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Newsletter

The Voice of the Syriacs



CHAIRMANS MESSAGE

Dear readers,

Middle East region and countries continue to hold the priority within the international community attention and meetings. As a whole the region pass through very fundamental process of re-balance between regional and international powers. In every country and corner around the region there are new discussions and negotiations to seek new alliances. Ongoing Syrian conflict is in our priority within ESU.



Syriac people are densely present across Syria. Thus, Syria holds great importance for Syriac people and their future in this country. We are trying all ways and possibilities to defend the cause and concerns of Syriac people in Syria. There is clear deadlock at the international level regarding conflict solution of Syria. International and regional actors have to find mutual consensus to end the nearly 3 year old conflict which caused to the death of 100.000 civilians and millions of refugees across Syria and in neighbor countries. The solution in Syria will not be easy but it is essential for the salvation of Syrian society. Syrian cosmopolite social fabric has to be preserved and all ethnic and religious groups have to find their places.

On the other side, there are very important developments in Turkey regarding Syriac people and democratic process. Following long years of trials Mor Gabriel Monastery has finally its lands back. Prime Minister R. T. Erdogan announced the decision regarding Mor Gabriel during the presentation of democratic package. From the first day of this issue, we were in full sure that Monastery will take its rights. Moreover, Syriac people have other problems and concerns in Turkey. Mor Gabriel Monastery solution does not have to hide other points. Above all, Syriac people have no status in Turkey. By working on new civil constitution Syriac people have to acquire constitutional guarantees. Our partner organization Federation of Syriac Associations made official request in order to open Syriac school in Turabdin which is very important step.

During last three months, as ESU, we had different works, activities and meetings. Following our humanitarian aid campaign to Syria which had been finished successfully, we made an event of three days in front of the United Nations at Geneva. Our objective was to make hear our voices concerning Syriac people in Syria. We had successful event and we made some important meetings.

We are passing very important periods and developments. Syria will continue to hold major place within our works and priorities. We will follow all news, developments closely in order to ensure the rights of Syriac people in Syria. As ESU, we believe that Syriac people also can make important contributions to regional issues as they did in history.

Lahdo Hobil
President of European Syriac Union

HOW SHALL WE LIVE TOGETHER IN THE AL-HASSAKE REGION?

Under this slogan representative of Syrian Arabs, Syrian Kurds and Syriac Christians from Al-Hasaka governorate gathered in July 2013 in Midyat, Southeast Turkey, to forge a new social contract between them and to determine their future together.

In the first part of the conference, representatives of the Syrian Kurds and the Syriac Christians held a unique discussion in a transparent manner, related to the historical events in Turkey in 1915 and then proceeded to discuss arrangements on how to live together in the future in the region of Al-Hasaka. The participants of the Syrian Kurds expressed their regret for the past and desire for a political partnership, based on shared privileges and mutual respect.

From this discussion a new social contract between Syrian Kurds and Syriac Christians has been forged. This social contract addresses six key questions, which define the moral basis of the common life of Syrian Kurds and Syriac Christians in the region of Al-Hasaka.

Following the six key questions, which have been discussed and on which the social contract is based:

How shall we create an intentional pluralistic community in the Al-Hasake region that seeks unity between our communities rather than ethnic, cultural and religious uniformity?

How shall we solve the problems between our two communities? How shall we enable hearts to be softened so as to engage in constructive joint problem solving? What is to be the mechanism for achieving this?

How shall we create a just political culture and foster social justice that leads to sharing power and privilege between our two communities?

How shall we promote personal and political forgiveness in the region so that we can even have a future together?

How shall we heal the wounds of history in our region?

What shall be the role of faith and religion in the public square of the state and, particularly in the Al-Hasake region?

In the second part of the conference the discussion involved the Syrian Arabs. The result of this comprehensive discussion is an amendment contract, which addresses all three parts, the Syrian Arabs, the Syrian Kurds and the Syriac Christians.



SYRIAC LEADER ARRESTED BY ASSAD - REGIME

Since the uprising in March 2011 Syriac Christians took an active part for a democratic transition in Syria. Syriac Christians have been always accused to support the Assad-Regime. But under the leadership of the Syriac Union Party of Syria, the opposite has been proofed. Many active members of the Syriac Union Party have been arrested and tortured by the Assad-regime. Last attack of the Syrian Regime has been the arrestation of the Vice-President of the Syriac Union Party of Syria, Sait Malki. Sait Malki is a well known Syriac Christian leader; last years he attended many conferences, such as in the EU-Parliament and represented the situation and the demands of the Syriac Christian people in Syria in many meetings in many European countries and in the U.S. Sait Malki always travelled back to Syria, to take active part in the organization procedure of his party on the ground. On August 12th, Sait Malki has been arrested by the Assad-regime. Following please find the press release of our European Syriac Union.

WE CONDEMN THE ARRESTATION OF SYRIAC LEADER IN SYRIA

TO THE WORLD PUBLIC OPINION & INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

Syrian Baath regime continues to attack, harass and arrest the members, partisans and followers of **Syriac Union Party** in Syria which is leading structure which defend the rights and demands of Syriac people in Syria. The true face of Baath regime is uncovered when the native people demand their rights. World public opinion and international media all together are witnessing the brutality of the regime. Until recently, Baath regime has used and manoeuvred Syriac people for its own purposes. By asking their rights Syriac people became the enemies of Baath regime. Syrian Baath regime



which do not recognise national identity of Syriac people continue to attack, arrest, torture and imprisoned Syriac people who work and fight for the rights of Syriac people.

On August, 12, 2013, Vice President of Syriac Union Party and President of Syriac Cultural Association Sait Malki had been arrested at the Airport of Qamishli.

Detention of high ranking member Sait Malki shows clearly the brutality, intolerance and hostility of Baath regime. To date, from March 2011 several times members and partisans of Syriac Union Party had been arrested, tortured and imprisoned. Before few month member of Executive Committee of Syriac Union Party Rubel Bahho had been arrested and imprisoned during an assault to his domicile.

From the beginning of the Syrian protests until today, Syrian Baath regime is trying all unethical ways and methods to keep Syriac people with and use them for its own purposes. **We believe in free and democratic Syria.** Syrian people deserve their freedom, dignity, equal rights and take their place among modern nations. Baath regime has lost all its legitimacy. Syrian Baath regime is not representative of Syrian people.

As European Syriac Union, ESU, we concerned by the detention of Vice-President of SUP Sait Malki and

Rubel Bahho. To recall, we also do not forget the ongoing abduction of Syriac Orthodox Church Aleppo Bishop Ibrahim Hanna and Greek Orthodox Church Aleppo Bishop Boulos Yaziji.

We condemn in strongest terms possible the unjust detention of Vice-President of SUP Sait Malki. Sait Malki and his friends in SUP are working peacefully for the advance of Syriac people and for Syria. We kindly call to all relevant actors and parties to monitor closely this situation.

GLORY TO SYRIAC PEOPLE GLORY TO FREE AND DEMOCRATIC SYRIA

Breaking News:

Following detention of Sait Malki Cosar, Vice President of the Syriac Union Party of Syria, we released a statement regarding his arrest. We have declared that we will follow the case closely.

Sait Malki Cosar had been arrested at Al-Qamishli airport. He stayed few days there and later on transferred to a prison in Damascus. During his detention in Damascus, communication channels were almost closed.

Syriac Union Party direction received information regarding the fate of their colleague. According this information Sait Malki Cosar has died. Syriac Union Party and his family asked to take his corpse. Officials asked to the presence of family members and later on members of family moved to Syria. Until today, family and his colleagues did not get anything. Thus, the news of the death of Sait Malki Cosar is not confirmed yet.

As ESU we will continue to follow the issue of Sait Malki Cosar. We already contacted different parties, human rights and humanitarian organizations to put their weight at this issue.

SYRIAC PEOPLE PROTEST IN GENEVA

From September 18th to 20th the Syriac National Council of Syria organized a protest in front of the United Nations Building in Geneva. Parallel to this protest meetings with permanent missions of Western countries and with the Office of Human Rights have been held.

Following please find the declaration of the Syriac National Council of Syria:



TO THE WORLD LEADERS AND WORLD PUBLIC OPINION

WE DEMAND TO RECOGNISE THE IDENTITY OF SYRIAC PEOPLE AND SUPPORTING THEIR RIGHTS

Syriac people will demonstrate from 18 to 20 September 2013 in Geneva in front of the United Nations Headquarters in order to make hear the cry of Syriac people, recognising their identity and supporting their fundamental rights. Syriac people need the support and justice of United Nations, world powers and all relevant actors in Middle East in order to continue their existence. Because once again as it happened during First World War, WWI, Syriac people are under threat of annihilation policies in volatile region of Middle East. The Lausanne Treaty signed on 24 July 1923, which secure minority rights of non-muslim groups under third section from 37 to 44 articles never had been applied to Syriac people

in Turkey. The rights and identity of Syriac people had been ignored. Today, we clearly demonstrate the continuity of this policy in Turkey, Iraq and Syria.

Since the start of uprising in Syria, Baath regime is crushing bloodily the demands of peoples. Since 50 years of Baath governance and Al Assad dictatorship the identity of Syriac people had been denied. The same mentality is present with even some so-called opposition groups in Syria. This stance of opposition groups is to avoid recognition of Syriac people and their representation in international level. International community must put pressure on Syrian opposition groups to change their stand vis-a-vis Syriac people. Also international community and regional actors have to pass to action in order to stop the massacres of the regime and atrocities of jihadists groups in Syria.

Syriac people are autochthones of Middle East and Mesopotamia. They have long traced history and made important contributions to the Mesopotamian civilisation and they have also rich culture. We believe that international community and relevant actors have moral and juridical duty to protect Syriac people and recognise their identity. We also call to international actors to avoid tragedies of Iraq to be repeated in Syria. This is vital for Syriac people.

On behalf of Syriac National Council of Syria, we demand the recognition of Syriac people identity and secure their presence in international platforms by legal decisions.

- 1 Inviting Syriac people representatives to the conference that will design the Syrian issue by United Nations, United States of America, Russian Federation and other countries
- 2 Accepting Syriac people not only as religious group but as entire identity of folk and as autochthones entity in Syria and in international level.
- 3 Presence of Syriac people with their own identity in new Syria and securing all rights in the constitution.

The humanitarian aids those are underway to Syria by United Nations and European Union have to reach also to Syriac people and make necessary arrangements inside Syria to avoid mass exodus.

Syriac National Council of Syria - 18.09.2013



Syriacs apply for School in Turabdin / Southeast Turkey



Federation of Syriac Associations, SÜDEF, made an official demand in order to open Syriac school in Midyat, Turabdin region. Syriac people are deprived from minority rights in Turkey.

Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Syriac people had been deprived from their political, social, cultural rights despite the fact of the Lausanne Treaty. Syriac people had their own school until 1928 in Turkey. Syriacs had suffered deeply from this issue. Under the Lausanne Treaty all non-muslim minorities had to enjoy their rights. Despite the true fact, Syriac people never enjoyed their rights in terms of education and other areas. Moreover, they had been target of discriminative policies during the last century.

President of SÜDEF Evgil Türker said that "in light of Lausanne Treaty articles we as Syriacs have the right of education. There are an unjust stand vis-à-vis Syriac people in terms of application of the treaty. Today with our demand we will try to break this."

Prior to that, Syriac Foundation in Istanbul made another request for an opening school in Istanbul for the pupils. The demand had been refused but later on the Supreme Court decided in favor of the Syriac Foundation.

Syriac children either in cities or in the villages encounter problems during their educational life. More important point is that children in the villages are deprived from high schools as it is known in Turkish "lycee". Syriac villages in Turabdin region have only primary schools. Children of these villages if they want to continue to their school have to go to the other villages in the vicinity. These villages are mostly Muslim. They encounter difficulties here too. Meanwhile, this situation effect especially girls who have not even chance to go to other villages' schools. The Syriac families do not send their girls to the other villages.

Children who have no possibility to go to other villages remain without diploma and later on encounter diffi-

culties in the future; being deprived from driving licence and having low post and jobs during the army duty.

Evgil Türker said that majority of Syriac people are in diaspora mainly in European countries. There are roughly 4000 Syriacs left in the Turabdin region. We have good potential in Midyat city. We can open our school here and bringing Syriac pupils from villages of vicinity. We would like to collaborate with different partners and organisations and especially with University of Mardin which has a Syriac Language Institute.

During last decade Syriac people especially from European countries show great interest for Turabdin region. There are some families who returned back definitively while they have re-build their homes and villages. The presence of Syriac people and their continuation of existence in the Turabdin region is great asset for Turkey and also for entire Syriac people living everywhere in the world.

HISTORICAL STEP BY SYRIAC WOMEN IN SYRIA

On July 20th 2013, 150 gathered together in Al-Malkyie with the goal to establish a women organization for Syriac women. Under the slogan: "free women, democratic system, free individual" the founding conference of the Syriac Women Organization was held and culminated in success. Following please find the final statement of the founding conference of the Syriac Women's Union in Syria. Syriac Women, after a long struggle, finally attempt to break the restrictions imposed on them. They bear and promote the responsibility on them and their Syriac people, and have shown their courage to stand by their people in these difficult circumstances in Syria. They've entered the political arena, playing an active role, which aims to raise awareness and find solutions to the historical, cultural and social problems suffered by Syriac (Assyrian-Chaldean-Aramaic) women. They aim to be able to create a democratic society in order to eliminate gender inequality.

tion for the Syriac women in Syria.

On July 20th 2013 in Al-Malkyie, under the slogan: "free woman, democratic system, free individual" the founding conference of the Syriac Women Organization was held and culminated in success. 150 women attended the conference and took the name of Syriac Women Union in Syria, which laid the foundation and organizational structure necessary for it. With courage and dedication, women discussed their organizational circumstances and elected the members of the Union Council, composed of 35 members, and elected an executive committee consisting of 9 members and the Union president and vice president.

This founding conference acknowledged the basic bylaws of the Union and the basic principles. These included adopting all the charters of the United Nations for Human Rights, and the laws concerning women's rights, the rejection of all forms of violence against women and

restrict community, gender and individuals.

The conference also adopted goals to work for equality between genders, work in the field of development, prepara-



ration and training for human rights in general and women's rights in particular, raise the educational level of women to make them aware of their political and social rights and claim them, and create opportunities for women to play their effective role in the creation of a democratic civilian society. The conference also highlighted the representation of Syriac women and the need to defend their rights and the rights of Syrian women in international forums and conferences, maintain the cultural heritage of the components of Syrian and Syriac people, stand against violence, sectarianism and discrimination in all its forms, work on advocate campaigns of humanitarian issues, especially women issues, the call to amend the legislation and laws to ensure women's rights and freedom and open hearing centers to protect battered women.

The Syriac Women Union in Syria will be an umbrella organization for the advocacy of the rights of Syriac (Assyrian-Chaldean-Aramaic) women, which work for a common goal in obtaining their rights to create a democratic society. We are hopefully that freedom for a woman to have personality and intelligence will be restored and the struggle for equality and freedom that have long been deprived for thousands of years will come to an end.

Executive committee

Syriac Women's Union in Syria

20.07.2013



Based on the social and national responsibility of our organization, which tries to embrace all Syriac women as a comprehensive foundation, women have become a real and active partner in defending the issues and the rights of their people. Since 2005, the Syriac women have developed themselves and attempted to catch up with developed societies through participation in educational and training camps and courses, in addition to social and cultural activities. Today they've reached a stage where they can establish an organiza-

children, racial discrimination and terrorism, and to work for the improvement of Syrian women in general. The conference highlighted important basic missions for the group, such as making it possible for Syriac women to reach the highest levels in society, playing a role in the consolidation of the concepts of democracy, friendship, peace and secularism, and to take a stand against the distinction between the names and doctrines of the Syriac people and against all sorts of pressures and traditions that

The Voice of the Syrians

IMPRINT

Information bulletin about the social position of the Syrians in and outside the Middle East.

It appears periodically, published by the European Syriac Union (ESU) in Brussels-Belgium.

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Humanitarian Assistance from Europe to Al-Hasaka governorate in Syria

The Syrian crisis continues to be the urgent and highest priority for the international community and to the country of Middle East. Under the command of the United Nations, world powers seek every attempt to solve deadly crisis almost three years. Meanwhile, the deadlock at the United Nations Security Council, UNSC, has been major elements to the continuation of this process. While the regional countries and international powers seek the magic solution, Syrians altogether suffer daily.

Refugees flux to the neighbor countries, elders, children are most vulnerable. Humanity faces great dilemma vis-à-vis Syrian issue.

Humanitarian aspect of the Syrian crisis is very huge and important aspect of the ongoing conflict. While all sides are fully determined to crash another with all means, humans from every class suffer and try to continue to live with very limited sources. Whatever the discussions are regarding the Syria, the whole parties within the conflict must allow and open humanitarian corridor to the civil within Syria.

Despite the calls from international community, worldwide NGO's this is not the case, yet. By approaching to the winter, people needs are great and vital. Thus, while discussing the possible solution for the whole crisis, the involved actors have to maintain necessary means and help for people inside Syria and of course to those who are in the refugee camps.

There is one more and very important aspect of the humanitarian issue regarding

Syrian crisis. During last three years of the conflict, whole society has been affected and all social classes are in difficulty. The humanitarian aids that are underway to Syria have to reach to the all segments of Syria. The monitoring of this process is another point that is crucial. Syrian crisis has far reached beyond the Syrian borders and now is affecting whole region. International community and regional actors and countries have to find common shared agreement to end the crisis.

ESU had initiated a humanitarian aid campaign toward Syria from March to May 2013 in major European cities where Syriacs are present. Syriac people in Europe show great act of solidarity and support during the campaign. As conflict continues, borders between Turkey and Syria close often times. Despite this, 80 tons of food kits have been collected and shipped through Turkey to Al-Hasaka governorate in Syria. During the transfer of the aid, Federation of Syriac Associations, SÜDEF has been major actor for the safe arrival of the aid to Syria. The aid will be handled to IDP families, vulnerable persons, women and children. Al-Hasaka governorate in general doesn't get humanitarian assistance from outside; there is big need for winter clothes, food and medicine.

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