Turkey, therefore, officially, they do not have the right to rebuild or to restore churches in the said country. Nevertheless, Turkey overlooked the rebuilde of the churches because of its interest in becoming a member of the European Union. The restauration of many churches in Turabdin has revitalized the Syriac Christianity. He stated the fact that the Syriacs are not recognized by the authoriti as a minority covered by the Treaty of Lausanne. The representatives of the ESU announced that the Syriacs do not have legal status according to the international law. Nevertheless, Syria overlooked the restoration of the churches.

**Chairsman`s Message**

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**Patriarch warmly receivs ESU Delegation in audience**

On Friday, 4th of November 2005, a delegation of the European Syriac Union (ESU) was receiv- ed by His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Aphrem, Patriarch of the Syrian-Orthodox Church in the Mor Ephrem monastery in audience. The delegation consisted of Mr. Iskender Alptekin, the ESU president, Fikri Aygur (Deputy Chairman) and Mr. Tuma Celik (Treasurer). At the end both sides expressed their positive view on the current meeting. The session marks the beginning of an informative and fertile dialogue, stated all persons present.

**ESU Delegation meets the European Commission to discuss the Future of the Syriacs**

Pierre Mirel, director of the European commissi- on for the enlargement of responsibility in communication and information, and Owen Parker, member of the Turkish team, told the delegation of the ESU that the appearing problems in the Syriacs in the Southeast of Turkey are watched critically by the EU commission. At the same time Mirel worried about the legal barriers concerning the property entries and laws which explicitly forbids European citizens to register possession and in properties on their names.

Furthermore Mirel said that the EU will mon- itor the existing deficits in terms of rights of minorities and human rights as well as the freedom of worship in its progress report in November. Mirel guaranteed that the problems of the Syriac Christians will also be discussed. The EU will plan for the compliance of the rights of the Syriacs in the daily routine. The acknowledgement and the protection of the rights of the ethnic and religious minorities are central points of the negotiations*, how Mirel said.

The representatives of the ESU announced that the previous state treatment and considera- tion of the Syriacs is to be understood as a real cornerstone of the problems. “As long as the state acknowledged the Syriacs does the Syriacs get their rights and obligations will stay away”, so Fikri Aygur toward the commission representatives.

After the meeting, which lasted 30-minutes, the members of the delegation visited the last page, which documents the difficulties and non-acknowledgment of the ESU especially regar- ding the EU negotiations of accession.

The Syriacs in particular formulated the fol- lowing points of criticism: acknowledgment as an ethnic minority and with it acknowledgment as a juridical minority; the protection of freedom and human rights as well as the state support with this intention.

In conclusion the ESU chairman expressed that the Syriacs judge Turkey’s management of the Syriacs in the European Union positively, but without reflection. “Turkey must accelerate the realization of the problems. Because the Syriacs see their hope in European Turkey”, Iskender Alptekin summ- ed up. At the end both sides expressed their positive view on the current meeting. The session marks the beginning of an informative and fertile dialogue, stated all persons present.
EU Commission: The Syriacs are a Minority in Turkey

On November 9th, 2005, the commission of the EU published her yearly report about the development and process concerning the accessi-
on the EU. In this report the commission strongly criticized the realization of different, decide reforms. Regarding this, the EU criticized the realisation of different, process concerning the accessi-
ction of EU. Brussels wants Turkey to remove the legal problems of Christian minorities within the next two years.

For the first time, the Syriacs are regarded as “Non-Muslim minority” and their problems are mentioned explicitly in the report. The report deals with the fact that Turkey interprets the Treaty of Lausanne differently and because of that does not accept the Syriacs as a “Non-Muslim minority”. As a result, the Christians in Turkey have problems with the acknowledgement of foundations (to establish teaching facilities), in addition to that, they have problems with the registration of property in the land registry and the set of difficulties regarding the village protectors and the feudal structures, which prevent the people from returning to their villages.

Above all, the law, which forbids the Syriacs to register in the land registry, will be mentioned. In September, these problems were told to representatives of the commission of the European Syriac Union (ESU), during a meeting. Referring to this, huge doubts and complications are being reported, no denominational division of the Syriacs has been done. They only talk about Syriacs.

The following passages are important for the Syriacs:

In the section Minority rights, cultural rights and the protection of minorities it is stated: (…) Turkey’s approach to minority rights remains unchanged since last year’s report. According to the report, the minority rights have changed. In 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, minorities in Turkey consist exclusively of non-Muslim communities. The minority rights are being respected by the authorities with the Treaty of Lausanne. Non-Muslims are Jews, Christians and Greeks. However, there are other communities in Turkey which, in the light of the relevant international and European standards, could qualify as minorities. (…) (…) The training of Armenian language tea-

teachers is still not possible pending acceptance by the Turkish authorities of an Armenian department within an Istanbul university for the study of the Armenian language. Non-Muslim minorities not usually asso-
ciated by the authorities with the Treaty of Lausanne, such as Syriacs, are still not permitted to establish schools.

(…) ‘(…) Few individuals of Syriac-origin have been able to return from abroad.

Those that have lost their Turkish nationality are not able to register their property in the framework of the ongoing land registry in the Southeast. In this context, there has been a worrying increase in the number of complaints from Syriacs in Turkey and abroad regarding the seizure of the unhoma-

bited property by both citizens in the region and the land registry authorities. Moreover, those that do return continue to face harassment from the village guards. (…)’

Concerning the fundamental right, it is stated: (…) ‘(…) The right to property for Christian and Muslim communities is recognised by Article 35 of the Constitution. In 2005, Article 35 of the Law on Title Deeds, which was new in 2003, was amended by the Constitutional Court due to concerns related to national security and the unity of the state. Since June 2005, no immo-

rable property has been sold to foreign-

ers, although the government is work-

ing on legislation which would permit

such sales. In practice, Greek nationals have encountered problems inheriting such sales. In theory, Turkish nationals are allowed to acquire property by for-

1942-2005

Archbishop of Central Europe, His Grace Mor Julius Jeshock Cicek, passed away

or placing orders subject to the Constitu-

tional Court’s review’.

The Voice of the Syriacs Volume 1 - Issue 3 page 2

Archbishop Julius Jeshock Cicek, who died on July 10th 2005, was one of the greatest Sha-

pharisees in the Syriac Orthodox Church. Since his consecration as Metropolitan of the first Metropolitan Church of Central Europe in 1979, His Eminence had oversaw the establish-

ment of a number of churches and monasteries in Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, England and France. The Syriac Orthodox Church in Europe achieved remarkable growth due to his efforts.

More than 150 Syriacs attended the funeral ceremo-

nomy, November 5, 2005. The funeral service was led by His Holiness Moran Mar Ignatius Zakkai I, was the Metropolitan of Tur Abdin. The funeral was also an eminent calligrapher who continued the traditions of the ancient Syriac Orthodox tradition of illiterate manu-

script illumination. He was born in 1885 and was ordained as a deacon in 1908. It was in 1908 that he became a monk in Deyrul Zafaran Monastery.
The monastery is one of the most revered institutions of the Syriac Orthodox religion, contai-

ning the graves of 52 Syriac Orthodox patriarchs and metropolitans. The monastery was the last residence of our Syriac Orthodox Patriarch, Mor Ignatios Behnam. The monastery was consecrated in November 1979.

The Safron Monastery. Founded in 607, the monastery was destroyed by the Persians in 612. The monastery was restored by Bishop Deyrul Zafaran, Church of Virgin Mary and Mar Yakub Monastery, there are three for-

cesses for building up this territory. Some parts of the monastery were built by pagans even before the Late Period. The Monastery is still open to visitors.

The city used to be known as “Marde” by the Persians, “Mardar” by the Byzantines, “Mardin” by the Arabs and “Mardina-Mardo-Mard” by the Syriacs. These were transformed into “Mardin” in 1808, when the city was occupied by the Turks. The names refer to the Aramaic termard and mean “forests”.

During the administration of Abgar Arye Bar Ezor, Mardin became the residence of the Independent Syriac Kingdom of Osroho (Urf, Edessa, Urfa). From the Middle Ages onwards, Osroho was an area which the state has spe-

cific importance for Christianity. It is known that Philemon Bar Pahom, who was the first ruler of his time to adopt Christianity as official religion. Abgar invited Jesus Christ to Turfa to explain the Christian beliefs. He was a handkerchief bearing his facial features and a letter addressed to the City of Urfa. This is why Urf is known as “Blessed City” even in our own days. It was in this city that Deyrul Zafaran Monastery is still open to visitors. The secret section for worshipping called “mahbaz” is the oldest part of the mona-

stery. The monastery was enlarged with additional sections built in 1979.

One of the most famous church fathers is Mor Filiovanis, Archbishops of Mardin.

The Zafran Monastery had been the pendant of the Zafran Patriarchate in the early 20th century.

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