The Voice of the Syriacs

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The Bethnahrin Women Union

No more right of asylum for the Syriacs from Turkey

Syriac-orthodox Christians do not have to fear group-arranged persecution in Turkey any more and therefore don’t enjoy right of asylum in Germany. The Hessian Higher Administrative Court has come to this conclusion on February 22 in Kassel. The application of 50 members of a syriac-orthodox Christian family from Turkey was dismissed, against the decision of the Administration Court in Giessen. The 6th Senate of the Court justified its decision in second instance with the fact that political conditions in the southeast of Turkey would have stabilized in the meantime (Az.: 6UE 2268/04.A.). In the written reasons for the judgement it says: “On August 30th 2006, the family of Gebro and his brother-in-law Yusuf Ay from Sweden, who were visiting their home village "Hah" (Turkish: "Anitli") near the village "Ortaca", was attacked by a Turkish mob. Moreover, is he the mayor of the Islamic neighboring village "Ortaca".

On 15th and 16th April 2006 the I. Congress of the "Bethnahrin Free Women Union" was held in Sweden. The congress was attended by 58 delegates as representatives from around Europe and the homeland. The Bethnahrin Free Women Union is considered as a political women organization, which engages itself with the rights of the Syriac (Aramaic-Aramaic) women in Turkey and promotes the participation of the women in political decision making, the Union, set up in 2000. The first steps for organizing the women were taken in January 1998 when the Bethnahrin Free Women Union could be founded finally in the year 2000. With the establishment of the BWU a plan and a program were set up, according to which women could carry out their goals and ideas independently. It sought to express the women’s problems as well as to promote the participation of the women and families in the national movement.

In the past few years the Syriac women have already been involved in the cultural, political, social and international events. Our women union has been internally and externally engaged itself with other institutions. Thus the thoughts of the women could be spread within our society.

The resolution of the congress on 16th April 2006 the BWU was renamed as the Bethnahrin Women Union BWU. With the new members and work program and a new charter of the organization. Also, hierarchically and in the organization structure important changes were undertaken. According, now there are independent executive committees, which are coordinated and led by the European Executive Committee, consisting of 13 representatives from individual countries. The co-ordination committee was selected, which coordinates the activities and the information between the executive committee of the homeland and the executive committees of the homeland.

Some of the resolutions that emerged from the aims and principals of the congress are:

* Mediating with other institutions for the women’s union
* To instate equal rights between women and men
* Proclamation of our national identity on international level
* Participation in the democratization process of the middle east
* To take an important role in the media

BWU-Europe

The Hessian Higher Administrative Court has resolved that Syriac people were no longer persecuted in Turkey. Yet, it can’t be calculated how this decision has an effect on current asylum-processes and on already accepted and unlimited asylum-grants. But one thing can be said for sure: This decision will be highly discussed in Turkey and will cause discussions in the Syriac communities living in the European Diaspora.

Under which circumstances do experts and judges review the lively and difficult return-efforts to their home places? Are positive signals of the Syriac people in regard with the EU-entry of Turkey overvalued? Several questions have evolved much conversation within the last couple of days and weeks.

It is right and also welcoming that Turkey is making a lot of progress. But still a fundamental change concerning the Syriac community has not still been reached so far. Local and national reforms are reforming starting points, but not more than that since the realisation of the latter is a long time in coming. Stew progress is being made with the registration of plots of lands. As a result, Syriacs are quiet unsatisfied with the way they are treated by authorities. Christians are in fear of the Syriac community represses and discrimination. Occasional acts and attacks of sabotage that occurred throughout the last months point out to existing conflicts.

Therefore, it is wrong to assume that the Syriac’s efforts of return will at the same time come along with the assurance of persecution and discrimination by the Turkish government and authorities. These efforts of the Syriac people are primarily based on their yearning of leading a life that one day will again be full of peace and freedom in their native country. The identification with this land is to its prior a gesture of good will towards Turkey and the people living in these regions. The way that some Syriac families choose to go to an uncertain one, hoping that many Syriacs will follow one day. Another point of view of returning people is their trust in Europe which vouches for the democratization of Turkey.

In consideration of all these aspects, it is hence too early to speak of a changing situation in Turkey which offers Christians chances of a fresh start. Moreover, the political situation is very tense – not only in regard with the flaring up of battles in this region.

It is good that Syriac people are keen on returning to their home country. But until that this going to be a harash and long way. Still it remains a dream and in order of realising it reforms in Turkey need to be practically pushed forward. The government’s stereotypical treatment of Syriacs in Turkey is supposed to be abandoned. A guaranty of life, property and the future of the Syriac community is being assured by Turkey. Also, an economical aspect such as the support of return-projectsm from the part of European countries therefore plays a big role.

In the following, I will enumerate some incidents that happened recently and which have evolved much conversation within the last days and weeks as well as international protests, the state does not interfere at all.

On 15th June 2006, three Turkish men called Tarkan Karahan, Serkan and Serkan kidnapped Mr. Akdemir from his shop and a few minutes later they shot him dead with a handgun in the car they used for kidnapping. They put Mr. Akdemir who was already dead in the back of the car and took him to a field near Ortaca, the village which Mr. Akdemir was known as Dincay, where they buried him with the help of another person called Serkan.

Mr Akdemir was married and left two children.

On 18th June 2006, Isa Dogan from Azerbaijan and his brother-in-law Yusuf Ay from Sweden, who were visiting their home village "Hah" (Turkish: "Anitli") near the village "Ortaca", was attacked by a Turkish mob.

On August 30th 2006, the family of Gebro and his brother-in-law Yusuf Ay from Sweden, who were visiting their home village "Hah" (Turkish: "Anitli") near the village "Ortaca", was attacked by a Turkish mob. Fortunately, it only came to property damages. Gebro himself was in the monastery "Mur Gabriel" at the moment of the attack.