



The Voice of the Syriacs



Chairman's Message



Dear readers,

During the political and social movements of last months, our region and the world had witnessed the slow but sure transformation of the Middle East countries which were the centre of undemocratic systems. These social movements reversed some long lived regimes and the other still persist at the places.

Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people are passing very important period also as the other nations in the region. In Iraq, our people are target of systematic attacks and their presence becoming alarmist. Today the situation in Syria also is very important for our people. For this, establishing of democratic and modern systems in the region is the key for the future.

Our organisation, ESU, held the 4th Congress during the period of the social unrest which squeezes the region and the systems. Our Congress finished with great success and will be the powerful solution to the period. To be ready and to give answer to the new process, ESU and with all relevant institutions and delegates are with the consciousness of the importance of the process and the works to be done.

Our region and the world are living difficult but necessary periods in terms of social, political and economic issues. The transformation of Middle East countries must bring democratic, open and pluralistic systems at the future.

Finally, I present all my deep gratitude to all my friends and delegates which accords me their confidence to take forward our organisation, ESU.

ESU IV EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS

European Syriac Union (ESU) held its IV extra ordinary Congress with the presence of more than 150 delegates and guests from Europe at Belgian capital, Brussels.



For this occasion, rich programme was done and agenda of work was ready to the Congress.

The extra ordinary Congress objective was to elect the new President for ESU during three years of mandate. According the results of the secret vote, Lahdo Hobil, the former vice-president, had been elected to the post of chairmanship.



Following the election of the new President Lahdo Hobil made a welcome speech to the participants of Congress. President Hobil declared that, ESU had been the centre of solutions to the Syriac people from the establishment until today. Our slogan is unity and working with full energy and devotion to create better conditions to our people in the diaspora and homeland."

"For the future our main focus will be about the situation of Iraq and Syria, these two countries have significant importance for our people and we are following every incident concerning our people," highlighted Hobil.

During the Congress the report and the planning of activities had been presented to the delegates and new functions had been established for the future. One of the important functions that had been created is the Department of Foreign Affairs and Rima Tüzün had been named to this function. Rima Tüzün said that we create this fonction to be able to work more professionally for the external issues and strenghten our relations with relevant actors.



On the other hand, Iskender Alptekin, former President of ESU, had been named as the Honorary President of ESU.

ESU held the Congress every three years and working in the Europe and rest of the world to promote and develop the situation of Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people.



ESU presents Annual Report to European Authorities

A committee from ESU meet with European Commission authorities concerning situation of Syrians in Turkey and presenting ESU Annual Report about the situation of the Syrians in Turkey.

Mr. Christos Makridis at the DG Enlargement of Turkey Unit received ESU delegation composed from ESU Secretary Rima Tüzün, member of administrative committee Süleyman Gültekin and David Vergili.

ESU delegation presents the annual report to Mr. Makridis and had opportunity to deliver latest situation and expectations of Syrians in Turkey.



At the discussed issues Mor Gabriel trials took important places and ESU members expressed their high concerns about ongoing trials. ESU members declared that Mor Gabriel trials will be test balance for the Turkey for the future democracy and living together.

Among discussed issues the cadastral survey problems that face Syrians and constitutional change had been discussed during the meeting and ESU delegate highlighted the importance of the new constitution that will be prepared in Turkey.

Mr. Makridis express his gratitude for the report and he declared that during the preparation of EU Turkey Progress Report, they will take account of ESU report.

Syriac Erol Dora elected to Turkish Parliament

Syriac Lawyer Erol Dora entered to the Turkish Parliament after general elections held on the country. The election of Erol Dora has a significant importance for the Syrians and also for Turkey.

For the first time of the Turkish Republic history a member of Syriac community will took a place at the Parliament.

"If I manage to enter Parliament, I will become the voice of the Syriac community, as well as all of the other ethnicities living in the southeastern region," Dora told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review.

Erol Dora gained his place at the Parliament as independent candidate for the Labor, Democracy and Freedom bloc, which is supported by Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP.

Although Dora said he offered his name for individual reasons, he acknowledged that the Turkey's Syriac community had been lending him support in his campaign. "The support that I have seen makes me happy."

The candidate said the situation in Turkey was changing, allowing for people from previously unrepresented groups to join the race to enter the legislature.

"Whatever his ethnic identity, if a Turkish citizen displaying the moral courage wants to have a voice in his country, there is nothing wrong in that," said Dora. "In previous years, the minority communities living in Turkey were

looked upon as foreigners, nevertheless, with the European Union accession process, this situation is changing."

Turkey is moving from a system of "compulsory citizenship," in which only the country's Turkishness is privileged, to a conception of citizenship that is more inclusive of diverse, non-Turkish groups. "All of the ethnic cultures of Turkey are" excited about this, Dora said.

"It is not important whether to be chosen or not. The pluralist participation will be the sign that everybody in Turkey has equal rights," the candidate said. "Our entrance into politics from the bottom rung by showing effort ... will certainly contribute to the improvement of Turkey."



"We've been living in Mesopotamia for hundreds of years. Our properties that are thousands of years old are in dispute. The problems concerning the 1,700 year-old Deyrulmur Monastery, known also as Mor Gabriel, are still continuing," he said in reference to a lawsuit filed against the monastery by the neighboring villages of Yayvantepe, Çandarlı and Eglence in 2008 in which locals claimed that the church was occupying their land. If the ongoing case is decided against Mor Gabriel, the monastery could lose a significant amount of land.

With a joint declaration of Syriac institutions among them also ESU congratulate election of Erol Dora and they welcome this historic event.

Lifelong Learning Programme

Contribution to the equal educational chances and equal rights of Syriac-Assyrian women

The European Commission has integrated its various educational and training initiatives under a single umbrella, the Lifelong Learning Programme.

The new Lifelong Learning Programme enables individuals at



Lifelong Learning Programme

all stages of their lives to pursue stimulating learning opportunities across Europe. It consists of four sub-programmes: Comenius (for schools), Erasmus (for higher education), Leonardo da Vinci (for vocational education and training) and Grundtvig (for adult education).

Launched in 2000, Grundtvig aims to provide adults with more ways to improve their knowledge and skills facilitate their personal development and boost their employment prospects. It also helps to tackle problems associated with Europe's ageing population.

It covers not only teachers, trainers, staff and organisations working in the sector, but also learners in adult education. These include relevant associations, counselling organisations, information services, policy-making bodies and others such as NGOs, enterprises, voluntary groups and research centres.

The programme funds a range of activities, including particularly those supporting adult learning staff to travel abroad for learning experiences, through exchanges and various other professional experiences. Other larger scale initiatives involve, for instance, networking and partnerships between organisations in different countries.

Our project offered the chance to communicate with women in comparable situations to jointly learn according to their individual needs and to improve their chances to leave their marginalised role by access to learning. The women learned to get self confidence and courage, to communicate their own needs (concept of self help).

The offers took the women from the spot where they are and opened the road to become more conscious about their own identity. This had been achieved by several steps of modular-based learning and result in individual, interactive and intercultural learning experience and further learning.

The women themselves cooperated in setting up a network of a European process towards more equality of chances and social participation as European citizens. To achieve this, they participated in exchanges with women from other networks with comparable goals in the EU.

Because of the vast offering of formation the project in cooperation of different institutions in Europe offers basic opportunities for the women to work towards a European understanding and integration in the societies of the European countries. These goals are supported by a number of measures of public and political education (e.g. seminars, newspaper articles, etc.)

Women acquired the possibility to find access to education. Through the 'access to lifelong learning', the Syriac-Assyrian women leaved their role binding them to the proper house as housewives and mothers to build up more self confidence and strength.

With the learning partnership the women acquired the possibility to communicate with women in comparable situations to jointly learn according to their needs.

The learning partners exchange, differentiate and further develop an education offer tailored to the target group. Through mobility, the different knowledge and experiences from the different countries are inserted into the institutions of the learning partners.

During these two years learning strategies had been developed,

- To encourage the improvement of education offers for migrant women

- To advance the linguistic, social and cultural integration
- To encourage the acceptance of the women in the patriarchal Syriac-Assyrian society with regards to equality of chances
- To implement public relations and sensibilisation measures for the intercultural education about the Syriac-Assyrian problem in Europe and
- To further train women to become multipliers and leaders of their own groups

The following education offers and methods contributed to the expansion of the goals: Seminars, workshops, education camps, exchange of teachers, publication of project experiences and communication of the results.



During the learning partnership, learners as well as instructors are involved. All project partners are regularly informed about the overall progress of the project. Because of this, the women offered the possibility to acquire transnational experiences. Women as learners, but also the teachers, are encouraged to exchange experiences during the mobility activities in the host country.

The partners of the learning partnership are:

- Bethnahrin Frauen Union in Deutschland e. V. Germany
- Diakonie Rheinland Westfalen Lippe, Germany
- Bethnahrins Kvinnoförbund, Sweden
- Cultureel Centrum van het volk van Mesopotamie, Belgium
- Stichting Bethnahrin Informatie Bureau, Netherland
- Union Freie Frauen Bethnahrin, Switzerland

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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Union der Freien Frauen Bethnahrin UFFB
Germany

Syrianska-Assyriska Riksförbundet i Sverige
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

Memorial of Iskender Alptekin

Last year around these days of May, ESU first Chairman Beloved Iskender Alptekin (Matay Rabo) passed away following a heart attack. This year as a memorial of Iskender Alptekin, ESU organized a great festival under the slogan of "Culture and National Festival "Matay Rabo" at Heilbronn, Germany on 21 May 2011.

For this great Festival, ESU expects attendance of all Syriacs from various countries around Europe. The programme of the day; several singers and musicians, photo exposition of Syriac artists, speeches among others...

The martyr Iskender Alptekin was born on 29 August 1961 at the Kafro village in Turabdin. He passed his childhood at the village while studying the primary at the same time learning Syriac language. He leaved his village at the year of 1977 to Istanbul for working as many other people. At the year of 1978 he get married with Ferida Cacan and at the same year he migrated to Switzerland. He was the father of two daughters, Sylvie and Suzan.

From the year of 1993, Iskender Alptekin adopts the way to work for his people for his nation and he became as a professional staff for the duties. He freed his time and consecrated his life for the Assyrian-Syriac-Chaldean people. During his works, he passed at the every stage of work and responsibility. He had been present at the every corner that exist Assyrian-Syriac-Chaldean people, from every country of Europe to Middle East and until America.

As a consequence of his high qualities Iskender Alptekin became the first Chairman of newly established ESU on 14th May 2004. At the year of 2007 at the

second ESU Congress, he had been elected once more time with unanimity to the chairmanship of ESU.

Our beloved Chairman and friend Iskender Alptekin was enormously appreciated by all his friends and colleagues. As a chairman he had been always the symbol of justice, great example of maturity and patience. Under the presidency of Iskender Alptekin, ESU had been enforced by all domains, respected organisation within Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac people and of course at the international sphere. Every moment of Iskender Alptekin was dedicated to his mission, ready to every kind of duty and infatigable to visit every corner of the rest of world to be efficacious to his duty.

The decease of Iskender Alptekin causes great sadness among his family, friends and within Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac community all over the world. From the first day of death until the last day of funeral realized in the Turabdin, all people stressed out their support, their chagrin and their condolences to the Alptekin family and ESU. From the H. H.



Patriarch of Syriac Orthodox Church to bishops, from Lebanese President and Prime Minister to political parties in Turkey and to all Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac parties and organisations transmitted their condolences.

Iskender Alptekin left behind him great personality and full devotion to his responsibility. ESU is ready to revive this great personality at the every stage of the work within ESU.

European Syriac Union (ESU) and all members and friends of our institution are ready to continue the work and responsibility that Iskender Alptekin carry out during his presidency.