

We hold those who perpetuate the Sayfo genocide accountable

2021-06-15



In our struggle for existence as an ethnic identity and a people in its own right, we, the Presidency of the Bethnahrin National Council, have resolved since the outset to make our Syriac people rise and let the world know about the SAYFO Genocide of 1915. Since 1994, we have worked hard to introduce the systematic commemoration of SAYFO, and our efforts have led to the acceptance and internalization of commemoration within all segments of our people. These commemorations continue in an organized manner today by the various organizations within our people to inform the general public and international institutions.

When the Ottoman Empire and its collaborators, in particular allied Kurdish tribes and other powers, planned and set out to annihilate our people from history they carried out genocide between 1914 and 1925. This genocide aimed to eliminate the Christian peoples of Mesopotamia and Anatolia from history. More than five hundred thousand Syrians (Arameans-Assyrians-Chaldeans), one million Armenians, and nearly four hundred thousand Pontic Greeks were barbarously massacred.

The SAYFO Genocide of 1915 attempted to bury our Syriac people and its thousands of years of historical and cultural treasures. Consequently, the identity of our people was denied. Our heritage was usurped. After the long bloody years of genocide, the ruling powers implemented repressive policies based on denial, destruction, and assimilation to erase, once and for all, from the extended Mesopotamian geography, all traces of the great civilizations founded by our people. The great pain and deep trauma that our people endured have been passed down from generation to generation. The perpetrators of the SAYFO Genocide resorted to methods of brainwashing and propaganda to deny facts and make forget. The voice of our people was silenced by severe intimidation, repression, and the constant threat of retaliation. Furthermore, not only were the Syrians left stateless, but every basis for fully living as a people in our

homelands was taken from under our feet. Over time, the Syriac survivors of the genocide were forced to emigrate. Little by little, step by step, the plan to cover up and destroy the very existence of our proud people was carried out.

From our establishment as Bethnahrin National Council, we have fought resolutely against the threats and existential dangers from the ruling powers and status quo regimes bent on the total annihilation of our people. Manifestations and activities initiated by our revolutionary movement in Europe found fertile ground in all parts of our Mesopotamian homeland and systematically penetrated all segments of our people. Through our international diplomatic efforts, the actual historical events of the SAYFO genocide have been brought to the attention and put on the agenda of states and international forums.

Today, dozens of states officially recognize the events of 1915 as genocide. US President Joe Biden's recognition on April 24, 2021, of the massacres of 1915 as genocide is a result of the long and unwavering struggle of the Christian peoples of Mesopotamia and Anatolia for recognition and a historical achievement for humanity. As a next step, we expect the countries that have recognized the genocide to follow up on their decisions through state policies. We further expect the official acknowledgement of SAYFO as genocide by the states that have not yet done so. We also invite the peoples of Turkey to a common struggle and to condemn and set right past crimes against humanity in the Middle East. It is a well-known fact that democracy, freedom, and peace require great solidarity between the different peoples.

There can be no law, no mentality, and no statute of limitations for the crime against humanity called genocide. Germany's recent recognition of the genocide it committed in Namibia between 1904 and 1911 nullified all theories and time constraints on the subject of genocide. And Turkey's ruling status-quo powers and its racist exponents have run out of arguments. They have no more excuses to deny the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which Turkey too adopted. The SAYFO Genocide of 1915 is the identity of our Syriac people. No power or state that does not officially recognize or simply denies this identity can make genuine progress on human rights and democracy. Acceptance and acknowledgment of the truth as it is, wherever and whenever it is experienced, will move the world forward. The Genocide of 1915 is a barbaric crime against humanity carried out for political purposes. Therefore, it is just and right for politicians and parliaments to decide on this tragedy.

We respectfully remember the martyrs of SAYFO on this 106th anniversary. As Bethnahrin National Council, we call on all segments and individuals of our Syriac people, wherever they live in the world, to undertake activities and organize memorials and manifestations to commemorate the SAYFO Genocide of 1915. We call upon all segments of our people to protect and live their identity and to hold the perpetrators of the genocide accountable. Our struggle will continue all over the world until the SAYFO Genocide is fully recognized by the Republic of Turkey.