
Warrior of Words: “Naoum Mokarzel- Lebanese WWI Journalist”

Lilianne Zeidan *

Abstract

This study focuses on Naoum Mokarzel “Warrior of Words: Naoum Mokarzel- Lebanese WWI Journalist”. It is based primarily on unpublished sources, including the *Al-Hoda* Journal Archives. The paper covers the years immediately preceding WWI when Naoum took a particularly long and winding road to defend the rights of the Lebanese people in America. With the outbreak of the WWI, it became progressively difficult for Mokarzel to pursue his goals especially “when the six Great Powers guaranteeing Lebanese polity were fighting one against another and seeking Ottoman’s friendship”. However, in 1916, rumors about the massacre of the Maronites abounded, and the rudeness of the Jamal Pasha policy triggered Mokarzel to take all steps to prevent the annihilation of the people of Lebanon.

This paper focuses on the role of Al-Hoda- Naoum Mokarzel’s battlefied in WWI, during which he started to attack the Turks in his editorials and explored the ramifications of the reactions and actions of the “warrior of words” until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918.

Keywords : warrior, fund, volunteer, fundraising, collapse, crumble, immigrant, migration, emigration, starvation, newspaper, Mutassarifya, recruit, *mahjar*, relief

* Professor at the Lebanese University, Faculty of letters and Human Sciences, liliane.zeidan@ul.edu.

Warrior of Words: Naoum Mokarzel- Lebanese WWI Journalist”

The First World War was a human disaster; millions over the world and one third of the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon lost their lives. In this respect, I choose to pay tribute to one of those eminent journalists who fought for the Lebanese cause and supported Lebanese nationalism by spreading awareness, even from a distance, to eventually become the symbol of Lebanese nationalism: Naoum Mokarzel¹, the founder of *Al-Hoda* newspaper (Shibley, 2014, p.71).

Thus, this paper focuses on Naoum Mokarzel as “Warrior of Words” and Lebanese WWI Journalist. It is based primarily on *Al-Hoda* Journal Archives. It covers the years immediately preceding WWI until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, when Naoum Mokarzel and his newspaper took a particularly long and winding road to defend the rights of the Lebanese people.

With the outbreak of the WWI, it became progressively difficult to Mokarzel to pursue his goals “when the six Great Powers guaranteeing Lebanese polity” _the *Mutassarifya* of Mount Lebanon_ were fighting each other and seeking the friendship of the Ottomans.

However, in 1916, rumors proliferated about the massacre of the Maronites, and the ruthlessness of the Jamal Pasha policy actuated Naoum Mokarzel to take all steps to prevent the extinction of the people of Lebanon (Mokarzel, 1968, p. 23). *Al-Hoda* along with the “Lebanon League of Progress” were Naoum Mokarzel’s battlefield during WWI (Rihani, 2007, p. 56-57)².

Through this study, I tried to shed a new light on the character of the publisher of the daily *Al-Hoda*, who had played a leading role during World War I as the leader of the relief movement. I also explored the actions and the reactions of this “warrior of words” by examining his editorials and unsigned articles in *Al-Hoda* from which he led his battle against the Ottomans. Those articles have become part not only of the History of the emigration from Lebanon to the New World but also part of our country’s recorded history. This study is divided into two main parts: Naoum Mokarzel at the Eve of the Outbreak of Hostilities and Naoum Mokarzel “warrior of Words “during WWI.

1-Naoum Mokarzel at the eve of the outbreak of hostilities

Arab migration to America started in the last half of the nineteenth century. The first wave had its geographical roots in the Levant³, particularly from the small towns and mountainous villages in the present-day Lebanon, which were primarily Christian (Suleiman, 1992, p. 194; Pearlman, 2013, p.191; Reid, 1970, 358-367).⁴

¹ Naoum Mokarzel: (2 August 1864 - 5 April 1932)

² Lebanon’s League of Progress was established in 1911, and *Al-Hoda* became its political voice.

³ The first wave was mainly from Mount Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, and was a Christian phenomenon.

⁴From 1860-1900, an estimated 120,000 persons left Mount Lebanon, about one fourth of the total population. Most were destined for the Americas. From 1900-14, the rate increased from an average of 3,000 emigrants per year to an estimated 15,000 emigrants per year. Donald Reid speaks about “Syrian Christians”: Syria here refers to geographical Syria, including the present day countries of occupied Palestine, Jordan Lebanon and Syria.

It must be stressed that the Lebanese emigration was an immediate consequence of acute land shortage under the *Mutassarifya* in 1861 and the serious failure of silk-crop in the Mountain over the period from 1875 to 1885 (Karpas, 1985, p. 177-178).

Thus the mountaineers, who were mostly Christians, sought economic security through migration (Karpas, 1985, 178; Reid, 1970, p. 358.). That time, most of the emigrants were those poor unfortunate peasants and small-scale traders⁵ that had had little or no schooling, with the exception of a few⁶, such as Naoum Mokarzel (Suleiman, 1994, p.27).

Naoum Moukarzel was born and raised in Freike, located in the central part of Al Maten el Shemali, in Lebanon, in 1864, to Father Antoun Mokarzel, a Maronite priest (Moses, 1994, p. XI).

Naoum arrived in the United States in 1888, at the age of twenty-six. He had already graduated from the Jesuit Saint Joseph's University, a prestigious Catholic institution of higher education in Beirut. He taught literature for a year at the Jesuit College in Cairo after graduating, and he established a boarding school in his native village, Freike. In the United States of America, after two years of medical school, he gave up and felt the lure of journalism. He founded *Al-Asr*, which quickly failed (Family Collection Archives)⁷.

Shortly after, on February 22, 1898, in Philadelphia, he founded, published and edited his new newspaper, *Al-Hoda*, which means 'The Guidance', to move, four years later _in 1902_ to New York to reach large numbers of Arabic speaking communities (Rihani, 2007, p. 50)⁸. The paper began as a biweekly publication, changed to a weekly and later to a daily one (Charlton, 1971)⁹. It ended up by being the third oldest Arabic daily newspaper in the new world and one of the first Arabic newspapers to adopt the innovative American system of headlines and to run pictures¹⁰.

In fact, before World War I, there were dozens of Arabic magazines and newspapers in the New World. The impetus of the Arabic press was handful of intellectual immigrants in general and the Lebanese ones in

⁵It was uncommon for a family, who considered the costs of the voyage as an investment, to borrow money or to mortgage land to send a member or two to fulfill their dream of greater wealth and status.

⁶Most of the immigrants were lower-middle class or somewhat poorer. Their greatest bond was the family and the sect to which they belonged.

⁷ Family Collection Archives, Mokarzel Family, Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies, NC State University: <https://lebanesestudies.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/collections/show/44>, accessed on Nov. 17, 2020.

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/09/21/archives/end-comes-to-alhoda-arab-paper.html> accessed on May 30, 2020.

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/09/21/archives/end-comes-to-alhoda-arab-paper.html> accessed on May 30, 2020.

¹⁰ Mokarzel, Salloum A. (1881-1952), the editor of *The Syrian World* said on the paper's 50th anniversary in 1948. "*Al-Hoda was the first Arabic newspaper to treat news strictly as news...*" (Charlton, 1971) ;

<https://www.nytimes.com/1971/09/21/archives/end-comes-to-alhoda-arab-paper.html> accessed on May 30, 2020.

New York's Little Syria, 1880-1935, A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement of the Degree of Master of Arts, Florida Atlantic University (Shibley, 2014 p.71) ;

http://fau.digital.flvc.org/islandora/object/fau%3A13506/datastream/OBJ/view/New_York_s_little_Syria__1810-1935.pdf. accessed on May 30, 2020.

particular (Hourani and Shehadi, 1992, p.190)¹¹. Between 1892 and 1907, 21 Lebanese Arabic publications appeared, 17 of them in ‘Little Syria’ (or New York) (Naff, 1992 ; Hourani and Shehadi, 1992, p. 154).

The competition between those newspapers was intense (Fahrenthold, 2009, I, p. 7)¹² as it was established on sectarian basis (Makdisi, 2000, p. 166-167). It was the reflection of the diverse people from different “*millet*” under the Ottoman Empire (De Testa, 1856, I, p. 123-126) where the confessional community was a substitute for nation or country. This divergence was transported from the Middle East to the USA and was illustrated via the Arabic press there (Suleiman, 1994, p. 42).

While *Mir’ât al-Gharb* (mirror of the West) spoke for Greek-Orthodox, and *Al-Bayân* represented the small Muslim and Druze communities, *Al-Hoda* was the Maronite’s organ despite being stated at the beginning that it will not be subordinated to any faction or party, whether religious or political¹³. Similar to other newspapers, the idea of this publication was conceived in the spirit of service to the new immigrants who did consider themselves “*as sojourners*” (Charlton, 1971, p. 39; Schumann, 2013, p. 5)¹⁴: “*Lebanese and Syrian emigration in its inception was not intended to be permanent*” (Mansur, 1927, p. 18.). The first-comers went forth alone and with the fixed resolution to return (Mokarzel, 1926, p. 1), believing that they would stay long enough to possess financial assets, strike it rich and return to their mother-country (Suleiman, 1994, p. 27). They were poor illiterate, or at best, literate only in Arabic (Suleiman, 1992, p. 194; Khater, 2001, 187-189; Shibley, 2014, p. 64). As a result, the Arabic press in North and Latin America was not very interested in what was happening politically in the New World. It was incumbent upon it to know more about the country of origin and supply the new immigrants with the necessary information that aroused their interest. In this context, the political affiliation of the publications was always linked to the Middle East, and in particular to Mount Lebanon and the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire (Pearlman, 2013, p. 196)¹⁵. This was a necessity to

¹¹The first Lebanese immigrants were not a clearly distinct group. In fact, a brief catalogue of names by which they were known is instructive and illustrates the difficulties scholars had in discussing ‘the Lebanese’ over a span of some one hundred years. Thus, since their arrival in America over a century ago, these people have been referred to as, or called themselves, Syrians, Syrian-Lebanese, Syrian-Americans, Turks, Arabians, Arabs (or merely a constituent part of the - American group) or Lebanese Americans (Hourani and Shehadi, 1992, p.190).

¹²Prior to 1910, printing in the Arabic language was punitively expensive because news type required setting by hand. *Al-Hoda* was the first newspaper to adapt linotype to Arabic and to acquire Mergenthaler Linotype machine (Fahrenthold, 2009, Vol. 1, p. 7; Charlton, 1971, p. 39); <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/09/21/archives/end-comes-to-alhoda-arab-paper.html> accessed on May 30, 2020).

¹³When Naoum Mokarzel accused other Arabic newspapers in the United States (and their editors/publishers) of being loyal to Britain, France, Russia or the Ottomans, he emphasized that *Al-Hoda*, “followed a policy of independence (Charlton, 1971, p. 39). <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/09/21/archives/end-comes-to-alhoda-arab-paper.html> accessed on May 30, 2020) (Schumann, 2013, p. 5).

¹⁴ Arab-Americans called themselves *al- Nizaleh* (i.e., travelers or guests), “*Syrians*” or “*Ottomans*” _ all such terms indicating a temporary U.S. presence and/or non-citizen affiliation (Suleiman, 1994, p. 38); (*Al-Hoda*, 1899, p. 20): “*You remain settlers in a foreign land*”.

¹⁵ From 1860-1900, an estimated 120,000 persons left Mount Lebanon, about one fourth of the total population. Most were destined for the Americas. From 1900-14, the rate increased from an average of 3,000 emigrants per year to an estimated 15,000 emigrants per year. Emigration practically halted when Lebanon was blockaded during World War I, but then resumed, with West Africa emerging as a key destination.

meet the needs of the new emigrants; *Al-Hoda*, dealing with Arabic topics was as necessary to the Syrian-born immigrants as home and school (Suleiman, 1994, p. 39).

Almost *Al-Hoda* and all other newspapers (Schumann, 2013, p. 4 -5)¹⁶ had to define in one way or another their attitude (if not their relationship with) toward the Ottoman authorities (Suleiman, 1994, p. 39).

Up to World War I, nearly all Syrian Arab newspapers in the United States called for reforms in the Arab provinces under the Ottoman government; however in his writings in *Al-Hoda*, Mokarzel called for the establishment of a viable vital Lebanese State by an extension of the frontiers of the *Mutassarifya* (Bawardi, 2014, p. 62; Salibi, 1966, p. 153; Shibley, 2014, p. 60)¹⁷.

He was convinced, when he attended the Arab Conference, in Paris, in 1913¹⁸, that Christians and Muslims had to face together the attempt of the Young Turks to undermine the legitimate aspirations for autonomy or independence (Bardawi, 2014, p. 65) and to “*absorb the ethnic entities under their government*” (Cook, 2016, p.87)¹⁹.

The legitimacy of the *Mutassarifya* and its protection offered and guaranteed by the European powers pushed him, upon his return from Paris, to rethink the situation and to claim the implementation of concrete measures leading Mount Lebanon from autonomy to independence. Among the actions he took were the restitution of the Lebanese ancient borders, the appointment of consuls and ambassadors, the restoration of the Lebanese flag and the objective of recovering customs and postal services. Thus, *Al-Hoda* campaigned in its editorials for the independence of postal services in Mount Lebanon and the creation of a free port (Mokarzel, 1968, p. 7).

Alix Naff asserted that before the First World War, an “ethnic reference” was cultural rather than nationalist under Ottoman rule because there was no political entity (in the Arab provinces) that would justify a nationalist identity” (Naff, 1992, p.3.). However, in the ‘autonomous’ Lebanon (politically existing), Lebanese nationalism manifested itself at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (Salibi, 1966, p. 109-110)²⁰, particularly with Naoum Mokarzel. Indeed, Naoum, as a Lebanese journalist and teacher, entered the political arena by trying to forge in his editorials and articles, through *Al-Hoda*, an authentic Lebanese nationalism among Lebanese immigrants across the United States and other parts of the *mahjar* (Mokarzel, 1868, p. 6).

¹⁶ The period before and after World War I was a time of remarkable cultural production in the North and Latin America: Schumann (2013), p.4-5.

¹⁷ http://fau.digital.flvc.org/islandora/object/fau%3A13506/datastream/OBJ/view/New_York_s_little_Syria__1810-1935.pdf, last accessed on May 30, 2020.

¹⁸ Naoum Mokarzel attended the First Arab Conference in Paris. He represented the Lebanese separatism against demands for Syrian national territorial integrity by nationalists from Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Istanbul, Iraq, Damascus, Mexico, and the United States: (Barwardi, 2014, p.74; Rihani, 2007, p. 50).

¹⁹ The Ottoman province of Syria encompassed what is today: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and occupied Palestine.

In fact, before World War I Arabic-speaking immigrants that arrived from the Ottoman province of Syria, which included the *Mutassarifya* or, called themselves Syrians (not ottomans)-even those who came from Palestine.

²⁰ The Lebanese polity that emerged since the Lebanese principality era (Emirate) and was consecrated by the *Mutassarifya* protocol engendered among the inhabitants of the Mountain - the Maronite in particular- a Lebanese national feeling. The Lebanese nationalism was accentuated by the immunity provided to the “*règlement organique*” by the five Great Powers. Being Lebanese is being one of the inhabitants of the Mountain sharing the same privileges and almost the same culture (Salibi, 1966, p. 109-110).

Thus, *Al-Hoda* had established itself as the great champion of Lebanese political rights in specific and Arab culture in general (Moses, 1994, p. XI). It championed the cause of Lebanon and “Lebanonization” (Suleiman, 1994, p. 44).

In fact, the Ottoman Empire began to crumble during the nineteenth century, and its weakness was obvious during the Balkan War. Consequently, Naoum began to sense opportunities for escaping the age-old restricted status by devoting himself to the above convictions (Mokarzel, 1868, p.18-19; Ümit, 2014, p.43:)²¹. While Naoum was planning and deliberating, the outbreak of the First World War in Europe among the guarantor countries prevented him from going further in that direction and pursuing his goals.

This explains why, during World War I and its aftermath, Mokarzel's main political concern, along with the Arabic-speaking groups in North America, was to achieve the liberation of the homeland from Ottoman rule and to provide economic aid to the starving inhabitants, especially in the Mount Lebanon region. Like most Arab leaders, in order to achieve these goals, he set up relief committees, collected funds and sent money and supplies whenever possible. He also urged young Arab men in the United States and elsewhere to join the U.S. armed forces to help their new country and liberate their old homeland. Campaigns were launched to encourage immigrants to buy "American Liberty Bonds" to contribute to the war effort.

2- Naoum Mokarzel “warrior of Words “during WWI

At the outbreak of World War I, in the summer of 1914, Naoum Mokarzel knew from a cable sent to him by the League of Progress in Alexandria (Mokarzel, M., 1968, p. 24) that Lebanon was “in a great danger²²” (Tauber, Eliezer, 1993, p. 4-1; Buwairi, 1926, p. 361-2). He tried as the president of this association and the editor of *Al-Hoda* to convince the representatives of the Allies in Washington to invade Mount Lebanon and liberate its inhabitants from the yoke of Ottomans, and help them gain their independence, but his initiative was rejected (Tauber, 1993, p. 4-14)²³.

However, when the Ottoman Empire had entered the War on the side of the Central Powers, the United States was not technically at war with Turkey. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed, but there was no declaration of war on either side. Therefore, Mokarzel had to respect the US neutrality. He feared, at the beginning of the War, to be blamed for giving his support openly to the Allied and to the Lebanon’s independence (Mokarzel, M., 1968, p. 24).

In spite of this, nothing prevented him from sending indirect and strong messages in this matter, through *Al-Hoda*, when he felt that he had a chance. Thus, on July 4th, 1915, Naoum took the opportunity, at the American Independence Day, to recall, in an article entitled “Their Day and Our Day”, “The American Great Day”, the right or duty of the people of a nation to overthrow the oppressor. Thus, he drew a comparison between the American people and the Lebanese one, between what the American people achieved all through their history

²¹ (Ümit, 2014, p. 43): As sharp observers of their environment, American missionaries were cognizant of the fact that by the middle of 1913 [...]: “*Turkey is an empire, but it is not a nation. It has not in itself power, spiritual or material, sufficiently strong to weld together all of these elements into a nation*”.

²² On 22 November 1914, the Ottomans deployed their military troops in Mount Lebanon.

²³ Many revolt plans were drawn up at the beginning of the War by the Lebanese abroad: in Egypt, Greece, France [...] the Syrians who were secretly hoping, even plotting, that England or France might come and free the country from the hand of the oppressor.

and what the Lebanese had lost. He criticized the Lebanese for their passivity regarding the restitution of their rights, their ancient borders, their leadership and the lack of independence in their land of birth, accusing them of being cowards and submitting blindly to the “Ottoman oppressor”⁴, (*Al-Hoda*, July, 4th, 1917). Mokarzel wanted the American experience to be generalized and applied in Lebanon. He recognized over and over again that the struggle for freedom might require martyrs and not just “printer’s ink” (Gualtieri, 2009, p. 92).

Meanwhile, the French occupied the Island of Arwad on August 31, 1915, and their presence coupled with the military British troops in Egypt became a direct threat to the Ottoman Empire. Allied intelligence operations were expanded. Subsequently, in the same year, the Ottoman Empire abolished the *Mutassarifya*, and put Mount Lebanon under the direct Ottoman government control by appointing Ali Mounif Bey, a Sunni Ottoman *Wâli*, as the Mountain new ruler (*Ismâ’îl Haqqî Bey*, 1969, p. 4)²⁴.

When Naoum learned of this statement, he expressed anger and mistrust towards Ottomans who deprived “a defenseless people of their old and sacred rights”. In revenge, in one of his articles in his newspaper “Thoughts of what you are doing”, (*Al- Hoda* January, 11, 1916, p. 4), he wrote that the *Firmân* (royal decree) by which the Ottoman abolished the protocol of the *Mutassarifya* recalled not only “the barbarism of such practice but also the arbitrariness with which it was applied: the *Firmân* is more like the orgy of the drunken ones than the words of the Sultans. The *Firmân* seems to be issued by a leader of a brutal tribe in the heart of Africa, (p. 4)” By time, the situation in the mother-country escalated. Nevertheless, one must note that the dreadful impact of this war weighed heavily on the *Mutassarifya*. It revealed the economic inadequacy of the autonomous Mount Lebanon, which depended on remittances from Lebanese immigrants and foreign trade for more than half of its income and mainly satisfied its needs for cereals and livestock from the *Biqâ’* plains and the Syrian interior (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 72).

Thus, the shortages of the war coupled by drought and a massive invasion of locusts during the summer of 1915 exacerbated by the unbounded ambition and greediness of ruling classes and usurers made the majority of the inhabitants of Beirut and Mount Lebanon suffer famine the most among the rest of Ottoman provinces (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 72). In addition to all that, a large number of Lebanese and Syrians were hung by the Turks (Ajay, [April 1974, 5-2: 151](#))²⁵: “[...] The Turks would hang someone one a week or every two weeks”. On 6 May 1916, fourteen persons were hanged in Beirut. The main instrument for punishing was the military ottoman tribunal (Ajay, [April 1974, 5-2: 151](#)).

To the challenges of the War and within the parameters of official US neutrality, the American community in Beirut, the American Red Cross and the Presbyterian missionaries²⁶ responded by carrying out a valuable relief

²⁴ Ali Mounif Bey (Septembre 8, 1915- February 10, 1916); *Ismâ’îl Haqqî Bey* (March 26, 1917- 1918).

The French occupied the Island of Arwad on the 31 August 1915, and the intelligence operation expanded and became a direct threat to the Ottoman Empire. In revenge, the Ottomans began to push away from the coast certain leading Christian families, which had been in contact with the Allies.

²⁵ The process of political suppression- including the various measures used by the Turks to control the local government and the public security apparatus, the church and foreign elements – culminated in the executions of May 6, 1916. “It was [...], an act of barbarity almost beyond comprehension or belief....”.

²⁶ The Presbyterian missionaries were the founders of the American College in Beirut.

work (Antonius, 2015, p.241). In turn, Lebanese and Syrian immigrants faced those challenges in many different ways: organizing campaigns for their people to buy "American Liberty Bonds" (Mass, 11 November 2020)²⁷, joining the U.S. military to defend their new country and liberate their homeland, setting up relief committees, raising funds and sending money and supplies whenever possible (Haik Di Napoli, 2002, p. 18). For his part, Naoum Mokarzel, who could no longer afford to remain neutral or indifferent, acted as "the great champion of the Lebanese cause, throughout the United States and other parts of the 'mahjar' to provide economic assistance to the starving people, especially in Mount Lebanon (Suleiman, 1994, p. 44).

Naoum Mokarzel, through *Al-Hoda*, wrote a series of editorials describing the crisis in Syria and Lebanon in details. On January 19, 1915, he issued a public appeal on behalf of the victims of Mount-Lebanon and urged the readers to contribute to relief of the war sufferers of the Mountain through the American Missionaries (Mokarzel, M. 1968. p 20). *Al-Hoda* repeatedly carried appeals for help (Bushnaq, 2002, p.178). Thus, it became the voice of conscientiousness. It acknowledged the birth of numerous associations named after the native villages or areas from which the immigrants emerged; 'Ibreen' association was one of them. *Al-Hoda* acknowledged 'Ibreen' association on Monday, January 24, 1916 (*Al-Hoda*, January 13, 1916, p. 3; January 24, 1916, p. 2):

When Human duty requires that the sons of each locality abroad should provide help to the poor of their native villages, we have met on December 12, 1915, and we have donated the amount above mentioned, and it was sent through the American missionaries to the sheikh of our village Ibreen in order to be distributed to the sufferers there. Because there is no doubt about your (integrity) and your right generosity, we published this information on the pages of the eminent magazine *Al-Hoda* which can reach you "where ever you are" and it will be like a notification to achieve this sacred duty that you are from its defenders and God increases your wealth.

In the same framework and under the rubric "Social Section", and under the title "You and Your Family in your Homeland _ Answer to Dozens of Reports_" answers to the donors' questions were sharp and clear in line with the spirit of the newspaper (*Al-Hoda*, January 18, 1916, p. 3)²⁸:

When you asked us to send a designated amount of funds that you wanted to help your family with, through the American missionaries, we did not think that you would come back to ask for a response from the country after all that we wrote about the money and the terms and conditions for sending it. And we have fulfilled our optional duty and sent money to the missionaries and received from them a receipt, we sent it to you and we have fulfilled our responsibilities.

Do you want to know why you didn't get any answer from your family? Why did not you receive a

²⁷ Steeve Mass, WWI Liberty Bonds and the Culture of Investing, NBER, 11 November 2020: <https://www.nber.org/digest-202011/wwi-liberty-bonds-and-culture-investing> Last accessed on Nov. 17, 2020

²⁸ "All intolerance, fraud, pretention [...] are the enemies of *Al-Hoda*".

receipt from them proving that they received the money? And why, why and why? So dear citizen, you are aware of the situation of Turkey, maybe your family has been afraid of writing to you, or that their letter was intercepted, or something else happened, which we do not know. We only know one thing that the money that does not reach the recipients at home is sent back to its senders, in America. As long as the receipt is in your hands, you are safe, you are in Lebanon (Ibid, p. 3).

In the spring of 1916, Naoum Mokarzel heard an alarming news through the Department of State about the extermination of the Christians of Mount Lebanon. He called for a meeting of the Lebanese League of Progress. As a result, an appeal to the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, was sent by cable through the Lebanese League of Progress and in the name of Humanity to urge him to intervene "to protect our unfortunate brethren, before it is too late" (Mokarzel, 1968, p. 23). The inhabitants of Mount Lebanon "*were reduced by the Ottomans to eating grass and leaves while undergoing religious persecution*" (Ibid, p. 23).

In the same year, an "American Committee for Aid to Syrian and Lebanese Victims" was created to collect contributions. It received a cable from Constantinople through the State Department describing the terrible conditions in which Syrian and Lebanese Christians were living. The cable suggested that something had to be done to prevent the death by starvation of a large number of Christians. The Committee heard of massacres, but the greatest danger was starvation. Subsequently, *Al-Hoda* intensified in its editorials the call for more funds (Mokarzel, 1968, p. 23) because the main income of Mount Lebanon depended largely on the remittances of its emigrant population.

Given the limited number of Syrians in the United States, this demonstration of generosity speaks volumes about their benevolent tendencies, especially considering that it was only at the beginning of the 20th century that they became financially independent and that their immigration is barely in its second generation (*The Syrian World*, June 1927, I- 12, p. 45-46). In fact, the Lebanese and Syrians of the Diaspora aware of the harsh situation of their people were mobilized not just by sending money, but also by volunteering to fight against the Ottoman Empire. For instance, the Syrians in Canada asked the Canadian government, in the early 1915, for a battalion of Syrian soldiers to be recruited to fight the Turks, not the Germans. A clip from the Daily Star newspaper published in Montreal- Canada was sent to *Al-Hoda*, to spread the information and reach a wider audience. Thus, *Al-Hoda* played a leading role in coordinating all ongoing initiative at the American level. An article entitled "The Syrians in Canada" communicated this fact: (*Al-Hoda*, January 18, 1916, p. 3):

The Syrian community in this city (Montreal) is discussing the matter of recruiting a battalion to fight with the Allies against their only enemy, Turkey. The Lebanese (Syrians) do not want to fight the Germans and the Austrians, as they have nothing against them, but they hate the Turks who caused all of their past problems and who took their Mountain, where they have long lived under the protection of the six European Powers (p.3).

That is why they wanted to go to Asia Minor to fight the Turks, and this is why the National Guard Bureau

allowed the Syrians to volunteer under these conditions. In Montreal, about one thousand five hundred Syrians were expected to increase the number of these volunteers. *Al-Hoda* applauded this idea for four reasons: (Fernandez, p.127; Mokarzel Mary, 1968, p.7):

- 1-The emergence of the national courage that “we” thought had diminished
- 2-To show gratitude for the beautiful land that accepted us and did good to us
- 3-To support the free principles that the Allies are fighting for
- 4- Because such a demonstration helps the people of our homeland in Canada to cancel the dye applied to them as if they were non-Caucasians.²⁹

The Syrian immigrants in the United States in turn had previously proposed volunteering, and they were around 250,000 immigrants. Eliezer Tauber wrote that, in the early 1915, a large number of Syrians in Canada, the United States and South America wanted to volunteer in the British forces and go to Egypt in order to fight for liberation of Syria. They promised around 30,000-50,000 volunteers (Tauber, 1993, p.4-14). From his part, Naoum Mokarzel was hoping to reach this ultimate goal by channeling information and supporting efforts through *Al-Hoda*, but he often expressed his fear “*saying is one thing doing is another*”. What the editor of *Al-Hoda* wished for was that determination be steadfast, not advertising in the newspapers, which may be beneficial for a short time and harmful for a long time because saying without action is a cause of mockery and contempt (*Al-Hoda*, January 18, 1916, p. 3).

In February 1917, the United States declared war on the Triple Alliance and gave free reign to Naoum’s pen (Mokarzel, 1968, p. 24). Thus, Mokarzel reiterated his appeal in his editorials and via the Lebanese League of Progress to all the Lebanese immigrants who were seeking assistance in liberating their old country to volunteer in the war against Turkey, but this time, on behalf of US and Lebanon (Mokarzel, 1968, P. 24).

However, the launching of this campaign had to be blessed by the American authorities. That is why Naoum went once again to Washington and spoke with many officials there on this issue, and then wrote to the Lebanese League for Progress from Washington, “tell our people the good news: The United States government has agreed to allow us to call for volunteers in the Oriental Battalion” (Mokarzel, M., 1968, p.25). It should be noted that France, had already established, in November 1916, a fighting unit called “the Oriental Battalion” to fight in the Levant and invited the Syrians and Lebanese to join ([Tsipsios](https://www.lesclesdumoyenorient.com/La-Legion-d-Orient.html), February 12, 2018)³⁰. As President of Lebanon League of Progress, Mokarzel tried to get the United States government to allow the Syrians and Lebanese in the US Army to be transferred to the French military in order to join the “Oriental Battalion”.

²⁹ Naoum went to Washington, D.C., at his own expense several times, meeting with judicial and immigration officials. The immigrant leadership, which included historian Philip Hitti along with Naoum Mokarzel, presented historical and genealogical evidence of the Syrian Caucasian origins. Physically the modern Syrians are of mixed Syrian, Arabian and even Jewish blood. They belong to the Semitic branch of the Caucasian race, thus widely differing from their rulers, the Turks, who are in origin Mongolian, who were not eligible to the American citizenship. This issue was not finally put to rest until 1923.

³⁰ <https://www.lesclesdumoyenorient.com/La-Legion-d-Orient.html> last accessed on January 29, 2021.

On the other hand, Naoum attempted, on behalf of the Lebanese League for Progress, to have the Syrians and Lebanese volunteers transferred from the US Army to the French Army and to join the "Oriental Battalion". He felt that this would strengthen the Lebanese demand for the independence. Afterward, the campaign launched in the pages of *Al-Hoda*, (*Al-Hoda*, July 1917) called upon the Lebanese to volunteer, promising to pay all transportation to its headquarters in Bordeaux, France. It announced the qualities required for a volunteer as imposed by the American authorities, two of these requirements are:

-He should be under the age of 45 years

-He should be in a good health, with good heart, good lungs, and without any anomaly that could prevent him from being enrolled in the Army...

The Lebanese League of Progress, in turn, approved those conditions and imposed new ones:

1-The volunteer should accept to travel as economic passenger, if not he will pay the extra fees.

2-The Lebanese League of Progress would deliver the volunteer's passport once on the boat ready to travel

3-It would not cover the personal expenses

4-The French government would repatriate each volunteer to his host land etc. (*Al-Hoda*, July 1917).

At the same time, an amount of \$100,000 was proposed as a target to reach. The Lebanese League of Progress suggested donations be given monthly, and the grants or donations may take the form of money or the fees of passports.

Afterwards, a book was published after the War by Lebanese League of Progress. In this book, the photos of the donators of at least \$10 monthly were illustrated with a translation of their own biography and the balance sheet of the capital. In order to achieve this goal, two treasurers were appointed giving confidence and credibility to the fund raising process: the Bishop Youssef Yazbek and the priest Francis Wakim, who were in charge of the Maronite communities respectively in Philadelphia and New York. However, after 1917, the money for this cause was sent to the Maronite Patriarch through the Apostolic Nunciature in the US and bifocals foreign papacy in Rome (*Al-Hoda*, July 6, 1917, 110).

The news about the volunteers was daily covered by *Al-Hoda*. This campaign launched on the pages of *Al-Hoda*, under the sponsorship of the Lebanese League of Progress, lasted till the end of the War.

As a result of this campaign, a great number of young people responded to Naoum's call, but only twenty-five volunteers were able to join because of military and transportation complications. In Brazil, however, the number of volunteers was much greater; eighty-two men enrolled in the Oriental Battalion and were transported to France and financed by the Lebanese League of Progress. What was significant was the effect achieved despite the small number of volunteers. Lebanese immigrants became directly involved in the war against Turkey. It was not just the volunteers and donors, who were targeted through Naoum to free Lebanon from the "Occupant", but also all the Lebanese of North America (*Al-Hoda*, July 6, 1917, 110).

The Lebanese league of Progress in New York called through *Al-Hoda* for a Conference for the Lebanese in North America gathering all its members all over its branches in the US, Canada, Mexico and Cuba in order to reach a common ground regarding the national issue during this critical time. All the Lebanese associations, even those who were never in contact with the Lebanese League of Progress but inhabited Lebanon in its ancient borders, were invited on one condition – their willingness to fulfill the national duties – without denying their own private goals whether they were social, educational or charitable (*Al-Hoda*, July 6, 1917, 110).

The editor of *Al-Hoda* aimed through this Conference to unite the representatives of the Lebanese community in North America around a common road map in order to facilitate the achievement of the national goals (*Al-Hoda*, July 6, 1917, 110). Moreover, Naoum next Battle was against the “spies, hypocrites, traitors (*Al-Hoda*, July 13, 1917, 117) and unionists who defended the Union between Lebanon and Syria at the expense of Great Lebanon (whether they were Lebanese or Syrians, individuals, associations, committees, newspapers, etc.)

In an article dated July 7, 1917 entitled “Lebanon for the Lebanese”, Naoum referred to instances in history to assert that there was no doubt that the Lebanese people can claim such a political entity contrary to the status of Syria and Syrians under the Ottoman Empire (*Al-Hoda*, July 7, 1917, 111). He insisted that the merit of Lebanon’s existence as an autonomous political entity went to the Maronite struggle over the history, with a lot of sacrifices and the many massacres. That engendered a sort of consecration of their rights in their homeland compared to the other inhabitants of the Mountain (*Al-Hoda*, July 6, 1917, 111).

Consequently, Naoum had to fight against the rival of *Al-Hoda*, the *Meraat al-Gharb*, the Orthodox journal, and “liberation Committee of Syria and Lebanon” because they did not support the independence of Lebanon from Syria (*Al-Hoda*, July 13, 1917, 117).

Within the same framework, his battle was also against secularism and secular people, as Amin Rihani, Gebaran Khalil Gebran and Ayoub Tabet, who were advocating Great Syria. He asked them in one of his articles entitled “Where are your feelings” to come back to their national conscious, join him in his struggle and defend the Lebanese identity and the Lebanese cause (*Al-Hoda*, August 10, 1917, 139).

Conclusion

When World War I ended with the victory of the Allies, the fate of the Ottoman Empire was among the major problems that the Peace Conference, held in Paris on January 18, 1919, was going to face, (Lesch, David, 1999, p. 14)³¹. Therefore, Naoum went to Paris to join the Lebanese delegations and pleaded for the independence of Lebanon within its historical natural borders separating it from the rest of Syria under the French mandate (Loheac, 1978, p. 73; Baudis, 1979, p. 197-202; Tauber (1995), p. 10; Samné, 1920, p. 31-33).

³¹ The principle of self-determination (self-determination) and the liberation of peoples were the main motives that led the United States to participate in the war. This principle was part of Wilson's 14 points that were gradually revealed from December 1917 to September 1918: «Self-determination», Wilson said, «is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril».

One year later, Mokarzel's impossible dream turned into a reality and his ambition seemed to be satisfied when General Gouraud, the French High Commissioner for Syria and Lebanon, proclaimed the establishment of the State of Greater Lebanon under the French Mandate, on September 1, 1920 (A. D. N., (1918-1932), 452). Mokarzel continued to follow closely the political evolution of Lebanon, but he was very disappointed by the "corrupted people" in power in the New Republic. He wrote early in 1927 (*The Syrian World*, August 1926, I-2: 51-51):

In Lebanon there are leaderships of ignorance, of assumption, of "inherited rights" and of vain conceit -all of which is productive of evil and not of good. Not ten persons in Lebanon are of one opinion, not even three unless they are united in conspiracy or submission.

He was convinced that the political regime in place was ill-adapted to the mentality of the Lebanese people "[...] who are admittedly the brain of the East, are not yet fit for independence". Under existing conditions, and while Syria "is seething with religious venom", "[...] the French are much better to the Lebanese than any other neighbors". He sent to the League of Nations as editor-in-chief of *Al-Hoda* and president of the League of Progress, a protest against the proposed "*amalgamation of Lebanon with Syria*". Naoum reacted in this way because of the Syrian insurrection and its devastating repercussions on Lebanon.

A few years after the end of the WWI, in 1925-26, where Mokarzel found himself once again obliged to conduct a new fundraising campaign, still through *Al-Hoda*, for the relief of Lebanese refugees, especially those driven out of their homes by the insurgents (*The Syrian World*, I- 2, August 1926, p.53)³². Mokarzel did not lose hope of being able to play an influential role in determining the fate of his homeland. Through the pages of his newspaper, the "warrior of words" proposed some remedies to Lebanon's chronic problem, which deserve to be better studied and analyzed.

In conclusion, *Al-Hoda* remains one of the best primary sources of research that addresses several key issues of concern to historians today, particularly those related to the various roles conceived and played for the sake of Lebanon by one of the leaders of the relief movement and the eminent godfathers of "*Grand Liban*" – Naoum Mokarzel.

³² This campaign for relief resulted in a very substantial amount, approaching \$50.000 in money and clothes, being forwarded to a special committee of members of the Lebanon legislative Council for impartial distribution. These funds, forwarded at the rate of \$1000 a week, were of great assistance in the relief work. In August, 1926, the Lebanon Council voted unanimously a resolution of thanks to Naoum Mokarzel for great assistance in the relief work. When he learned that he will be awarded, he hastened to cable the newly formed Press Association of Beirut that he would under no consideration accept a decoration explaining that his services to mother-country were conceived in pure disinterestedness.

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