

Open letter to the European Parliament

2021-06-15

European Parliament
60 rue Wiertz / Wiertzstraat 60
B-1047 – Bruxelles/Brussels

Dear MEP ...

During World War I the Ottoman Turks carried out one of the largest genocides in the world's history, killing over 1.5 million Armenians, 500 000 Chaldeans-Syrian-Assyrians and 350 000 Greek Pontiacs. His Holiness Pope Francis declared it "the first genocide of the 20th century" and Syriac Christians commemorate this day on June 15, Armenians on April 24 and Greek Pontics on May 19.

During the genocide of 1915 against Christian communities more the 500.000 Chaldean- Syriac-Assyrians were murdered, and women and children were forced on the first death marches, deported, or forced to convert and faced torture and death. Their religious, social, and cultural identity was deliberately eradicated and their assets and way of life destroyed and appropriated by the Ottoman Turks. Germany's Accredited Representatives Dr. Martin Niepage, Higher Grade Teacher in the German Technical School at Aleppo, put it clearly in his testimony as; "The Young Turk has the European ideal of a united national state always floating before his eyes. He hopes to turkify the non-Turkish Mohammedan race — Kurds, Persians, Arabs, and so on -- by administrative methods and through Turkish education, reinforced by an appeal to their common interests as Mohammedans. The Christian nations--Armenians, Syrians (Syriacs) and Greeks--alarm him by their cultural and economic superiority, and he sees in their religion an obstacle to turkifying them by peaceful means. They have, therefore, to be exterminated or converted to Mohammedanism by force. The Turks do not suspect that, in doing this, they are sawing off the branch on which they are sitting themselves. Who is to bring progress to Turkey if not the Greeks, Armenians and Syrians (Syriacs), who constitute more than a quarter of the population of the Empire?"

The modern state of Turkey, the successor of the Ottoman Empire, ridicules the surviving communities that were killed by the Turkish sword during the genocide and continues the persecution by denying there ever was a genocide. On May 4, 2020, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan confirmed his intent to deal with what is left of these communities in Turkey and the region when he said "We do not allow terrorist leftovers of the sword in our country to attempt to carry out [terrorist] activities," stated Erdoğan. "Their number has decreased a lot but they still exist." The word Sayfo is a Syriac word meaning the Sword which is used in Turkey as a synonym for the genocide.

Today, they revile us publicly using polarizing propaganda that brand us as terrorists, and a threat to the state in order to continue to oppress us, demean us, and to steal our future in the region. By not acknowledging their wrongdoing in the past they have the potential to exterminate us again. If you want to say the sentence 'never again' it can only be possible if the international community forces Turkey to face its own history while recognizing their current rhetoric is followed by actions that has dire consequences

for our people in Turkey and the surrounding countries where many of our people fled after the genocide. The list is long and includes the recent invasion of peaceful regions of northern Syria, paying for mercenaries and weapons to be used in Libya in defiance of the U.N. imposed arms embargo, exacerbating tensions with NATO ally Greece in the eastern Mediterranean, cross-border military operations into northern Iraq, recurring verbal attacks on Israel, and the recent use of radical Islamist mercenaries and weapons in Azerbaijan as part of the offensive in largely Christian Nagorno-Karabakh.

We want to reconcile old wounds in the hopes of preventing new ones. But there can be no reconciliation without accountability. We the undersigned organizations are active within the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people in Europe. We are dedicated to the promotion of the recognition of the rights, historical truth and justice in the Middle East. Without this our people cannot create political, social and secure environments to continue their existence and survival among fractured and deepening upheavals they face in the region. As a long-term solution, we believe that this historical truth of the 1915 Ottoman Turkish Genocide against Armenians, Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrians and Greek Pontians should be clarified and recognized in order to put an appropriate stand and necessary policy measures in place against future aggression against our people.

European Union as a major global power and stakeholder and great achievement vis-à-vis democracy, pluralism and human rights can play vital role in the recognition of crimes against humanity and deliver strong message to the world. Recognition of 1915 genocide by the European Parliament, as several states and organizations did in the past, will change the path of history towards justice, truth and reconciliation.

We, as European Syriac Union, ESU kindly ask you to recognize 1915 genocide against Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people what happened to us in the past as a sign to our future as ethno- religious minorities in the region. Not only for our sake, but also for Turkey to confront its past and by so doing the hope that this will bring greater security and stability to the region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely