

## Jews under Muslim Rule—II: Morocco 1903-1912

by David Littman

*The historical framework for these letters, in the form of a short introduction, was to have been written by the late Professor H. Z. Hirschberg. Tragically, only four days after he had received the 1976 Ben Zvi award for his life's work on the history of Jews in Islamic lands, Professor Hirschberg passed away in Jerusalem. This documentation, based on letters relating to the first decade of the twentieth century in Morocco, from the Archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, is dedicated to the cherished memory of a highly esteemed scholar, teacher and friend.*

The *Alliance Israélite Universelle* was founded in Paris in 1860. The principal objectives of its founders were to work everywhere for the emancipation and moral progress of the Jews, and assist those suffering from discrimination. By 1914, about 50,000 boys and girls were receiving an education in its primary and vocational training schools dispersed throughout the Ottoman Empire, Persia and the Maghreb.

Letters and reports flowed into the central office of the *Alliance* in Paris from the representatives of the regional Alliance Committees and AIU school directors, from community leaders as well as individuals, and occasionally from French and foreign diplomats. These documents were generally written in French, although some are in other European languages or in Hebrew, Arabic,

and Judeo-Arabic—often with an accompanying translation into French. The letters here published for the first time have all been specially translated into English.

This rarely-used source-material frequently portrays a dismal picture of the Jewish condition in the early part of the twentieth century, in what was generally a hostile environment. Hundreds of letters vividly authenticate the contemporary accounts of European travellers during the age of liberalism and emancipation, who almost unanimously agreed on 'the degraded and precarious position of Jews in Muslim countries, and the dangers and humiliations to which they were subject'.<sup>1</sup>

The material in the AIU archives from Morocco is probably the fullest from any Muslim country. Morocco had always retained its independence, but anarchy was frequent and the Jews suffered most from it, especially at the death, or change, of a Sultan. Traditionally, nothing was easier for

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*This is the continuation of David Littman's article, 'Jews in Muslim Lands', the first part of which appeared in our last issue.*

rebels or fanatics than to attack the feeblest and the most despised element of society.<sup>2</sup>

It is perfectly true that the Muslim Moroccan commoner also suffered during these periods of instability, but the degraded minority status of the Jews, as infidels and *dhimmis*, made them the most vulnerable victims of each and every brutal excess from a cruel *qa'id*, a ruthless mob, or tribesmen in revolt. From the time of the description of their wretched state by Addison in the seventeenth century, to Budgett Meakin's accounts at the turn of the twentieth century,<sup>3</sup> European travellers and diplomats had rarely failed to note the abject condition of the Jews in the Sheriffian Empire.

The classical text on their condition in the late nineteenth century is that of Charles de Foucauld. Disguised as a Jerusalem Rabbi in order to accomplish his 'Reconnaissance au

Maroc'<sup>4</sup> in 1883, this young French aristocrat and military officer was obliged to hear this gratuitous insult from each and every Muslim who passed him on the road to Chechuan: '*Que Dieu fasse brûler éternellement le père qui t'a engendré, Juif!*'<sup>5</sup> Thirty-one years later, describing the Jews of Arr'en in southern Morocco, Edmond Doutté wrote:

*On reste confondu que sous une pareille tyrannie un peuple ait pu conserver intacte la foi qui lui valait ce martyre. On conçoit encore la haine inspirée aux vainqueurs par la résistance de ces malheureux et les massacres périodiques qui les décimaient.*<sup>6</sup>

The letters and reports which follow, vividly illustrate the humiliation, misery and exposure to physical violence which was still the lot of the ordinary Moroccan Jew in the first decade of the twentieth century.

### Chronicle of Events

September 1902	Bu Himara (Jilali b. Idris al-Zarhuni) revolts against the Sultan 'Abdul-'Aziz.		
April 1904	Franco-British Entente. France relinquishes all her rights and interests in Egypt, and Britain accepts a French protectorate in Morocco.	19 March 1907	ted the 1904 Franco-Spanish agreement. Dr Mauchamp, French doctor and philanthropist, murdered in Marrakesh. The French occupy Wajda on the Algerian frontier.
October 1904	Franco-Spanish agreement regarding their future respective zones of influence in Morocco. French bank consortium grants large loan to the Sultan.	1 August 1907	Nine Europeans killed in Casablanca. Jewish <i>mellah</i> sacked and pillaged. Militarily, France intervenes throughout the <i>Shawiyya</i> region around Casablanca.
1905	Si Madani El Glaoui, a southern Berber chieftain, withdraws support from 'Abdul-'Aziz.	5 January 1909	'Abdul-'Hafiz rebels successfully, with the help of El Glaoui, against his brother 'Abdul-'Aziz.
March 1905	Kaiser William II visits Tangier with the aim of blocking French aspirations.	February 1909	'Abdul-'Hafiz accepts the <i>Act of Algeciras</i> and is recognized by the French. Germany recognizes France's 'special responsibility' in Morocco.
April 1906	The outcome of the Algeciras conference, called by Germany, was the <i>Act of Algeciras</i> , accepted by the Sultan, which, due to British support, consolidated	1909	Bu Himara captured by 'Abdul-'Hafiz.
		1910	Spain begins the occupation of northern Morocco. Tribes around Meknès rise in rebellion under new

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1 July 1911	pretender; they are defeated by the French. German gunboat <i>Panther</i> sent to Agadir, after which the French cede a crucial part of French Congo to Germany.	France establishing the French Protectorate over Morocco.
30 March 1912	The Sultan 'Abdul-'Hafiz signs the treaty with	17-19 April 1912 Uprising in Fez against the French, the Jewish <i>mellah</i> sacked and pillaged.
		11 August 1912 'Abdul-'Hafiz abdicates. Mouley Yusuf succeeds him.

Documents

1903 *Jizya (poll-tax) still imposed on all Moroccan Jews*

I have read with much pleasure the article in the *Journal des Débats* concerning the Jews in Morocco. Never before has such a precise and impartial study on our co-religionists in this country been published. There can be no doubt that the author of this article has lived in the country, that he has observed and judged what he has seen without allowing himself to be influenced by other publications or by diplomats in embryo who haunt the legations in Tangier. It is not surprising in a work of this scope and importance that the author has been guilty of some errors. Thus he states that the *jizya* or tribute paid by the Jewish communities to the Sultan has been abolished in many cities. This tax is still in force and there is a tendency to increase it. Apart from this heavy tax burden, the Jews are obliged to give costly gifts to the *qā'id* and to important Muslims passing through the city; in time of war, which is the normal state of affairs in the country, they are forced to contribute toward the feeding and maintenance of the [tribal] chiefs and their soldiers. The Jews of the Riff and those subjected to the more or less independent Kabyles also have obligations to their lords and masters.

Moreover, it would be a mistake to generalize when speaking of the Jews of Morocco. Those from Tetuán are quite different from their co-religionists in Fez, and the Jews living in the towns have customs totally different from those living in the country who are, in essence, not to be distinguished from nomadic tribes. A few kilometres from Tetuán is the city of Chechuan where no European has ever penetrated and where two or three thousand of our co-religionists suffer the most dreadful

persecution and harassment from the Muslims and from those in authority. . .

*Letter (12.6.1903) from E. Carmona, Head of the Tetuán AIU Boys' school to the President AIU, Paris (AIU MOROCCO I.C.1).*

1903 *Jews assaulted in Rabat and falsely accused of blaspheming Islam*

. . . The events which for the last year are taking place in Morocco have had their repercussions on the Jews of Rabat . . . our redoubtable enemies the *Zairs* and the *Zem-mours* [tribes] were preparing to irrupt into the *Mellah* in order to pillage it. . .

Mr Méana, the Spanish consul and doyen of the diplomatic corps in Rabat, is a good and most charitable man, gifted with a modesty which enhances his fine character. He is the protector of the weak and hence a friend of the Jews, regarding whose fate he takes a heartfelt interest. . . He immediately sent his emissary to the governor advising him to provide the necessary guards for the protection of our co-religionists and of those Spanish subjects residing in our quarter . . . later he made pressing requests through the Spanish legation in Tangier and the breaches in the exterior wall of the *Mellah* were repaired. Since then we have benefited from a little tranquillity. Unfortunately it did not last.

A Jew named David Benzaquen, under Brazilian protection, was returning from Salé with his wife. In order to arrive earlier in the *Mellah*, the couple took a short cut, when their way was barred by a group of tanners who worked in the area. When Benzaquen insisted on proceeding by that route, the fanatics rushed at him, beat him furiously with sticks and swore to assassinate him in this isolated spot. He saved himself by taking flight.

To explain their behaviour, the Arabs concocted a document, false in every respect, stating that our co-religionist had blasphemed the Muslim religion. The Cadi, who presided over the case, took the matter seriously and had the unfortunate man seized by his *sbires* and, despite the strong protests of Mr Benatar, the vice-consul of Brazil, the man was thrown in jail. Through a refinement of cruelty, the Cadi, in principle and by temperament an enemy of our race, placed a rigorous ban on access to the prison by the mother and brothers of Benzaquen, naturally anxious to do what they could to help this victim of Arab fanaticism. This incident had a sequel. Having seen that a protected Jew could be locked up with impunity, the Muslims assumed that anything was permissible against the Jews, and for several days they gave free rein to their hatred, striking them in the street, spitting in their faces and inflicting upon them the most glaring injustices. If one of us raised a voice to protest against these abuses, a crowd of Arabs was always present and ready to testify in favour of the guilty ones and to make out that the intruder had committed blasphemy against the Muslim religion. The fact that Arab justice does not accept evidence by a Jew only made the situation more intolerable.

My intervention had become indispensable. On Saturday, 12 June, I called on Mr Méana (the Spanish consul) and then made a tour of all the other vice-consulates, informing them of the situation and asking them for their co-operation, which they kindly agreed to give me. The following evening, accompanied by soldiers from the Spanish, French, British, German, Austrian and Belgian embassies, I appeared before the governor to protest against the cruelties committed by the Arabs. My words were heard and on 14 June, two soldiers went through the town from one end to the other urging all the shopkeepers and regional heads to protect the Jews and to seize and bring before the governor anyone who maltreated a Jew.

After this, the situation of the Jews in Rabat improved considerably. . .

*From an annual report (20.10.1903) to the AIU Central Committee, Paris, by J. Conquy, head of the newly-founded Rabat Boys' school (AIU FRANCE XIV F 25).*

1903 Jewish population of Fez demonstrates loyalty to the Sultan

. . . The political situation of our brethren in Fez is neither good nor bad. So long as Morocco will maintain the status quo, their situation will not improve. In the towns of the interior of Morocco, the condition of our brethren will not change until there will be a European occupation. The Jews can hope for nothing from the present regime, which is unwilling to shake the Moroccans out of their inertia or eradicate their deep-seated ignorance, which holds anything European in horror. Any radical change in Morocco could only have favourable and beneficial effects for our co-religionists. . .

. . . *Bu Himara*. An event which shook the whole of Morocco and for a while threatened to overthrow the present dynasty was the appearance of the only too notorious agitator Bu Himara.

We first heard of Bu Himara in September last year [1902] a year ago today. Not even his name, place of birth or origin were known. There were vague stories that a saint, a messenger from God, one of those mystics who so often arise in the Sudan, the Sahara and in North Africa, roused by the reforms which the Sultan 'Abdul-'Aziz wished to bring about in the country, was seeking, cunningly, to exploit the general discontent, and had put himself at the head of the discontented. To win over the ignorant and fanatical mountains people, he represented himself as a wizard, a magician—always mounted on a she-ass. For this reason, popular imagination gave him the name of Bu Himara (father of the she-ass). . . Thus, it was from Taza, a small town situated two days ride from Fez, a kind of pirates nest perched on the summit of the Kiatha mountains, that Bu Himara raised the standard of revolt. . .

Bu Himara is now no more than a legendary figure like so many others who are depicted in popular stories and songs. The terror which he once inspired is gone. His name has given birth to a whole new literature which is much favoured by the Arabs in Fez. The stories and songs composed in honour of Bu Himara are without number. This mysterious

personality has, so to speak, fascinated and charmed the most powerful Berber tribes with his persuasive words and great comprehension. In addition, his slightest expressions and gestures have been so magnified, his so-called miracles blown up into such stupid proportions, that he is already considered not as an impostor, but a revered saint in Morocco, particularly in the interior towards the mountains and wild regions that stretch from Taza to the Riff. . .

In the eyes of these tribes, Bu Himara is a saint in a double sense because he fought for the Muslim faith, this following the example of Moulay Idris, the founder of Fez. Thus, it was for the good cause that he endangered his life; he merely wished to remove from the sacred soil of Fez a king with European tendencies—and the Europeans themselves.

As you can well imagine, the state of our co-religionists during these woeful days was pitiful. We all knew that Bu Himara would be fatal for the Jewish community of Fez. The *Makhzen* [government] itself did not conceal its fears on this subject. So, the *Mellah* had become a virtual barometer of the political temperature in Morocco. All the vicissitudes of the war, good or bad, had their repercussions in the *Mellah*. . .

The panic and lamentations lasted until January 29 [1903], the day when Bu Himara was defeated. From then on everything changed at the *Mellah*. Lamentation gave way to joy. The shouts and the din were again heard in the streets, but they were cries of rapture which became delirious when the canon shots announced the news—false alas!—that Bu Himara had been captured.

I shall never forget the explosion of pure delight in the *Mellah* when the news was announced. Throughout the day, the streets of the *Mellah* were crammed with people. From the terraces could be seen the flood of people going from one end of the *Mellah* to the other, shouting their delight to the sky and chanting hymns and psalms. Thousands of lungs exhaled their praises to God, and their blessings on the Sultan 'Abdul-'Aziz.

The evening was even more colourful. The whole Jewish population proceeded with lanterns and lighted candles to the *Dar-El-*

*Makhzen* [the Sultan's Palace], shouting hymns such as: *Adou Olam, Igdal, Az-Yashir Moshe* and so on. There, for hours, they shouted, sang, laughed and cried, invoking blessings from the sky on the young Sultan. And finally sacramental blessings were addressed to the Sultan by everyone. *Allah-Harak-Amar-Sidi* (God bless the life of the Sultan), repeated five, 10, even 15 times by these thousands of Jews, men, women and children. They were at a loss to know how to express their happiness that evening. This immense compact crowd, singing and shouting in the night, only a few steps from the Sultan's Palace, each with a lantern in his hand, created a fairy-like, thrilling effect. The *Makhzen* was not unmoved by these imposing demonstrations of loyalty by the Jews. To express its gratitude, a thousand fireworks were let off over the *Mellah*.

The parades recommenced in grand style the following day, but this time our brothers were bolder, observing a custom enshrined in centuries of tradition. They went into the Palace to express to the Sultan himself their immense joy caused by the defeat of Bu Himara. More than 3,000 Jews, among them many women and children, with musicians in the lead and banners displayed (banners consisting of large golden or silver sashes worn by women) offered their warmest congratulations to the Sultan and Menebhi [his Minister] for the brilliant victory of 29 January.

Needless to say, our co-religionists were received with great kindness. El Menebhi himself, at the invitation of the Sultan, condescended to make a short speech in which he encouraged his listeners to express their joy freely, to decorate and illuminate the *Mellah*, for, as he said, Bu Himara had a special hatred for the Jews. In fact, the *Mellah* was illuminated and decorated during two days and two nights.

Today [seven months' later] all is relatively calm. No-one speaks any longer of Bu Himara with fear. To see the tranquillity that reigns in the city, it is hard to believe that there was ever any apprehension and that Bu Himara had ever represented any danger to our people.

DAVID LITTMAN

May God grant that this calm \* is of long duration and that there will be no recurrence of the horrors that caused ruin and desolation to the ill-fated community of Taza . . . [over 60 Jews had been killed and many injured in Taza one year earlier].

*From an annual report (1.9.1903) to the AIU Central Committee, Paris, by J. Valadji, head of the Fez Boys' school (AIU FRANCE XIV F 25).*

#### 1907 Cataclysmic destruction and pillage of Casablanca Mellah

On 1 August, a band of about 100 Kabyles, helped by some Arabs from the town, attacked the port dock-yard, derailed a small train, killed nine Europeans, and destroyed a large part of the installations. An immediate panic spread in the town; it was a premonition of things to come. Tuesday and Wednesday were days of indescribable suspense. The Jewish population, anticipating the massacre and pillage, whoever should emerge as victors, rushed in despair to the merchant boats being laden with goods in the harbour. Almost all the rich and well-to-do families able to gather together specie and personal belongings went on board, paying exorbitant sums either to the Kabyles who permitted them to embark, or for their journey to the boats. There were scenes of disorder and confusion: mothers who had mislaid their children who had disappeared, rich people who had put their entire fortune into a mattress, only to watch it disappear in the water.

The cruiser 'Galilee' appeared offshore on Thursday, 3 August. Its arrival spread a little calm in the town and until the following Tuesday, the situation seemed less alarming, despite the 5 to 6,000 horsemen surrounding the town. Suddenly it changed. In the night of Monday to Tuesday, because either the 'Galilee' had received the order to bombard the town or because Moulai-Amin, the uncle of the Sultan, feeling overwhelmed, asked for protection from the French cruiser, the Europeans were warned at two in the morning to go in haste to their Consulates. At 5 a.m. a picket of 75 sailors disembarked. You know the sequel: the *Makhzen's* soldiers

fired on them; they crossed the town leaving a number of corpses behind them, arrived at the French consulate and gave the signal for the bombardment to commence.

With the first cannon shot, as if the Arabs were only waiting for this sign, the soldiers of the *Makhzen* rushed into the *Mellah*, followed by the whole population, and started the pillage. The 5 to 6,000 men who were waiting at the gates penetrated the town, spread out through the *Mellah* and the *Medina*, robbing, looting, raping, killing and burning, and during three days, until the French troops disembarked, sowed terror throughout the town. Not a house, not a family, not a person was spared. There are only five to six Jewish houses that remained intact because they were situated near the consulates. The *Kaiseria*, the quarter of the Jewish merchants, with more than 500 shops, was burned down; nothing but ruins remain. From one end to the other, without any exception, the *Mellah* was sacked: doors and windows smashed, furniture and contents gone; all has been cleaned out, demolished; our schools have been reduced to pieces; the benches and desks smashed, the equipment, the money stolen, the books burnt. At the *Talmud-Tora*, where my assistant, Mr Soussana lived, everything was destroyed. Mr Soussana was very ill: they took everything away from him, even his mattress and his nightshirt; he was left naked on his iron bedstead . . . all the synagogues, except for two small oratories, have been sacked, the silver stolen and the *hekal* [altar] desecrated. To the honour of our co-religionists, the *sepharim* [Scrolls of the law] were saved. Everywhere there is desolation and devastation. One wouldn't believe that men could have destroyed so much, but rather that the city had been the victim of a cataclysm.

But the looting, the fire is nothing. Chased out of their homes, the Jews scattered in all directions, around the precincts of the consulates, particularly the French consulate. There were battles between the Arabs and Europeans besieged in their consulates. Suffering heavy losses, the Arabs fell on the weakest: the Jews. A veritable man-hunt began. The Jews hid themselves in caves, under rubble, in empty tanks. Families lived for

\* See letters of 1912 on pillage of Fez.

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three days under straw, without food. The men were pursued and beaten with truncheons or stabbed; the women raped when there was time, or abducted with their children. Horrible scenes took place. The narrative from the mouths of the victims themselves is hair-raising. . .

Following my three-day investigation, I have made the following estimate which the authorities consider is most probably correct: 30 dead, some 60 wounded, of which 20 seriously; an unlimited number of rapes (I dare not question the families nor would they dare to admit it), more than 250 young women, girls, children abducted. . .

*Letter (15.8.1907) from Isaac Pisa, head of the Casablanca Boys' school to the Pres. AIU, Paris (AIU MOROCCO II C 3).*

*1907 Starving Jewish refugees from Casablanca*

. . . But the most to be pitied are those who were made captive or were taken prisoner during their flight. Poor, sad, humanity! Many have had no food for four or five days. To return to the town, they are forced to use every imaginable kind of trick and deceit. Some have handed over everything they happened to have with them; others escaped in the night: intercepted on the open road, they proclaimed they were Muslims on their way to fight a Holy War against the French. When they were released, they were sent back completely naked. They were gathered in the camp and given sacks to cover themselves, and later they came to see me. Two or three new families arrive each day: pale, emaciated, their bones showing, hollow-faced, sunken-eyed. I welcomed them at the *Talmud-Tora* and warmed them up with the rhum I had with me. I had them washed and gave them food, and they returned into the town, swelling the numbers of the destitute—and my stocks of food are running out! By the middle of next week there will be nothing left. And then what will these wretches do?

There are at the moment 350 to 400 poverty-stricken families in town of which 50 families were once well-to-do but are now

in misery and a hundred others who kept a little something which they will soon have consumed.

*From a letter (23.8.1907) from Isaac Pisa, Casablanca to Pres. AIU, Paris (AIU MOROCCO II C 3).*

*1907 400 destitute refugees arrive in Settât*

This is to inform you that your family arrived here in good health, thanks be to God, but your sister died on arrival at Settât and was buried as a saint since she did not succumb on the way.

You will know from this letter that there are more than 400 Jews from Casablanca here. They are all without clothing. I am doing everything possible to feed them, but I have nothing left. All the young girls were raped. You know the daughter of Israel, your neighbour, who is pretty; all the Arabs had her. Married women suffered the same fate; their husbands no longer want them and there is a great scandal. Everyone is dying of hunger. I beg you therefore to approach the notables in Casablanca and the teacher of the *Alliance* to do something for them, for otherwise they will all die of hunger and from their sufferings.

*Letter in Judeo-Arab (22.8.1907) from David Amar, merchant of Settât, to Selam Edery, notable of Casablanca, translated and transmitted by Pisa to AIU Paris, registered 4.9.1907. (AIU MOROCCO II C 3).*

*1907 Forced conversion to Islam of abducted girls*

The undersigned sends his greetings to you, Mr Ben Elie, Mr Zagury and the son [Dr Henry] of the Baron de Rothschild.

I have to inform you that on the Thursday when you sent me into the interior, I spent the night with the *Oulad-Zyan*; I found no Jews there. On the Friday evening, I reached the territory of the *Mdakra*, in the abode of the *Ouled-Zidan*. There they wanted to kill me; the Arab you sent to accompany me saved my life. I found many young Jewish girls there: some have remained Jewish, others have been forcibly obliged to convert. Among those who were converted, there is a daughter of Mr Benchimol who has been adopted by an Arab. On the Saturday, I arrived in

Magouch amidst the Jews who inhabit that place. These poor people received me kindly and promised to help me to save all these young girls. I therefore beg you to go to Mr Benaroche and ask him to prepare for you a letter of recommendation for the *Lfakra* (Sherifs) of Magouch who are his protégés. They have a lot of influence with the *Mdakra* tribes. Please send this letter to me at Joseph Benbaruh's with whom I am staying and who has paid the courier who will bring you this letter.

*Letter in Judeo-Arab (29.9.1907) from Abraham Amstet at Margouch to Isaac Pisa, Casablanca, translated and transmitted AIU Paris, registered there 8.10.1907. (AIU MOROCCO II C 3).*

*1907 Settât sacked, Jews in headlong flight*

I have the honour to confirm to you my dispatch of today which read: 'Settat sacked by Mzanza tribe. Jewish population has fled'. A messenger brought me this sad news this morning...

A few days ago, I gave you some information on Settât. With the astonishing vitality that is a sign of our race, the community had re-organized itself quickly after the pillage of four years ago. To give you an idea of the extent of the new calamity which has struck the Jewish population of this country: 300 to 400 families are again without shelter and without food, not counting the families from Casablanca who are still there and who have now suffered the horrors of a second pillage.

*Letter (19.11.1907) from I. Pisa to Pres. AIU Paris (AIU MOROCCO II C 3).*

*1908 Eye-witness account of destruction of Settât Mellah*

*Jews of Settât.* Again the Jews of Settât! Yesterday evening I was urgently summoned by Mr Malpertuy, the French Consul, who informed me of the following message from General d'Amade: '80 Jews from Settât having obtained French protection are proceeding to Casablanca; make arrangements to receive them'. . . . This morning at 11 o'clock they arrived, under the guidance of the General staff, 135 of them in a most pathetic state. The men looked like ghosts, hair and beard dishevelled, covered in stinking sacks, through which one could see their bare

bodies, their feet swollen and covered with mud and sores. The women, hardly covered in a piece of colourless linen, revealing their phantom-like nudity, their emaciated features, most of whom were offering dried-up breasts to sickly infants and being followed by a swarm of noisy little brats. Impossible to tell the young from the old, so much their misery has given them a uniform look. We fit them up on hay beds and serve them water, we give them bread and oranges and then listen to the story of their tribulations during the long months that the present situation has lasted.

'Do you know', a young woman told us, 'what we suffered four years ago? (for them, the pillaging of [27 December] 1903 is a date of ill-omen). We had returned to our homes and our work, this one at growing cereals, that one cobbling. The following years were hard. There had been no rain and there was no harvest. For us it was hunger. But we were always able to save ourselves so long as we were left in peace in the *Mellah*. For six months we had known that things were going badly and that the Arabs were planning trouble. Then we heard about the pillage of Casablanca. The Jews who had fled from there had taken refuge with us. We received them all in our homes and our huts. Little by little they returned, some to Mazagan, some to Rabat. When we saw arriving the *mehalla* [army] of Mouley-Rachid, we had a premonition of the pillage, for whether it was the *mehalla* or whether the tribes needed money, they would always fall on us.

In fact, three months ago, the *Mzanza* [tribe] had plundered a section of the *Mellah*, taking advantage of the discord reigning between the tribes. They took all we had, which amounted to almost nothing, and we probably owe our lives merely to our misery. After they left, it was death by hunger for us. We could not go forward to Casablanca because the Arabs had barred the route; we could not go backwards for fear of falling into the hands of the hafidienne *mehalla*, and we could not go and work in the deserted *douars*. Fortunately, a courier arrived from the school director of Casablanca with a letter for Sheik Ben-Omar in which we were recommended to him. This rich Arab received



us all, gave us food for some weeks with such kindness that we could hardly believe he was an Arab.

A month ago, the French arrived in Settât. All the Arabs fled and many Jews with them. Some 300 of us remained in the town, hoping that the French would take it. But after staying only a few hours they left abruptly. They had only gone a few kilometres away—we could still see their lights—when the Arabs came back from the mountains. The two weeks that followed were horrible and I ask myself how we are still alive. . . . All the well-to-do people left the city and went behind the mountains to Rebi Ayouch-ben-Malca who enjoys the respect of the Arabs. We remained in the town living in a state of continual trauma, constantly expecting to be pillaged.

A few days later the French returned to the outskirts of Settât. Realizing that this time the French would stay, the Arabs plundered the city for the last time, taking some of us with them. Those who were left were picked up by the French troops who gave us food. They questioned us and we told them what we knew, that the *mehalla* no longer wanted to fight and that there was dissension between the tribes. We were finally taken to Ber-Rechid, slept a night at Medionna and here we find ourselves without any hope of returning to our homes.'

'What has happened to the other Jews?' we asked anxiously, 'for you are only 150, and in Settât and in the *douars* you were at least a thousand?' 'We do not know' was the reply, 'many are at Casablanca with their parents; others are behind the mountains and many are probably among the Arabs.'

All these refugees are *Chleuhs*. It is out of question to repatriate them. We are organizing aid to clothe and feed them, then we will find them housing and work, after which they will merge with the population.

*Letter (9.2.1908) from I. Pisa, Casablanca, to Pres. AIU, Paris (AIU MOROCCO I B 2).*

1908 40 Settât Jews killed, remainder courageously protected by Arab sheik

. . . Today I received a visit from Sheik ben-Omar who protected the Jews so effectively on my recommendation and that of Mr Karl

Tieke, the doyen of the German colony. He confirmed point by point the account that I sent you the day before yesterday, and added certain details which I have verified. When the French left after the first occupation of Settât, the Arabs threw themselves on the *Mellah* with the intention of exterminating them [the Jews] for having acclaimed the French troops. Some 40 Jews were killed and the killing only ceased because Sheik Omar in person went to protect the *Mellah* and killed with his own hand a pillager so as to show his determination to stop the looting. It was thanks to his action that the remainder were spared and survived until the French returned. He told me that many Jews remained behind at Settât and, according to him, they must have been killed after the second departure of the French.

Sheik ben-Omar was taken prisoner by the French troops but was released because of his loyalty and is returning to Settât. He will write to let me know if it will be possible for the Jews to return.

*Letter (13.2.1908) from I. Pisa to Pres. AIU, Paris (AIU MOROCCO I B 2).*

1908 Jews of Fez humiliated and menaced with pillage

I have the honour to inform you that following recent events in Morocco, and particularly at Fez, the situation of our unfortunate co-religionists in this town has become intolerable in all respects.

I will not speak of the terror and panic of each moment as well as the dangers with which we are constantly threatened. It is sufficient to tell you what you already know, that we live among savages who have already tried to satisfy their ferocious hatred by making a carnage of all the Jews, and only await the first opportunity to try again. With each riot in town, there is talk of breaking into the *Mellah* and sacking it.

Other torments have now been added to this life of constant anxiety. Since the proclamation of Mouley Hafiz as Sultan in this capital, our people have been forbidden to go into the *Medina*, the Muslim quarter, which is the business centre where both rich and poor Jews, artisans and businessmen earn their living—under pain of being beaten and

thoroughly ill-treated. The few heads of poor families, who risk their lives and go to the *Medina* to earn a few pence for food for their children, come back exhausted and desperate after their sufferings at the hands of the Muslims. They are subjected to all kinds of humiliations. They are forced to take off their shoes and walk bare-foot. They are made to jump and dance, thus provoking the mirth of the Muslims and satisfying their scorn for the Jews. In fact all imaginable tortures are inflicted on them without any pity and any one who dares to offer any resistance to these barbarous acts is beaten and maltreated. . .

*Letter (13.2.1908) from Rahamin Benzimra to the Pres. AIU, Paris (AIU MOROCCO ?).*

1908 Mellahs in Mzab utterly destroyed, many Jews massacred by tribesmen

*Jews of Mzab.* Another disaster which I have the painful duty to communicate to you, concerning which our co-religionists of Mzab have been the victims. General d'Amade's column operating against the *Mdakras* [tribes] arrived on the 17th February at the foot of the hills in the vicinity of Mzab. The *qā'id* of the *Casbah Ben-Ahmed*—the most populous of Mzab and the one which comprises the largest number of Jews—went to tender his submission to the French authorities. The next morning, in reprisal, the other Mzabis sacked the *Casbah* and destroyed stone by stone the two *Mellahs*, massacring a number of Jews and chasing the others like a herd of beasts across fields. This information has been confirmed to me officially.

From local sources, it appears that the Jews living in this *Casbah*—several hundred souls—are en route for Casablanca. A large number would have found refuge in the other *Casbahs*. Yesterday, I received a first contingent of 90 persons. . .

*Jews of Settat.* A third contingent arrived on the 16th February bringing their number to 315. . .

Mr S. D. Levy from Mauricio informs me that it is not 12,000 but 29,000 francs that the Jews of Buenos Aires have sent to Tangier 'for the victims of Casablanca'. . .

*Letter (25.2.1908) from I. Pisa to Pres. AIU, Paris (AIU MOROCCO I B 2).*

1908 *Description of treatment of Meknès Jews by Rabbi Abraham Amar*

Because I know of the greatness of the *Alliance* and its aim in coming to the aid of Jews, endeavouring to save them from oppression in all those countries where they are scattered, I have ventured to reveal to you something of the events which have befallen us recently and to inquire whether, in the name of the good and powerful Lord, you might intervene with the Jewish notables and members of the *Alliance*, for we are clumsy and gauche in expressing our feelings—the length and hardness of our captivity has stifled our spirit. This is why we ask you to be our interpreter and our worthy intermediary.

From the day when the revolution started in our city (the revolution which the Muslims of the city carry on against our good king, His Majesty 'Abdul-'Aziz) we have been in very great distress.

Our enemies started by making us eat the dust and by making us the objects of scorn and contempt. They forced us to walk bare-foot and thus our standing has been completely destroyed. Several thousand are without food because our co-religionists were not willing to walk barefoot nor submit to the shame and shocking treatment of these savages.

Moreover, they exact taxes from us daily which are hard to endure. On one occasion, we paid 1,000 duros and not a day goes by without our miserable and anguished community being forced to pay a new tax to silence the mouths of thousands of our enemies and oppressors.

They have also been cunning enough to close any escape route—thus preventing us from finding salvation in flight—in order to oppress and exploit us until we are left naked. . .

*Hebrew letter (26.2.1908) from Abraham Amar, one of the Chief Rabbis of Meknès, to A. Ribbi, head of the Tangier AIU Boys' school; translated and transmitted to AIU, Paris, registered there 15.3.1908 (AIU MOROCCO IV C 11).*

1908 *Confirmation of Rabbi Abraham Amar's lament*

I have the honour to enclose the original and the translation of a letter which I have

just received from Meknès. The signatory, Mr A. Amar, is one of the leading rabbis of the community. All that it says with regard to the exactions and profound misery suffered by our co-religionists is absolutely true. Our chief rabbi and various members of our community have received other letters which confirm what Mr Amar writes. Jews from Meknès who live in Tangier say that they are receiving with every postal arrival identical news from their relatives and friends. . .

*Letter (10.3.1908) from A. Ribbi, Tangier, to Pres. AIU, Paris (AIU MOROCCO IV C 11).*

*1908 Humiliation and oppression of Jews in Wazzan*

This is to inform you that news received this morning from Wazzan shows that the situation of our co-religionists from that town is desperate. Since Mouley-Hafiz's proclamation [as Sultan] in that region, the cycle of persecution began for these wretched people. They are exposed to the worst possible treatment and suffer the most irksome humiliations. Last Wednesday, three of the [Jewish] notables were arrested, stripped of all their possessions and thrown into prison. Afterwards, a mob of Arabs entered the *Mellah*, pillaged and sacked a synagogue, profaned sacred objects, lacerated the Scrolls of the Law and threw them into the street. The frightened Jews barricaded themselves in their houses. They are in the greatest consternation. A meeting of *Ulemas* [learned doctors of Islamic law] is to be held to decree the conditions under which their lives may be spared and what will be their fate. As details on these distressing events are lacking, tomorrow's post is anxiously awaited.

Some merchants from here [Larache], being under European protection with interests in Wazzan, have given particulars of the situation to the [foreign] consuls, who have promised to refer the matter to their ministers [Ambassadors] in Tangiers.

At Alcazar, too, the Jews are grossly misused. All kinds of persecution are inflicted upon them: they must take off their shoes in front of mosques, submit to all the humiliations of yesteryear and even accept blows, without being able to complain to the au-

thorities. The governor of the town, to whom they have paid 1,000 pesetas for his protection, has told them that he is powerless before the fury of the populace and has advised them to avoid going out for fear they should be massacred. Great panic prevails within this ill-fated community. Some families have come to Larache to seek refuge.

To the Arabs of the interior, the arrival of Mouley-Hafiz represents a brilliant victory over the Europeans and must, as its immediate consequence, give them the freedom of humiliating and ruthlessly oppressing the Jews—in the name of the liberator of Islam.

*Letter (21.6.1908) from Bensimon, head of the Larache AIU Boys' school to the AIU, Paris.*

*1908 Houses of Wazzan Jews confiscated, windows blocked up*

Subsequent to my letter of the 21st, I can give you some details on the events at Wazzan, taken from a letter received here yesterday by a [Jewish] notable.

After three days of indescribable fright, our co-religionists have been able to save their lives on the following conditions. Oppressive measures, revoltingly cruel, were decreed by the meeting of *Ulemas* and their application will render the situation of these wretches highly precarious. Judge for yourself:

First of all, they are forbidden to go about the streets with shoes on, to wear white clothes; they are even refused light and air—all windows opening on to streets must be blocked up. A synagogue, in the neighbourhood of a *Sharif* [noble, descendant of Mohammed] is closed. They are likewise forbidden to smoke, drink or distil spirits. All stocks of tobacco and cigarettes found in their shops have been confiscated and burnt. They would have accepted all these persecutions resignedly, if their houses had not been attacked. From one day to another, they found themselves dispossessed of their homes. Anyone having title to any kind of property must put it into the hands of the *Sharifs*. The three notables who were arrested obtained their freedom only by paying a ransom of 1,500 pesetas, an enormous amount given the poverty of this small community. What makes the situation of these unfortunate people even

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more wretched is that they are not allowed to leave the town either to attend to their business or to evade the cruelty of these fanatics. They cannot even hope to see their lot improve. To whom can they appeal, who will intervene on their behalf?

*Letter (24.6.1908) from Bensimon to AIU Paris.*

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1908 *Benevolence shown to Jews by Grand Vizier El Glaoui*

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 16th instant which you have sent me through our faithful friend, M. Joshua Corcos.\*

I have noted all that you have told me and have the pleasure, firstly, to inform you that I am no fanatic, as stated by the European newspapers. On the contrary, I maintain a genuine and fair equality towards all goodly men, without reference to their race or religion. You have no doubt been informed that, since my return to Marrakesh, I have taken all necessary precautions to abolish the recent vexatious measures taken against the Jews and, God be praised, have succeeded in this. They are at present quite as untroubled and highly respected in the *Medina* (the Arab quarter) as in their *Mellah*. They may wear their *baboush* [a heavy slipper] in the *Medina* and may moreover even ride on animals outside the *Mellah*, that is, in the *Medina*. In short, they now have all freedom to do everything formerly forbidden to them. We hope that they will continue to be satisfied and we ask God Almighty to assist us for the general good.

As to re-opening your schools here, you may rest assured that I shall give all assistance to the teachers you are to send, in order that they may open the schools without difficulty. So send the teachers, for they will be welcome. I should also inform you that I am very pleased with the schools you have in our Empire and I have always esteemed the education given there to Jewish children. I know already that the sole object of your schools is the intellectual and moral elevation of all

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\* The letter of Leven to El Glaoui and his reply were inspired by Joshua Corcos, a Jewish merchant of Marrakesh, and banker to the Sultan.

their pupils and that they maintain great respect for all religions. M. Corcos will undoubtedly inform you that, upon reading your letter, I summoned before me the two *Pashas* of the town and the *Pasha* for the outskirts of Marrakesh, where there are many Jews, and in the presence of M. Corcos enjoined them to do all they could to ensure that the Jews should not be mistreated and that no annoyance to them should occur at any time. I also recommended the schools, teachers and pupils to them.

I repeat that I love only the truth and the equality of all creatures. We remain staunch friends to all Europeans and in particular to our honourable neighbours, the French. I should also inform you that our revered sovereign, His Majesty the Sultan Mouley 'Abdul Hafiz, wishes well to everyone and desires the good of all, and that everything that the newspapers say about him is false.

*Letter (26.10.1908) from Si Madani Elmezouar El Glaoui (Grand Vizier of His Sherifian Majesty, Mouley 'Abdul Hafiz, Sultan of Morocco) then in Marrakesh, to Narcisse Leven, President of the AIU, Paris.*

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1909 *Sultan promises protection to Jews of Fez*

This intervention and the steps taken could not have come at a more opportune moment. Amidst the confusion of Moroccan politics, you were able to predict the moment when a *détente* was likely, so as to intercede appositely on behalf of our co-religionists in Fez. This is what happened: the Sultan read most attentively the speeches on Morocco made in the *Chambre [des Députés]* in the last few days. As and when the newspapers arrived in Tangiers, special messengers brought him the translations. You will recall the report on the situation in the *Mellah* which I sent to M. Gaillard, the French consul in Fez, and which was forwarded to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and you saw how M. Pichon, when speaking in the *Chambre* on the situation of the Jews in Fez, was prompted by that report and quoted part of it. Furthermore, M. Pichon made representations on the subject to [Si Taïeb] El Mokhri [Foreign Minister], who passed them on to the Sultan. Yesterday, El Glaoui, following these representations, con-

vened the Chief Rabbis and the notables of our community, and, speaking in the name of his master, told them:

It has come to our knowledge that the head of your school has on several occasions written on your behalf to the *Alliance Israélite*. I am instructed by my master to tell you that never again will you be obliged to submit to any injustice on the part of the *Makhzen* [government], that forced labour will no longer be imposed upon you, that your feasts and sabbaths will henceforth be respected; I bring you the goodwill promises of the Sultan, who loves you as much as his most faithful subjects. The doors of *Dar el Makhzen* [the Palace] are from this day forward wide open to you and you can always put your complaints and grievances before us; they will be equitably heard.

This is, more or less, what El Glaoui told the representatives of the *Mellah*. Shortly after the community leaders had left the Grand Vizier, I presented myself before him and handed him your letter, which made a considerable impression on him. El Glaoui was very flattered by your approach and showed it by the particularly charming manner in which he received me. After having renewed to me personally the promises made to the notables of the *Mellah* a few minutes previously, he rose to go in order to read to the Sultan your letter which I had taken the precaution of having translated beforehand into an elegant, literary, Arabic.

*Letter (7.12.1909) from Abraham Elmaleh, head of Fez AIU Boys' school, to AIU, Paris.*

#### 1911 Only the Alliance is able to protect Marrakesh Jews

... The great majority of the people enjoy no protection except that of the *Alliance*. We are doing all we can for them. If Jews are unjustly imprisoned, molested and held to ransom by the authorities or by fanatical Muslims, the representative of the *Alliance* makes it his duty to plead their case with the responsible authority and more often than not his efforts are crowned with success. We endeavour to maintain the best possible relations with the *pashas* and the other local

government authorities, and use these good relations to ease, as far as we can, the precarious situation of our co-religionists who are Moroccan subjects.

These relations are even more crucial to us since we have no right to interfere in the dealings between the *makhzen* [government] and its own subjects. Thus, each time I have intervened on behalf of any Jew, it is on the basis of a *fabor* (grace, favour). One could not speak in terms of injustice or violence to these proud and arrogant men without the risk of being shown the door and forever barred access to the governor's house. . .

*Letter (27.9.1911) from Raphael Danon, head of the Marrakesh AIU Boys' school to the AIU, Paris (AIU FRANCE XIV F. 25).*

#### 1912 Improved situation of Marrakesh Jews

One cannot fail to recognize the achievements accomplished so far by your schools in Marrakesh. If one were to remember for a moment the situation of the Jews in this city 10 years ago, one is struck by the changes they have undergone in the material sense, as well as from an intellectual and moral viewpoint.

Judging from conversations I have had with some Jews on this subject, it is clear that their situation was very precarious. With a deep sigh, they recall the painful moments which they experienced. Your eminent collaborators who have taught in your schools in Marrakesh have, no doubt, painted frequently for you a picture of the sad and heartbreaking situation of the Jewish community at that time. Nevertheless, I would like to add some details.

Confined to their sombre ghettos, the Jews lived in unhealthy slums. Whole groups of people swarmed in one miserable room, heaped together so to speak on top of each other and breathing bad air. The shadows of ignorance and superstition had taken possession of almost all of them. Small wonder that in the streets, at almost every step, one could come across sickly people in tatters. Everything about them reeked of the most abject poverty and the crudest ignorance. . .

Let us measure the progress made by the Jews in their relations with the Arabs since the period of the *Galut* [exile] which ended only with the assassination of Dr Mauchamp

[19 March 1907]. A deep, unbridgeable gap separated the Muslims from the Jews. The latter were the object of torment, scorn and ill-treatment. They were not allowed to leave the *Mellah* with shoes on their feet, with the exception of the president of the community who was always escorted by the *pasha's* soldiers. All were obliged to take off their *babouches* or leave them at home when they tried to enter the Arab quarter, no matter how prosperous their condition. The unfortunate ones who ran the risk of riding any sort of animal through the *Medina* (the Muslim quarter) were beaten with sticks or fists, and then forced to dismount in a trembling state. 'Miserable Jew, how dare you ride an animal in the presence of your master?' 'In the name of God have pity on me, I am dismounting.' That is not all, in the *Medina*, the unfortunate Jews were the playthings of their tyrannical neighbours. The latter forced them to endure a thousand humiliations, when they passed by, such as throwing their skull-caps to the ground or filling it with urine and returning it to them. After which the Arabs spat in their faces, threw stones at them or forced them to perform humiliating acts. Those who tried to defend themselves were knocked about without pity. Inured to the worst treatment, the poor Jews accepted with pious resignation all the repressive acts which their dangerous neighbours made them endure. In a word, the age of the *Galut* had been a period of suffering and endless torments for our unhappy brethren.

What a change has taken place! This sad and humiliating past is disappearing little by little before the path of light, of progress. Today, the Jews are treated almost as the equals of the Arabs and the Christians. . . .

*From a report (30 March 1912) by L. Benoudiz, teacher at the AIU Boys' school, Marrakesh to AIU, Paris (AIU MOROCCO II B. 9).*

#### 1912 Cataclysmic destruction and pillage of Fez Mellah

We are awakening from a horrible nightmare. I didn't feel able to describe it to you. The sack of the *Mellah* by the mutinous sherifian troops began on Wednesday, the 17th of this month at midday. I had just left

the school and had sat down to lunch, when I was informed that shots were being exchanged at the gates of the *Mellah*. At first it was a quarrel of small importance. But, moment by moment, the news that came in was more and more alarming. I was told that the troops had massacred their instructors, that 5,000 well-armed soldiers had revolted, and that there was a march on the *Mellah* and the European quarter. The doors of the *Mellah* were closed but unfortunately not guarded, for the Jews had no guns or munitions and the attack was so sudden that it was impossible to organize a defence. Each tried to defend himself in his home near his family. Our schools were invaded by groups of women and children in tears seeking refuge, none of whom realized, unfortunately, as we understood later, that our presence was fatal for them, for the mutinous soldiers were out to massacre all the French of Fez. I tried to organize our group to defend itself in the best way, so that our lives would be sold dearly. We had only five guns for more than 400 refugees. It was a desperate situation. About 2 p.m. I was told that the mob had burnt the doors of the *Mellah* and penetrated the quarter. The sack began then and we could hear the cries of those who were being massacred and their screams of despair. I spared no effort to get news to the French Minister and to the French camp in Dar Dbibagh about two kilometres from the *Mellah*, to obtain aid, but my letters never arrived.

I have set out this situation in a letter to the French Minister of which I am sending you an enclosed copy. In any case, Mr President, we Jews have been the innocent scapegoats for the anti-French movement that broke out in Fez. Many French have been killed and mutilated: officers, businessmen lost their lives that Wednesday. It is a cruel mourning for France and for us. I have lost dear friends whom I shall always remember. The tragedy that struck an entire community such as our *Mellah* was even more atrocious. From the whole city of Fez, we were the only ones to be attacked; how cruelly true it is that whenever popular anger explodes in Morocco, vengeance is wreaked on the *Mellahs* until hatred has been satiated.

The pillage that started at midday on the Wednesday continued without pause until Saturday morning. For three days, massacres, robbery and conflagrations were accomplished in the *Mellah* without interruption. The night of Wednesday to Thursday was a night of hell. I shall never forget that night, guns in my hands, near my stricken family, hearing the shooting, the screams of the victims, in a district illuminated by the sinister light of the burning quarter, expecting at any moment to be attacked by the savage horde and massacred with my family. We passed through horrible moments. Around me, I had gathered my wife, my children and my staff so that we might die together, for we would not have escaped death despite the desperate resistance we were prepared to offer; we knew this from the experience of several homes that had been defended with desperate courage and which had finally yielded to the bullets and the flames. On the Thursday morning, because of the atrocities already committed and wishing to prevent further tragedies, I induced the people in the surrounding houses to leave. I myself left my house with my family and all the refugees and we fled to a garden adjacent to the Sultan's palace. We passed the rest of the day there, tracked and pursued, from hedge to hedge and from one cottage to another!

Oh! that desperate flight in the garden, the cries of the women and children who cling to me, under the delusion that I had the means to save them. I will never be able to describe you the full horror of it. Deliverance came that evening. Filled with compassion, the Sultan had all the Jews gathered together and opened the doors of his palace, those doors against which we had knocked in vain all that day. Nearly two thousand Jews took refuge that evening in one of the palace courtyards. We were among them. What had happened to the others? We shuddered to think of their fate. We spent that night in the courtyard under the rain, sick and starving (we had eaten nothing since Wednesday morning and it was not until the Friday morning that we received a piece of bread). The following morning, Friday, the Sultan sent for me with my family. We insisted that our staff should also gain entrance, to which

he agreed. We were received in a house; the Sultan came to see us and to talk with us, with simplicity and much kindness. At the palace we were given the utmost hospitality until the morning when I left to go to the Embassy in order to help the Jews. The other Jews were gathered together at the palace on the Friday, and the Sultan ordered a generous distribution of food to them. The military authorities, the embassy and the British consul sent bread. . . .

The facades of the houses were ripped out, whole streets were piled with rubble from houses which had caved in, the doors of all the houses had been smashed; broken furniture and the remains of the pillaging carried out freely by several hundred looters during three days lay about. Fire everywhere, destruction, ruin and desolation. The corpses which were piled up in the streets were removed, more than 50 of them, men, women and children. How many more will be found under the rubble? I went into the school and into my apartment. There was nothing left. What could not be taken away had been broken, ripped up. What scenes of savagery have I reconstituted! . . .

*Letter from Abraham Elmaleh (22.4.1912), head of Fez AIU Boys' school to Pres. AIU, Paris (AIU MOROCCO ?).*

#### 1912 Report on the massacre in Fez

The day after the April bloodbath which witnessed the complete plundering of the *Mellah*, a Commission was named by special *dahir* of the Sultan Mouley Hafiz to redress the immense disaster which had struck the Jewish population.

Here is a translation of the imperial *dahir*:

'Praise to the One God:

'There is no strength or power except in God on High, the Sublime One. (Seal of S. M. Mouley 'Abdul Hafiz, Sultan of Morocco.)

'This is to announce that with the aid of God we enjoin the setting up of a Committee composed of 14 members, under the chairmanship of our servant Tazi. We require this Committee to examine ways of remedying the situation of the Jews of the *Mellah* in this city, and to take all steps necessary in this respect, therefore:

1. The Committee will first concern itself with providing for the subsistence of the Jews.
  2. It will then proceed to remove the rubble from those parts of the *Mellah* which have collapsed, and generally clean up the quarter.
  3. It will choose an appropriate provisional encampment for the Jews.
  4. It will take appropriate measures to protect the Jews and the *Mellah*.
  5. The Committee will undertake these tasks with due solicitude and care in order to achieve the objectives outlined by the most practical means.
- 'Greetings This is our decree, may God approve it, the 5th *Djoudada* of the year 1330 (20 April 1912). . . .'

Following the looting which had lasted non-stop for three days, the *Mellah* presented a picture of a city destroyed by some frightful cataclysm. All the part between the admission *bordj* and what had been a furnace was completely destroyed and at the mercy of the fire which had been started on the night of 17 to 18 April. The streets which had previously been so gay, so full of life and movement were now just a mass of burnt and smoking ruins. The rubble rose to a height of more than ten metres, reaching the top floors of the houses. Half of the area was in ruins, ravaged by fire and uninhabitable; sections of walls stood alone, gutted houses somehow held together by a miraculous balancing act; others which had been isolated by partial or total collapse of adjacent houses were dangerous to live in.

The whole Jewish population had fled and taken refuge in the courtyard of the Sultan's palace. To the horror of destruction was added the horror of silence. The streets, encumbered with corpses, covered with bloodstains, varieties of débris, broken furniture, torn clothing, goods and numerous other things, were proof of the violence of the destruction and also of the struggles between pillagers who robbed one another. A nauseating odour of decomposition, decay, and fire arose from this chaos, and the rain which had fallen hard for 48 hours had transformed the *Mellah* into a filthy cesspool.

More than 60 Jews dead, some 50 wounded, a third of the *Mellah* deliberately burnt down, the complete sack of the quarter, a Jewish population of 10,000 people reduced, after the exodus, to 8,000, living on public charity, without shelter or clothing, neither with homes nor tools for work, stripped of all their possessions: that is the balance sheet of those tragic days and the situation which confronted the Committee. . . .

The Jewish population remained at the palace from the 19th-28th April. At first squeezed in a narrow yard, they were later able to occupy the vast interior courtyards of the palace and the menagerie where the cages for wild beasts served as shelter. From the outset, the Committee sent the necessary supplies to this population. . . .

The victims were able to return to the *Mellah* on the morning of April 28. It was time: they had suffered severely from the cold and humidity under their pathetic makeshift shelters which the rain penetrated. The return was heartbreaking. It was a pitiful column of men, women and children, in rags, dirty, weeping with despair as they gazed at the mass of ruins. An immediate distribution of food was made and the Jewish population crowded itself together as best it could in their quarter, reduced in area by one third. A large number of Jewish families emigrated at once to Meknès and the coast. I estimate that 2,000 left of which a part returned to Fez because of the difficulties of subsistence.

All the Jews who came back to the *Mellah* had need of aid, for no-one any longer possessed anything. It was impossible to make a distinction between those who had been rich and comfortable and those who had been poor. Our task only began once the Jewish quarter was re-established since some had to be provided with means of existence, others with working tools, and all with daily subsidies. . . .

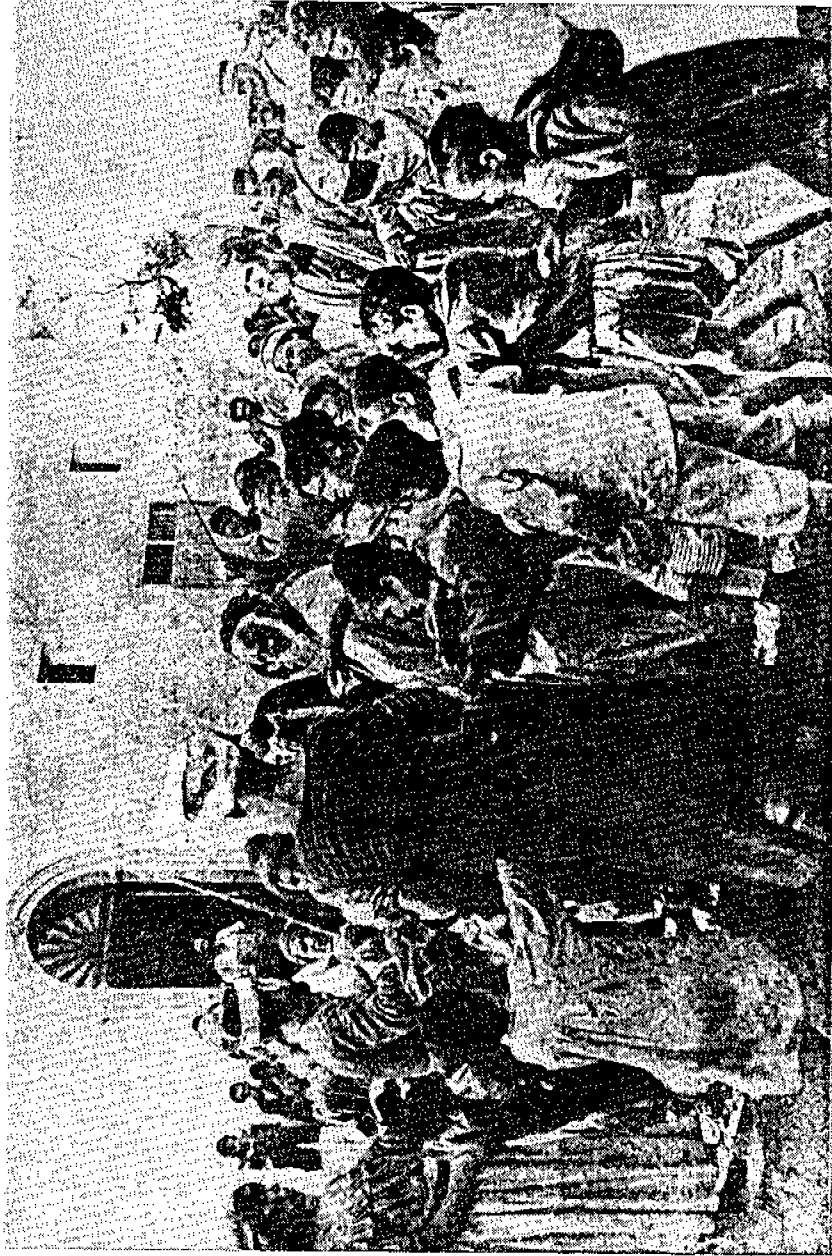
*From a report of A. Elmaleh (22.11.1912) published in Tangier (1913) (AIU MOROCCO).*

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### 1913 Jews of Fez can never forget the ghastly bloodbath of 1912

It is perhaps useless to recall the bloody events which took place in Fez on 17 April





A distribution of food to the Jews of Casablanca after the pogrom (August 1907).



The Jews of Fez taking refuge in the Sultan's menagerie (April 1912).

1912. However, what happened was so terrible that any recital would still fall short of the reality.

The Moroccans had been described as being sometimes sanguinary, but they carried out a crime of such infamy that day that the Jews of the *Mellah* will never be able to erase its evil memory.

Assassination, rape, fire, looting—nothing was spared this unfortunate Jewish community which was unable to defend itself since it had been completely disarmed a few days before by the Moroccan authorities under a futile pretext, which shows clearly that the revolution was organized and was not spontaneous as some have tried to pretend. . .

On 17 April, while the people of the *Mellah* went about their occupations as usual, a horde of Moroccans, amounting to thousands, rushed on the quarter and in cowardly fashion—whilst our wretched co-religionists begged for mercy, reminding them of past services—assassinated children, women and old people, under the eyes of their families who were powerless to help. These savages assuaged their passion on our wives and daughters who were raped in front of their relatives with a brutality that defies description. The circumstances of these atrocities still make us tremble; they went beyond all that can be imagined. And when we say that some of these women and young girls, sullied in this manner, are dead and others will for ever carry the traces of this violence, despite the care and attention of French doctors, the suffering which grips the *Mellah* can be understood.

While a part of the Moroccans brutally attacked us, others invaded our homes and after having carried off all of our possessions,

they set fire to our houses, thus adding another element of horror to the situation. Our sufferings are not easy to describe for at that moment we had lost all sense of self: frightened, ready for certain death, separated from our loved ones, we awaited with anguish the moment of our deliverance.

However, the presence of French soldiers had a salutary effect on Mouley Hafiz who decided to save a population of about 10,000 people, which was wandering about the streets, most of them without clothing. The Sultan's gardens were chosen as our refuge and there, without distinction of sex, we were herded into stables, into the cages of a menagerie, anywhere in fact where we could find shelter from the heavy rain that fell during those baneful days. There we remained for several days without covering and virtually without bread. The French soldiers freed us and order having been re-established, we were able to return to our homes. There we found another desolation since everything had been destroyed, and when we say that even the wood from our houses had been ripped off and carried away, the extent of the pillage can perhaps be imagined. . .

*From a report (Oct. 1913) probably prepared by A. Elmaleh for the French authorities in Paris (AIU MOROCCO).*

NOTES

1. Bernard Lewis, 'The Pro-Islamic Jews', *Judaism*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (New York, 1968), p. 401.
2. George Vajda, 'Un Recueil de textes historiques judéo-marocains', *Hespéris*, No. XII (Paris, 1951).
3. J. E. Budgett Meakin, 'The Jews of Morocco' (1892) *JQR* IV, *The Moorish Empire* (1899), *The Land of the Moors* (1901), *The Moors* (1902).
4. Charles de Foucauld, *Reconnaissance au Maroc 1883–84* (Paris, 1888).
5. Michel Carrouges, *Foucauld : Devant l'Afrique du Nord* (Paris, 1961), p. 151.
6. Edmond Doutté, *Missions au Maroc : En Tribu* (Paris, 1914), p. 137.