



Chairman's Message

Dear readers,

After a halt of more than 2547 years the Syriac-Chaldean-Assyrian nation is resurfacing from the depths of the history. A few days ago the Kurdistan Regional Parliament ratified the constitution of the region and paved the way for the Christian community living in Northern Iraq to form their own autonomous region.

As a result of this new historic development, our people living in Northern Iraq will have the right to declare their self administered autonomous region. The North of Iraq has been the homeland for the Syriac-Chaldean-Assyrian people for at least seven thousand years.

Throughout the last two thousand five hundred years our people have been living in their own homeland without any appropriate status. During all these long centuries our people have been subject to countless massacres, lootings and forced migration.

Without an appropriate status, the people of any nation, since they have no internationally recognized identity, are bound to be subject to atrocities. It is a fact that many nations have disappeared within the layers of the history and have melted among other nations.

However, the Syriac-Chaldean-Assyrian people have always resisted to be vanished in this way, never lost their hope and finally have slowly begun to take their rightful status in the New Iraq that is moving towards the democracy.

Following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire many people have vanished within the newly founded states of the Middle East. Especially, for the native Christian people of these states, it was impossible to preserve their culture and identity any longer.

As a result of the democracy being brought by the US to the Middle East, many ancient and native people will have the opportunity to revive. Indeed this was also the case for many new states and people to find a space to breathe in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Communist regimes of the Eastern Europe.

Thus, Iraq is going through a similar process and the Syriac-Chaldean-Assyrian people are re-emerging to the surface of the contemporary history.

Iskender Alptekin

TOWARD TO UNITY OF NAMES

On 25th June Kurdistan Regional Parliament ratified the new draft for the constitution. The constitution is accepted with the great majority. Among the participants there was also Chaldeans Assyrians Syriacs deputies.

The most important point at this draft was the definition of the names which belongs to our people. Hitherto the different combinations were used for describing the community and more specifically after fall of Saddam regime at whole of Iraq, the existence of community was important.

At the draft constitution of the Kurd region, for the first time the Chaldean Assyrians Syriacs are accepted as one community. The definition became Chaldeans Syriacs Assyrians, without separation by comma and only referring only to one.

Another important point was the acceptance of the autonomy region at the draft constitution. According to the unofficial English translation of article 5 of the constitution says: "The people of Kurdistan region composes of Kurds, Arabs, Turkman, Chaldean Syriac Assyrian, Armenians and other who are citi-

zens of Kurdistan region"

Also the article of 35 says: "This constitution guarantees the national and cultural and administrative rights of Turkman, Arabs, Chaldean Syriac Assyrian, Armenians including the autonomy wherever any of those components are a majority and this to be organized in a law"

On the other hand, the Chaldeans Syriacs Assyrians People's Council made a statement related to these important events. At the statements Council felicitate all the people who were active at this process and declared great and important efforts of Sarkis Aghacan. The Council also thanks the regional administration and the parliament.

Subsequently to the fall of Saddam regime in the Iraq Chaldeans Syriacs Assyrians lived great persecutions at the country. Nearly one million of people are fled the country and most of people were forced to leave their homes. Well known personalities were captured by demanding great amount of ransoms and otherwise were killed. Daily life of the Christian Chaldean Syriac Assyrian people was unacceptable.

Visit to Turabdin with German Delegation

Between 14-17 April European Syriac Union (ESU), with one delegation from Germany made a visit to Turkey particularly to observing last developments with the Mor Gabriel Monastery land dispute case.

The delegation was consisted from; Michael Brand, Ute Granold, Alois Karl and Dominik Geissler from CDU-CSU deputies at the Federal Parliament, CDU employee at the Federal Parliament Sven Oole, Dr. Otmar Oehring from German Catholic Foundation Missio, Ingo Stender responsible of the external relations at the Ankara within German Ambassador and lastly Fikri Ayyur Vice-Chairman of ESU and responsible of the foreign relations.

First day the delegation met with the Syriac Catholic Priest Yusuf Sag and Chaldean Priest and Patriarch Representative Sir Francois Yakan at the Istanbul. The main discussion items were the problems of these churches and the difficulties that they meet with the Foundation's Code. The second day a visit to Turabdin has been realized. First visit realized to Mardin Governor Hasan Duruer. Then delegation met with the Bishop Mor Philiksinos Saliba Ozmen at the Deyrulzafaran Monastery.

Then a meeting has been held with Mustafa Yilmaz, head official of district of Midyat.

After these, the committee met with the Mor Gabriel Monastery lawyer Rudi Sumer and the Bakisyan (Alagoz) mukhtar (the elected head of village). Latest developments and information gathered about the situation. Long conversation done with the Mor Gabriel Monastery Bishop Samuel Aktas, also a visit realized to Kafarbe mukhtar who helped the Monastery from the first trial and he expressed his opinions about Monastery frontiers.

The next day, with the already gathered information delegation went to Ankara met Prof. Dr. Tahsin Fendoglu, the head of human rights unite linked to Prime Minister and also a meeting done with a committee on behalf of the government at the Parliament. Last meetings held place with Murat Mercan and Kaan Esener, head of human rights department. All delegations have chance and possibility to see all details about Mor Gabriel case.

The German delegation made a press conference at the German Parliament about this visit at 20 April.

The Chaldean Syrian Assyrian Popular Council (CSAPC) Dohuk/ Iraq

Reality and Objectives

Under the slogan "Claiming our national rights is a democratic struggle to support the brotherly struggle and reconstruction of the new Iraq", the proceedings of the Ankawa Popular Conference began in the Sub-District of Ankawa in Erbil, Iraq in 12-13 March 2007.

The conference was attended by more than 1200 independent personalities from our Chaldean, Syriac Assyrian (CSA) people. It was also attended by the representative of the British Consulate and the Italian Consulate respectively as well as the finance minister of the Kurdistan Region Government (KRG) Mr. Sargis Aghajan and representatives from our national, Kurdish and government institutions in the KRG in addition to the participation of our people's institutions from the various areas at home and from abroad.

The conference was a step forward to gather and unify the efforts of our (CSA) people and join its ranks to realize all the legitimate rights of our people including autonomy in its historical areas where it lives at present.

The proceedings of the conference ended successfully through the emergence of the Popular Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Council (PCSAC), and the announcement of a final manifesto and the forwarding of two memorandums to the Iraq Constitution Amendment Committee (ICAC) and to the Committee of Kurdistan Constitution Drafting (CKCD) in addition to the issuance of a number of recommendations and decisions of concern to our people and its national rights.

The autonomy project has thus become a demand by the masses of our people; for our people does not only regard the issue of autonomy a decisive question, but rather the last opportunity for it to be ever able to live in freedom and dignity in its homeland Iraq side by side with his Arab, Kurd, Turkmen, Armenian brothers and other Iraqi sects.

The (PCSAC) has undertaken today the task of following up and realizing this common demand in direct coordination with the parties represented in the council, that have likewise officially adopted this demand, particularly when the council started in a concrete way with its mission and activities at its headquarters in the city of Duhok. The council has come to have at present numerous offices both at home and abroad. And thanks to the efforts made by those offices and committees, the council, that comprises devoted and independent members of our people and political parties, has eventually changed into an effective national and political institution with a strong popular support.

The total number of the council members is 41 of whom 31 are independent and another 10 members represent the political parties of our (CSA) people. It is worthwhile mentioning that participants in the Ankawa Popular Conference had voted during the election process, that was carried out on a provincial basis and according to the population density, for the election of 31 candidates who were to occupy the seats allocated to the independent members representing all the Iraqi governorates where our people live as well as the diaspora. The seats were distributed as follows:

Nineveh: 6, Duhok: 5, Erbil: 4, Baghdad : 3, Sulaymania: 1, Kirkuk : 1,

Basrah : 1

Besides, 5 seats were allocated to the members of the preparatory committee of the conference and another 5 were given to the diaspora for the present term of the council. As for the 10 seats allocated to the political parties of our people, 7 seats have already been occupied by our national parties who decided to join and be represented in the council. The remaining 3 seats are still vacant in addition to the seat allocated to Basrah that is also vacant for security reasons. The political parties that have joined the council are as follows:

1. Beth Nahrein National Party,
2. Beth Nahrein Democratic Party,
3. The Chaldean Democratic Manbar (Pulpit),

4. The Syriac Gathering Independent Movement,
5. The Chaldean National Council,
6. The Assyrian National Party and
7. The Chaldean Culture Society

Even the presidency body of the council has likewise been elected in a democratic way following the first meeting of the council in the village of Karamles on 15 May 2007 that was attended by the independent members numbering 31. The meeting was also attended by a judicial supervisory committee head by Judge Ali Asghar Abdul-Razak Hassan, Court of First Instance Judge of the District of al-Hamdania. And hence, the council enjoys a judicial and legal characteristic that is acknowledged by our people on both the Iraqi and Kurdistan Region levels.

Based on the above, the council today is more than ever keen about adhering to its basic demands in terms of the unity of our people and the establishment of an autonomy area in the historical places where our people live currently and to provide for this autonomy area constitutionally according to the formula stated in its political agenda as follows:

1. Our (CSA) people that lives in the Plain of Nineveh has a legal right to form an autonomous area.
2. The boundaries of the autonomous area are to be defined within the areas that are inter-connected in the Plain of Nineveh as well as the areas in Duhok Governorate that have a majority of (CSA) population .
3. Inhabitants of the villages and towns lying in Kurdistan Region that are not part of the autonomous area, have the legal right to join the autonomous area, should they ever so decide by majority vote.
4. Syriac language (modern Aramaic) shall be deemed the official language for the autonomous area side by side with Arabic and Kurdish.
5. The autonomous area shall have a parliament that is elected by our (CSA) people. The parliament in turn will elect a First Minister who shall be in charge of the administration of the autonomous area.
6. The state minister shall form a government whose members should be from the autonomous area and be endorsed by the parliament of the area.
7. The parliament of the autonomous area shall prepare a constitution for the area that is going to be valid following endorsement by the majority of the population of the area through a referendum.
8. The government of the autonomous area shall enjoy full authorities with the exception of the fields of development and economy, water resources and petroleum activities, whereby the autonomy area shall share these fields with the government to which it is connected.
9. The autonomous area government shall have the authority to appoint its own police force which shall have its own logos according to a special legislation.
10. The autonomous area government can establish its own special courts of justice to arbitrate in matters related to our (CSA) people, particularly in terms of the civil status, such as marriage and divorce... etc.
11. The parliament of the autonomous area shall endorse a flag and a logo for the autonomous area to be flown on the public buildings inside the area side by side with the flag and logo of Iraq and Kurdistan Province
12. A separate and fixed budget shall be allocated to the government of the autonomous area for the administration of the government of the area.
13. Non-CSA inhabitants of the autonomous area shall be treated on equal footing with all the population of the area, including the freedom of doctrine and religion.
14. Issues of special national and religious concern to our people who live outside the autonomous area shall be directly addressed by the central institutions of the autonomous area, and they shall have the full right to voting, participation and nomination for the election of the autonomous area parliament.
15. Our (CSA) people all over the world (holding an Iraqi citizenship) have the full right to voting and nomination during the parliamentary elections of the autonomous area, as is the case with the Iraqi members of parliament and the Kurdistan National Council.

MOR GABRIEL MONASTERY CASE

Mor Gabriel Monastery, one of the most important Syriac Monastery in the world, won one of the land dispute cases last Friday. The local Turkish court ruled his decision on favour of the Mor Gabriel Monastery.

According to the new agencies, the dispute over the boundaries of Mor Gabriel, a fifth-century Syriac Orthodox monastery in eastern Turkey, had raised concerns over freedom of religion and human rights for non-Muslim minorities in Turkey, a predominantly Muslim country and European Union aspirant.



www.morgabriel.org

During the case processes of the monastery, Syriacs all over the world point out their support to the monastery with the statements and visits to the monastery and with the great street demonstrations. On the other hand, the European Union and United States representatives also follow up the land cases

closely. Mr. Fikri Aygur, Vice-President of the European Syriac Union (ESU) said that, this is very important result for us and for the Syriacs in the world. From now on the Monastery finished the problems with the villagers because the frontiers are known. Aygur also declared that, other land dispute cases are ongoing in the local court and they pursuit all developments very closely. The decision of court is more political than exit legal to ESU. Lastly, Aygur noted that court decision will be a test for the Turkish state by respecting and giving the total rights to the non-Muslim communities in the Turkey.

On the other hand Mor Gabriel Monastery lost one of the cases over the land disputes with the Turkish statethat was postponed. The court made the decision on favour of the Ministry of the Forest.

On the other hand the Mor Gabriel representatives stressed that they will prepare to objection against this decision and they declared that they will bring this decision to the Ankara. As it is well known last month the Monastery had won one of the cases. Also the dispute with the Treasury is won by the Mor Gabriel Monastery.

Similarly to the other trials the interest was very high. Personalities from different places were present to the court at the Midyat. Among the participants, Tuma Celik from ESU, Yilmaz Kerimo member of the Swedish Parliament, deputy Anne Ludvingson, Evin Cetin from Social Democrats of Sweden and Sema Kilicer representative of the European Union were at the Midyat.

Mor Gabriel Monastery stated that they will prepare an objection to this decision and they will bring this to Ankara, also one of the lawyers of the Monastery said if there will be a need they will bring this battle also to the European Justice.

Mor Gabriel Monastery is one of the most important monument for the Syriac Church and to Syriac community all over the world. The Monastery plays an important role in the life of the community more specifically during the hard times, Mor Gabriel Monastery become an address to all who seek an aide. During the migration of the Syriacs, the Monastery stood up and help all people, today grace to Mor Gabriel Monastery the syriac children has possibility to finish their basic education.

ESU gives too much importance to this process of the Monastery, also national and international media had pursued these incidents from the first day.



www.morgabriel.org

ESU YOUTH ORGANIZATION

The conference that has been held in Switzerland on the 9th of May was on behalf of the Syriac youth.

This conference indicated that the Syriac youth has the possibility to organize a manifestation and is ready to organize an organization which



is for the youth of his own society. Giving possibilities to lead an organization and trying to be an added value by professionalizing, helping with activities and organizing meetings.

Last year (2008) a handful of young man and woman came up with the idea to set up a youth organization because

there was a need for nationalism. Looking forward to the future of our people we also wanted to have a decision making within this evolving process.

Concerning the changes that are in the Middle-East and the changes of world politics made this handful youth aware of positive and negative aspects which can be an issue for our society. By looking at these aspects and with the help of ESU we started to go on a test phase of one year to set up a balance and a stable organization. We had a couple of activities like self-actualization and studies to level up the average knowledge of our youth.

We made a great manifestation in Germany to pronounce our presence.

During this manifestation we made our plans and goals clear. By showing the professionalism and our capabilities we received a lot of sympathizing youth. Having finished the first phase or the so called test phase we were ready to start an official youth organization called ESU-Youth. By having this title we are the representatives of the youth within European Syriac Union (ESU).

During the conference which has been held in Switzerland we also pronounces the hierarchy system and our annual plan. Now 2 months after the start we are working toward our next coming activity, which is the same as last year a study for levelling up the average knowledge of our leading board.

Other activities in our annual plan are for example; trip to the EU parliament, making connections to other youth organizations of our society in Europe, but also in Turkey, Syria and Lebanon, building up new connections with European youth parties. Of course these are just examples. We are also handling on pragmatic issues. If there are new or hot items which are negative to our community we will try to bring these issues to our European colleagues so that they can be solved within a short time period.

During these times, it is almost a must for every youth to be concerned about issues of his own society. We must not forget that we are the future of our nation and we can make the changes that need to be done for the good of our own community/society.

Therefore we say to every person whether a young man or young woman stand up for your thoughts and help this Syriac society for a better future!

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.

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History of Nineveh (part I)

Nineveh (ancient Ninua), ancient city, capital of the Assyrian Empire at its height (about 705-612 BC), on the Tigris River in northern Iraq, opposite the modern city of Mosul (Al Mawsil). Today, its location is marked by two large mounds, Kuyunjik and Nebi Yunus, and the remains of the city walls (about 12 km/7.5 mi in circumference).

Situated at the confluence of the Tigris and Khosr, Nineveh was an important junction for commercial routes crossing the Tigris. It was first settled in Neolithic times before 6000 BC and was inhabited almost without a break until after AD 1500.



In the 2nd and 3rd millennia BC Nineveh was known primarily as a religious center. The healing powers of its statue of the goddess Ishtar were

renowned as far away as Egypt.

The Assyrian king Sargon II (reigned 722-705 BC) is credited with the founding of a library at Nineveh. Sennacherib (reigned 705-681 BC) moved the capital of the empire from Calah (now Nimrud) to Nineveh shortly after he came to the throne.

The city's area was expanded to about 730 hectares (about 1800 acres), and massive defensive walls were added. Drinking water for the inhabitants was brought in from some 50 km (more than 30 mi) away by a system of canals and aqueducts.

During the reign of Ashurbanipal the library was enriched by his scribes with systematically collected scholarly and literary texts and works on magic.

The sack of the city by the Babylonians and Medes in 612 BC effectively put an end to the Assyrian Empire; and, although some of its sections were later inhabited, Nineveh never regained its former importance.

Nineveh was the oldest and most populous city of the ancient Assyrian Empire, situated on the east bank of the Tigris opposite modern Mosul (in Iraq).

The first person to survey and map Nineveh was the archaeologist Claudius J. Rich in 1820, a work later completed by Felix Jones and published by him in 1854.

Excavations have been undertaken intermittently since that period by many persons. A.H. (later Sir Henry) Layard during 1845-51 discovered the palace of Sennacherib and took back to England an unrivalled collection of stone bas-reliefs together with thousands of tablets inscribed in cuneiform from the great library of Ashurbanipal. Hormuzd Rassam continued the work in 1852.

During 1929-32 R. Campbell Thompson excavated the temple of Nabu (Nebo) on behalf of the British Museum and discovered the site of the palace of Ashurnasirpal II.

In 1931-32, together with M.E.L. (later Sir Max) Mallowan, Thompson for the first time dug a shaft from the top of the Quyunjik (Acropolis), 90 feet (30 meters) above the level of the plain, down through strata of accumulated debris of earlier cultures to virgin soil. It was then proved that more than four-fifths of this great accumulation is prehistoric.

Sayfo Conference at Hambourg

On the 25.04.2009, the Syriac and Armenian Communities commemorate Sayfo victims at the Mor Dimet Church based at Hamburg city. The commemorative day was realized by; European Syriac Union (ESU), Hamburg Armenian Community, Hamburg Armenian Youth Board Kilikia, Federation Suryoye Deutschland (HSA), Hamburg Mor Dimet Church and Hamburg Syriac Community. The opening of day done with the prayer that held by two priests from the Armenian and Syriac Church.

With the moderation of Abut Can on behalf the Syriac Community and Toros Sarian to Armenian Community, more than 300 people were present during the commemoration day and writers, academics and historian was also present to express to their opinions and views about Sayfo years. Writer and Journalist Recep Marasli, Historian Gabriela Yonan and Evgin Muksielyas from ESU share their opinions about Sayfo. Armenian Music Assembly David-Qurtett also was present with their melodies.

Recep Marasli from Turkey with his long-detailed speech drew attention to the role of Turks and also some of Kurds during Sayfo massacres. Marasli said, "Actually named as Independent War was not a war against imperialists, contrary it was a war to end the existence of indigenous communities in the

Anatolia, it was a war against people of the Anatolia. Marasli criticized also the ongoing campaign on Turkey about genocide and said such campaigns will be credible only when they use explicitly the genocide definition.

Historian Gabriela Yonan, at her tour highlighted the processes of Priest Yusuf Akbulut of Diyarbakir who was sued because of Sayfo statements. She also added that 1915 Genocide was a Cihat (holy war) which was supported by Germany and the objective was to clean Turkey not only from Armenian but also from all Christians.

Second Sayfo activity was done with the initiative of 24 April Initiative, Hamburg Syriac Community and with the collaboration of Turkish and Kurdish friends. The ceremony started with the documenter about Sayfo. Journalist Recep Marasli, Auteur Dogan Akhanli and From ESU Evgin Muksielyas made their speeches about the meaning of the day. More than 80 people were present to this day.

At his speech Evgin Muksielyas drew attention to life struggle of Syriacs during Republican period of Turkey and added that Sayfo was a dark page at the history. Muksielyas shows chronologically the diminution of the Syriac from their homeland Turabdin