

and villages of Erzerum and that of the city of Erzerum itself. During these widespread massacres and deportations, Armenians in some places, as earlier discussed, were given the option to convert to Islam and stay on. Many women too, some forcibly, others voluntarily, were taken into Muslim homes as wives or concubines and saved. Tens of thousands of women, however, did not make the choice to “save their soul” and go on living with the nightmares of the past and the compunction of having betrayed their race and religion. They chose to continue their journey to death. Archbishop Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Patriarch of Constantinople, recorded one of many such documented examples in his memoirs:

A military policeman accompanying a caravan of Armenian deportees from Aleppo to Mosul relates how he had proposed to a pretty girl to marry him and free herself from torture and death. The girl responded to him: “If it is your prophet who ordered you to treat us so inhumanely, I cannot be the wife of a man who worships such a prophet. And if he did not order you to do this and still you are doing it, then I cannot be the wife of such a godless unbeliever, even if I were to die.”²

In Agop Hacikyan’s novel, *A Summer Without Dawn* (2000), Vartan Balian’s beautiful wife, Maro, decided to go with Riza Bey, a high ranking officer and later the mayor of Aintab, who promised to send her to Constantinople to join her relatives.

the law to give the action some kind of authority (the law was approved on May 30, 1915), and before the events of Van which were later labeled an “uprising” and used as a pretext to justify the measures taken against the Armenian population of the Empire. See Walker, “World War I and the Armenian Genocide” (1997), pp. 249-52.

² Der Yeghiayan, *My Patriarchal Memoirs* (2002), p. 73.