



Chairman's Message

Dear readers,

Some incidents affect a nation as a whole. The ongoing pressure and occupation practices directed against the Mor Gabriel Monastery have affected and moved the Syriac nation throughout the world. The Mor Gabriel Monastery is considered to be a holy shrine for the Syriacs. Even though tens of thousands of Syriacs had to flee from Tur Abdin region (South East of Turkey) in the 80's, they resisted and did not evacuate the Mor Gabriel Monastery. And the Monastery that was kept inhabited by the Syriacs encouraged hundreds of Syriac families. Accordingly, the region of Tur Abdin was not evacuated by its indigenous Syriac people.

In spite of the severe pressure it suffered in Turkey in the 1980's and 1990's, the monastery of Mor Gabriel has managed to stand on its foot. Despite all this, the Mor Gabriel Monastery continued to represent the Syriac culture in Tur Abdin. 20 years after the first migration wave to Europe, when the relations between Turkey and the EU started to improve, the Syriacs in Europe began to consider a possible return to their homeland. Accordingly, some families returned and re-established themselves and thousands of other Syriacs started to visit Tur Abdin region every year. However, just when this was happening, the Turkish state started to show its long accustomed threatening face. This time, unlike before, it did not attack the Syriac individuals of the region one by one, but directed its aggression to the Mor Gabriel Monastery, thus to all of the Syriacs.

The Ministry of Forests and the Treasury of the Turkish republic attempted to occupy the lands that belong to the Mor Gabriel Monastery. By doing so, actually the Turkish state is sending a symbolic message to the Syriacs saying that this is not their place. Tur Abdin region was named by the Syriacs as the "Mount of the Servants of God" and became a centre of the Christianity by the Syriac Christians. At times the number of the Christian monks residing in this region had reached tens of thousands. However, in spite of its 17 centuries old history, the newly founded Turkish State authorities claim that the lands of the monastery belong to the state. Accordingly they try to occupy them on a false claim.

The Syriacs traditionally believe that this monastery was founded by the God's messenger angel Gabriel. According to this Syriac legend, the angel Gabriel promised that this monastery will remain standing on its foot until the doomsday.

Iskender Alptekin

Conference at the French Senate

On Thursday 2nd April, a conference was held in the French Senate about the future of the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrians in Iraq.

The conference was organized by the Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac Institute in Paris with the active collaboration of European Syriac Union and thanks to the help of the Senator Mrs. Christianne Kammerman.

Guests from different fields attended to the conference: The Iraqi Ambassador in France, French Senators and journalists.

The conference was split in 2 sessions where in the first session academics and authors made a speech about the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrians people's history and presence in the Middle-East.

The Professor Herman Teule President of Institute for Eastern Christendom at the Nijmegen University (NL) and others were the main speakers during that session.



After a short break a video was shown related to the situation of the Iraqi refugees in Jordan and stating the alarming situation of the Iraqi refugees and mentioning that more than 60% of them are Christians.

You can see the video here:

<http://www.lejourduseigneur.com/index.php/jds/Emissions/Abouna-Khalil-le-dernier-samaritain>

And a second session was related to political arena and the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrians political organizations in the Middle-East and Europe.

Aziz Al-Zebari from the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Council of Iraq explained the current situation of the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrians in Iraq, their tragedy and therefore the need for autonomy.

In his speech, on behalf of European Syriac



Union, Suleyman Gultekin talked further about the request for autonomy for the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Christians in Iraq. He explained that this request is not to divide Iraq, not against Iraqi people, nor to contain themselves into a ghetto but on the contrary to build a multicultural and more equitable society in Iraq for all Iraqi people and minorities living in Iraq. Suleyman Gultekin also insisted that the request for autonomy doesn't go against Iraqi Constitution and made a reference to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Some of the articles read during the conference show that our request is in line with International Institutions:

Article 3

Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Article 4

Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.

Article 5

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

Article 6

Every indigenous individual has the right to a nationality.

You can read the complete U.N. declaration here:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/en/drip.html>

Furthermore Suleyman Gultekin explained the different events and meetings organized/hold by European Syriac Union about the request for autonomy in Iraq during the last 2 years.

Please see the link below for a detailed conference program..

<http://www.esu.cc/Events/Programme%20Conference-Debat.pdf>

Attacks continue against Mor Gabriel Monastery

Last year the cadastral survey was started at the Mor Gabriel Monastery and villages of the vicinity. During these works three of the muslims vil- lages menaced Mor Gabriel Monastery inhabitants to seize the prop- erties of the Monastery. With the objective to seize all the properties, the representatives of these vil- lages with the religious and national de- clarations and statements that they do they tried to show the Monastery as the occupant and as the missionary habitation. As a final of these accusa- tions from the first degree



Turkish Republic Ministry of Forest and Environment and Ministry of Education started an investigation against cen- tenary Monastery of Mor Gabriel.

At the result of these investigation Ministry of the Forest and Environment had sued Mor Gabriel Monastery with the hypothesis that Monastery occupied the woodland. Answer to this act Monastery also sued Ministry of Forest and Cadastral Directorate to protect their land that they are using before arrival of the Turks to the Anatolia.

The first trial started at the November 2008. The trial was postponed. The next one was at the December also this one was postponed. The trials continue at the January, February and Mars and like precedents these also was postponed. New trials will continue at the 22 April and 06 Mai 2009.

To monitor these trials and giving support to the Mor Gabriel Monastery hundreds of Syriac and European representatives were present at the precedent trials. At the Europe Syriac people for many times with the head of the Bishops they organized huge street demonstrations in Sweden, Deutschland, Switzerland, Austria and Belgium. 25 January 2009 at the demonstration of Berlin more than 20 thousands of Syriac people were present. This number was quarter of the Syriacs of Germany. This activity was supported firstly with the Syriac Orthodox Church, European Syriac Union and different Syriac party and institu- tions.

At the time when Syriacs planning to return back from Diaspora, the

method of Turkish gov- ernment to seizure and oppress 1600 years old Mor Gabriel Monastery, mainly is a policy of intimidation to prevent returning back of Syriac to their ancestral home- land. Also there is a second reason which afraid Turkey from the registration of the Monastery lands. South east of Anatolia is full with the destroyed and already occupied Syriac churches and monasteries. Such a trial that will be gain with the Monastery part, this will be first example to the rest of the Syriacs to protecting their cultural richness.



Mor Gabriel Monastery is one the most important and milestone for the Syriac and also for the Christianity. During the decades the Monastery was the vital place for the preserving religious heritage and continuation of the Syriac liturgy. Apart this the Monastery has important role for the education of the Syriac children of the region. Only Monastery has capa- bility to offer this service to the Syriac children which in their own vil- lages there is no choice of schools and education facilities.

From one side which tries to adhere to European Union from other side which makes efforts to be a model country at the Middle East, Turkey's policies against Syriac religious institutions are contrasting strategies.

If really Turkey wants to be a democratic coun- try in the future, then must shows more respect to the historical, religious and social rights of the Syriac and other non muslim minorities which lives for the thou- sand of years in Turkey.



ESU Diplomacy Meetings

European Syriac Union, Iraq Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Popular Congress, Iraq Bethnahrin Patriotic Union (HBA) and French Assyrian- Chaldean-Syriac Institute representatives made a serial of meetings be- tween 26-27 January 2009 at the European Union institutions. The main objective of these meetings was to seek support for autonomy safe regi- on at the north Iraq for the Iraqi Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Christians.

From ESU Fikri Aygur (ESU Vice Chairman), Suleyman Gultekin (ESU Belgium Representative), Ilyas Demir (Nederland Representative), Simon Oguz (Sweden Representative), on behalf of Iraq Chaldean- Syriac-Assyrian Popular Congress Aziz El Zebari (External Relations) and for the same institution Gabriel Malko (European Responsible) for the HBA Cak Sen and French Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac Institute Agnes Ide were present during these meetings.

The first meeting was realized with the Sophie Kisling secretary of the European Council President Javier Solana and Karin Gatt-Rutter chief of the European Commission Iraq Desk. At this meeting the discussion was about situations that faced Iraqi Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Christians. Also the help was requested for the security and aide for the realization of the autonomy project.

Other meetings were done partly with the European Parliament Iraqi

Committee. These meetings were realized with the European Parliament Iraqi Committee Chairman Baroness Emma Nicholson of Winterbourne and Nicholay Mladenov and from the same committee Tunne Kela.

At the 28 January 2009 ESU and Iraq Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Popular Congress representatives made a meeting with Nederland representati- ves. Nederland government Middle East and Africa representatives and Turkey representatives were present at this meeting. With this meeting also the aim was to seek support for the autonomy project and finding solution for the Mor Gabriel Monastery problem which situated at the southeastern of Turkey otherly in the Turabdin.

On February also ESU and Iraq Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Popular Congress representi- ves met Sweden Parliament External Relation Commission.

One of the main objectives of ESU is to seek support for the autonomy safe region in Iraq for the Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac people.



New Patriarch for the Syriac Catholic Church

Mar Ignace Youssef III Younan had been consecrated new patriarch for the Syriac Catholic Church and religious ceremony took place in Our Lady of the Annunciation Cathedral in Beirut.

The new Patriarch Mar Ignace Youssef III Younan was elected at the beginning of the year as new patriarch because of the resignation the precedent patriarch. The ceremony unfolded in the presence

H.E. Youssef III Younan born to Farjo & Khatoun (Khabot) Younan on November 15, 1944 at Hassakeh, Syria and baptized on December 8th at Assumption Parish. He is the middle child of nine children, having four brothers and four sisters.

Bishop Youssef Younan attended Assumption Parochial School and after graduation went on to study at Our Lady of Deliverance Seminary in Charfet, Lebanon. He continued to pursue his priestly formation and career at "Propaganda Fide" and earned a double Licentiate (Masters) in philosophy and theology from Urbaniana University in Rome.

Bishop Youssef was ordained to the priesthood on September 12, 1971. After ordination he was appointed as teacher in the Seminary in Charfet where he was director of the major Seminary for two years. He returned to his home Diocese of Hassakeh where he functioned as Diocesan Director of Catechesis. He remained in this position as director for seven years. He was then appointed pastor of the Church of the Annunciation in Beirut in 1980, where he remained until 1986.

In March of 1986 he was assigned to the United States where he was to establish a mission in the New York/New Jersey Metropolitan area to gather Syriac Rite Catholics. Soon after his arrival, with the guidance and assistance of The Most Reverend Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick (Archbishop of Newark) he established the first mission of Our Lady of Deliverance. In 1988, he was further appointed by the Sacred Congregation for Eastern Rite Churches as coordinator among

his colleague missionary priests in the United States and Canada. And in 1991, he was officially appointed "Apostolic Delegate" by the same Congregation to represent the Congregation and the Syriac Rite to the Catholic hierarchy of North America.

In June of 1991, Father Younan was elevated to the rank of "Corbishop" by the Patriarch, Mar Ignatius Antoun II Hayek. The ceremony took place at Our Lady of Deliverance Mission in Newark, New Jersey.

Since this time, Corbishop Younan traveled from the East Coast to the West Coast (California) on a monthly basis to help establish another mission. Soon after his initial visits, the mission of The Sacred Heart was established in North Hollywood in 1991. Three years after, he reached out again to establish a further mission Church in San Diego called Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

On November 6, 1995, Pope John Paul II appointed him first Bishop (Eparch) of the newly established Diocese (Eparchy) Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Diocese for Syriac Catholics in the United States and Canada. He was consecrated Bishop on January 7, 1996 at Saint Peter and Paul's Church in Kamishly, Syria by His Beatitude, the Patriarch Hayek..

He fluently speaks Arabic, French, Aramaic, Italian, German and English.

News: various sources.



Cadastral Survey in Turabdin

Since cadastral survey had started in Turabdin region Syrians face great problems and for many times there is no answer for the questions. Syrians are at the phase to demand their own and fundamental rights.

At the time when all the lights are at the ongoing unfair Mor Gabriel Monastery case, othe villages of the Syrians also have the same incidents. The villages of Arkah (Uçkoy) and Bethkustan (Alagoz) have the same cadastral disaccord with the local officials in the region.

For this reason, the people of Arkah made different activities and lobby to create public opinion around this issue. Accordingly, the Arkah villagers who reside in Europe made serial of meetings including



Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and with the deputies. The Arkah association made a meeting with an european parliamentary from CDU to make hearing Arkah problem. At the same time the association sent a letter to the Interior Ministry of Turkey to find a solution.

On the other hand, Bethkustan also faces the same problems with the cadastral survey. The trial of Bethkustan postponed to another date because of the incomplete documents from the experts.

From a period there is important movement between Syriac in the diaspora concerning to return back to the Turabdin. From this time until today, Syrians in Turabdin face different problems with various tactics. Turkey has to accept Syrians as native people of the region, giving all historical, social and cultural rights to Syrians will strengthen Turkish democracy and this will be great step toward acceptance of multiculturalism.

ESU Sweden Book Fair

On 8th March 2009, the European Syriac Union ESU and the Mor Fetrus church of Hallonberg in Stockholm jointly organized the 3rd Bethnahrin book fair.

Many authors from among our people and foreign authors participated in this fair. Professor Swante Ljungred the author of a new book about the Sayfo Genocide held a speech about the history and the Sayfo Genocide of the Assyrian Syriac people.



Evin Cetin, who is a candidate to the EU parliament also held a speech about the Sayfo Genocide and the 8th March Women's day.

Up to 27 authors participated in the book-

fair. This year's authors award was given to Mr. Besim Aydin. Around 500 people attended the book-fair.

One of the objectives of ESU Sweden is to find specialists of the Syriac literature and history and make meetings with the community.

Beside this ESU Sweden is one of the respected organization within the syriac community and at the Swedish political arena.



The Voice of the Syriacs

IMPRINT

Information bulletin about the social position of the Syriacs in and outside the Middle East. It appears periodically, published by the European Syriac Union (ESU) in Brussels-Belgium.

Contact:

Phone: 0032 2 523 4181
Fax: 0032 2 523 6201
Internet: www.esu.cc
e-mail: contact@esu.cc

Address:

European Syriac Union
Rue Bara 152
1070 Brussels
Belgium

Chairman: Mr. Iskender Alptekin
e-mail: iskender.alptekin@esu.cc
Deputy Chair: Mr. Fikri Aygur
e-mail: fikri.aygur@esu.cc
Secretary: Mr. Evgil Turker
e-mail: evgil.turker@esu.cc
Treasurer: Mr. Nail Akcay
e-mail: nail.akcay@esu.cc

Members of the Union

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Switzerland

Bethnahrin Informations Netz
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Netherlands

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Netherlands

Centre Culturel du Peuple de Mesopotamie
Belgium

Institut Mesopotamie de Bruxelles
Belgium

Assyrer-Suryoye Kultur Verein
Austria

Women Conference

On the occasion of the 8th of March, the international day of the women, the Bethnahrin Frauen Union Germany has organised an international Women's conference.

The goal of the international women's conference was to establish a step towards an intercultural exchange and to promote the linguistic and social integration of the women in Europe. Through the contribution of the assembled advisers, Mrs. Antje Blumenthal, MdB/CDU delegate; Mrs. Martina Severin-Kaiser, ecumenical reverend of the Nordelbischen church and Mrs. Rima Tüzün, representative of the Bethnahrin Frauen Union, it was possible to jointly analyse and discuss special points of interest.

The first adviser, Mrs Antje Blumenthal talked in her speech about the difficulty of a female politician to be elected and recognised. She also showed that women are paid lower wages than men and expounded on a proposal to combat the causes of wage differences between men and women.

Reverend and designated person for ecumenism of the Nordelbischen church, Mrs Martina Severin-Kaiser explained to the listeners that the 8th of

March now also is World Prayer Day. Mrs Severin-Kaiser explained, based on many examples from the Bible, that the woman is an integral part of Christianity and that man and woman are both the image of God.

Mrs Rima Tüzün talked about the situation and the position of the Suryoye women in society and mentioned in view of this the causes of the bad development in the range of education and integration of Suryoye women.

After the advisers held their speeches in the first block of the women conference, a podium discussion was introduced after a 30 minute break by the leader of the conference, Mrs. Meryem Sass. The possibility was offered to the more than 140 participants to ask questions to the advisers.



Local Elections in Turkey

At the last week of the mars Turkish voters went to the polling booth to give new names for the next period.

As is well known Turkey passed difficult times and turmoil because of the political arena. According to some of the specialists the winner of the elections is the governmental party, AKP and to others is the main opposition party CHP.



Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan with the speech that delivered to the journalists

he highlighted the dissatisfaction of the election results and he added also that was surprised. Erdogan declared that they will analyze very deeply the message of the voters and they will try to take some lessons from these results.

Accordingly AKP gathered 38.78%, CHP 23.12, MHP 16.04 % and DTP 5.68 %.

On the other hand the AKP for the first time is losing the votes. According to some experts and election specialists the reason of this decline could be the economic crisis results, going far from the European Union promises and lastly the internal political atmosphere.

AKP won 10 of the big metropolises and other parties also gain few cities. The main objective of AKP was

to gain some of the southern cities, Izmir and Antalya but this did not happen.

The elections also in Turabdin change the atmosphere of the region. The Syriac attendance and interest was high as the last years.

At the Turabdin the important point was that three villages had turned to the Syriac means Anhil, Ciwardo and Marbobo.

On the other hand for the first time Syriacs were presented to the local representatives. At the different cities three Syriacs won their places for the new duties. At the Mardin Subhi Uysal from the AKP, at the Midyat Jacob Gabriel from DTP and from Bakirkoy, Istanbul Selim Algaz from CHP won their places at the municipal council.

Lastly at the Midyat, densely populated with the Syriacs, Sehmus Nasiroglu from the Democratic Party won the municipality for the third time.

The participation to the local elections was at the high degree also the interest of the Syriacs to the election was an important point to highlight.

