

Syriacs want separate refugee camp in Turkey

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Leading Syriac figures say they met with officials from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and Foreign Ministry in an effort to establish a separate camp in Mardin for Syriac citizens who are defecting from Syria.

Deputy chair of the Syria-based Syriac Union Party, Said Malki, Syriac National Council chairman and member of the Syria Syriac Associations Federation's management board Bassam Ishak, Turkey Syriac Associations Federation chairman Evgil Türker, met with AKP deputy chair Numan Kurtulmuş and the Foreign Ministry's Center for Strategic Research (SAM) deputy chair Mesut Özcan.

No compromise has yet to be reached between the officials on that matter, but negotiations are still ongoing, Malki told the *Hürriyet Daily News*. "They assured us not to create a problem in the works we are to conduct within the bounds of our means. We want the Syriacs to stay in Turabidin (around the southeastern province of Mardin and Midyat), which is the old residential area of the Syriac community," Malki said.

The Syriac community is asking for a separate camp to be established for them as they do not want to settle in already founded camps along the border. "Within the current camps there are various people from different segments of society so every kind of problem can arise there. Also, there are many gangs involved in human trafficking in these camps. The Syriacs who cannot comply with the camps leave there and try to migrate to a third country. So some undesired things might occur. Above all they do not want to return their homeland after all this, we are trying to prevent it," Malki said.

"We firstly want to meet the accommodation needs with the support of diaspora and Turkey's Syriac associations. But since we have limited facilities we need the support of the state," Malki said about the expenses of a possible Syriac camp.

Unregistered Syriac immigrants

Thousands of people who fled from Syria found asylum in Turkey or migrated to a third country through Turkey, Malki said. "Only a few [of the refugees] were registered. Many of them stay with their relatives, while some reside in various places they could afford with their own means," Malki said, indicating they did not want anyone to migrate from their homeland.

“We want them to stay in their residences and struggle. But if there is no chance to struggle, they could temporarily migrate and then return to their homeland after conditions get better. Consequently, we want the migrants to stay in a place where they would not face difficulties and would not need to migrate to a third country and the most appropriate location for that is Turabidin,” Malki said.

Source: Hurriyet Daily News

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