Refael Aharon ben Shimon response on suicide

As we saw last week, Rabbi Refael Aharon ben Shimon (1847-1928) is a good example of a rabbi that confronted the challenges of modernity.
We described how and why he, for instance, forbade the celebrations of private weddings (**see here**) and issued a decree making mandatory to celebrate weddings only in a Synagogue.
Today, I would like to address a completely different and very delicate issue, which Rabbi ben Shimon had to deal with too. As he himself writes (see *nehar misrayim* 2, page 584) in Cairo (Egypt) suicide became epidemic in his time (ca.1910-1920). *"We see with a broken heart… how young people take their own lives because of small problems, illusory matters of honor or frustrated romantic expectations.. and I saw that this terrible outbreak came from European influence [=Western culture] because there they do not believe in an afterlife, and have nor fear of [=belief in] God, so when they are confronted with any crisis –instead of accepting it as a Divine decree– in a brief moment of impulsivity, they would take their own lives…".*
Rabbi ben Shimon spoke publicly several times about these issues, encouraging the people to believe that going through difficult times is part of what makes us grow, and that we should see these challenges as God-sent opportunities to elevate ourselves emotionally and spiritually.
Besides his teachings, rabbi ben Shimon also made the following ruling: When someone commits suicide (*has veshalom*) the honors due in normal circumstances to someone that passes away are suspended. The body is buried outside the common area of the graves, etc. But in order to alleviate the families the rabbis usually consider that the person who committed suicide was not completely mindful of his actions, and/or in the last seconds, he might have repented from his intention. Thus, his death is not categorized as suicide and honors would be given to his body.
Rabbi ben Shimon cancelled this leniency. He saw that the last

resource to stop the potential suicide might be knowing the pain and shame that will be inflicted to his family, since his body will not even be buried in a normal grave, etc.
As Rabbi ben Shimon himself testified, this preventive ruling was effective and the rates of suicide in Cairo diminished dramatically.