

## Rumors in Damascus (B)

On the morning of July 11, 1860, a mob was now banging on the door of Abd el-Kader's residence in Damascus. Confronting the crowd, Emir Abd el-Kader barely paused before he spoke:

*My brothers, your behavior violates the law of God. What makes you think you can go around killing innocent people? Have you sunk so low that you are slaughtering innocent women and children? Didn't God say in our holy book, whoever kills a man who has never committed murder or created disorder in the land will be regarded as a killer of all humanity?*

*You are fools and idiots. The Christians I killed were invaders and occupiers and were ravaging our country... If you will not listen to me then God did not provide you with reason—you are like animals who are aroused only by the sight of grass and water.*

*As long as my soldiers are still standing you will not touch them. They are my guests. Murderers of women and children, you sons of sin, try to take on of these Christians and you will learn how well my soldiers fight.<sup>1</sup>*

Abd el-Kader was credited with saving five to ten thousand lives. His first biographer, Charles Henry Churchill later wrote, "Abd el-Kader alone stood between the living and the dead ... To say the Turks took no measures to stay the deluge of massacre and fire would be superfluous. They the connived in it, they instigated it; they shared in it."<sup>2</sup>

Abd el-Kader's most valued accolade was a letter from Emir Shamil, a Chechen freedom fighter imprisoned in Moscow, who praised him for his courage to do what his faith required: *You have put into practice the words of the Prophet and set yourself apart from those who reject his example... I was stupefied by the blindness of the functionaries who committed these excesses.<sup>3</sup>*

To a congratulatory letter from French Bishop Pavy of Algiers, the Emir responded:

*That which we did for the Christians we did to be faithful to Islamic law and out of respect for human rights... All the religions of the book rest on two principals—to praise God and to be compassionate toward his creatures. Those who belong to the religion of Mohammad have corrupted it, which is why they are like lost sheep. Thank you for your prayers and good will toward me.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 303.

<sup>4</sup> Kiser, John W. *Commander of the Faithful, the Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader*. (Monkfish Book Publishing Co., 2008), p. 302.