

The first International Syriac Symposium held in Turabdin - Turkey

2007-04-01



On 30-31 March 2007, the First International Syriac Symposium was held in Turabdin's central town of Midyat. This symposium was for the most part financed by the European Union and was jointly organized by the Ulasilabilir Yasam Dernegi (Life Within Reach Association) a social organisation from Turkey and the European Syriac Union (ESU).

To this symposium that lasted for two days, the Archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Mardin Saliba Ozmen, the Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey Mr. Yngve Engstrom, the MP of Mardin Mr. Nihat Eri, the Secretary General of the Ulasilabilir Yasam Dernegi Association Belgin Cengiz, the Project Coordinator of the UYD Hacer Faggo, the members of the ruling committee of ESU Mr. Tuma Celik and Ms Linda Gabriel as well as many scientists from various universities in Turkey attended and made speeches.

The opening speech of the Symposium was made by the MP of Mardin Mr. Nihat Eri. Mr. Eri in his speech underlined the changes and the progress that the Turkish officials made regarding the problems faced by the local Syrians.



The Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey Mr. Yngve Engstrom in his speech emphasized the importance of the civil organisations, and the significance of such a Symposium that is being held in Turkey.

The member of the ruling committee of ESU who organized the Symposium informed the audience about the reasons for the migration of the Syriacs from Turkey. Thus, stated that the main reasons for this migration are the historical discrimination and persecutions that the Syriacs have been suffering in their homeland. He also emphasized that this migration is not only the loss for the Syriacs who have been living in the region for at least 7 thousand years but it is also a loss for Turkey.

Following the opening speeches Mr. Celik read a paper on the Social and Cultural structure of the Syriacs. During the Syriac Symposium the following people set in the panel as presenters, Nese Erdilek from Bilgi University's research centre on the migration (the Panel on **the Syriac Identity, the Social structure and Law**), Lawyer Sabit Halat (**the Syriacs Diaspora and Migration**) and Mr. Zafer Yoruk (**the Syriac Identity and Cultural Rights**).

The people who read papers during the panels are: the representative of the Syriac Cultural Association in Midyat Mr. Jakop Gabriel, Doc, Dr. Emre Isik from the University of Mimar Sinan in Istanbul, Doc, Dr. Ahmet Tasgin from Dicle University, the member of the Ruling Committee of ESU Mr. Tuma Celik, the president of the Culture and Solidarity Association of Mesopotamia Mr. Muzaffer Iris, Mr. Hakan Aytekin from Maltepe University, PHD student from Ege University Mr. Ihsan Cetin, Mr. Echoue Gouriye (from Syria), Dr. Abdurrahim Ozmen, Doc, Dr. Suavi Aydin (Hacettepe University) and the secretary of ESU Ms. Linda Gabriel.

This Symposium was in no doubt regarded by the attendees as the first of its kind in the exertion of solving the problems of the Syriac people who have migrated from their homeland either due to the massacres and deportation that they suffered in 1914-15 or due to the armed clashes in the region during the 1980's and 90's.

At the conclusion speeches of the Symposium, the importance of the fact that the problems are now being discussed was emphasized, thus a step had been taken towards finding a solution. Following the Symposium the traditional 1st April New Year and Spring Festival that has been celebrated by the ancestors of the Syriacs in Mesopotamia was celebrated.

