

Political (1897) Department.

ORDINARY MS.

G.O., No. 340

Dated 27 5- 97

W2
29/5/97

[Despatch Abstract.]

Receiving a despatch from the Secy of State
to the Govt of India forwarding copy of cer-
tain correspondence relative to the affairs
of the ancient Syrian Church in Malabar.

Note - This has to be returned to Bill file 112 11 on return.

W2
27/5/97

PRINTED IN G.O., dated

14-12-1897, No. 778

19/5/97

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

No. 1

Political,

8th April 1894.

Copy

Letter to the Govt. of India

No. 24, and enclosures.

Recd 17th
May 18th 97

Re: affairs of the Ancient Syrian
Church in Malabar.

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6011^o340 Pol 8 27/5797
India Office,
London, 8th April 1897.

Political,
No. 27.

To His Excellency The Right Honourable The Governor
General of India in Council.

MY LORD,

*Affairs of the Ancient Syrian Church in
Malabar.*

* Memorial from the Antiochian Patriarch
of the Syrian Church to the Queen, dated
the 29th September 1896.

Letter to the Antiochian Patriarch of the
Syrian Church, dated the 23rd March 1897.

Letter from Mrs. E. A. Finn to Sir A. J.
Bigge, dated the 23rd November 1896, and
enclosure.

Letter to Mrs. E. A. Finn, dated the 23rd
March 1897.

Letter from Mrs. E. A. Finn, dated the
26th March 1897.

I transmit herewith, for the information of
your Excellency's Government, copy of correspond-
ence* on the subject of representations which have
been addressed to this office relative to the affairs
of the ancient Syrian Church in Malabar.

2. You will observe that, in reply to a request
from the Antiochian Patriarch over the orthodox
Ancient Syrian Community throughout the East,
that he might be granted a firman containing all
the privileges connected with his office, &c., I have
informed His Holiness that, as Secretary of State
for India in Council, I am unable to issue the
instructions desired by him, as they would not be
in accordance with those principles of non-inter-
ference in the affairs of the Syrian Church, which
for many years the British Government have desired
to maintain. Both in British India and in the
States under the protection of Her Majesty the
Syrian Church may rely upon the maintenance of
peace and good order, and the courts of law will
not fail to grant suitable redress if it should un-
fortunately be necessary for His Holiness or any
members of his Church to appeal to them.

3. A memorial has also been addressed to Her
Majesty the Queen-Empress by the Patriarch. It
contains some general allegations of oppression and
injustice inflicted on the Syrian Christians on the
Malabar Coast of India, but the only specific
complaint relates to an order said to have been
obtained from the Madras Government by the
Resident of Travancore, for the division between
the two sections of the Syrian Community of
certain monies, or the interest accruing thereon,
which had been deposited with Government as an
endowment of the church or school at Kottayam.
To this memorial I caused a reply† to be returned
to the effect that the Government of Madras had
declined to pass such an order, but that, in any
circumstances, memorials contesting the order of a

† Letter to Mrs. E. A. Finn, dated the
23rd March 1897.

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Local Government could not be entertained by the Secretary of State in Council, unless they were submitted through the Government whose order was impugned.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient humble Servant,

(Signed) GEORGE HAMILTON.

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ENCLOSURES.

No. 1.

Antiochian Patriarch of the Syrian Church to Her Majesty the Queen-Empress.

(Translation.)

Ancient Syrian Patriarchate.

To Her Exalted Majesty the Queen of England and Empress of India, the glorious and illustrious Sultana, Victoria—may God perpetuate the throne of her sovereignty in glory and grandeur! Amen.

What I beg to represent to your sublime Government—may God preserve its greatness and glory—is as follows:—

According to ancient custom, in our noble country, the Ottoman Empire, a Patriarch who is newly appointed over any people or community whatever, has a grand "Firman" and a glorious decoration conferred on him, like his predecessors.

Accordingly, when, a year and a half ago, I attained to the rank of Patriarch, His exalted Majesty the Sultan, Abd-ul-Hamid Khan, the Second, amongst his numerous favours, bestowed on me a grand "Firman," in which were inserted all the privileges connected with our office and all the rights belonging to our supremacy, and, likewise, the highest decoration of the first class, like my predecessor; in order, thereby, to facilitate our dealings with the "Valis" and Governors in all the provinces and throughout the Imperial Ottoman Empire, and, especially, to facilitate the affairs and business, whether temporal or spiritual, of the members of our Community. And, as, with respect to the portion of our Community who are living in the countries of India, Malabar, Kotim, Cochin, and other towns and villages, under the shadow of the wing of your distinguished Government, it is requisite for me to refer to the Governors of the aforesaid places for the management of the affairs of our Community, with a view to our being known to them, under the auspices of your sublime Majesty, and our appeals to them being listened to, I request you kindly and graciously to bestow on me a distinct "Firman" in our name, containing all the privileges connected with our office and the rights belonging to our supremacy and including an explanation of our supremacy over all the Archbishops, Bishops, and spiritual heads of the clergy and all the individuals of our, Ancient Syrian, orthodox Community, and over all the monasteries and churches and their appurtenances, under the presidency of the Patriarchate of the Antiochian see, which are to be found in Malabar and the rest of the places before mentioned. We request you graciously to insert the following suggested articles and what is similar to them in the honourable "Firman," which we beg of your Majesty to bestow, as a favour, upon us, viz.:—

Control over all the monasteries and churches and their estates in mortmain, in accordance with our office and our spiritual supremacy, like our predecessors.

The dismissal and appointment of the Archbishops, and Bishops and the heads, and all classes of the clergy, and all managers of the churches and schools and monasteries, when necessary and requisite.

The supervision of the contracting of the marriage-tie and its dissolution.

The absence of opposition on the part of any individual of the Community to our spiritual duty and office.

If we should see practices on the part of any Archbishop or Bishop which are not befitting, and we dismiss him, the local Government shall recognize him as dismissed and not listen to any appeal from him, and, when, after investigation, we appoint another in his stead, the local Government shall recognize him as appointed, and, being appointed by us, shall listen to and attend to any appeal or request from him. He whom we shall accept shall be accepted and he whom we dismiss shall be dismissed. He who resists and opposes us shall be treated by the local Government in the requisite manner. If a quarrel and dispute should arise between some of the members of our Community, and they refer to the Patriarchate, the settlement of it shall pertain to us, without opposition on the part of the rulers.

No opposition to be made to the exercise of the creed of our religion, nor to the dress of the (*sic*) our spiritual body, nor to our possessing all the rights which pertain to our supremacy, according to ancient custom, like our predecessors.

When we shall pass through and travel in the countries mentioned above, for the purpose of seeing and enquiring into the circumstances of our Community, no opposition or impediment shall be put in our way, or in the way of those who may be with me, in my suite, or under my management, in any way whatever, by the officers and officials of the Imperial Government, but they shall afford us help and assistance and the necessary facilities and protection, in case of need.

No opposition to be made to us on the part of the Navy and the Customs Houses and immunity to be given us from paying Customs duties on the things with us.

On our visiting the honourable Governors and Judges in official circles, orders to be given for the registration of the "Firman" in the records of the local Governments, in order that, from whatever place we may refer to them, they may attend to our application, and give the requisite facilities.

The object we have in view in making this request is that your sublime Majesty may graciously and kindly give orders for a "Firman" being drawn up in this manner and sent to us, in order that we may be honoured by it, and in order that it may be for us like a precious jewel and a strong shield in our hands to show to the rulers of the above-mentioned countries, when that is requisite and necessary.

Likewise, we request your glorious Majesty, who is accustomed to be liberal and gracious, to do us the favour of conferring on us a proud decoration in order that we may be honoured by it amongst our fellows, and, therewith, we reiterate our prayers for the prolongation of the days of your noble Majesty's life and the extension of your renowned rule. This is the motive of our petition and the aim of our applying to the graciousness and benignity of your illustrious Majesty. May the Lord Almighty extend your reign in happiness, for ever! And it is for you to do as you think fit.

I am,
He who prays for the continuance of your reign,
IGNATIUS, ABD-UL-MESIH,
Antiochian Patriarch over the orthodox
Ancient Syrian Community throughout
the East, at the Monastery of "El
Zaferan."

(Seal of the
Ancient Syrian Patriarch.)

From the city of Diyarbekr, the 29th of September 1896.

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No. 2.

Mrs. E. A. Finn to Sir A. J. Bigge.

The Elms,
75, Brook Green, London, W.,
23rd November 1896.

Sir,

I have the honour to forward the enclosed packet, as requested by the Syrian Patriarch Ignatius Abd-el-Meseehh, who, in 1894, (succeeded?) the late Patriarch Ignatius Peter III.

The envelope has suffered somewhat in transmission by the post I regret to observe.

Lieutenant-Colonel
Sir A. J. Bigge, K.C.B., R.A.

I am, &c.,
E. A. FINN.

Enclosure in No. 2.

Antiochian Patriarch of the Syrian Church to Her Majesty
the Queen-Empress.

(Translation.)

Official Residence of the
Ancient Syrian Patriarch.

To the glorious Sultana, whose blessed, noble, and auspicious name has been spread to all countries and all places, by justice, generosity, and rectitude, the Queen of England and Empress of India, the illustrious Queen Victoria, the mine of mercy and the fountain of benevolence—may God prolong the days of her life in glory, prosperity, happiness and honour for ever! Amen.

After presenting special greetings and salutations, befitting your illustrious Royal position, together with the whole spiritual body, the heads of the clergy and all the members of our community, in various places and countries, we pray and supplicate God, with all our humble and contrite hearts, that He may give your Majesty long life, with the enjoyment of perfect health and strength, and that He may cause you to sit upon the throne of your great kingdom, victorious, prosperous and happy, and that your glorious government may be successful and fortunate, and blessed with the divine favours. May He cause all your enemies to be defeated, humiliated and overcome; may He ever enable you with His favour, to obtain victory and success, over both your hidden and open enemies! May He scatter your foes by our might and power, as violent winds scatter the dust before them! May the Lord cause all your affairs and circumstances to be attended with good, success, and good fortune, through His divine assistance, and His eternal favours! May He give special help and splendid glory to your honoured Government, your great Ministers and your gracious officials in all matters continually! May He make your troops on sea and on land fortunate and successful and victorious and triumphant over your enemies, dispelling them! May he make you firm on the throne of your sovereignty in glory and dignity and happiness and success for ever and ever! This is what we beseech God to do from the bottom of our heart, together with the clerical body and the members of our great community at the times of prayer and supplication, and at all times.

What I beg to represent to your Majesty—may God protect your honour and glory—is as follows:—

For a long time acts of oppression have been committed against the members of our community, the ancient Syrian orthodox Antiochian Church, residing and settled in the countries of India, Malabar, Kotim (Kotium), Cochin and other towns and villages included under the

shadow of your august Government, owing to their being deprived of their rights by other people. Especially, moreover, lately, we have heard that many aggressions, injuries and acts of oppression and perfidy have been committed against them by the opponents of our Church, and committed with the permission or help of some of the rulers of the above-mentioned places. In this way, also, the Judge (Governor) "Restend" (?) who was at Kotim five months ago, sought to take away the rights of our ancient community and give them to other people; and, after his departure from Kotim, he wrote to the Governor, that is to say, the great Minister, at Madras, and decided that our community should be deprived of its rights, and that they should be given to other people who have no business with them; and these doings of the aforesaid Judge involved the ruin, destruction and dispersion of the members of our community and our churches, and the taking away of all the rights of our community and their annihilation. This is contrary to justice and magnanimity, and yet these things were done although they are opposed to the justice and fairness of your sublime and compassionate Government. Amongst other things, with regard to the money in the Bank, which is specially for the administration of the school of our general community, the Society for which is organized and managed by twenty-eight members, under the presidency of the Bishop Joseph, who has the title "Mar" Dionysius, Bishop George, "Mar" Gregorius, and three other Bishops who assist them. This general, fraternal and friendly society is elected by the whole of the members of our, the Syrian, community, who are under the shadow of your sublime Government in Malabar, and from ancient times, the said money in the Bank has been given to the administration of the said school; and the heads of the said school as well as the teachers and the pupils and their parents offer up prayers for the continuance of your sublime Government in prosperity, and, other people have no right to interfere in or oppose this in any way whatever. But, now, the official, mentioned above, ordered that half of the aforesaid money in the Bank, which is specially assigned to the members of our community, shall be given to the "Believers" (?), and his object in so doing is to weaken the School of our Community and upset the rights of the members of our religion and deprive them of them and give them to other people, that is to say, to the apostates the "Believers" and to support for them a school from the funds of our community, when they have not the slightest right to interfere with the money in the Bank.

Besides the money in the Bank, above-mentioned, the members of our community and their churches and the heads thereof, in the places afore-mentioned, have certain special, sacred and well established rights, which they have possessed since ancient times, and which (have?) been decided to be theirs in the three local Governments, together with the money in the Bank on the same footing, and all this is confirmed and corroborated and entered in the Registers of the said three Governments. It is clearly proved that these rights are specially assigned and preserved to the members of our community, and, now, it is his intention to take them out of their hands. The conduct of the Judge mentioned above and other officials and oppressors is contrary to the justice of your glorious and celebrated Empire and does not agree with your holy will and your sublime wishes at all. We beg of your gracious and merciful Majesty to issue a noble official order of yours for the drawing up of official orders and decisive, stringent and clear regulations, as is necessary, addressed to all your great Ministers and noble officials, who govern the countries of India and Malabar, and to your respected Consuls in general, in order that they may preserve the rights and privileges of your servants and subjects, the members of our community, and that they may not give room for acts of oppression and perfidy being committed against them in any way whatever by our opponents, but always afford them help, succour and assistance.

Moreover, we beg you to mercifully issue an order of your sublime Government to the local official mentioned above, prohibiting and abolishing what he did which involved injury and oppression with regard to the rights of the members of our community who are under the shadow of the wing of your compassionate Government. We ask for the continuation of all the rights of our community, as they were, and their corroboration, and that the official behaviour towards us may be according to ancient custom and the perpetuation of things as they have been from of old, as that was founded on justice. This is what we request of the justice and graciousness of your celebrated Government, which is accustomed to be generous and merciful and equitable. But it is for you, to whom all commanding belongs, to act as you think fit. Considering the mercy and justice of your illustrious Government towards us, we trust firmly in God that your royal order will be issued for that being done which is required according to this petition of ours, and that the necessary firmans and commands will be written to the Ministers of State and the rulers of the above-mentioned places in accordance with our request and with justice. I hope I shall be favoured with the glad tidings of your acquiescence, by the kindness of your Government, so that my mind may be at ease.

Such is the object of our request.

May God perpetuate your glorious and illustrious Government for ever!

I am,
He who prays for the continuance of your
sublime Government,

IGNATIUS, ABD-UL-MESIH,
Orthodox Antiochian Patriarch over the
Ancient Syrian Community throughout
the East, at the "Zaferan" Monastery.

(Seal of the
Patriarch of the Ancient Syrians.)

From the town of Diyarbekr, 29th September 1896.

No. 3.

India Office to Mrs. E. A. Finn.

India Office,
23rd March 1897.
Madam,
I am directed by the Secretary of State for India in Council to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 23rd November last (to the address of Sir Arthur Bigge), and the enclosed memorial addressed to Her Majesty the Queen-Empress by Ignatius, the Patriarch at Antioch of the ancient Jacobite Church. This memorial contains some general allegations of oppression and injustice inflicted on the Syrian Christians on the Malabar coast of India, but the only specific complaint relates to an order said to have been obtained by the Resident of Travancore for the division between the two sections of the Syrian community of certain moneys, or the interest accruing thereon, which had been deposited with Government as an endowment of the church or school at Kottayam.

It has been ascertained, from the proceedings of the Madras Government, that the possibility of some such arrangement was suggested by the Resident, but that the Government did not approve of it.

I am further directed to say that, in any circumstances, the Secretary of State in Council would not entertain memorials contesting the order

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of a Local Government unless they were submitted through the Government whose order is impugned.

I have, &c.,
A. GODLEY.

Mrs. E. A. Finn.

No. 4.

India Office to the Antiochian Patriarch of the Syrian Church.

Your Holiness,
India Office,
23rd March 1897.
I have had the honour of receiving your Letter of the 29th of September in which you request that you may be granted a Firman containing all the privileges connected with your office, and the rights belonging to your supremacy, and including an explanation of your supremacy over all the Ecclesiastical Authorities, the individual members, and the property of the Syrian community in Malabar and other places specified. You indicate in detail the matters which you desire to have entered in the Firman, and express the wish that it should be registered in the records of the Indian Governments.

2. In reply, after due consideration in Council, I regret to be obliged to inform your Holiness that, as Secretary of State for India in Council, I am unable to issue the instructions desired by you, as they would not be in accordance with those principles of non-interference in the affairs of the Syrian Church which for many years the British Government have desired to maintain. Both in British India and in the States under the protection of Her Majesty, the Syrian Church may rely upon the maintenance of peace and good order, and the Courts of Law will not fail to grant suitable redress if it should unfortunately be necessary for your Holiness or any members of your Church to appeal to them.

I have, &c.,
GEORGE HAMILTON.

His Holiness Ignatius Abd-ul-Mesih
Antiochian Patriarch, Syrian Church, Diyarbekr.

No. 5.

Mrs. E. A. Finn to India Office.

Sir,
75, Brook Green, W.,
26th March 1897.
I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 23rd, as to the Memorial addressed to Her Majesty the Queen Empress by Abdul Meseehh Ignatius, Patriarch of Antioch, of the ancient Syrian Church.

And I will take care that the communication of the Secretary of State for India in Council is forwarded to the Patriarch.

This Patriarch has never been in England as his predecessor was, and it is improbable that he should have had advice or help from any European as to his memorial to Her Majesty.

I have, &c.,
E. A. FINN.

The Under Secretary of State
for India.

650
CURRENT No. 1535

1. 225

No. 1779-1/A.

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A copy of the foregoing is forwarded to the Government of
Fort St. George, for information.

CHIEF SECRETARY
17 MAY 1897
GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

By order, &c.,

D. W. S. S. S.

Offg. Under Secy. to the Govt. of India.

FOREIGN DEPARTMENT,

SIMLA;

The 11th May 1897.

Political despatch from Her Majesty's Secretary
of State for India, No. 27, dated the 8th April
1897, with enclosures, regarding the affairs of the
Syrian Church in Malabar.

With
three copies

H.S. the Governor

Affairs of the Ancient Syrian Church
in Malabar.

Note

The last order on the Syrian
Church endowment is G.O. No 70
Political of 25. January 1897
the last in the Note. file.

Ans
24/5/97

Political Dept 226

C. No 650

Order.
Mis

W. 3408 27
26.5.97
to May 97

Recorded

Curd.
24.5.97.

25/5/97
70

Recd in Trav. & Cochin (pro)

with endow. in origl to
be returned

Recd
11/6/97

Ref
Office (after dispatch)

one. } Add original to Syrian
Church file. See that the Revd.
returns the enclosure. Set
a printed label for the file & have
a list of contents prepared to it.
It requires paging

one. 27

Noted in the
Cust. work.

was in accordance
to
Rec
18/6/97

Ans
24/5/97

[G.
188]

Originals of currents printed
in G.O., No. 778
Political Department, dated,
14. 12. 1897, to be
destroyed at the beginning
of 189 .

for copying } 29/11
ined 31/5/ } 1897
d

O., No. DATED

to C. No

GOVERNMENT A A A A A A A

OF GOVERNMENT.

ENT WITH DITTO.

NOT FILED UP, BEING WANT FOR DESPATCH
IN ORIGINAL.

N.B.—

- A = Copy in full.
- B = Not to be copied.
- P = Copy abstract only.
- Q = Copy heading only.