale, Irak ve İran Cephelerinden Harp Günlükleri* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010), 38.

[25] Neriman Açıkalın, "Fuhuş Pazarında Sermaye Olmak: Mersin Örneği," *Çalışma ve Toplum* 38, no. 3 (2013): 254–55. Ahmet Emin (Yalman) adds that in 1917, the hospital for prostitutes infected with venereal disease admitted 2,512 women, 1,416 of whom were Muslim. In 1918 at the same hospital, of 2,841 visitors, 1,675 were Muslim. Ahmet Emin (Yalman), *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1930), 244.

between October 1920 and May 1921, the American sociologist Clarence Richard Johnson, who taught at Robert College in Istanbul, estimated that there were between 4,000 and 4,500 prostitutes working in the capital, with 159 houses of ill repute in the Galata and Pera districts alone.[26]

In the late nineteenth century, European prostitutes often traveled to the Middle East and North Africa to escape poverty and to seek better economic opportunities. This increased the number of sex workers in the Ottoman Empire, particularly in Istanbul.[27] The phenomenon of prostitute migration was also a cause for concern in the other belligerent nations of World War I.[28] Europeans decrying the "white slave trade" told stories of women who had been transported to Istanbul on the pretense of receiving employment in the home of a wealthy *paşa* (an honorary title given to high-ranking political or military officials), only to be sent to brothels instead.[29] The economic aftermath of the 1917 Russian Revolution also swelled the number of Russian prostitutes who migrated to Istanbul. According to the British Foreign Office, by 1921 there were 169 Russian prostitutes registered with the Allied Police Bureau, most of whom listed unemployment and famine as their reasons for working as prostitutes.[30]

For hardline members of the CUP, who were led by the Ottoman minister of war, Enver Paşa, war was a remedy for solving political problems.[31] The state, he argued, should assume the role of a "social physician" and cure society's ills.[32] Enver painted the struggle against social problems as a domestic war against elements within the empire that threatened the CUP's vision of a postwar Turkish Muslim sovereign state. Efforts to purge the

[26] Clearance Richard Johnson, *Constantinople To-Day Or, the Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople: A Study in Oriental Social Life* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922), 358–59.

[27] Mark David Wyers, *"Wicked Istanbul": The Regulation of Prostitution in the Early Turkish Republic* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 91; Liat Kozma, "Women's Migration for Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East and North Africa," *Journal of Women's History* 28, no. 3 (2016): 93–113.

[28] On Russia, see Laura Engelstein, "Morality and the Wooden Spoon: Russian Doctors View Syphilis, Social Class, and Sexual Behavior, 1890–1905," *Representations* 14 (1986): 169–208; and on Austria-Hungary, see Nancy Wingfield, "The Enemy Within: Regulating Prostitution and Controlling Venereal Disease in Cisleithanian Austria during the Great War," *Central European History* 46, no. 3 (2013): 568–98.

[29] Franz Janisch reported an incident from 1910 when German sailors came across such women after their ship landed in Istanbul and were able to appeal to the German consulate for assistance. Franz Janisch, "Der Mädchenhandel und seine internationale gesetzliche Bekämpfung," *Archiv für Rechts- und Wirtschaftsphilosophie* 7, no. 2 (1914): 305–6.

[30] Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office to the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, 31 December 1921, 3AMS/B/14/04, Women's Library, London School of Economics.

[31] Hans-Lukas Kieser, "Modernisierung und Gewalt in der Gründungsepoche des türkischen Nationalstaats (1913–1938)," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 57, no. 3 (2006): 162.

[32] M. Talha Çiçek, *War and State Formation in Syria: Cemal Pasha's Governorate during World War I, 1914–17* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 17.

home front of immorality arose from related political motivations aimed at altering the demography of the empire.[33] Indeed, the CUP viewed wartime as the perfect opportunity to implement the radical changes it considered necessary in order to create a modern state that was capable of defending itself.[34]

Government concern with the impact of public morals and health on soldiers' willingness to fight and their effectiveness in battle was not unique to the Ottoman Empire, as research on Austria-Hungary has shown.[35] As in the Habsburg Empire, the specific definition of morality under the CUP was less concerned with individuals' private conduct than with the deleterious effects of their public behavior on order, safety, and concepts of decency within the larger community.[36] In this sense, a moral crime in the eyes of the Ottoman government and military was one that had the potential effect of harming the war effort; public order and public morality were regarded primarily as military problems. For example, in response to a report that a man named Salih was having illicit relations with the female relatives of military members and was driving others into prostitution, the Third Army reminded the War Ministry in 1917 in no uncertain terms that anyone carrying out military service needed to be free from "any sort of anxiety" related to family bonds, which were among "the most sacred and the most blessed" of all relationships. Soldiers, moreover, needed to be reassured that in their absence the government would protect the honor of their families, preventing people like Salih from "trampling upon the honor" of deployed soldiers' families.[37] Public morality was thus understood to be one of the pillars upon which the preservation of the empire rested. In order to field an army of soldiers willing to fight for the empire, the Ottoman military believed that its soldiers needed to be assured of the sanctity of their families' honor.

Deportations as Policy before World War I

Deportation was the preferred method of addressing sex work during World War I. The policy had an established precedent in the long history of Islamic jurisprudence, and it fulfilled the strategic needs of a twentieth-century military. In Islamic legal practice, Muslims who had committed *zina* (fornication) could be subject to exile. *Zina* was one of the five *hadd* crimes—crimes that the Quran describes as offenses against God—and it

[33] Kieser, *Talaat Pasha*, 13.

[34] Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13–14.

[35] Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution*, 214.

[36] Ayşe Polat, "Subject to Approval: Sanction and Censure in Ottoman Istanbul (1889–1923)" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2015), 294.

[37] Transcript of a letter from the Third Army to the War Ministry, 8 January 1917, DH.EUM.ADL 32/28, BOA.

was punished with flogging, beating, or even capital punishment.[38] Two of the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence, the Shafi'is and the Hanafis, tended to impose banishment rather than corporal punishment when individuals were found guilty of *zina*.[39] Although the four schools, which emerged in the ninth and tenth centuries, can have differing views on legal questions, they accept each other's rulings as valid. Since *zina* incorporated virtually all forms of nonmarital sex, prostitution was a subset of the crime and likely included a small but not insignificant number of convictions. A preference for exile also informed nineteenth-century Ottoman law concerning prostitution. In 1859 Grand Vizier Ali Paşa issued an edict stipulating a period of either forty-eight hours to three months in prison or three to six months of exile as a punishment for those convicted of prostitution.[40]

During World War I residents of Ottoman towns and cities were therefore aware that deporting prostitutes was a viable option for dealing with the prevalence of sex work. For example, in June 1918 a resident of Konya petitioned the Interior Ministry to deport the prostitutes who worked in the local brothel, arguing that since the governor had opened the brothel in 1916, the town had witnessed an escalation of indecent behavior. The petition warned that "circumstances that will completely destroy public morality beyond recovery" were emerging. Young people, the petitioner alleged, were selling their parents' possessions and committing theft to fund their visits to the brothel. As a result, "a state of affairs that will corrupt family order" was engendering an atmosphere of "disrespect [and] disobedience" between parents and children. The only solution was to send the prostitutes into exile until they had "reformed themselves" (ıslah-ı nefs edinceye kadar).[41]

The gendered nature of exile also has a longer history. Liat Kozma refers to the creation of "boundaries of respectability," when neighborhoods in nineteenth-century Ottoman Egypt organized efforts to keep respectable women away from brothels and to bar prostitutes from entering respectable neighborhoods.[42] Elyse Semerdjian notes the communal nature of

[38] The other four *hadd* crimes were false allegations of *zina*, theft, drinking alcohol, and highway robbery. Some jurists included apostasy as a sixth *hadd* crime.

[39] Patricia L. Khleif, "'There Goes the Neighborhood!': Sexuality and Society in Seventeenth-Century Kayseri," *Arab Studies Journal* 6/7, no. 2/1 (Fall 1998 / Spring 1999): 132. Başak Tuğ points to a court case in the eighteenth century in which two women who had committed fornication in Istanbul were sentenced to banishment to Bursa, but only after this punishment had been ratified by the central government. The judge notified the Imperial Council of his decision, and the council subsequently ordered Bursa officials to settle the women as "exiles." Başak Tuğ, "Politics of Honor: The Institutional and Social Frontiers of 'Illicit' Sex in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Anatolia" (PhD diss., New York University, 2009), 149–50.

[40] Kemal Yakut and Aydın Yetkin, "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Toplumsal Ahlâk Bunalımı: Fuhuş Meselesi," *Kebikeç* 31 (2011): 276.

[41] Petition to the Interior Ministry, 17 June 1918, DH.EUM.6.ŞB 42/52, BOA.

[42] Liat Kozma, *Policing Egyptian Women: Sex, Law, and Medicine in Khedival Egypt* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 79. Also see Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime & Punishment in Istanbul, 1700–1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 86–111.

seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cases of banishment in her study of Ottoman Aleppo. Entire neighborhoods sometimes brought cases to court against prostitutes or procurers in order to have them removed from the neighborhood.[43] The male patrons of prostitutes could also be taken to court by their neighbors, which could result in flogging or exile.[44]

Respectability was both a gendered and a classed concept. Ottoman urban centers in the nineteenth century were flooded with manumitted slaves and migrants from rural areas. Women the locals considered disreputable were thus often those who had resorted to prostitution because they had no alternative means of sustenance, and many of them were freed slaves, immigrants, widows, or divorcees. These women had lost their social support systems; they could no longer rely on husbands, slave owners, or other patrilineal ties to protect them from destitution. These forms of male protection were particularly important in rural areas, because women had few avenues for employment on their own.[45] Definitions of respectability also depended upon a specific vocabulary to describe the sexual purity of women. Whereas an unrespectable man generally earned the label after repeated criminal activity, for a woman, any kind of sexual misconduct, such as interaction with nonrelated men or work as a public performer, could brand a woman as unrespectable, even if she did not engage in prostitution.[46]

Although these categories of respectability had been in use since the eighteenth century, during World War I local enforcement was replaced by CUP administrative structures that gave the central government in Istanbul much wider authority to morally police the population. Barely four months after the failed 1909 countercoup, when disenfranchised military officers failed in their attempt to revoke the 1908 Ottoman constitution and to reinstall the sultan, the CUP established the Public Security Directorate (Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdiriyeti), which was designed to consolidate policing power in the CUP's own hands. The directorate replaced the Police Ministry (Zabtiye Nezareti) and reported directly to the Interior Ministry.[47] With branches across Ottoman territory that were subjected to the authority of the Istanbul-based Interior Ministry, the directorate gave the central government greater authority over policing in the provinces.[48] Indeed, the Interior Ministry claimed authority over the maintenance of public order and security in all Ottoman territories.[49]

[43] Elyse Semerdjian, *"Off the Straight Path": Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 118.

[44] Semerdjian, 128.

[45] Kozma, *Policing Egyptian Women*, 95–96.

[46] Kozma, 80–81.

[47] Kent Schull, *Prisons in the Late Ottoman Empire: Microcosms of Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 51.

[48] Halim Teyfik Alyot, *Türkiye'de Zabıta: Tarih Gelişim ve Bugünkü Durum* (Istanbul: Kannat Basımevi, 1947), 489.

[49] Ferdan Ergut, *Modern Devlet ve Polis: Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Toplumsal Denetimin Diyalektiği* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 196–97.

At the beginning of its rule, the CUP focused on combatting violent crime in Istanbul and on maintaining law and order in order to underline the political legitimacy of an empire at war.[50] In 1911 the General Police Directorate of Istanbul was also placed under the direct authority of the Interior Ministry, highlighting the central government's focus on public security in the capital. Since Istanbul was the administrative and political capital of the empire, any public perception of unchecked crime and violence in the capital would have had catastrophic effects on the CUP's reputation early in its rule.[51] During the war, the Public Security Directorate and the Interior Ministry amassed even greater powers and acquired nearly unlimited discretionary power to enact policies concerning public security.[52] The American ambassador, Henry Morgenthau, noted that Police Commissioner Bedri Bey's efforts to suppress the trafficking of women had had the effect of expanding the powers of the Istanbul police: "He took advantage of the peculiar state of affairs that had made him the Law, personified, and profiting by the knowledge and expertise of public spirited men who have been watching the situation closely, eagerly waiting an opportunity to find the means of stopping this curse, [he] once and for all, stepped boldly in and secured the city."[53] The regulation of sexuality was one area that Ottoman officials targeted with their powers over policing, and they developed task forces designed specifically to monitor and control sexual behavior. In 1909 the Public Security Directorate established the Morality Police (Zabita-ı Ahlakiye), whose duties involved documenting the women who worked in brothels, preventing women infected with venereal diseases from working in brothels, and treating venereal disease patients.[54] Once the war began, the Morality Police was further charged with the task of pursuing those suspected of involvement in the trafficking of prostitutes to Istanbul.[55] The organization also operated a school designed to teach prostitutes skills like sewing and tailoring, with which they could earn an alternative source of income.[56] The Istanbul police believed that the root causes of prostitution were poverty and obstacles to employment, and they endeavored to redirect prostitutes toward what the police considered more honorable work.[57]

[50] Noémi Lévy-Aksu, "A Capital Challenge: Managing Violence and Disorders in Late Ottoman Istanbul," in *Urban Violence in the Middle East: Changing Cityscapes in the Transformation from Empire to Nation State*, ed. Ulrike Freitag, Nelida Fuccaro, Nora Lafi, and Claudia Ghrawi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 59.

[51] Dölek Sever, *Istanbul's Great War*, 112.

[52] Sever, 338.

[53] Morgenthau to Bryan, 24 March 1915.

[54] Yakut and Yetkin, "II. Meşrutiyet," 283.

[55] Paul Mulzer, "Bericht über die sittenpolizeilichen Maßnahmen zur Regelung der Prostitution in Italien, Athen und Konstantinopel," *Dermatologische Wochenschrift* 97 (1933): 1632.

[56] İhsan Birinci, "Ahlak Zabıtasının Tarihçesi," *Hayat Tarih Mecmuası* 3, no. 11 (1967): 53.

[57] Yakut and Yetkin, "II. Meşrutiyet," 284.

Sex and Sovereignty: Reshaping the Empire through Deportations

High-ranking officials in Istanbul supported deportations to correct lapses in public order and morality. Cemal Paşa, appointed military governor of Istanbul in 1913 and later the governor of Syria in 1915, boasted in his 1922 memoir that during his term of office in Istanbul he had "proved that [he was] one of the most zealous advocates of the emancipation of women" because he believed he worked to protect Turkish women from exposure to indecent behavior.[58] This was achieved, in part, through deporting what he deemed undesirable elements in Istanbul. Cemal painted a bleak picture of early twentieth-century Istanbul, where Muslim women, even the elderly, could not walk down the streets without being subjected to harassment from men "who made indecent suggestions" or who were emboldened to make improper physical contact. Noting that the Ottoman penal code lacked sufficient punitive provisions to respond adequately to such abuse, Cemal described the measures he took: "I issued a warning that men who used insulting language and women who accosted ladies should be transported to the interior. After four or five examples had been made our women were able to walk the streets without further molestation. For the first time a definite step had been taken to place the personal freedom of Turkish women on a secure basis."[59] According to Cemal, the degeneration of public morality was "always more or less noticeable in proportion as the Government was strong or weak."[60]

Cemal's characterization speaks to the gendered nature of the perception that immoral behavior had increased during wartime, one that was common across Europe. Men were generally accused of profiteering, shirking military service, soliciting the services of prostitutes, drunkenness, and violent behavior, while the women's behavior was typically coded as laxity of sexual morals, particularly as manifested in illegal prostitution, the operation of brothels, and the sale of children into prostitution.[61] Solicitation of prostitutes damaged the idealized image of "Little Mehmet," a term popularized in official Ottoman war propaganda and similar to the British Tommy Boy or the French Poilu.[62] The image of the prostitute was contrasted with Ottoman Muslim women who were "angels of charity": nurses and charity organizers and supporters. One Baghdad newspaper in 1915, for example, stressed the "silent, quiet way in which women work in wartime to help."[63] Official discourse concentrated on the contributions

[58] Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman 1913–1919* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), 17–18.

[59] Pasha, 17.

[60] Pasha, 17.

[61] Wingfield, *The World of Prostitution*, 211.

[62] Yiğit Akın, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 83.

[63] Translation of *Zuhur,* no. 587, 20 April 1915, Türkei 167/R 13903, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin.

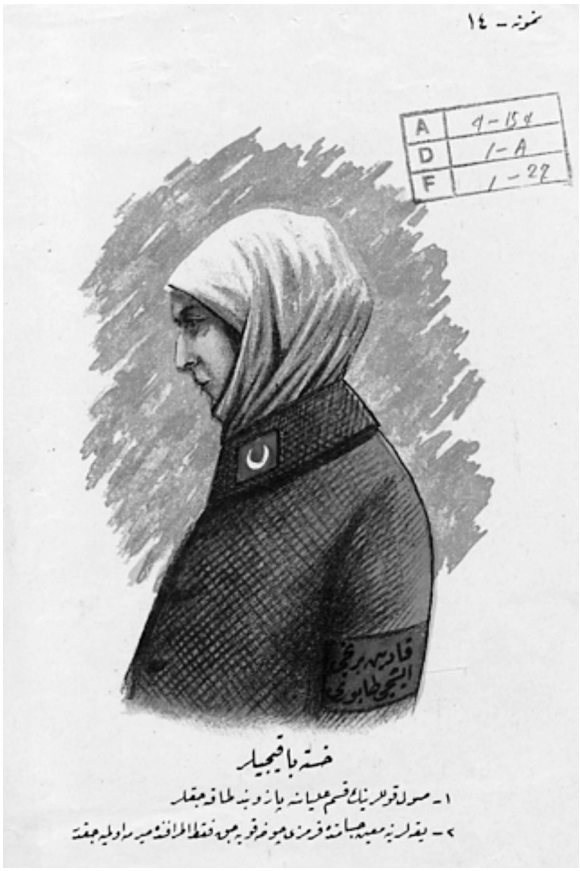

Figure 2. Rendering of a female nurse, 2518/14-1/27, BDH Collection, T. C. Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Arşivi, Ankara.

of upper-class women and their voluntary contributions to the war effort, and it elided the economic impact of the war for the majority of Ottoman women, who suffered economic privation and were forced to rely on state support systems.[64]

In order to combat the perceived increase in moral laxity during the war and redirect women toward officially sanctioned wartime activities, state organizations like the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women (Osmanlı Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi) established branches in Beyoğlu, Sultanahmet, and Üsküdar,[65] the neighborhoods of

[64] Akın, "The Ottoman Ordeal," 118–19.
[65] Yakut and Yetkin, "II. Meşrutiyet," 285.

Istanbul that had the most brothels in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[66] These neighborhoods had such a reputation for immorality that it was dangerous for respectable women to be seen in them. In a fictional story published in the journal *Türk Kadını* (Turkish woman) in 1918, the relationship between a deployed soldier and his wife is strained, and he suspects her of infidelity just because she was seen on the streets of Beyoğlu.[67]

Exile as a policy served a practical function in that many sex workers were deported under the auspices of administrative authority as opposed to by a trial, allowing military authorities more latitude to act independently of other institutions.[68] Deportations of sex workers thus continued to uphold the boundaries of gendered respectability established in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the central government played a much greater role in this enforcement. An article in the newspaper *Stamboul* in 1876 described how the Justice Ministry had ordered the arrest and deportation of enough foreign prostitutes such that "two boats were packed" with them. The measure was taken to remove prostitutes who, the newspaper claimed, "congregated in the revolting neighborhoods of Galata" in order to "root out" the "disgraceful trade." Great Power consuls objected, however, causing the plan to be aborted.[69] Due to the Capitulations, imbalanced treaties between the Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers that granted some European citizens extraterritorial rights and reduced taxation, Ottoman authorities were unable to enter foreign-owned brothels to determine the registration and medical status of prostitutes working there. The Capitulations were originally granted from a position of Ottoman economic and geopolitical strength in the sixteenth century, but over time they became a foothold for the expansion of European extraterritoriality in the empire, as European countries were able to dictate the terms of the agreements. Part of the set of extraterritorial rights that European countries enjoyed was the ability to establish consular courts that had jurisdiction over their citizens living in the empire. Foreign brothel owners and prostitutes thus enjoyed special legal protections.[70] Individuals facing arrest by either the Ottoman

[66] Müge Özbek, "The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu (1875–1915)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 5 (2010): 563–64.

[67] Birsen Talay Keşoğlu, "Son Dönem Osmanlı'da Türk Kimliğinin Oluşturulmasında Kadın Biçilen Roller: Milliyetçilik ve Türk Kadını," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 11 (2010): 147.

[68] Oğuz, "The Struggle," 123.

[69] Quoted in *Bulletin Continental,* no. 5, 15 May 1882.

[70] Wyers, *"Wicked Istanbul,"* 87. For example, when a prostitute named Marika, whose citizenship was a matter of dispute, got into a fight with another resident of a brothel in Beyoğlu, the Russian Consulate sent two agents to forcibly remove her, injuring another worker in the brothel when a dispute broke out. The Ottoman police criticized the methods of the Russian agents, arguing that such an investigation was the rightful task of the police and that the Russians were overstepping their authority. They requested that the Interior Ministry take steps to dissuade the Russian Consulate from taking similar measures again in the future. See Istanbul Public Prosecutor's Office to the Interior Ministry, 3 January 1913, DH.H 64/40-2, BOA.

government or a foreign consul at times skirted punishment by obtaining passports from a different country and claiming protection under their new citizenship, further hampering Ottoman policing.[71] Some local residents also bemoaned what they perceived to be inadequate official measures to limit prostitution. A petition from inhabitants of Kastamonu, for example, claimed that prostitutes were arrested repeatedly by the police, but their morals never improved, and they would immediately return to prostituting themselves upon release from prison.[72]

As the war drew closer, the Ottomans began to take more resolute measures with foreign representatives and other foreigners residing in Istanbul. On 26 March 1914 the Ottoman Foreign Ministry demanded that "in the interest of public health" state medical examiners should be given access to the brothels owned by Austro-Hungarian subjects and that regardless of whether or not the brothels were registered with the government they should be "subject to continuous surveillance."[73] By June Austro-Hungarian Embassy officials had replied, indicating that while they appreciated the concerns related to "hygiene and public order that inspired this request," they would allow access only to state doctors and only in cases where the Ottoman government had previously informed the consulate that the establishment in question was a brothel operated by Austrian or Hungarian subjects.[74] Along with policies that regulated travel and the movements of foreigners, this measure was part of a broader effort to define and limit the privileges of foreigners in the Ottoman Empire during World War I.[75]

After the Ottoman entrance into the First World War and the unilateral abolition of the Capitulations on 9 September 1914, a move designed to remove constraints on Ottoman wartime policy making,[76] the CUP government was emboldened to carry out more aggressive actions and argued that the maintenance of social order was necessary if the empire were to survive the war. Deportations of prostitutes and accused traffickers, most of whom were in Istanbul, began in earnest in 1915. A 21 October 1916 order from the Interior Ministry to the Istanbul Police Directorate stipulated that non-Ottoman citizens who were accused of participating in "white female trafficking" (beyaz kadın ticareti) were to be deported from the empire, while Ottoman citizens were to be "transported to interior provinces."[77]

[71] Wyers, *"Wicked Istanbul,"* 88–89.

[72] Petition to the Interior Ministry, 22 September 1918, DH.EUM.6.ŞB 46/31, BOA.

[73] Transcript of a notice delivered to the Austro-Hungarian Embassy, 26 March 1914, F 52/47366, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna.

[74] Transcript of a notice to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, 9 June 1914, F 52/47366, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna.

[75] Sever, *Istanbul's Great War*, 197–210.

[76] On the abrogation of the Capitulations, see Feroz Ahmad, "Ottoman Perceptions of the Capitulations, 1800–1914," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, no. 1 (2000): 1–20.

[77] The language of the order can be found in Istanbul Police Directorate to the Interior Ministry, 21 October 1916, DH.EUM.ADL 49/20, BOA. Individuals could be deported

"Utmost Misery and Distress": Deportations in Practice

The Istanbul police often justified the deportations by arguing that they were for the "preservation of public morality," upon which public security and order were dependent.[78] Individuals who took part in other actions deemed injurious to public morality also sometimes faced deportation. On 18 June 1917 the governor of Hüdavendigar province wrote to the Fifth Army Command regarding a woman named Terliyeli Mariodiçe bint Kastanti, who was working as an unlicensed midwife in Bursa and who "brought a number of soldiers' families to various locations and incited them to vice." The police decided to deport her, and the governor requested that she first be transported to a town called Seküd while a decision about her permanent resettlement was made.[79] Mariodiçe's case also fell under the jurisdiction of a 1915 regulation that made all ranks of medical personnel, including midwives, responsible for reporting cases of syphilis to higher-ranking medical and military authorities.[80] Under Ottoman logic, her failure to adhere to these regulations posed a threat to the war effort and made her subject to deportation.[81] Another case involved a man named Ali, who had escaped from prison and had formed an armed band of robbers around Bursa in the middle of 1917. Two women, his sister Fatima and the wife of another man from their village who was also named Fatima, were accused of "harboring Ali and giving him guidance" and were deported.[82]

Prostitutes were, however, the main targets of Ottoman deportations that resulted from a concern over public morality. Although Muslim women

from Istanbul either with or without an order from the Ottoman Courts-Martial. See Public Security Directorate memorandum, 4 March 1916, DH.EUM.ADL 28/38, BOA. The Istanbul police made plans to deport non-Ottoman citizen prostitutes from "enemy nations" by way of Bulgaria in May 1915 and requested that the Interior Ministry obtain approval from the Bulgarian government. See Istanbul Police Directorate to the Interior Ministry, 5 May 1915, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 24/3, BOA. Some non-Ottoman citizens were deported to the interior provinces before being sent out of the country; one such Bulgarian citizen was sent to Ankara before leaving for Bulgaria. See telegraph from Talaat to the governor of Ankara, 31 August 1915, DH.ŞFR 55A-9, BOA.

[78] Istanbul Police Directorate to the Interior Ministry, 14 June 1915, DH.EUM.ADL 12/31, BOA.

[79] Governor of Hüdavendigar to the Fifth Army Command, 18 June 1917, 3452/76/13 BDH Collection, ATASE. According to Şemseddin Sami's *Kamus'ül Alam*, Seküd was one hundred kilometers southeast of Bursa. On the issue of state surveillance of midwives, see Tuba Demirci and Selçuk Akşın Somel, "Women's Bodies, Demography, and Public Health: Abortion Policy and Perspectives in the Ottoman Empire of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 3 (2008): 399–400.

[80] Seçil Yılmaz, "Threats to Public Order and Health: Mobile Men as Syphilis Vectors in Late Ottoman Medical Discourse and Practice," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 13, no. 2 (2017): 234–35.

[81] A law was passed in 1921 prohibiting unlicensed doctors from treating venereal disease in Turkey. See Mulzer, "Bericht" 1632.

[82] Governor of Aydın to the Fifth Army Command, 13 June 1917, 3452/76/16, BDH Collection, ATASE.

were forbidden by Islamic law to work as prostitutes, during World War I Muslim women were issued licenses by the police directorate to work as prostitutes in order to better monitor their health and prevent the spread of venereal disease. A woman named Mari bint Andon was deported from Istanbul to Konya in 1917 by the military government because she had clandestinely admitted Muslim women into her home, outfitted them with hats, and then acted as a mediator to prostitute them to strangers.[83] In 1918 a woman named Harope petitioned the Interior Ministry after she and several other women had been deported from Galata to Ankara for having operated an illegal brothel. "With the aim of procuring a profit," she had converted to Islam and then apostatized several times, giving rise to "much harm."[84] As was the case with Mariodiçe, women like Mari and Harope could face deportation for a failure to adhere to regulations, in this case, prostituting unlicensed Muslim women. The fact that she was assisting Muslim women in particular to prostitute themselves, along with her multiple conversions, was also a source of ire for Ottoman officials. As seen above, Muslim prostitutes clashed with the image of Muslim women as patriotic supporters of male soldiers in official Ottoman discourse.

Deportations often caused extreme disruption to the economic livelihood of entire families. A Jewish woman named Dina was deported from Istanbul to Kayseri, while her husband was sent to Sivas, due to their alleged involvement in the "white slave trade." In a letter dated 21 March 1916 Dina's brother petitioned the Public Security Directorate on her behalf, requesting that she be allowed to return to Istanbul and arguing that she was an "honorable woman."[85] The Istanbul police denied his request, however, leaving Dina alone in Kayseri.[86] The decision of the Istanbul police to remove Dina from male financial support systems would have only made it more likely that she would resort to prostitution in Kayseri, undercutting the Ottomans' reasoning for ordering deportations. Women were also separated from their children as a result of the deportation policy. Marika Delamiçe was an Ottoman citizen who was deported by military authorities to Konya on 16 April 1917 for inviting Muslim women to her home and encouraging them to prostitute themselves to foreign men. In March 1918 her children sent a petition to the Interior Ministry seeking their mother's return:

[83] Istanbul Police Directorate to the Interior Ministry, 17 June 1917, DH.EUM.3.ŞB 22/15, BOA.

[84] Istanbul Police Directorate to the Interior Ministry, 14 July 1918, DH.EUM.2.ŞB 60/62, BOA. Another prostitute named Tartik from the town of Malkara had attempted to convert to Islam, but her request was denied on the grounds of her profession. See governor of Edirne to the Interior Ministry, 8 January 1917, DH.EUM.2.ŞB 33/26, BOA.

[85] Petition to the Public Security Directorate, 21 March 1916, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 22/47, BOA.

[86] Istanbul Police Directorate to the Interior Ministry, 2 April 1916, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 22/47, BOA.

> Even if it can be assumed and accepted that the act was committed, would a mother not have drawn a moral of renewal [*intibah*] from enduring a lasting punishment of one year of deprivation of happiness and tranquility and the deprivation of the lone members of her family, like your humble servants, two helpless and orphaned children, one of whom is a sixteen-year-old girl and the other a twelve-year-old boy? And isn't her renewal the aim of the punishment ordered by the government, that she be expelled and banished from her homeland to another area? And would [granting her] request for forgiveness after her departure to Konya not help her achieve this renewal?[87]

The children described their mother as "our sole protector" and asked that her sentence be pardoned so that she could return to them. In this sense, deportations had the effect of sinking vulnerable populations deeper into poverty, making it far less likely that women with few other employment opportunities would leave prostitution. Dina, Marika, and Marika's children all lacked opportunities for employment and support systems from the state and their families, from whom they were separated. When Marika was deported from the capital, her children were left to fend for themselves, and Dina was separated from her male relatives and lacked employment prospects outside prostitution.[88]

Deportees, many of whom were non-Turkish and non-Muslim, also complained about the severing of their religious and national connections. Prior to the outbreak of the Balkan Wars in October 1912, most prostitutes who worked in Istanbul were foreigners. Petitions from such women speak to the uneven experiences of deportation for those who were expelled from Istanbul depending on religion, ethnicity, and nationality. The sources indicate that separation from families and male support systems was a common experience across ethnic lines. Deported sex workers who were not Ottoman Muslims were often already living apart from their families, but they faced additional burdens after deportation. Two Russian Jewish women who had been deported from Galata to Kayseri, for example, sent a letter to the Interior Ministry in July 1916 complaining that Kayseri lacked a rabbi to lead their religious services and that there were no other Jews in the town, which was adding to their "utmost misery and distress." They argued that "Jews taking shelter in the dominion of Islam such as us" should not have to endure such abject conditions, and they requested

[87] Petition to the Interior Ministry, 3 March 1918, DH.EUM.3.ŞB 25/53, BOA. The Istanbul police inquired of the Interior Ministry whether or not there were objections to Marika returning, but the dossier does not contain a response from the Interior Ministry.

[88] Metinsoy points to a similar instance in 1917, when a young girl named Saniha was forced to remain in Istanbul to work in a workshop after she petitioned to visit her mother, who had been deported to Ankara for engaging in prostitution. The Ottoman government claimed that the mother was likely to force Saniha into prostitution. See Metinsoy, *Ottoman Women*, 143–44.

to be allowed to either return to Istanbul or relocate to a neighborhood in Konya, where they could live within a Jewish community.[89]

Similarly, a Romanian woman named Sabina wrote on behalf of herself and other Romanian women who had been transported from Istanbul to Bursa in late 1915. She explained that they had initially been able to scrape by financially by selling their own "clothes and other such things," but because they knew no one in Bursa who could offer them employment and had no other means of making a living, they had run out of things to sell by December 1917 and were living in a state of impoverishment.[90] It was not until 14 November 1918 that the Fifth Branch Office of the Public Security Directorate requested that the government find money to help the women with their living expenses, nearly eleven months after their petition.[91]

Deported foreigners also struggled to integrate linguistically. The governor of Ankara complained to the Interior Ministry that Istanbul transported two "jobless and moneyless" Russians named Anna and Fişel to Ankara in December 1914. Ankara was chosen as their destination due in part to the fact that there was no railroad route from Ankara back to Istanbul, thereby preventing them from returning clandestinely. The two had been deported for working in brothels and for vagabondage, and they apparently spoke Russian, German, and some Arabic but no Turkish, hindering their integration and employment prospects in the Turkish-speaking village.[92] That Anna and Fişel were sent to a relatively isolated town in Anatolia with few possibilities for integration and employment suggests that it was quite likely that deported women would have had to turn to prostitution after their relocations. The Ottoman policy, in other words, was destined to increase rather than decrease the likelihood that poor women would resort to prostitution.

Many other deportees petitioned the government for permission to return to Istanbul, and their requests were typically denied. Even in cases where women were allowed to return to their homelands, because of the proliferation of armed groups of deserted soldiers across Anatolia, land travel was quite dangerous.[93] Women would sometimes request that they be allowed to be accompanied during their deportations by their husbands

[89] Petition to the Interior Ministry, 12 July 1916, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 27/46, BOA.

[90] Petition to the Public Security Directorate, 23 December 1917, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 53/11, BOA.

[91] Public Security Directorate to the War Ministry, 14 November 1918, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 53/11, BOA.

[92] Governor of Ankara to the Interior Ministry, 14 December 1914, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 9/26, BOA. A petition from deported women themselves who complained about their inability to find work after their removal from Istanbul can be found in the petition to the Interior Ministry, 6 March 1916, DH.EUM.ADL 12/31, BOA.

[93] Mehmet Beşikçi, "When a Military Problem Became a Social Issue: Ottoman Desertions and Deserters in World War I," in Yavuz and Ahmad, *War and Collapse*, 480–91.

and other male members of their family.[94] The Ottoman government endeavored to closely monitor the movements of the population, especially transient groups, during World War I. Prostitutes were prime targets of such monitoring due in part to their ability to carry venereal disease across Ottoman territory.[95] Men and women who had been deported and needed to seek medical care for venereal disease or other inflictions often faced both stiff opposition from Ottoman bureaucrats and logistical obstacles. In September 1915, for example, a man named Savoman and his wife, who had been deported to Kayseri for involvement in female trafficking, were granted permission to return to Istanbul for one month in order to obtain medical treatment for her. The Istanbul police, however, questioned the wife's need for treatment and demanded that the couple be sent to Ankara or Konya instead.[96] The Interior Ministry agreed and granted them permission to seek medical treatment in either Ankara or Konya, but a statement barring their return to Istanbul was stamped on their travel permit.[97] This case reflects both the importance of Istanbul in the eyes of Ottoman officials and the desire to shield the capital from any further outbreaks of disease. This concern reached even the highest levels of the Ottoman military. On 4 May 1918 Enver Paşa complained bitterly to the Interior Ministry that ten female sex workers who had been deported from Istanbul to Hüdavendigar province had returned without permission. As a result, the women were ordered deported again, but this time to different areas within Hüdavendigar. The military made it clear that the women would not be allowed to return without the express permission of the relevant authorities and that lower-level officials who allowed such women to return without a permit could expect "severe legal proceedings" against them.[98]

Corrupt officials and soldiers were, at times, reprimanded for their insubordination. In his memoirs Talaat described how in 1915 he took action against "unscrupulous [and] immoral" public officials and military authorities who had committed abuses, focusing mainly on issues related to wartime profiteering and personal financial gain. He claimed that he formed four investigative task forces from members of the Council of State and the appellate courts, known as the Mazhar Commission, and sent them to Anatolia to dismiss officials committing such abuses and bring them before

[94] In the case of women who were deported from Syria to Gümüşhacıköy in Amasya province, for example, they requested that men be allowed to escort them as far as Adana when they returned to Syria. See telegraph to the Interior Ministry, 8 January 1918, DH.EUM.4.ŞB 19/30, BOA.

[95] Yılmaz, "Threats," 237.

[96] Governor of Kayseri to the Interior Ministry, 19 September 1915, DH.EUM.ADL 15/10, BOA.

[97] Interior Ministry to the governor of Kayseri, 22 September 1915, DH.EUM.ADL 15/10, BOA. A similar incident can be found in governor of Kayseri to the Interior Ministry, 15 November 1916, DH.EUM.ADL 27/1, BOA.

[98] Enver to the Interior Ministry, 4 May 1918, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 64/2, BOA.

local military courts for trial.[99] Enforcement was irregular at best, however, as Talaat's investigations ignored crimes committed against Armenians entirely.[100] An Armenian woman named Gülfirar and her husband both sent telegrams to the Interior Ministry requesting that she be permitted to return to Çankırı, from where she had been deported for what she admitted was "misconduct." In an attempt to support Gülfirar's credibility, her husband made reference to his four years' military service and the fact that he was currently working for a labor battalion. Gülfirar had been deported to Kastamonu province, and the deputy governor there learned from the Çankırı governorate that a major of the Kastamonu Fifth Army labor battalion, İsmail Hakkı Bey, had illegally transported her from a brothel in Kastamonu to Çankırı and that he was having "illicit relations" with her that were "injurious to the honor of the military." İsmail was summoned to the Ankara military court, while Gülfirar was taken back to Kastamonu because she had left for Çankırı without permission, even though she claimed that she was taken against her will.[101] The sources do not indicate whether or not İsmail was punished by the military courts.

"Without Recourse to Any Foresight": Provincial Disputes

Local officials in the areas receiving the deportees often lodged complaints with the Interior Ministry, the Istanbul police, and other local leaders over financial, logistical, and security concerns. A lack of communication and coordination between Istanbul and the Anatolian provinces also proved vexing for local administrators. They complained that, contrary to the goal of protecting public order, the resettlement of prostitutes only exacerbated social problems. On 7 March 1917 the governor of Niğde wrote bitterly to the Interior Ministry that a number of prostitutes had been deported mainly from Kayseri due to the accusation that they had "corrupted local morals, and, as a result, with consideration toward effecting a change and restoring public order, they were deported to Niğde." The letter remonstrated against the deportations, arguing that "this deportation cannot by any means be an effective remedy for the betterment of morals." The governor's grievances stemmed from the fact that deportation was ordered "without recourse to any foresight" about whether the women would be able to find housing or jobs. He suggested that if the women were sent with guaranteed housing and employment in a factory, he would not have objected to the policy. The governor further critiqued the logic of the deportations, arguing: "What conceivable reason can be demonstrated that

[99] Alpay Kabacalı, ed., *Talât Paşa'nın Anıları* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2000), 76–77.

[100] Kieser, *Talaat Pasha*, 241.

[101] Deputy governor of Kastamonu to the Interior Ministry, 22 April 1918, DH.EUM.2.ŞB 55/19, BOA.

these types of women, who have been expelled from their homelands, will not corrupt the morals and disrupt the public order of the towns to which they go?" The governor concluded that those women for whom factory work could not be found should be "placed under the protection of their [parental] guardian or trustee."[102]

The governor of Kayseri responded close to a month later, arguing that he acted on a command from the Third Army and that women were sent to Niğde because other routes were unsafe due to their proximity to the theater of war. The police in Kayseri had made efforts to curb prostitution, but they considered these women intractable and likely to encourage "immorality . . . among the town's youth." The Kayseri governor defended the deportations, arguing that they were necessary to protect the families of deployed soldiers from exposure to what he believed was immoral behavior.[103] This letter from the Niğde governor is remarkable in a number of ways. For one, it addresses some of the most glaring problems with deportations, namely, that in the absence of institutions to dissuade women from working as prostitutes and sufficient financial assistance from the state, deportations accomplished little aside from moving the problem elsewhere. It also speaks to the lack of opportunity for low-skilled workers in the wartime economy. Institutions like the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women were inundated with applications from women seeking work; from its establishment on 14 August 1916 to 7 November 1916, the society received over fifteen thousand applications, a volume that made it impossible to find employment for all.[104] With a limited ability to assist women in finding employment, local administrators were left with few options with which they could attempt to integrate the deportees into their new towns' economies.

The Niğde governor's letter also highlights the glaring lack of financial resources to assist deported women. The First World War placed a tremendous financial strain on the Ottoman treasury. Even before 1914 the Ottoman treasury was in a precarious state; between 1911 and 1913 the empire's spending had already created a deficit of some 34 million Turkish pounds.[105] Financial woes affected civilians directly in the forms of diminished financial assistance, especially after mobilization, which was officially declared on 2 August 1914. In October 1915 the Ottoman government approved a separation allowance for families whose primary income earner had been conscripted, but provincial leaders frequently reported to Istanbul

[102] Governor of Niğde to the Interior Ministry, 7 March 1917, DH.EUM.ADL 33/23, BOA.

[103] Governor of Kayseri to the Interior Ministry, 11 April 1917, DH.EUM.ADL 33/23, BOA.

[104] Karakışla, *Women, War and Work*, 87–88.

[105] Edward Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 17.

that they could not pay the allowances in a timely manner.[106] The increasing number of families who required assistance in 1916 and 1917 stretched Ottoman finances thin.[107] These financial challenges were the background for increasingly loud disputes between the provinces about who would pay for the maintenance of deported prostitutes. The Hüdavendigar governor complained in May 1916 that his province could not cover the expenses for women deported from Istanbul to Eskişehir because they had operated a brothel without a license. The governor asked that the women be returned to Istanbul and that their transportation fees be paid by the Public Security Directorate.[108] After three weeks without a reply, the governor again wrote to the Interior Ministry, repeating his demand that the women be returned and noting that he had never been told why the women were being deported.[109] The Istanbul police responded in July clarifying the reason for the women's deportations but made no mention of expenses.[110] Both the lack of communication between provincial leaders and the dearth of necessary funding for women's living and transport expenses created an atmosphere of confusion and tension for provincial leaders. Contrary to the goal of maintaining public security throughout the empire, the deportation policy only complicated cooperation between provincial leaders and the police.

The policy also did little to reassure provincial governors that women could pursue livelihoods outside of prostitution after their relocations. A letter from the governor of Ankara dated 14 June 1915 inquired about the living expenses of a certain Asitaneli Halide, who had been deported from Istanbul for "having acted contrary to the precepts of Islam and Ottoman national manners."[111] The Istanbul police reported about two weeks later that Halide had first been punished for having visited a brothel, for which she received a one-month prison sentence. After she was released, however, she broke a window in an inn, attempted to commit suicide, and was "disturbing" to a police officer, leading to a deportation order sending her to Konya. After a short time, however, her guardian in Istanbul successfully petitioned for her return. During her return to Istanbul, it came to light that Halide had had "lighthearted relations" with the train conductors (şimendifer kondüktörleriyle münasebat-ı hiffet ü meşrabanede bulunarak), and it was

[106] Nicole van Os, "Taking Care of Soldiers' Families: The Ottoman State and the *Muinsiz Aile Maaşı*," in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775–1925*, ed. Erik Jan Zürcher (London: I. B. Tauris, 1999), 103.

[107] Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 143.

[108] Governor of Hüdavendigar to the Interior Ministry, 17 May 1916, DH.EUM.ADL 21/35, BOA.

[109] Telegraph from the governor of Hüdavendigar to the Interior Ministry, 3 June 1916, DH.EUM.ADL 21/35, BOA.

[110] Istanbul Police Directorate to the Interior Ministry, 4 July 1916, DH.EUM.ADL 21/35, BOA.

[111] Governor of Ankara to the Interior Ministry, 14 June 1915, DH.EUM.ADL 6/8, BOA.

decided that her punishments had not yielded the desired improvement to her disposition. The military authorities therefore overturned the previous decision and ruled that it was improper for Halide to return to Istanbul. This time, on 3 May 1915, she was deported to Ankara instead.[112] As was the case with Niğde's complaints about deportations, local authorities in Ankara lacked the resources to provide alternative employment or social support for women like Halide. Authorities were thus incapable of doing anything to alleviate the conditions that had led the women into the crimes for which they were being punished with deportation. It was therefore understandable that Ankara officials saw no reason to expect that the behavior of women like Halide who had no family support and no recourse to financial assistance from the state could be reformed.

Choices about where to deport women were made with an eye toward the war effort, a fact that often exacerbated the conflict between the provinces, as certain provinces like Ankara were usually earmarked as suitable destinations for strategic reasons. A woman named Eleni Margret was ordered to be deported from Istanbul to Çorum in 1917, but for reasons not made clear, she settled in Ankara instead, where she was living in "hardship." Furthermore, her "manner of dress and gait" proved to be a "distraction" to the Ankara police, a fact the deputy governor of Ankara likely emphasized to draw attention to his belief that prostitutes were hindering the maintenance of public order in his province. The deputy governor suggested that if the Istanbul police would refuse her return, Eleni should be sent to Izmir or a similar such locale instead of Ankara.[113] In June the Istanbul police responded and argued that Eleni could not be sent back either to Istanbul or to a coastal port city like Izmir, which had a much larger population of foreigners than Ankara. This was relevant because Eleni also was known to have been the mistress of a European deckhand and to have had "contact and relations with other German officers."[114] Ottoman officials evidently did not want to risk putting her into contact with foreign nationals who would be passing through cities like Izmir.

The Istanbul police also noted that because Eleni was employed as an actress, she had "close relations" with members of local theaters, who were mostly citizens of Entente countries, most likely Russian or French. The risk of her passing along information from the German and Austrian soldiers with whom she was associating was therefore a possibility; prostitutes spying or sharing information they gleaned from their clients was a

[112] Istanbul Police Directorate to the Interior Ministry, 27 June 1915, DH.EUM.ADL 6/8, BOA. Istanbul's reply made no mention of Ankara's complaint about how her living expenses were to be paid.

[113] Deputy governor of Ankara to the Interior Ministry, 24 May 1917, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 61/26, BOA.

[114] Istanbul Police Directorate to the Interior Ministry, 13 June 1917, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 61/26, BOA.

concern shared by other belligerent nations during the war as well.[115] That Izmir was a port city only exacerbated the fear of the Istanbul police that Eleni would indiscreetly pass on information that would reach Entente powers.[116] The police conceded that keeping the women in Ankara would also be untenable and suggested that they be sent to the destination that had originally been chosen for the deportation: Çorum. In addition to the financial ramifications of accepting deported sex workers, provincial leaders were cautious of accepting the burden of expending available security forces, already in scarce supply, to monitor individuals deemed potentially harmful to the war effort, placing a disproportionate burden on provinces like Ankara to accept the arrivals of deported women.

Conclusion

The deportation of sex workers in the Ottoman Empire during World War I should be viewed as part of a broader social policy seeking to engineer radical changes in the composition of Ottoman society. I suggest that the Ottoman experience in the First World War should be placed alongside the empire's European cobelligerents, which displayed a similar concern for public morals to the extent that such policies aided war aims. Ottoman political and military leaders believed that in order to preserve an empire capable of emerging victorious in modern wars, the empire needed to take measures to ensure public morality. Ottoman leaders were convinced that the willingness of soldiers to fight and their effectiveness in combat were dependent upon guarantees of their families' moral integrity. Pimps, madams, and prostitutes posed a danger to the Ottomans' goal, and using deportation as a method to mitigate the threat allowed the government and military authorities to take swift and unilateral action. The experience of those affected by deportation was often influenced by religion and nationality. Foreign women and Jewish women, for example, faced linguistic challenges and barriers to other employment opportunities in the towns and cities to which they were exiled. The lack of financial and other resources to help deported sex workers gave rise to disputes between the provinces and the central government.

After the Ottoman Empire signed the Armistice of Mudros on 30 October 1918, ending the Ottoman participation in World War I, townspeople continued to petition the government to deport prostitutes and other individuals considered to be contributing to moral collapse. As was the case during the First World War, politicians during the Armistice and

[115] Knežević, "Prostitutes," 326–27.

[116] Other examples of the Ottoman government deporting prostitutes accused of being spies can be found in Public Security Directorate to the War Ministry, 11 June 1918, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 66/48, BOA; and Public Security Directorate to the Istanbul Police Directorate, 5 February 1917, DH.EUM.5.ŞB 63/38, BOA.

after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 continued to view prostitution as a military problem necessitating military solutions, which underscored the importance of wartime policy in shaping early Turkish sexual and gender policy. In Tuzcular, a town along the Black Sea coast, for example, residents complained about a brothel for French soldiers. The soldiers had committed a number of legal infractions, and Tuzcular officials asked the Interior Ministry to order the deportation of local prostitutes to rectify the situation.[117] Parliamentarians in the nascent Grand National Assembly also attempted to curb prostitution using measures that the military had imposed during World War I to police sexuality. In July 1920 members of the assembly's Justice Committee attempted to introduce legislation that would have punished the "pimping" (kadın oynatmak ve gezdirmek) of women with hard labor, a sentence often imposed upon those convicted of sexual assault during the war. "In some places and in some neighborhoods," argued Refik Bey, who represented the town of Konya in the assembly, the "shameful habit [of pimping] has begun to be carried out in such a frightening, deplorable, and barbaric manner that . . . this situation gnaws at our social structure and brings harm to our national vitality." In his own district specifically, "beginning quite some time ago in Konya, this wicked situation persists into recent times in a very sinister manner, owing to the effects of the Great War on public morality."[118] As I have demonstrated, however, the effects of the Great War to which Refik Bey alluded were often the result of the Ottomans' own policies. The deportations of sex workers only made it more likely that these women would again turn to prostitution, given their lack of alternative forms of employment, familial support, and financial assistance, as well as local leaders who were interested most in shifting the problem elsewhere.

About the Author

Stefan Hock is a PhD candidate at Georgetown University. His current research explores the relationships between wartime policies targeting sexual behavior and sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey.

[117] Petition to the Interior Ministry, 7 October 1921, DH.EUM.AYŞ 76/89, BOA.
[118] *T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi* Devre 1, Cilt 1, İçtima Senesi 1, 13 July 1920, 295.