

Open letter to international organizations, governments bodies and media outlets

2021-02-08



We, undersigned organizations, would like to draw your attention and share our concern, appeal and demand regarding an urgent issue which continues to affect the Syriac-Assyrian-Chaldean Christian community in Turkey and abroad.

In January 2020, an elderly couple, Hurmüz and Shmouni Diril, were abducted in their ancestral village, Kovankaya, in the Şırnak province of southeast Turkey. Mr. and Mrs. Diril are the parents of Father Remzi Diril, a Chaldean Catholic priest in Istanbul.

Following their disappearance, the Diril children, family, and friends in Turkey and abroad embarked on a search for information on the whereabouts of Mr. and Mrs. Diril.

About two months later, on March 20, 2020, the lifeless and mutilated body of Shmouni Diril was discovered by family members in a ravine just a few hundred meters from her village. However, Hurmüz Diril remains missing.

Aside from a few token statements by local authorities, no meaningful actions have been taken to investigate the murder of Mrs. Diril, or to locate Mr. Diril. The government autopsy of Mrs. Diril, and forensic reports, are inconclusive. The Diril children, family, and friends demand to learn the truth.

Mr. and Mrs. Diril had recently resettled their once Chaldean-majority village as a result of the relative peace that had recently developed in the area between Turks and Kurds. The Dirils represent a growing trend of diaspora Christian communities, particularly from the Syriac-Assyrian-Chaldean diaspora, venturing to reestablish ties to their ancestral villages in southeast Turkey, and restore family properties in an effort to remain connected to their roots. The targeting of Mr. and Mrs. Diril, and the culture of impunity reinforced by the Turkish authorities, has served to intimidate the remaining native Christian communities, and those returning from the diaspora.

On this basis, we raise our concerns, and demand that the Turkish Ministry of Justice order an earnest, comprehensive, and transparent investigation into the case of Hurmüz and Shmouni Diril, and hold the

perpetrators accountable. We further call on the Turkish Ministry of Justice to prioritize the institution of equal treatment and justice under the law, regardless of religion, as the Turkish Constitution requires.

- The Diril Family
- European Syriac Union ESU (Germany)
- European Syriac Union ESU (Belgium)
- Benjamin Blanchard - Managing Director of SOS Chrétiens d'Orient (Belgium)
- American Syriac Union (America)
- Bethnahrin Women's Union (Europe)
- Stichting Bethnahrin Information Bureau (The Netherlands)
- Platform Tur Abdin
- Federation of Development Organizations of Tur Abdin (The Netherlands)
- Assyrian Institute of Belgium
- Assyrian-Chaldean Association of Belgium
- The Tower of Babel Association (Belgium)
- Mesopotamian Institute of Brussels (Belgium)
- Cultural Center of Mesopotamian People in Brussels (Belgium)
- Assyrian-Chaldean Association of France
- Bethnahrin Cultural Center of Gütersloh (Germany)
- Syriac Cultural Society of Hamburg (Germany)
- Assyrian Youth Association of Örebro (Sweden)
- Assyrian Mesopotamian Association of Enschede (The Netherlands)
- Tur Abdin Federation (The Netherlands)
- Center for Assyrian Information and Documentation Assyria (The Netherlands)
- Derik Association (The Netherlands)
- Saint Aho Foundation (The Netherlands)
- Saint Georges Foundation (The Netherlands)
- Federation of Syriac Associations (Turkey)
- Central Council of Syriac (Switzerland)
- Azech Suryoye Cultural Association (Switzerland)
- Bethnahrin Information Network (Switzerland)
- Midyat Syriac Association (Switzerland)
- Aramaic Cultural Association (Switzerland)
- Cultural Center Bethnahrin Ticino (Switzerland)
- Assyrian-Syriac Culture Club of Vienna (Austria)
- Church and asbl Mar Addai and Mar Mari d'Orient of the Chaldeans of Brussels
- Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of Sweden and Scandinavia
- Assyrian Cultural Association in Botkyrka (Sweden)
- Union of Assyrian-Chaldean in France
- Bethnahrin kulturcentrum Sodertalje
- Syrianska Assyrska riksförbundet (Sweden)
- Bethnahrin kulturcentrum Vasteras