

Hakkı, İsmail Bey

By [Malek Sharif](#)

Hakkı, *İsmail* (Ismail Hakkı Bey)

The second extraordinary Muslim governor ("Mutassarif") of Mount Lebanon and last Ottoman governor of the province of Beirut

Born 01 January 1870 in Diyarbekir, Ottoman Empire

Died Between 1919 and September 1930 in Probably Istanbul, Turkey

İsmail Hakkı was an experienced civil servant. He collected and published detailed statistics on the population, economic activities, education, natural resources and means of transportation in his provinces, and attempted relief efforts to alleviate some of the severe effects of famine. With his departure from Beirut on 1 October 1918, Ottoman rule in what was to become Lebanon came to an end.

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Early Life and Career

İsmail Hakkı Bey (1870-?) was the son of Müftizade Ahmed Sabri, a notable of Diyarbekir. He studied at the Ottoman School of Civil Service in Istanbul (*Mekteb-i Mülkiye*). His education enabled him to become a secretary in the chamberlain's office at the Yıldız Palace. He was dismissed from service after the deposition of [Abdülhamid II, Ottoman Sultan \(1842-1918\)](#) in 1909.

However, he was appointed deputy mayor of the sixth district of Istanbul and was a member of the general administrative council of the city. In 1910, he was elected as one of the deputies of Diyarbekir province to the Ottoman parliament. In May 1914, he became the general secretary of the Ottoman high commissioner in Egypt. He was appointed governor of Mount Lebanon on 27 March 1917, and governor of the province of Beirut on 7 July 1918. He left his last post on 1 October 1918, and his name was removed from the civil servants' roster as governor of Beirut in March 1919.

World War I

During İsmail Hakkı's tenure in Mount Lebanon and Beirut, there was a famine of unprecedented severity due to crop failure in geographical Syria, a maritime blockade of the Ottoman coast by the Allies, waves of locusts, and the provisioning of the Fourth Army. He took measures to alleviate the famine by increasing the number of soup kitchens and making sure that [schools](#) and orphanages were supplied with adequate quantities of food and proper medical care. Such measures, however, fell short of addressing the dire circumstances. His friend and relative [Hüseyin Kâzım Kadri \(1870-1934\)](#) stated that İsmail Hakkı failed to convey stocks of wheat stored in Latakia to Beirut out of fear of [Ahmet Cemal Pasha's \(1872-1922\)](#) reaction. İsmail Hakkı did not report the illegal contact and smuggling between the coast of Mount Lebanon and the French occupied island of Arwad, saving those involved from the martial courts.

İsmail Hakkı was enthusiastic and involved in reforming the educational system in the area under his jurisdiction. He supported and sponsored a two-volume work on Mount Lebanon, to which he contributed two articles. The book aimed to establish proper scientific knowledge and correct statistics about the province, in order to find constructive and effective solutions to its problems.

İsmail Hakkı successfully established courteous relations with the Christian majority of Mount Lebanon, to the extent that the Maronite Patriarch demanded an extension of his tenure in Mount Lebanon. However, his earlier work experience in the Imperial Palace made him an easily intimidated civil servant, and the influence of Cemal Pasha seriously reduced his ability to make controversial decisions; he was frequently accused of being indecisive.

The End of Ottoman Rule

The last day of Ottoman rule in Beirut could be reconstructed as follows: on 30 September 1918, the mayor of Beirut received a telegraph from Emir Said al-Jazairi of Damascus, urging him to establish a free Arab government in Beirut. [Umar al-Da'ûq \(1874-1949\)](#) conferred with leading Beirut notables to avoid a fight with the remnants of Ottoman authority. A delegation was formed to convince İsmail Hakkı to leave the city peacefully before declaring its independence. İsmail Hakkı conferred with Hüsyin Kâzım and decided, due to the quick withdrawal of the army from the province, to leave on 1 October 1918. He left the treasury and affairs of the city of Beirut in the custody of its incumbent mayor al-Da'ûq, consequently leaving the treasury of the province and the Ottoman bank to the city, unlike his colleagues in neighbouring provinces. This episode is reported in four autobiographies in three different versions.

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