



NEWSLETTER

Nr. 38

Dear friends,

In these difficult times of pandemic, preventive measures, and partial lockdowns we ask for strength, health, and patience to all. We as European Syriac Union co-chairs had hoped that the world would come to reflection, understanding, and cooperation in fighting this virus. Unfortunately, we see hostilities and wars continuing. Enmity endures and we see authoritarian regimes trying to benefit from the situation. This is inexcusable.

In the Middle East, we see that the U.S.-led International Coalition against ISIS has brought back hope for indigenous components like Syriacs and Yazidis who suffered genocide by terrorist ISIS. Slow reconstruction work and insufficient peacebuilding efforts in the ISIS aftermath, however, are threatening the existence in **Iraq** of these indigenous components. Syriacs and Yazidis are still forced to flee their Mesopotamian homelands.

Shiite Shabaks and their Iranian-backed PMU-militias aim to bring about a demographic change in Iraq's Nineveh Plain. This keeps Chaldeans-Syriacs-Assyrians from returning to the Nineveh Plain where only an estimated 35%-40% of the pre-ISIS 125 thousand Chaldeans-Syriacs-Assyrians have returned to. The situation in Shingal (Sinjar), where Yazidis have their population centers, is even more dire and reconstruction almost absent. Tens of thousands of Iraqi Yazidis and Syriacs still remain internally displaced. Syriac and Yazidi political organizations have repeated therefore their calls for more self-representation and self-protection.

In North and East **Syria**, we see that the Democratic Autonomous Administration is a model of how peoples and cultures can cooperate and co-exist. It has given hope for a future united democratic Syria and constitutional and political rights for Syriacs, Yazidis, Kurds, and others. The

Democratic Autonomous Administration is an eyesore for Turkey. It feels threatened by this democratic peoples' model and hence Turkey and its militant factions, some espousing Islamist ideologies, have invaded North and East Syria in front of the world's eyes. Turkey with its dream of re-establishing Ottoman glory, again threatens co-existence of indigenous components and puts them into jeopardy.

Critical voices of Turkey's domestic crackdown on political opponents and restricting freedom of expression are systematically put in jail. Today, **Turkey** is one of the biggest jailers of journalist. Political opponents are threatened, slandered, removed from democratically elected positions, and stripped from diplomatic immunity. Changing churches into mosques for internal propaganda and populism creates animosity between the countries' civilians and puts the future of Syriacs, Armenians, and Rum-Greeks in Turkey at risk. This is all aggravated by Turkey's recent hostility against Greece and it openly inciting hostility in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Artsakh.

ESU calls on the world public opinion and international powers to come to the help of the indigenous components. They have suffered more than enough genocides, persecutions, and emigration. Only full recognition of their rights can guarantee a future in their middle eastern countries of residence. The disappearance of Syriacs from the Middle East is a risk for the whole world. Diversity, pluralism, and continuation of Christianity in the Middle East are necessities for the Middle East to develop to full democracy and respect for human rights. It is imperative for the UN, EU, U.S., and Russia to take away this clear and present risk.

ESU Co-Chairs Hulya Gabriel & Tony Vergili

ESU statement on Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict



Since the start of the conflict over Artsakh, Nagorno-Karabakh, we are following the ongoing hostilities between Armenian and Azeri forces in Artsakh with great concern. The war has brought many civilian casualties and the regional and international powers and community have stayed too cautious in the matter.

While the world lives through so many difficulties in these challenging times of pandemic, political turmoil in the Middle East and new developments in the Caucasus add new and negative dimensions to international politics.

While the international community hesitates and is unwilling to stop aggression from Azeri forces, third countries are fueling the conflict by providing military support and sending military support and forces to Azerbaijan. Especially Turkey's interference deepens the Caucasian conflict by transporting jihadists from Syria. This has been documented by various media outlets. Moreover, the aggressive statements and warmongering position of Turkish officials and authorities also threaten the existence of Armenian and other Christian peoples in Turkey.

While the Russian-brokered cease-fire is constantly violated, the hostilities continue and have reached residential areas. The violence against Armenians brings back memories and creates fears of past Tragedy.

The Minsk Group and the international community have the moral responsibility to call for all parties to abide by the ceasefire. In addition, the Minsk Group and the international community have the moral duty to bring about a sustainable and enduring peace process among the two countries and respect the will of the people of Artsakh.

Fundraising for Fire Extinguishers for Syriac villages and monasteries in Tur Abdin, Turkey



The European Syriac Union and five other Syriac organizations held a [joint fundraising](#) in June 2020, to raise money for fire extinguishers for Syriac villages and monasteries. The fire extinguishers were much needed as every summer Tur Abdin is plagued by fires devouring Syriac farmland, orchards and vineyards costing the Syriacs (part of) their livelihoods.

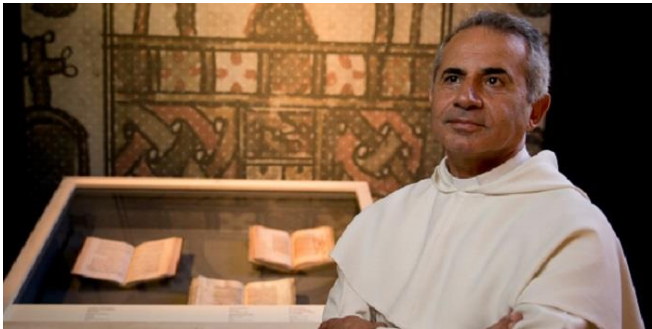
Because of the fundraising, ESU and its partners were able to distribute 42 fire extinguishers at EUR 500 each to representatives of Syriac villages at a meeting held in the community center of the Federation of Syriac Associations in Turkey (SÜDEF). Money left over from the fundraising was used to buy fireproof clothes and supplies.



ESU congratulates

Mgr. Najeeb Michael, the Syriac Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul in Iraq, with his nomination and him being shortlisted for the prestigious European Sakharov Prize 2020

“When the Islamic State arrived in Mosul in August 2014, Mgr. Najeeb Michael, Archbishop of Mosul, ensured the evacuation of Christians, Syriacs and Chaldeans to Iraqi Kurdistan and safeguarded more than 800 historic manuscripts dating from the 13th to the 19th century. These manuscripts were later digitized and exhibited in France and Italy. Since 1990 he has contributed to safeguarding 8,000 more manuscripts and 35,000 documents from the Eastern Church.”



And “This is a real opportunity to give this prize to a courageous person, an undying defender of the Christians in that land, to recognize and underscore the effort of this priest who stood up to barbarism and saved those manuscripts from Iraq,” said French ID group member Nicolas Bay. (source: European Parliament)

The winner of the Sakharov Prize will be announced on 22 October 2020.

The Syriacs who were elected to the municipality council of their residence in Germany. Daniel Hanna (CDU, Nippes-Cologne), Gabriel Hanne and Matthias Harman (both CDU, Ahlen), Christina Coban (CDU, Rheda-Wiedenbrück), Ibrahim Savci and Aram Bisso (CDU, Gronau), and Antonio Josefs (FDP, Gronau).

Also, ESU wishes all the luck on November 3, 2020 to the Syriac Chaldean Eric Esshaki who is running for election for the Republican Party to the U.S. House of Representatives to represent Michigan's 11th Congressional District.

Also, ESU wishes all the luck on November 3, 2020 to the Syriac Assyrian Sargis Sangari who is running for election to the U.S. House of Representatives to represent Illinois' 9th Congressional District.

ESU closely monitors the cases of the Syriac-Chaldean Diril couple and monk Aho



Turkey – The trial against Syriac Orthodox monk Sefer Bileçen - monk Aho - of the Mor Yahqoub monastery in the Tur Abdin region in southeast Turkey continued at the end of September in the fourth Heavy Penal Court in Mardin. Monk Aho is accused of membership of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) for giving bread and water to PKK fighters. The PKK is designated a terrorist organization in Turkey.

The Syriac monk denies the charges but does not deny giving bread and water. He said in his defense statement, “I give food to everyone who comes to my door – whoever he is.” The trial against monk Aho will continue on November 3. If found guilty by the Turkish court he will face a minimum prison sentence of 7.5 years. ESU closely monitors the case of monk Aho and continues to bring it to the attention of the European Parliament and human rights organizations. ESU sees the trial against monk Aho as another harassment by the Turkish state to scare away the little remaining Syriacs in southeast Turkey.

Turkey - The Syriac-Chaldean couple Hurmüz (71) and Shmuni Diril (65) disappeared on January 11, 2020 in their village Mehre, Şırnak Province, southeast Turkey. On March 20, the lifeless and mutilated body of Shmuni Diril was found in a riverbed near their village. There are no new developments regarding the whereabouts of

Hurmüz Diril. Local Turkish authorities have allocated little search capacity and detectives to the case. The case is labelled confidential and to date, to our knowledge, no autopsy report on the body of Shmuni Diril has been released.

ESU closely monitors the Diril case and has had contact and met with several authorities and politicians both in the Turkey and in Europe with the request for more urgent action and transparency. ESU demands a full and comprehensive investigation into the murder of Shmuni Diril and the kidnapping of Hurmüz Diril.



ESU calls for official recognition by the Iraqi state of the Simele Massacre on the Suraye people



On 7 August 1933, Iraqi state military forces and local allied Kurds and Arabs massacred hundreds of Suraye (Suraye) in the village of Simele. During that whole month of August 1933 more than 60 Suraye villages in Amadiya, Zakho, Nohadra (Dohuk), Sheikhan and Mosul, northern Iraq, were destroyed and burned. On August 7, 2020, we issued a written statement calling for the Iraqi government to take its responsibility and officially recognize the Simele massacre as such.

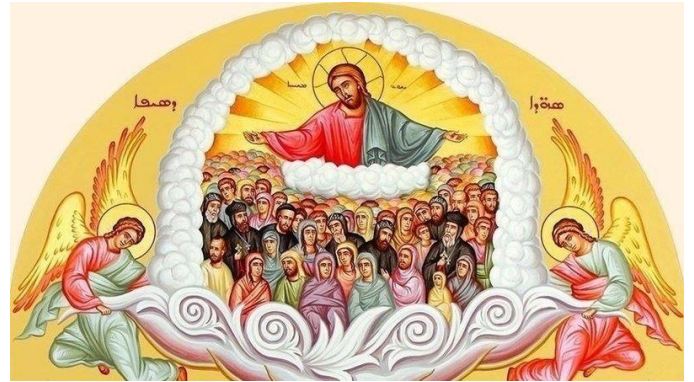
With an official state recognition of the massacre and the role of its army, the Iraqi state would fulfill its moral and constitutional obligation toward its own people. Official recognition would also create an inclination to provide a safe place for the threatened Suraye people (Chaldeans-Syriacs-Assyrians) in Iraq.

Recognition would send a clear message that indigenous components, such as the Suraye and the Yezidis, which have suffered greatly and whose existence and future in Iraq is under serious threat, need protection and that repression, discrimination, and killing of indigenous

components and vulnerable groups in the country needs to stop immediately.



ESU petition for Recognition Sayfo 1915 Genocide by European Parliament



On the occasion of the annual Sayfo Remembrance Day on June 15th, the European Syriac Union has started a petition to urge the European Parliament to recognize the Sayfo Genocide of 1915 and side with historical truth. ESU asks the European Parliament to choose for peace and justice according to its founding pillars and ideals.

Help us achieve Sayfo Genocide of 1915 recognition by the European Parliament. Help us reach the necessary 5.000 signatures.

[SIGN THE PETITION HERE](#)