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### 'Sherif of Mecca.'

<b>Holding Institution</b>	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
<b>Reference</b>	IOR/L/PS/18/B215
<b>Date(s)</b>	1915 (CE, Gregorian)
<b>Written in</b>	English in Latin
<b>Extent and Format</b>	1 file (4 folios)
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#### About this record

The file consists of a confidential printed report entitled 'Sherif of Mecca'. The report contains transcriptions of correspondence, a statement by a messenger (described below), and notes relating to Sherif Hosayn, the Sherif [Shereef] of Mecca [Husayn bin 'Alī], particularly in terms of his relations with the United Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire. The report contains the following sections:

- Dispatch from His Majesty's High Commissioner for Egypt (Sir Arthur Henry McMahon), dated 26 August 1915;
- Communication from the Sherif of Mecca to Mr Storrs [Ronald Henry Amherst Storrs], Oriental Secretary to British Representative Cairo, dated 14 July 1915;
- Statement of Messenger, Mohammed Ibn Arif Ibn Oreifan, 18 August 1915;
- Family and Agents of the Sherif, by 'R S' [Ronald Henry Amherst Storrs], dated 19 August 1915;
- Note on communication from the Sherif of Mecca, by 'R S' [Ronald Henry Amherst Storrs], dated 19 August 1915;
- Letter from Sir Arthur Henry McMahon to His Highness the Sherif Hosayn (undated).

The file contains five copies of the report, only one of which has been foliated and digitised.

B. 215.

CONFIDENTIAL.

Sherif of Mecca.

Despatch from His Majesty's High Commissioner for Egypt.

No. 94 (Secret). The Residency, Ramleh,  
26th August 1915.  
Sir, With reference to Sir M. Cheetham's Despatch No. 204, of 13th December last, and my telegram No. 450, of the 24th instant, I have the honour to forward herewith translations of the communications which have reached me from the Sherif of Mecca, of the statement of the messenger, and of my own reply to the Sherif as approved by your telegram No. 598, of the 25th instant. With regard to the terms of this telegram it will be noticed that I have not fully availed myself of the permission to make certain additions to the message.

The moment, in my opinion, has not arrived when we can usefully discuss even a preliminary agreement, and it might at this stage injure the Sherif's chances of the Kaliphate to advertise his dealings with us by sending a son or other notable to treat with us.

I have also omitted any explicit mention of the Sherif as the future Kaliph, as the terms of my message will be sufficiently clear to him on this point. To do so, moreover, might limit the extent to which he might otherwise make use of my letter.

I have, &c.,  
A. H. McMAHON.

The Right Hon.  
Sir E. Grey, Bart, K.G., M.P.,  
&c., &c., &c.

Communication from Sherif of Mecca to Mr. Storrs, Oriental Secretary to British Representative, Cairo.

To the dear honourable, may God protect him,

I present to your dear honour my affectionate regards and respects, and hope that you will do your best to make the enclosed note, containing the proposed conditions, effective, as you are capable of doing.

And in this connection I declare to you and your Government that you need not be anxious about the ideas of the people here, because they are closely bound to your Government by community of interests.

Do not be at pains to send aeroplanes or men-of-war to throw reports and rumours, as was done before, because the matter is now decided.

What we desire to beg you is to open the way for the Egyptian Government to send the charitable offerings of corn for the Holy lands, *i.e.*, Mecca and Medina, which were stopped since last year.

For verily, the sending of this grain for this year and last would be an important factor in laying the foundations of our mutual advantage.

This should suffice for a person of your grasp.

In conclusion I offer you my best salaams and respects.

2nd Ramadan 1333 (14th July 1915).

Kindly do not trouble to send any correspondence until you see the result of our operations; except the reply to the note and its enclosure, which should be through the bearer only; and, if you should think fit, give him a written token to make it easy for him to reach you when we find it necessary.

He is all right.

Unsigned.

'Sherif of Mecca.' [1v] (2/8)

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Enclosed with foregoing.

To his Honour,

Whereas the whole of the Arab nation without any exception have decided in these last years to live, and to accomplish their freedom and grasp the reins of their Administration both in theory and practice; and whereas they have found and felt that it is to the interest of the Government of Great Britain to support them and aid them to the attainment of their firm and lawful intentions (which are based upon the maintenance of the honour and dignity of their life) without any ulterior motives whatsoever unconnected with this object;

And whereas it is to their (Arabs') interest also to prefer the assistance of the Government of Great Britain in consideration of their geographical position and economic interests, and also of the attitude of the above-mentioned Government, which is known to both nations and therefore need not be emphasized;

For these reasons the Arab nation sees fit to limit themselves, as time is short, to asking the Government of Great Britain, if it should think fit, for the approval, through her deputy or representative, of the following fundamental propositions, leaving out all things considered secondary in comparison with these, so that it may prepare all means necessary for attaining this noble purpose, until such time as it finds occasion for making the actual negotiations:—

*Firstly.*—England to acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries, bounded on the north by Mersina-Adana up to the 37° of latitude, on which degree falls Birijik, Urfa, Mardin, Midiat, Amadia Island, up to the border of Persia; on the east by the borders of Persia up to the Gulf of Basra; on the south by the Indian Ocean, with the exception of the position of Aden to remain as it is; on the west by the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea up to Mersina. England to approve of the proclamation of an Arab Khalifate of Islam.

*Secondly.*—The Arab Government of the Sherif to acknowledge that England shall have the preference in all economic enterprises in the Arab countries whenever conditions of enterprises are otherwise equal.

*Thirdly.*—For the security of this Arab independence and the certainty of such preference of economic enterprises, both high contracting parties to offer mutual assistance to the best ability of their military and naval forces, to face any foreign power which may attack either party. Peace not to be decided without agreement of both parties.

*Fourthly.*—If one of the parties enters upon an aggressive conflict, the other party to assume a neutral attitude, and in case of such party wishing the other to join forces, both to meet and discuss the conditions.

*Fifthly.*—England to acknowledge the abolition of foreign privileges in the Arab countries, and to assist the Government of the Sherif in an international Convention for confirming such abolition.

*Sixthly.*—Articles 3 and 4 of this Treaty to remain in vigour for 15 years, and, if either wishes it to be renewed, one year's notice before lapse of treaty to be given.

Consequently, and as the whole of the Arab nation have (praise be to God) agreed and united for the attainment, at all costs and finally of this noble object, they beg the Government of Great Britain to answer them positively or negatively in a period of 30 days after receiving this intimation; and if this period should lapse before they receive an answer, they reserve to themselves complete freedom of action. Moreover we (Sherif's family) will consider ourselves free in word and deed from the bonds of our previous declaration which we made through Ali Eff.\*

Undated and unsigned.

\* Our last messenger, *vide* correspondence.

Statement of Messenger, Mohammed Ibn Arif Ibn Oreifan.  
Alexandria, 18th August 1915.

*Messenger.*—I am a member of the Harb tribe, section Masruh, sub-section Zebeid and native of Wadi Ithwil which flows to Kadima, a port half way between Rabegh and Jedda.

*Messenger's route.*—The Sherif of Mecca, who is now spending the summer season at El Taif, gave me a letter to deliver to Mr. Storrs, Cairo, and urged that I should deliver it and return in 15 days.

I left El Taif on Thursday the 3rd Ramadan (15th July 1915) arrived Mecca, Friday morning, left Mecca on Sunday morning, arrived at Jedda on Monday 7th Ramadan.

On Thursday, 10th Ramadan, I hired a sanbuk and started from Jedda with the intention of meeting a British steamer going to Suez, but a strong wind drove me east to the coast of Asir at a port called El Wash, where I arrived on Monday, the 14th Ramadan.

Hiring another sanbuk from El Wash, and a third from Firsan, I arrived at Kamran Island on Saturday the 26th Ramadan.

Through the British Consul at Kamran I got a free passage on a British steamer to Port Sudan.

Leaving Kamran on Thursday, 1st Shawal, I arrived at Port Sudan on Saturday, the 3rd Shawal.

I was placed on board Abd El Munsim the same day and arrived at Suez this morning, 7th Shawal (18th August 1915), and delivered the Sherif's letter to Mr. Storrs at Alexandria in the afternoon the same day.

*Verbal Message.*—All that the Sherif wishes to convey to Mr. Storrs is contained in his letter, but on handing the letter at Taif, which was in the presence of his four sons, Ali, Abdulla, Faisal, and Zeid, the Sherif told me to tell Mr. Storrs:—"We are now ready and well prepared."

His son Abdulla then said: "Tell Mr. Storrs that our word is a word of honour, and we will carry it out even at the cost of our lives; we are not now under the orders of the Turks but the Turks are under our orders."

*Arabs' attitude towards the Turks.*—The Arabs of Hejaz are greatly vexed that no pilgrims came to the Hejaz this year from Egypt, India, Java, &c., and they curse this war and those who caused it.

The Turks try to convince the Arabs that the English are the cause of the war, and that they prevent the Moslems in their Colonies from making the pilgrimage. But a few Java pilgrims have been able to perform the pilgrimage this year, having come *via* Macalla, Aden, and Suakin; and they declared that the English put no obstacles whatever before those who wished to perform the pilgrimage, but that there were no steamers available; all British steamers being employed in the transport of troops to the war.

In the month of Shaban, 1333 (June 1915) a British aeroplane threw proclamations to the Arabs at Rabegh and Jedda.

The Arabs read the proclamations, took copies of them to the Wali of Hejaz, and the Sherif of Mecca and said to them: "It is not the English but the Turks and their Allies the Germans who caused the war, and brought all these calamities upon our country."

In the month of Moharrem 1333 (December 1914), a British man-of-war appeared at Jedda. The Wali, who had come down from Mecca for this purpose, was for firing on it.

The Harb Arabs warned the Wali that if he dared fire on the man-of-war before she fired on the town, they would attack him at once; that if the Turks were at war with the English the Arabs were not, and so did not wish the English steamers to forsake their ports.

Early in Rabia Awal 1333 (January 1915) there arrived at Jedda from El Wagh in three sanbuks, 38 German officers and 8 guns, on their way to El Yemen.

They went to Hodeida *via* Kurfuda and Massowa, and after visiting Sanaa and other places in El Yemen, they returned to Jedda *via* Hodeida, Kurfuda, and Laith, leaving 25 officers and 6 guns at Sanaa.

From Laith they came by land to Jedda.

It should be noticed that the Harb tribes are in deadly earnest against the Turco-German alliance, and have warned the Turks that should any Germans dare come into Harb land they will be killed at once.

On hearing of the above-mentioned party of German officers, the Harb Arabs watched them on their return journey and fell upon them near Jedda and killed eight of them. The rest having escaped by night in a sanbuk to Jedda, took sanbuks thence and returned north to El Wagh.

In Shaaban 1333 (June 1915) arrived at Medina 16 Turkish battalions with a new Wali. The Harb Arabs met the Wali and told him that they could not suffer the Hejaz to be involved in the Great War for the sake of the Germans; that there was no need for troops in El Hejaz, and that therefore they should return northward. The Wali having attempted to proceed southwards, the Harb Arabs fired at the troops and killed four soldiers.

Ali, the son of the Sherif of Mecca, was then at Medina. He was asked by the Wali to intervene and settle the matter.

The Wali had to swear on the Koran that he had no Germans among his officers, that he would take no hostile steps against El Hejaz, and that the troops were intended for Yemen and Nejd. The Wali then proceeded with the troops to Mecca and thence to El Taif. The road between Jedda and Mecca had been cut by the Harb Arabs, days before messenger left Jedda.

On his way here from Port Sudan, messenger was told that the Turks had sent two battalions from El Taif to Jedda.

If this is true it shows that the revolt of the Harb tribes has taken a serious turn, and that the troops were sent down to quell it.

*A Wahhabi revolt against the Turks.*—Late in Shaaban 1333 (early in July 1915), the Sherif Hosayn received a letter from a Wahhabi chief of Nejd, six days east of El Taif, telling him that he should drive away the Turks from Hejaz, and that should he fail to do so, he himself will proceed with a large army to the Hejaz and drive them out himself.

Four spies from the Wahhabi chief are now in prison in Mecca. It is said that this chief paid allegiance to El Idrisi, and that he is supported by great tribes of Kahtan and Yam.

*The Turks of El Yemen and El Idrisi.*—Before leaving El Taif early in Ramadan, a messenger arrived from the Wali of Yemen to the Wali of Hejaz asking for reinforcements and money.

No reinforcements of troops could be sent to Yemen after the appearance of the Wahhabi chief in Nejd, but the Wali despatched five boxes of money containing 100,000*l.*

This money was to leave Jedda in a sanbuk to Lohaiya on 14 Ramadan. On his way here messenger gave this information to El Idrisi's people at El Wasb and the British Consul at Kamran, and to the captain of the British ship that transported him to Suakin.

When at Kamran he heard that El Idrisi had a great victory over the Turks on 10th Ramadan in which his losses were only four men killed while the Turks losses were:—hundreds of men killed and wounded, one big gun costing them 22,000*l.*, one fort, seven villages, four officers and 49 men taken prisoner.

On 28th Ramadan while at Kamran he heard the guns firing from morning till evening. This was a great battle fought by El Idrisi against the Turks and their Arab allies the Haig, and he has great reason to believe that El Idrisi has won that battle.

Besides his stationary army, El Idrisi has four armies of 10,000 men each, under the following great chiefs:—

Mohammed Taher of Sabia.

Ibrahim Sirhan of Sabia.

Yehia Ibn Thawab, Sheikh of Abs tribe.

Sayed Arar, Sheikh of Arar tribe.

*The Turkish Forces in El Hejaz and Yemen.*—Messenger does not know the exact number of troops in El Hejaz and Yemen, nor the names of

battalions, but estimates the Turkish forces in Hijaz and Yemen to be approximately as follows :—

- 7 battalions at Medina.
- 7 battalions at Mecca.
- 4 battalions at Jeddah.
- 16 battalions at El Taif.
- 20 battalions in Yemen, at Senaa, Hodaïda, Menakha, Zebid Taiz, &c.

54\* total. (Note.—This figure is obviously a gross exaggeration.)

*Sherif's plans and policy.*—The policy of the present Sherif of Mecca is to consolidate himself as Independent Emir of Mecca, and the whole of the Hejaz country and a part of Asir, and he is working to that object with all his might.

He has already gained the natives of Hejaz and a part of the Asir tribes, who consider him to be a great politician.

Messenger has heard secretly that the Arab officers of the Turkish forces in the Hejaz have sworn to the Sherif to be his support and to fight under his flag.

They declared that they do not wish to go and fight in El Yemen, nor take any part in the Great War, but to remain with him and defend the Haremeh against any invader.

Many deserters from the Turkish Army at Yemen come to the Sherif, and the Sherif pays them regularly and hides them from military authorities.

The Sherif's prestige has consequently become paramount; so much so, that the Sultan thought it wise in the present circumstances to gain his loyalty, and therefore sent him a firman proclaiming him the Chief Governor and Administrator of Hejaz, with the Wali under his orders.

This has greatly increased the Sherif's prestige, and greatly reduced that of the Turks in Hejaz.

The Sherif is in continual communication with Imam Yehia and El Idrisi. His present policy is to make peace with El Idrisi and between El Idrisi and El Imam Yehia.

Messenger is firmly of opinion that El Idrisi considers El Imam Yehia as a traitor, but has a certain respect for the Sherif of Mecca.

He considers him a politician, but does not regard him as a "standard" or religious leader.

There is no fear of a famine in El Hejaz since the English opened the trade route to Jeddah, and the Arabs feel very grateful to the English for the opening of the route.

#### Family and Agents of the Sherif.

*Ali*, the eldest son of the Sherif Hosayn, went to Medina in Rabi Awal 1333 (March 1915) to quiet the Beni Harb Arabs.

*Abdulla*, the second and most important son of the Sherif, was sent by his father to Nejd in Jemad 1333 (March 1915) to make peace with the Arabs of that country.

*Faisal*, third son, went to Constantinople March 1915 as a member of Parliament for the Hejaz to protest against the recruiting of the Bedouins of the Hejaz.

*Zeid*, the fourth son, was sent by his father in Jemad (March 1915) to Asir, to make peace with the tribes of that country.

They all returned in Shaaban (June 1915) and were present with their father when the messenger left Taif for Cairo.

\* Besides the native irregular troops of the Sherif, composed of Eteiba, Bisha, Ogeil (? Aqhayl), and Hozeil Arabs.

The following Ashraf are the agents of the Sherif Hosayn in El Hejaz :—  
Sherif Mohsin Ibn Mansur in Jedda. He is entitled Emir of Harb.  
A Sherif (?) \* in Medina.  
Sherif Sharaf in Mecca. Sherif Sharaf is called Kaimakam (Deputy) of  
the Sherif.

*Pilgrimage of Muhammad Idris.*—In 1332 Muhammad Idris El Senussi went to the Hejaz on pretence of fulfilling the pilgrimage, but in fact having been sent by the Turks to rouse the Harb Arabs for the Jihad against the English in Egypt.

[The Harb Arabs occupy the whole country between Medina and Mecca, and count about 80,000 men, all of whom follow the Senussi Tarika.]

Sayid Muhammad Idris held two large meetings of Harb Sheikhs, one at Medina, and one at Mecca, and the Sheikhs unanimously refused to take up arms against the English.

They said "The English have never done us any harm. They are just, generous, and wealthy, while the Turks are despotic and haughty. The Turks have broken their promise with us on several occasions, and have never done any good to our country."

The messenger states that he himself did not attend any of the meetings, but that he was asked his opinion on the matter by his Sheikh, and he said that had the Turks asked us before they raised the sword against the English we would have advised them not to do so.

Muhammad Idris, seeing that the tribes were firm in their refusal for the Jihad against the English, declared to them secretly that the Germans were behind this, and that he liked the English, and did not wish to raise the sword against them.

He subsequently, during his stay at Mecca, sent messengers to El Idrisi of Sabia and the latter gave him a present and, it is thought, a recommendation not to trust the Turks.

*Character of the Messenger.*—Messenger is not unintelligent, respectable and fairly well-informed Arab, of 53 years of age. He is a bitter enemy of the Turks who in 1325 H (1907), on a false accusation, confiscated his merchandise at Hodeida and imprisoned him there for three years.

With regard to numbers, in which he professes little interest, he has a more than Oriental vagueness, with the usual preference, when in doubt, for the higher total.

(Initialled) R. S.

19th August 1915.

Note on communication from the Sherif of Mecca.

(Secret.)

The letters are in the writing of the Sherif Abdalla (which is known to me) probably at dictation from his father. Neither are signed, and only the private note dated, thereby bearing out messenger's time table.

There is a curiously exact resemblance between the terms herein proposed, and the views frequently expressed by Shaykh Rashid Rida, especially in regard to frontiers.

This tends to confirm what has been already suspected, that the Shaykh is in communication with the Sherif.

While it is clear that the latter is endeavouring to reconcile local Arab interests, it may be regarded as certain that he has received no sort of mandate from other potentates.

He knows he is demanding, possibly as a basis of negotiation, far more than he has the right, the hope, or the power to expect.

Like his co-religionist elsewhere, he will probably modify his tone upon the fall of Constantinople.

\* Messenger forgets name.



'Sherif of Mecca.' [4r] (7/8)

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With regard to his proposals, official and unofficial, it would seem advisable not to resume, at any rate for the present, the aeroplane visits, which probably compromise the Sherif and tend to make his position more difficult.

They have had their effect, and it has been excellent, as is shown by the messenger's report.

On the other hand, the despatch of grain and money can hardly fail to strengthen the favourable impression already obtaining, and the messenger might be instructed to arrange with the Sherif for some watchword or token whereby delivery could be made to guaranteed consignees.

The question of the Arab Kaliphate has already been left to the decision of Islam; the British Government having been especially precise upon the point; that of the limits and boundaries could be reserved for subsequent discussion, the chief point for immediate decision being the expulsion of the Turks and the Germans and the maintenance of tranquility and solidarity in Arabia.

(Initialed) R. S.

19th August 1915.

To H. H. the Sherif Hosayn (titles).

After compliments and salutations. We have the honour to thank you for your frank expressions of the sincerity of your feeling towards England. We rejoice moreover that Your Highness and your people are of one opinion, that Arab interests are English interests and English Arab. To this intent we confirm to you the terms of Lord Kitchener's message, which reached you by the hand of Ali Effendi, and in which was stated clearly our desire for the independence of Arabia and its inhabitants, together with our approval of the Arab Kaliphate when it should be proclaimed. We declare once more that His Majesty's Government would welcome the resumption of the Kaliphate by an Arab of true race. With regard to the questions of limits, frontiers and boundaries, it would appear to be premature to consume our time in discussing such details in the heat of war, and while, in many portions of them, the Turk is up to now in effective occupation; especially as we have learnt, with surprise and regret, that some of the Arabs in those very parts, far from assisting us, are neglecting this their supreme opportunity, and are lending their arms to the German and the Turk, to the new despoiler and the old oppressor.

Nevertheless we are ready to send to Your Highness for the Holy Cities and the noble Arabs the charitable offerings of Egypt, so soon as Your Highness shall inform us how and where they should be delivered. We are moreover arranging for this your messenger to be admitted and helped on any journey he may make to ourselves.

Friendly reassurances. Salutations.

(Signed) SIR A. H. McMAHON.

