

The Caucus on U.S.-Turkey Relations & Turkish Americans

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St. Patrick's Day Special: Turkey & Ireland's Hidden History

Turkish Aid During Ireland's Great Famine



During Ireland's seven-year famine (Gorta Mór) in the 1840s, the Emerald Isle received much-needed aid from an unexpected source: Ottoman Turkey. Upon hearing of this disaster, which caused more than a million citizens to migrate to the U.S., Sultan Abdulmecid I sent £1,000 in aid (worth around \$140,000 in today's currency) and dispatched three ships to deliver food, medicine and other urgent necessities to the people of Ireland.

- Today, Turkey's generosity and compassion during Ireland's darkest hour serves as the bedrock of the diplomatic relationship between the two countries.
- During a 2010 visit to Ankara, Ireland's then-President Mary McAleese thanked for the aid, describing the Turks as one of Ireland's "greatest friends" during its time of need.
- Sultan Abdulmecid's aid to Ireland has also served as a powerful example of interfaith solidarity, with a Muslim leader determined to help a Christian country.

Fun Fact:

Turkey and Drogheda

In May 1847, the Sultan's aid was dispatched from Thessaloniki and arrived in the port town of Drogheda, 30 miles north of Dublin.

In 1995, Drogheda town hall erected a placard in commemoration of the arrival of Turkish support.

The town's soccer club, Drogheda United, shares the same club colors as Turkey's Trabzonspor. In, 2011 they became sister clubs in memory of their shared history.

Two years later, the teams played a friendly match to celebrate the special relationship between Turkey and Ireland.