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A cholera epidemic swept the Ottoman Empire from 1910. During the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, troop movements caused the rapid spread of the disease.

From the Memoirs of G. v. Hochwaechter, a German major stationed at Ottoman headquarters during the Balkan Wars:

Monday, 11 November [1912]. The worst of all is the threat of cholera, as I had previously mentioned. The disease continues to spread, and I was told that they had many kinds of medicines in the main depot here, but none for cholera....Since no fresh water can be found here, soldiers are drinking water from dirty puddles. All of the men seem scrawny. Under those miserable conditions, it would be impossible for them to endure epidemics, rain, cold, and hunger any longer. The soldier in my private service was given food only yesterday since we came here....

Tuesday, 12 November. The number of deaths from cholera and typhus is terrifying. During a one-hour journey we made a while ago, I counted sixty five people who were either dead, or were about to die.

November 16, Saturday. I couldn't sleep last night; the terrible scenes I witnessed yesterday stayed in my head all-night. They were really horrible....[He describes people buried in mass graves.]

At the station, it was almost impossible to move because of the huge crowd. Thousands of people, with sunken cheeks, and red eyes fixed on a point somewhere far, were running as if they were dragged toward the two long lines of wagons. They were trying to climb onto the wagons and the roofs. Some had died on the roofs, from where their arms and legs were hanging down. Some dead bodies even were lying between the wagons. Even healthy people would definitely catch the disease in such an environment.

Quoted in: Hikmet Özdemir. *The Ottoman Army 1914-1918. Disease and Death on the Battlefield.* Translated by Saban Kardaş. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008. 16-17.

