

THE CASE OF MOR GABRIEL MONASTERY

The Syriac-Orthodox monastery Mor Gabriel has lost this year's lawsuit against the Treasury of Turkey. Thus, the monastery loses around 28 acres of land. The Christian monastery Mor Gabriel in Turkey has been fighting for years against its expropriation by the state. This is not only a setback for the monastery, but also for the entire Syriac-Orthodox community in Turkey.

At the proceedings, the Mor Gabriel monastery presented two important pieces of evidence from 17/07/1935 and 01/09/1937. The latter proved that the monastery paid taxes for the lands in accordance with the Land Code. What's particularly bizarre is that these tax documents that were prior the first instance in which the court considered for the benefit of the monastery, the Court of Appeals in Ankara were not taken into account.

Despite numerous calls from European authorities and from Syriac people, the Turkish state continued to maintain its unjust position, which has been source of disappointment within Syriac people and distrust of

Turkish authorities.

Even in April, the German Bundestag demanded: "Turkey should finally take religious freedom seriously".

The Federal Government was called for greater efforts for the preservation of the Mor Gabriel Monastery in Turkey. With the voices of the Union, the FDP and the Greens, Parliament decided on a request by the coalition parties. Therein the Federal Government was called upon to work in coordination with EU Member States, so that the Turkish government ensures the livelihood of the 1,600-year-old Syriac-Orthodox monastery.

With the decision made by the Supreme Court of Appeals on 13 June, values and assets of Syriac people are trying to be seized by legal and juridical pressures. With unfair methods, lots of lands of Syrians have been seized during surveys and had been transferred to the state treasury.

These actions take source from local villages and state institutions. The

local court made decisions about cases but later on all parties decided to go to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court deals with the cases and even reversed the case, which was a gain by the Monastery Foundation.

At the time when AKP (Justice and Development Party) government was trying to persuade the whole world with the democratic openings, their actions against Mor Gabriel Monastery was completely contradictory. This situation is seen insincere by the Syrians.

By this, AKP government became a source of disappointment at the processes of reforms toward European Union. These political decisions always had been issue of discussion at the international arena and often Turkey had been condemned by the European Court of Human Rights. We also believe that Turkey will be condemned by the European Court of Human Rights concerning Mor Gabriel Monastery case.

PRESS CONFERENCE FOR MOR GABRIEL BY TURKISH INTELLECTUALS

Concerning the latest decision of the Supreme Court 20th Juristic Chamber against Mor Gabriel monastery, a group of Turkish Intellectuals called in a press conference on July 10th in Istanbul. The press conference took place at Cezayir Lokantası, Hayriye Cad. No 12, in Galatasaray-Beyoğlu.

The organizers, Altan TAN, Prof. Dr. Baskın ORAN, Prof. Dr. Cengiz AKTAR, Prof. Dr. Ufuk URAS, Tuma ÇELİK, told the public that the decision of Supreme Court 20th Juristic Chamber showed a lack of legal and ethical sense. In their call, the Turkish intellectuals mentioned that this decision was not the first injustice faced by the Syrians. Until now, the Syrians have not properly been able to voice

their thoughts to the public on this matter.

They said that to this situation they believed that they should be in solidarity with the Syriac people and therefore they prepared a statement to the public and a signature campaign with the title "Turkey is homeland of Syriac people - Mor Gabriel Monastery is not Occupier".

(To download this press release or for more information on how to solidarise with this campaign, please have a look on the link of the website <http://beraberbuyudukbuulkede.com>.)

The goal of this campaign was to draw attention to the situation in which Syrians live in their own land

and to show that Turkish society is in solidarity with them.

The initiators of this campaign, by the time of this publication, collected 250 signatures from highbrow people within Turkey. At last the initiators made their call with following words: "It is our basic responsibility and need to protect multi-cultural and different colours of society, standing against the policies of annihilation and denial, consolidating the fraternity among folks and establishing a democratic and free system. Finally, we kindly call to our compatriots to stand against the injustices vis-à-vis Syriac people and Mor Gabriel Monastery".

MANIFESTATION FOR THE RIGHTS OF SYRIAC PEOPLE IN SYRIA



On the 9th of June, the European Syriac Union organized a demonstration in Brussels with the objective to support the rights of Syriac people and all Syrian people who suffered from Baath-Regime.

People from different countries in Europe such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and France attended this demonstration. The participants at this manifestations were not only Syriacs, but also Syrian (Sunnits and Shiites) and Kurds. Together the demonstrators walked from the Square Orban to round Schumann. At the meeting place the representatives from different oppositional organizations (representative from the Syrian National Council Mr. Rimon Majoun, representative of the Syriac Union Party of Syria in Belgium, Mr. Issa Hanna, a. o.) made speeches.

On behalf of the European Syriac Union, Mr. Dikran Bethdawo stressed in his speech: "The policies of harass-

ment and oppression continue systematically against Christians in Syria and in Middle East region. Syriac-Assyrian-Aramean-Chaldean people have been a target of annihilation and reactionary policies and arrived to the point of disappearance and with demographic changes became victim of statelessness. Today, the same scenario and tragedy is repeated in Syria. The threats and oppressions increase constantly against our people in Syria. The uprising against the regime, which started in March 2011, is widened to the entirety of Syria. During this period the Baath-Regime killed thousands of civilians, among them women and children, as well as thousands that had been injured and arrested. Furthermore, tens of thousands fled their country. The damage on the societal structure is colossal and at a very important stage. Due to a lack of transparency, the Baath regime disguises most of the atrocities. Syriac-Melkites-Maronites Christians are also victim of this regime. During the barbaric

attack of Syria Special Forces to the members of the Syriac Union Party in April 2012, several people had been injured and later had been arrested and tortured.

The real face of Baath-Regime was seen once more with this incident against Syriac people. Syriac people are deprived from all political rights and Baath-Regime demonstrates clearly its mentality against Syriac people by applying its assimilative policies.

Therefore, Syriac-Melkites-Maronites-Assyrian people in Syria are against the Baath regime. Supporting the Baath-Regime is accepting the guillotine and at the same time it is committing a great offence. To avoid the scenario of Iraq for Christians in Syria and in other Middle East countries, the international community must take action necessary precautions rapidly."

ESU MEETS WITH GERMAN AUTHORITIES



Concerning the situation of Syrians in Middle East, ESU delegation, President Lahdo Hobil and Head of Foreign Affairs Rima Tüzün have met for the last 3 months with members of the German Parliament.

One of the main issues discussed with the members of the Federal Parliament of Germany (Mrs. Erika Steinbach CDU, Mr. Ralph Brinkhaus CDU and Mr. Pascal Kober FDP) were the Mor Gabriel trials. Both sides, the German representatives

and the ESU-delegation stressed that the Mor Gabriel trials are the test balance for Turkey's democracy. The issue of Mor Gabriel is a symbol of the difficulties and problems Syrians and other minorities face in Turkey.

Other important issues which have been expressed in particular were the difficult situation of Syrians in Syria and Iraq.

DISCUSSION IN THE EU-PARLIAMENT ABOUT THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN MINORITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST



On the 20th of June the Italian MEP Mr. Lorenzo Fontana invited to a discussion in the European Parliament. The conversation topic of this meeting was the situation of Christian minorities in the Middle East.

As speakers, the Italian MEP invit-

ed the president of the European Syriac Union, Mr. Lahdo Hobil, and the Clergyman of the Catholic Church, Monsignore Samuel Özdemir.

During this meeting, the oppression and slander of

Christians, both religiously and ethnically, were discussed. In the second part of the discussion, the current difficulties and problems which Christians are facing in the Middle East were stressed.

In his speech, the President of the

European Syriac Union expressed 3 current problems:

- in Turkey, the process to the monastery of Mor Gabriel
- in Iraq, the demographic changes and the attacks on Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrians, in the Kurdistan region, with the goal of expelling the Christians
- in Syria, the risk to relive a second Iraq, if there is no sufficient support by the European countries

The Clergyman of the Catholic Church, Monsignore Samuel Özdemir, specified that because of the attacks and murders by Islamic groups, Christians in the Middle East live with severe difficulties and problems. Monsignore Samuel Özdemir also highlighted the importance of support by the European Union; otherwise there will be no peace and democracy.

SYRIAC UNION PARTY OF SYRIA OCCUPIED THE SYRIAN EMBASSY IN STOCKHOLM

On the 14th of August at 10 AM members and supporters of the Syriac Union Party of Syria occupied the Syrian Embassy in Stockholm. With the slogan "All Syrians are one" they entered the building.

Outside, in front of the Syrian Embassy manifestators held up posters with their demands. A spokesperson of the Syriac Union Party said that the aim of this protest

is to make clear where Syrians are standing. The Assad-Regime claims that he is defending Syrian Christians and helping them, but from who? From their partners in the homeland, and its purpose was and is still creating a rift between the components of the Syrian people and feeding sectarian which contradicts with Syrian civilization and its people.

The spokesperson said that they

want to send a message to the world. They want to work to overthrow the Baath-Regime. He stressed that they share the claim of their Syrian brothers for freedom, democracy and change toward a Syrian civil and democratic republic in which its people enjoy equal rights and duties. Followed please find the press release of the Syriac Union Party of Syria:

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

Internet: www.esu.cc

e-mail: contact@esu.cc

Address:

Rue Bara, 152
1070 Brussels
Belgium

Chairman: Mr. Lahdo Hobil

lahdo.hobil@esu.cc

De. Chairm: Mrs. Neriman Özgün

neriman.ozgun@esu.cc

Foreign Affairs: Mrs. Rima Tüzün

rima.tuezen@esu.cc

PR: Mr. Yusuf Kangus

yusuf.kangus@esu.cc

Members of the Union

Union der Suryoye Vereine in der Schweiz
Switzerland

Bethnahrin Informations Netz
Switzerland

Bethnahrin Kultur Verein
Germany

Bethnahrin Frauen Union
Deutschland-Sweden-Switzerland

Syrianska-Assyriska Riksförbundet i Sverige, Sweden

Stichting Bethnahrin Informatie Bureau
Netherlands

Centre Culturel du Peuple de Mesopotamie
Belgium

Institut Mesopotamie de Bruxelles
Belgium

Assyrer-Suryoye Kultur Verein
Austria

Institut Assyro-Chalibien-Syriaque
France

Qenneshrin Newspaper
Sweden



One.. One.. One.. All Syrians are like one

In the name of this triangular union that we do believe in we share with our Syrian brothers their claim for freedom, democracy and change toward Syria civil and democratic republic in which its people enjoy equal rights and duties.

It has been a year and a half and the terrorist regime of Al-Assad is killing, emigrating, destroying, and arresting his people relying on his fake glory and his bloody throne, ignoring international conventions and the will of the majority of Syrians who have been asking for his departure.

We were the pioneers of the union party in the Syrian Syriac who rebels against injustice and crime.

This regime is trying to give an image about this revolution as terrorist

movements and as a civil war.

This regime claims that he is defending Syrian Christians ...but from whom?

From their partners in the homeland, and its purpose was and is still creating a rift between the components of the Syrian people and feeding sectarian which contradicts with Syrian civilization and its people.

The regime claims to protect Christians ...while its criminal militia beats the holy places of Christianity and does not respect its privacy. The Baath-Regime deprived Syriacs from their civil rights and abandoned them from their land for long decays. The Baath-Regime wants to protect the Christians? This is not believable, as its troops hit the Syriac churches in Homs, Aleppo and a private church or girdle, which occupies the status of historical and

symbolic significance of the Syriac people.

That regime works to protect the Christians? These repressive bloody massacres of our people will not be forgiven. We as Syrian Christians condemn Bashar's terrorist attacks against our people after we made sure that the regime has converted it's embassy in Stockholm into an office to Assad intelligence to collect all information about anti-Syrians regime and to torture them with their families.

We decided to protest peacefully and in a civilized manner towards the Embassy of the oppressive regime. We wanted our voice and our message to be reached to all nations and for our people in general and Christian Syriacs especially, and our churches and clergy who have not yet engaged in the ranks of the revolution against the Syrian regime of oppression and crime. Our purpose is to unite the efforts of our people in order to establish our legal rights, to preserve our heritage, civilization, our culture and our political rights equally with all the components of Syria.

Our people will triumph and win.. Syria's Assad criminal regime will be defeated.

Glory and immortality to the martyrs of the Syrian Revolution.

Syria to be a free and democratic pluralistic civil republic.

**The Syriac Union Party
in Syria
Secretariat of
Information Stockholm -
Sweden 08/14/2012**