

Christian group ‘will be’ OK with Brotherhood

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A recently established council bringing together Syria’s Christian minority groups in Syria has no fear of a possible Muslim Brotherhood rule in the country, according to a prominent member.

“We want to live as equal citizens and with equal rights all over the Middle East, especially in Syria,” Bassam Ishak, leader of the Damascus-based Liberal Party, told the Hürriyet Daily News on behalf of the council after announcing the establishment of the “Syrian Syriac National Council” on Sept. 8.

Over 30 political parties, non-governmental organizations, and women’s organizations, including the European Syriac Union, the Syriac American Association and the Syriac Movement have joined together to form the council.

The council’s headquarters will be in Damascus, while another office is planned to be opened in Ankara. Ishak, who is also a member of the Syrian National Council (SNC), said the council should not be seen as supporting one side in the Syrian conflict.

“The [Bashar] al-Assad regime is oppressive,” Ishak said. “We have no hesitation about the Muslim Brotherhood’s rule over the region; we are ready to support them. Along with this, we don’t want our council to be understood as a supporter of an opponent or a sided organization.

We will only convey our people’s democratic demands. Even though we support [the opposition], we are not for or against anyone. We will only fight for our people’s future.”

Importance of Istanbul

Declaring the council’s opening in Istanbul had great historic importance for its members, Ishak said. “A part of our people is still living here. Geographically, this is the closest location to Syria and the Anatolian territories where we have lived for thousands of years.”

Asked why the council plans to open an office in Turkey, Ishak said “Turkey is our neighbor, and also an

example in terms of democracy, so we want to build good relations [with Turkey].” Although Syriac Christians have had painful experiences with Turkey in the past, they do not want to remain trapped in the past, he said.

Thousands of Christians leaving Homs: Vatican envoy

ANKARA – Anatolia News Agency

Approximately 100,000 Christians in Homs have had to move to different places in Syria due to the ongoing clashes between the Syrian army and opposition militants, according to a senior Vatican diplomat in Damascus.

“Up until now, Christians have been suffering from the same consequences of the conflict like all the other citizens. However, a good number of Christians, around 100,000, had to leave Homs. Most of them moved to the Christian Valley [Krak des Chevaliers] and to the Damascus area,” Vatican Ambassador to Syria Nuncio Mario Zenari said yesterday.

Zenari said Christians made up 8 percent of Syria’s population. “It is very difficult to know how many Christians died because of the explosions and shelling,” the ambassador also said. Zenari said the Vatican was doing its utmost to stop the ongoing clashes in the country. Pope Benedict XVI had recently called on international communities to make further effort to stop violence in Syria.

Source: Hurriyet Daily News

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