

## Simele 1933: Martyrs Remembrance Day

2019-08-07



Every year on August 7 our Syriac (Chaldean-Aramean-Assyrian) people commemorate the Assyrian martyrs of Simele (Duhok province, Iraq). This day reminds us of yet another bloody massacre on the indigenous Christian population of Mesopotamia. In the preceding weeks up to and including August 7, 1933, Iraqi troops and local allies attacked Assyrian Christians – most of them members of the Church of the East - in Simele and dozens of neighboring villages. They killed more than three thousand men, women and children in those weeks, six hundred of them in Simele on August 7 alone.

Thus, less than 2 decades after the Christian Genocide of 1915, Assyrians once again became victims of brutal mass killings. In 1915 Syriacs (Chaldeans-Arameans-Assyrians) were systematically slaughtered and decimated in the Tur Abdin region and in the Turkish provinces of Hakkari, Van and Sirnak. After their flight, many of the survivors got scattered over different regions in the Middle East. The umpteenth uprooting from their historic villages, towns and lands. Some settled in Urmia, Iran. Others settled in the Iraqi regions around Duhok and on the Nineveh Plain.

In the aftermath of the Simele massacre, thousands of Assyrians fled the towns and villages where they had only recently settled. They re-settled, with new refugees coming in the following years, on the banks of the Khabur River in the Al-Jazira region in northeastern Syria under French mandate. In a period of British presence and power on the ground in Iraq, in a period of international negotiations and conferences on the Middle East, international and regional powers neglected to take real action at that time. Now a century after the Genocide of 1915 on Syriacs and almost 90 years after the Simele massacres, our people again is confronted with destruction, killings, kidnappings and forced democratic change in their homeland of Iraq. The arrival of ISIS, its disastrous aftermath combined with the geopolitical proxy fights by regional and international powers in the Middle East, once again represent an existential threat to our people in Iraq - and much so in Syria.

Where the protection and rights of minorities is an essential concept of democratic societies, we the Syriacs - the Chaldean-Aramean-Assyrian indigenous people of Mesopotamia – ask the international community and Iraqi government for humanitarian aid, full legal recognition and support in Iraq. As a representative of our people the European Syriac Union, today, sees that four necessities must be met for our Syriac Chaldean-Aramean-Assyrian people to survive in their homeland of Mesopotamia and their home country of Iraq: 1) security that we can trust and in which our people have a role; 2) we need direct

help to our people with rebuilding our cities and economy; 3) we need a reasonable degree of self-government - fully in line with the Iraqi constitution - to get a familiar framework for our security and governance; 4) the Iraqi government and the international community need to recognize the Simele massacre.

European Syriac Union

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