



## Chairman's Message



It is becoming harder and harder to live as a Christian in the Middle East. The persecutions against the Syriac-Chaldean-Assyrians have gained speed since the beginning of 2008. In the first few days of the New Year 9 churches were attacked with explosive charges.

On 29th February the Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul Boulos Faraj Rahho was kidnapped, his three accompanying Christians were killed and two weeks later his body was found in a shallow grave near Mosul. Also on a daily basis the Christian girls are being forced to veil themselves and the Christians who are not converting into Islam are receiving threats.

Land registry works have begun in Turabdin region of Turkey where the Syriacs live. However, some local Kurds who have the intention to seize some of the Syriac villages are using their local forces in order to terrify the Syriacs so that they can prevent their return from Europe.

Last year, in his progress report on Turkey, the Member of the European Commission responsible for Enlargement Ollie Rehn requested from Turkey to return the foundation assets of the non-Muslims.

In this regard Turkey prepared a new Foundations Law. However, according to the new law the Syriacs, the Armenians and the Greeks who are native peoples of Turkey are still being deprived from the right to re-claim the possession of their historical Churches and the estates that belong to them.

Besides, with the new constitutional changes made to suit the 'Veil Law' the legal conditions for fanaticism are being sought in Turkey. Thus, the revenues for Turkey to become a fanatic Islamic state have been opened as wide as the revenues for transition into a democratic state. For the Christians living in Turkey, this is indicating that there may be new dangers laying ahead.

This developments are pointing out, at least, how much the Christians of Turkey and Iraq are being strained. Unfortunately, this situation of the Christians of the Middle East has still not fully drawn the attention of the international community.

Iskender Alptekin

## First Syriac association officially opened in Syria

In Syria, for the first time a syriac association officially is opened. We present you an interview with the responsible of the new association Mr. Ibrahim Bis.

Mr. Bis have explained the process of this project, demands of syriac society and also their projects, activities and plans for the future.

**Under the 'syriac' name, for the first time an association is opened. What do you think about this project?**

Firstly, thank you in deep for the possibility that you give us to share our opinions to our people and also to your readers in the world.

The basic purpose of this association is to express our self to the world and to other communities in Syria.

Syriacs have played an important role in the Middle East with their culture and civilisation and these have been spread to the world.

I believe that, in Syria as an association also with the aid of other communities, we can serve many things. Establishment of this association in this period was very necessary and important.

**What is the main purpose of the association?**

When societies and communities want to express them self, they can do this only with their associations and foundations and also this is way of existence.

We have seen the necessity of a civil formation on the our soil. Naturally, the aim is, to strengthen our culture and working together with other communities and staying with harmony rather than to be assimilate with the other cultures. Finally, also the aim is to enrich and colorize the culture mosaic of communities in Syria.

**What is the perspective of the association to the world?**

In the 21st Century, an association that is founded naturally it will target modernism and innovation. We, as an association, we believe that for the total democracy all of the individuals have to work together at all branches. Then the community can gain all of its rights.

In this period, if any nation in the Middle East will not defend its history and culture also it will not help the world.

**There was any demand of community like the establishment of an association?**

Our community in Syria is dependant to the church and it continues all of the religious and cultural activities under this framework. For this it was happy from the situation. Even if it has attempts to found association, it was not insistent on the subject. The conditions of today are very different from the past. Unfortunately, our community lives in the past and they do not see alterations.

**Until now what kind of reactions do you have received from the community?**

Syriacs were deprived from civil foundations. With the officialisation of the association reactions are very positive. Everyone ask the questions about cultural activities and other projects. This shows necessity of an association like this.

**With the foundation, how is the atmosphere within Syriac community?**

As we mentioned before, with the officialisation process, atmosphere within community is very good. Different persons come to us and they demand any responsibilities and duties. The aim is giving duties and showing perspectives.

**What kind of expectations has the Syriac community from the association? Do you have any information about this?**

Expectations are very high. Community has expectation to be served from civil institutions. From young to the women and children all wants to activities continue within this association.

**What are the projects and activities of this association with short and long term?**

We have arrangement for short and long term. For the short term, the aim is to set up present personnel for the different branches, educate and conscious our members. At the same time, making new memberships for the association and trying to give duties to the members. For the long term, the aim is reach to academic level with general disciplines like music, folklore, theatre and so on.

## Cadastral records work started in Rayite (Turkey)

For the last few years, sometimes speeding up and sometimes with halts, the Turkish authorities have been doing the cadastral land registry work for recording the unregistered lands in Turabdin.

Since the beginning of this year it has been decided to undertake the cadastral land registration in the Rayite area of Turabdin region where the majority of the Syriac villages are situated.

The name of 'Rayite' as a word means the Church Congregation in Syriac. This mountainous area has been a very important center for Christianity since the early Christian era hence suitable for monastic life.

The cadastral land registry work of this region has a significant importance for the Syrians, because Rayite area is situated in the hills of Mount Izlo which is in the heart of Tur Abdin. This region is known as one of the first centers of the early Christianity and since the dawn of Christianity Mount Izlo is a place where the Syriac monks have started retiring into seclusion and leading an ascetic monastic lifestyle.

The Syrians have founded hundreds of churches and monasteries in this mountainous terrain throughout the history. Some of them are still standing upright until today.

Some of the most important monasteries in Mount Izlo which were built as early as the 3rd century A.D are: St. Eugene Monastery, St. Malke Monastery, St. Yoreth Monastery,

St. John Tayoyo Monastery, St. Abrohom Kashkaroyo Monastery, St. Jacob Monastery, St. Elio Monastery, St. Aho Monastery, St. Simon Monastery, St. Eshayo Monastery, St. Shomrin Monastery and St. Qawme Monastery. Moreover there are tens of other churches that have been founded in the Syriac villages of Mount Izlo.

Another fact that makes the region of Mount Izlo so important for the Syrians is the existence of nine adjacent Syriac villages which still remain free from the occupation of the local Kurdish population. The main such villages are, Arkah (Üçköy in Turkish), Harabemişka (Dağçı), Sederi (Üçyol), Beth Debe (Dibek), Kafro (Elbeğendi), Arbo (Taşköy), Habab (Güzelsu), Mhare (Marine), Beth Manhem. These villages were founded by the Syrians and have been continuously inhabited by the Syrians throughout their history. On the other hand there are some tens of other Syriac villages that have been seized and occupied by the advancement of the Kurdish occupiers to the region.

Although the Syrians of Rayite region started to emigrate abroad to the west in the early eighties, like many other Syriac villagers of Tur Abdin, the Syrians of this region have been the first ones who tried to return too. Accordingly, the Syrians of Kafro village who were previously living in Europe were the first Syriac villagers who started to re-build their homes and their village. Now, many of them are spending their summer holidays in their village and are planning a full return to their homeland. The idea of returning is a truth that is filling the dreams of

most of the Syrians. However, in order to realize such a mass return, there are so many security measures that need to be taken especially for the Syrians to live in Turkey.

As a matter of fact, the cadastral land registry works that have started in Rayite are providing an opportunity for the Syrians to register the lands and properties that they have inherited from their forefathers. Most of the Syrians who are living in Europe have taken some steps in order to benefit from this legal right. Even though the cadastral land registry works in Rayite are very important for the Syrians, however, there are some negative side effects in this development too. Namely, there are so many historically Syriac villages that have been previously occupied by the Kurds, which will be registered in the names of the Kurds. Hence, this will be naturally a loss for the Syrians. Also, all of the monasteries mentioned above are outside of the inhabited settlements. If the title deed of these monasteries is not claimed by the Syrians, these places will either be considered as

derelict historical ruins or will be transferred to the state treasury as forest lands. In order to prevent this situation, the church foundations of Tur Abdin have to claim the title of these monasteries and their estates. However, it is a known reality that the Syriac Church Foundation administrative body is very sensitive and non-committal in these matters.

The cadastral and the land registry work offer a protection for these monasteries. Because, in the past few years, there have been many demolitions and vandalizing incidents committed in these monasteries by the local Kurds who believe that there are plenty of 'hidden treasures' underneath their walls. Many of the

monasteries which were not under protection have been demolished in a way that they cannot be restored to their previous state. For example, a Kurdish family has adversely occupied and obtained the title deed of a monastery in Siirt district, which was built by the Syrians in the name of St. Jacob Hbishoyo who was a worldwide famous Syriac figure in the 9th century.

The registration of the titles of the church and monastery estates also depends on the recent changes that have been made in the Turkish Foundations Law by the Turkish parliament. Following the first date of implementation of this new Foundations Law, the Foundation of the Churches of Tur Abdin may legally claim and register the title deed of

all these Syriac church estates in its name. By doing so, the new Turkish Foundations Law may be turned into a historical development for the Syriac Church as it is for the Greek and the Armenian Churches.

Therefore, there are so many duties awaiting the Syrians in the region and the Church Foundation of Tur Abdin.





## The Murder of the Syriac Scholar Dr. Fuat Deniz

On 11.12.2007 Tuesday, Dr. Fuat Deniz a renowned teacher at the Örebro University was murdered by one of his relatives at the University where he was working. The murder incident that took place at around 13:30 pm left all the students and the management of the university in a state of shock. The assailant who entered the University, fled from the scene after he stabbed Dr. Fuat Deniz from behind his neck.

Dr. Fuat Deniz, a sociology teacher at the University of Örebro was heavily wounded with the stabs he sustained in his neck. Dr. Fuat



Deniz was taken to the hospital where he was kept alive with the aid of a life-support machine. Two days later in the morning of 13.12.2007 Dr. Lars Bergren pronounced his death in these words: "Fuat Deniz could not be saved due to heavy bleeding."

Dr. Fuat Deniz was born in 1967 in Kerboran. He moved to Sweden in 1970's, was living in the town of Öre-

bro in Sweden, he was married and father of a daughter. Dr. Fuat Deniz had done some researches on the effects of Sayfo genocide on the Syriac people. He also did researches on the Assyrian-Syriacs who moved to Sweden in the 70's and wrote some books on this topic.

In his book called "En minoritets odysse", he wrote about the effects of the Seyfo on the Assyrian-Syriac people and their identity. Dr. Fuat Deniz who was known with this book, was a respected figure among the Swedish society and the Syriac people. Following the announcement of his death on 13.12.2007, the students of Örebro University stood a minute of silence in his memory.

Following a thorough and intensive investigation the police of Örebro captured the killer and brought the incident to light. After his death Dr. Fuat Deniz was chosen by the University of Örebro for the award of the person who contributed the most to the Democracy in the year 2008. The award was given to his wife on 5th February 2008.

Source: Qenneshrin newspaper.

## The recent attacks on the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrians of Iraq

On 6th January 2008 during the Sunday mass, three in Baghdad and four in Mosul, altogether seven churches and monasteries were attacked with explosive charges by terrorists in Iraq. The Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul Bouslous Faraj Rahho was kidnapped and murdered.



The religious institutions that have been significantly damaged are:

In Mosul: the Chaldean Church of Saint Paul, the Nunnery of Dominican Sisters, the Orphanage of the Chaldean Sisters and the Church of Virgin Mary.

In Baghdad: The Greek (Melchite) Orthodox Church in Al Tahryat neighbourhood, Mar Ghorghis Chaldean church in Ghadir area, Saint Paul Chaldean Church and Chaldean

Sisters Nunnery (Mary's Daughters Nunnery) in Zafaraniya.

A few days later two more churches were attacked with explosive charges in Kirkuk.



More recently, on 29th February 2008, the Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul Bouslous Faraj Rahho was kidnapped, his two guards and driver were killed and he was found dead on 13 March 2008. This despicable incident of murdering

the Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul Faraj Rahho, was widely condemned, both by the Chaldean-Assyrian-Syriac people and the international community.

The Chaldean-Assyrian-Syriac Christians, who are indigenous people of Iraq, in recent years, have become daily targets of terrorist

groups.

The attacks against the churches are not first such attacks. Such atrocities were carried out in 2004 and 2006 in Baghdad, Mosul and Kerkuk. Apart from the recent attacks against the churches, almost on daily basis, there are news of persecution, threats, and killing against the Chaldean-Assyrian-Syriacs in Iraq. In recent years, hundreds of Christians have been murdered in Iraq. Moreover, the Christians are forced to convert into Islam and their daughters are forced to veil with Islamic head-scarf in schools.



The Iraqi Chaldean-Assyrian-Syriac Christian people, who have no means of security for their protection, following the attacks against them have always sought to escape by fleeing abroad. Consequently, during the past few years hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Christians were forced to leave their homeland which they inhabited for thousands of years and have fled, mainly to Jordan and Syria as well as to the west. Not because they want to do so, however they flee abroad due to the very dangerous situation they are living in.

The recent attacks may cause a sense of fear among the Chaldean-Assyrian-Syriac people in Iraq and consequently may bring about a new wave of emigration.

In order to avoid this wave of emigration, the Iraqi Christians are in a greater need of security and protection.



## 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 Chairm: 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

Union der Suryoye Vereine in der Schweiz  
Switzerland

Bethnahrin Informations Netz  
Switzerland

Union der Assyrer-Suryoye Vereinigungen in Deutschland  
Germany

Union der Freien Frauen Bethnahrin  
UFFB  
Germany

Syrianska-Assyriska Riksförbundet i Sverige  
Sweden

Renyö Hito Magazine  
Sweden

Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac Union  
Netherlands

Stichting Bethnahrin Informatie Bureau  
Netherlands

Centre Culturel du Peuple de Mesopotamie  
Belgium

Institut Mesopotamie de Bruxelles  
Belgium

Assyrer-Suryoye Kultur Verein  
Austria

## THE ISSUE OF 'DAYRO DASLIBO' VILLAGE

When the Syriac mukhtar of Çatalçam 'Dayro Daslibo' village Mr. Gevriye Arslan was murdered on 17-07-2004 the problem of this village came to light.

In 1997 some Kurds occupied the hamlet of Ayno, also known as 'Kaniya Dalawa', which had been registered as a hamlet of Yakitli 'Hermis' village.

However the hamlet of Ayno which was and still is a registered land whose official ownership belongs to the village of Dayro Daslibo, its administration has been transferred to the Gercüş district of the province of Batman.

The village of Dayro Daslibo is known to belong to the Dargeçit district of Mardin

Province. However, since Batman was promoted as a Province in 1990, the district of Gercüş which used to belong to the Mardin Province was transferred to Batman.

The majority of the land of the hamlet of Ayno is an officially registered land owned by Dayro Daslibo village.

And the ownership of its remaining land which is about 10 % commonly belongs to the village in accordance with the 3091 Act of the Land Registry Code.

The fact that the land of Ayno is watery and that most of Dayro Daslibo villagers live in the European countries raise the appetite of the occupiers.

Therefore, the occupiers killed the late mukhtar Gevriye Arslan in order to scare off the villagers of Dayro Daslibo and to occupy all their remaining lands. Even though their mukhtar was killed, the villagers of Dayro Daslibo decided not to leave their village and they still insist on adhering to this decision. However, the occupiers keep on harassing and terrifying the villagers. Thus they do not stop threatening, on daily basis, the new mukhtar of the village Mr. Zeki Arslan and his relatives who live in Europe.

In 2007 the occupiers, whose names are Sait Aslan, Şerif Aslan, Medeni Aslan, Besir Aslan, Abdurrahman Aslan and Simo Aslan, made a contract with a construction company in order to construct a road to Dayro Daslibo village which is situated 2 km to the south of Ayno hamlet. The road is planned to pass through the officially registered lands of Dayro Daslibo villagers.

On 06-10-2007 in order to stop this construction, the legal owners of the registered land, the villagers of Dayro Daslibo who are living in Europe,

sent a complaint letter to the Governors of Batman and Mardin, to the Kaymakams (the appointed district governors) of Dargeçit and Gercüş districts and to the Interior Ministry of Turkey. The Governor of Batman replied with a letter that was entirely defending the occupiers and containing unfounded statements to justify their position. In his letter dated 09-01-2008 the governor falsely describes the persons who have been occupying the land since 1997 as native villagers who have been living there for centuries.

Moreover, we have been informed that in January 2008 the occupiers further advanced their occupying activities and begun work to establish a stone quarry. Upon this development, we wrote a complaint letter to the Governors of Batman and Mardin, to the Kaymakams of

Dargeçit and Gercüş districts and to the Interior Ministry of Turkey and requested an unconditional evacuation of the occupiers from the village. Following this complaint, the Interior Ministry of Turkey sent a team of investigators to the region. In order to accompany the team of the investigators, Mr. Hanna Arslan and Mr. Cretin Turan went from Braunschweig town of Germany and were present there as witnesses. However, when the occupiers saw them at the scene became outraged with anger and especially a person called Turan Aslan who was among the occupiers attacked them and threatened them. The incident was witnessed by the state officials who were present and was calmed by the local Gendarme's determined interference. Otherwise, this could have been the second tragedy for the Dayro Daslibo villagers.



Therefore, the villagers of Dayro Daslibo are requesting the occupiers to evacuate their lands unconditionally, they are determined to use all available legal means and will not give up this demand.

Abut Can