



Chairman's Message

Dear readers,

Our world is changing extremely rapidly and world politics developments are in very sensitive scale for the next years.

While Europe and United States made their focuses on the coming elections, Middle East region countries continue to be at the top of the international agenda and especially Syria which is the centre of the tensions concerning Bashar Al Assad regime.

Syria is becoming extremely in difficult situation to maintain the current status quo in which Al Assad is continue to kill and oppress his own people. By the way, international community is far from reaching to a consensus and finalising the Syria crisis.

Syriac people also are victim of this regime and they also took their place for a new, free and democratic Syria. As we detailed in our bulletin, last 3 months had been intense and very difficult for Syriac people in Syria. The regime does not allow even any small event of people.

Syriac people who wanted to celebrate 1st April (Akitu) Festival had been attacked by Syrian Security Forces and they had been arrested.

For this objective, ESU with the coordination Syriac Union Party in Syria organised demonstrations and protests meeting around major European cities to denounce the real face of Bashar Al Assad regime and showing their solidarity with Syriac people in Syria.

Lahdo Hobil

SYRIAC MEMBERS ARRESTED IN SYRIA

On April 04, 2012 at the morning hours, the Syrian Security Forces captured five members of Syriac Union Party in Syria in the city of Qamishli and Malikiye. Syrian Security Forces continue to terrorise people and they realized raids to the domiciles for further arrests.

During the first raid of Security Forces five members, 2 women and 3 men had been arrested at the gendarmerie of Qamishli.

Recently, Syriac Union Party in Syria celebrated the 1st April (Akitu) Spring Festival in Syria with the presence of Syriac Christians. Akitu Festival is traditional and cultural festival among Syriac people as the beginning of the spring. This year's celebration was different from precedents with the declarations of political demands of Syriac people. Of course, authorities of the Syriac Union Party in Syria detailed their demands during the speeches, with the slogans and with the banners and posters.

In Syria it is strictly forbidden to organize any kind of celebration/activity without permission and without posters and photos of Bashar Al Assad as it was the same with his father, Hafez Al Assad. Contrary to this unjust code, Syriac Union Party in Syria did not get any permission for the celebration. Syriac Union Party in Syria did not carry and did not allow posters of Bashar Al Assad and of course they carried their own flags and slogans.

Later on, the members and sympathizers of Syriac Union Party in Syria organized an action against

the regime, which did not permit the celebration of 1st April, proclaim their demands and arrested their colleagues. Hundreds of Syriacs gathered in front of the gendarmerie, where members were held, and they made passive and sit-down strike for the liberation of the members of the Syriac Union Party in Syria. The response and acts of Special Security Forces was brutal and nearly 20 people had been injured.

On April 05, 2012 members of Party had been interrogated at the political unit and later had been transferred to the military unit. The detainees had been subject of heavy tortures. The women who had been arrested at the first raid of Security Forces have been later released and with the second raid the number of arrested members rised to 9. Now 1 person is still arrested. Since April 06, 2012 European Syriac Union (ESU) is organising protest meetings in front of the Syrian embassies in Stockholm, Geneve and today in Brussels and Berlin to protest this shameful arrest of the Syriac people in Syria. Arrested people did nothing against the rule of the country and they use only and basic right of assembly to celebrate traditional festival peacefully. The Assad regime shows once more time its real face to the entire world with this arrest of peaceful people. With this conduct Assad lost his legitimacy.

ESU calls kindly to international community, regional powers, and relevant actors and to media organisations to monitor this situation, staying sensible and acting with responsive way for the rights of Syriac Christians in Syria.

ESU-Bulletin Interview

Interview with Rima Tüzün, Head of ESU-Foreign Affairs concerning latest situation of Syriac people and focus on Syria issue.

What is your point of view concerning the situation in Syria?

Since months we face in Syria a wave of protests. This protests show that the regime in Syria cannot any more stay alive. Syria has a problem of its regime. The system of the regime is given from a father to his son; it is not a democratic chosen regime. The people in Syria are not willingly anymore to accept this regime. The people want more rights and freedom. About 60 % of the sources and incomes of Syria have been seized and controlled by the Assad clan. At last this not-wellbeing inside of Syria has exploded. This explosion had to come out one day. Since years the regime forces the Syrian people, makes pressure and totally controls them. The time of the Baath-regime in Syria is over; this kind of "one-hand" regime or better to say this dictatorship has come to its end. All Syrian society had been victim of torture and harassment and political activities, freedom of thought and civil institutions had been banned. Syrian people don't feel secure under this regime.

The movement of the Arab-Spring gave to the Syrian people courage to start with their protests and to start to organize themselves against the Baath-regime. The fall of the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya gave the people moral and encouraged them to stand up and to fight for their rights and to change the regime in Syria.

What is the latest situation of Syriac people in Syria during the uprising? What is the latest situation of Christians in Syria? Do you have any relations and cooperation with Syriac institutions inside Syria?

Since the uprising in Syria thousands of Syrians died; about 400 Syriacs have been killed. In Homs the most of the Syriac Christian community fled. There have been attacks against churches and religious leaders too.

As a result of the ending of the Baath-regimes in Middle East, Syriacs have to take place with this changes, especially now in Syria. Syriacs are 10 % of the Syria's population. Resulting to the assimilation politics of Baath-regime, the Syriacs lost their identity status. Syriacs are only known as religious minority, not as ethnic minority.

Since the uprising Syriacs started to ask for their national and ethnic rights and this is very positive.

As ESU we are cooperating with the political party Syriac Union Party of Syria which was founded in 2005 and is based in Syria. The Syriac Union Party of Syria celebrated this year the 1st April (Akitu) Spring Festival in Syria with the presence of Syriac Christians. Akitu Festival is traditional and cultural festival among Syriac people as the beginning of the spring. This year's celebration was different from precedents with the declarations of political demands of Syriac people.

Next day Special Security Forces arrested 5 members of the party. Against this arrest the members and sympathizers of the Syriac Union Party in Syria organized another protest. Hundreds of Syriacs gathered in front of the gendarmerie, where members were held, and they made passive and sit-down strike for the liberation of the arrested. The response and acts of

Special Security Forces was brutal, nearly 20 people had been injured and the count of the arrested risen to 9.

Against this incident we as European Syriac Union organized protest meetings in Stockholm, Geneva, Brussels and Berlin. Just after first protest meeting 8 of the 9 arrested people had been released. Now a day one is still arrested.

As ESU what is your policy of Syria? As an organisation, what kind of activities, works and relations you had realised for the Syria issues?

ESU is a bridge for our Syriac people, within Syriacs Assyrian and Chaldeans, in Middle East. One of our objectives is to create a public opinion on the problems of Syriacs face in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

As ESU we provide information about all people who are living in Syria, not only about Syriac Christians. For us it is important to enlighten on the identities of Syrian society. Arabs, Syriacs, Kurds and other minorities took place at the construction of Syria. Syrian society composed from Muslim, Christians, Druze and Yezidis beliefs. But in comparison with Arabs and Kurds, Syriacs are not known as ethnic minority. For example Kurds are known internationally as Kurds, in Iraq they were able to establish a regional government called Kurdistan.

Syriacs in Syria are indigenous people but without constitutional protection. As ESU one of our objectives for Syriacs in Syria is, to prepare conditions for a constitutional protection and security. We have to avoid such an example of what happened in Iraq.

Therefore we see a democratic change in Syria basically. The rights of all Syrian society have to be guaranteed. The return of humankind and development in the Middle East is an essential and vitally necessary. The new system of the regimes in Middle East has to become like Western standards; that means no suppression and no murders because of anyone's belief and identity.

The mission of ESU in Europe is to bring the situation of Syriacs and other minorities and identities in Syria in an objective way to an international platform and to demand for their democratic and vital rights. Therefore we did several TV-programmes, conferences and seminars within Syriac associations in different countries of Europe.

What should be done for the ending long-lived Syrian crisis?

For the ending long-lived Syrian crisis 2 columns are basically. First of all the opposition has to become better organized and the objectives of the members of the opposition have to be unified. After the last conference of friends of Turkey in important points have been decided; indeed that the new constitution has to be laic and not religious.

The other column is the support from the UN, USA and EU-countries. Thus the bloody massacres come to an end, international pressure and isolation of Syria's Baath regime is basically. Because the more bloods are poured, all the more the future of the peoples in Syria becomes difficult. Another risk is that if not as fast as possible the attacks against Syria's people come to an end, the wave of emigration will not stop. With the emigration of Syriac Christians from Syria we are concerned of the ending presence of Christianity in Middle East.

Syriac Organisations meet Turkish Constitution Conciliation Commission

On February 27, 2012 Syriac organisations from Europe and Turkey met the Turkish Constitution Conciliation Commission in Ankara to present and deliver the demands and expectations of Syriac people concerning the new constitution. This meeting has another important point is that for the first time of the history of Turkish Republic the National Parliament met with the political and NGO groups of Syriac people.



Syriac organisations consisting from European Syriac Union (ESU), Federation of Syriac Associations in Turkey, Mezo-Der and Federation of Syriac People in Germany (HSA)

had meeting at the parliament with the Commission which is consisted from the deputies of all political parties present at the Turkish Parliament.

Nearly one our of the meeting representatives of Syriac organisations focused their attention at the most important and fragile issues that face Syriac people and explain the historical and current situation of Syrians to the

Commission.

The Syriac representatives present the report concerning the demands and expectations of Syriac people from the new constitution and the highlight the injustice concerning lack of status of the Syriac people, inter alia, the suppression of unjust and false passages at the schools manuals which defined Syriac as "traitors", the views concerning definition of "citizenship" in the new constitution and problems concerning land issues in the Turabdin region.

Syriac committee which were consisted from Tuma Çelik (ESU), Evgil Türker (Federation of Syriac Associations in Turkey), Tuma Özdemir (Mezo-Der) and Saliba Joseph (HSA) will continue their meetings with the all political parties that are present at the Turkish Parliament.



ESU member Tuma Çelik declared that they

have very useful meeting for two sides and that the meeting passed with very good atmosphere.

Attack against Syriac Institution in İdil, Şırnak

At the night of February 12, 2012 Syriac Institution in the city of İdil, Şırnak in Turkey had been attacked by unknown people. The cultural institution "Süryani Kültür, Kardeşlik, Sevgi ve Hoşgörü Derneği" established in 2001 in the city which has few Syriac families.

The Syriac institution has especially works in the field of culture and is respected in the city from habitants. The city of İdil which was once one of the centers of the Syrians in the Turabdin region, after migration and difficulties Syriac people left the city and today there are only few Syriac families continue living there. The city also has great historical importance which served to the Syriac people culturally, religiously and economically.

European Syriac Union (ESU), working for the Syriac people in the diaspora and in the homeland countries will continue closely to monitor the situation of Syrians in Turkey at the period of tumultuous politic atmosphere.

During last years Syriac people in the region face some difficulties especially at the land registration field which has files many Syriac villages to the courts and as well the

Mor Gabriel Monastery. Mor Gabriel Monastery is seeking their rights at the European Court of Human Rights.

ESU demands from local authorities to work seriously to find perpetrators of this shameful and unaccepted attack against Syriac institution and to deliver them to the justice. ESU will continue to monitor and follow closely all developments related to this aggression.

We declare our support and friendship to the Syriac institution in the city of İdil and to the President and all members as well. Considering the difficulties in the city and in the region, the presence and works of such institutions is vital for the society and for the next generations.

European Syriac Union (ESU) condemns this shameful attack against Syriac institution and demand from governmental and local authorities to take necessary measures to prevent and secure the presence of Syriac people in the region. ESU will continue closely to watch all steps concerning this incident. The attacks and harassments even in low scale continue in Turkey against Syriac people and this create fear between population.

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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France

Qenneshrin Newspaper
Sweden

First Syriac Newspaper in Turkey: SABRO

First Syriac newspaper had started to be published in Turkey. With the name of Sabro (Hope) newspaper will be the platform for Syriac people in Turkey to make their voices and concerns.



Sabro newspaper will be published monthly for the moment and will be transformed to the weekly newspaper in

the future. Sabro is using two languages namely Syriac and Turkish.

Following the publication of the Sabro newspaper, Turkish media followed and gave importance to this step. During the days Turkish media made relevant news about Sabro newspaper.

The owner and editor in chief of newspaper Tuma Çelik said to the media that first objective

is to make heard our voice of Syriac and to be present in public discussions in Turkey.



Syriac Symposium in İstanbul

European Syriac Union (ESU) organised symposium titled "Syriacs in multicultural life" in İstanbul with the collaboration of Nederland's Embassy and Turabdin Syriac Culture and Solidarity Association.



ESU invited different personalities, writers and intellectuals from various areas to present their views and discuss the situation of Syriac people in Turkey.

The opening speech of the symposium had been presented by Erol Dora, first Syriac member of Parliament, and said that Turkey does not passed the test on the questions of the freedom of belief and thought. Erol Dora explained problems that face different ethnic groups in Turkey, lacking courage to face Turkey history and he also press high importance for the new constitution draft works and declared that this new constitution could be answer for many problems if it will be treated broadly and democratically.

Peter Van der Bloemen from Nederland Embassy stressed the importance of inter-religious tolerance and their support to such projects.

Tuma Çelik from ESU highlighted the situation of Syriacs in Turkey and Ahmet Taşğın presented historical view concerning minorities in Turkey politics from Lausanne Treaty.

Abdurrahim Özmen stated the lack of law and status for Syriacs in the Turabdin region. Journalist Vercihan Zifloğlu made his speech around Mor Gabriel cases and she also added that Syriac people have other problems too.

İsmail Beşikçi stated the political situation of Syriac during history. Şabo Boyacı presented speech about Tolerance and Syriacs in future and Muzaffer İris talked about minority issues and definition.

Many other speeches had been presented by different personalities namely Orhan Miroğlu, Yavuz Önen, and Sait Çetinoğlu among others.

The symposium is the first large scale activity prepared by Syriacs to enhance with Turkish public opinion.