



SYRIAC UNIVERSAL ALLIANCE  
ܣܘܪܝܝܐ ܘܢܝܘܝܐ ܥܘܠܡܝܐ

*NGO in Special Consultative Status with  
the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*

**17 March 2010**

**To Ms. Gulan Avci  
Swedish MP, Liberal Party  
Advocate of Motion 2008/09:U332**

**Subject: Congratulations on Recognizing Ottoman Genocide and Pledge of Cooperation**

Dear Ms. Avci,

On behalf of the Syriac Universal Alliance (SUA), a global umbrella organization of Aramean (Syriac) national federations and the only Aramaic-speaking United Nations NGO body (see Attachment 1), I warmly congratulate you for your courageous decision to endorse the Ottoman Genocide (see Attachment 2) resolution in your Parliament.

Your decision is unique. While other nations have recognized the Armenian and Greek Genocide, Sweden is the first nation to specifically refer to the Aramean victims, whom your Parliament has dubbed religiously “Assyrians [‘Nestorians’]/Syriacs/Chaldeans.” The only other Parliament to formally mention the Arameans has been the South Australian lower house, which has condemned “the genocide of the Armenians, Pontian Greeks, Syrian Orthodox and other Christian minorities.”

Together with our member federation in Sweden (*Syrianska Riksförbundet*), which has over 20,000 registered members, we applaud you for championing truth and justice and withstanding party politics and foreign intimidation. Hence we pledge our full support to you and your colleagues in pressing forward with your mission to “work in the EU and the UN towards international recognition” of the Ottoman Genocide against the aforementioned victims.

We wish to inform you that the Syriac Universal Alliance has built up a global network among (Genocide) scholars and politicians within Turkey, the EU, the UN and the Council of Europe (cf. [www.sua-ngo.org/?p=media&bb=20](http://www.sua-ngo.org/?p=media&bb=20)). Additionally, we have compiled an extensive database of information relating to the Ottoman Genocide against the Arameans. We are, indeed, fully prepared and committed to assisting (and advising where necessary) on our common goal for Genocide recognition. In our view, this goal will be achieved more effectively by working on it together.

One of the main goals of the SUA, is to secure a positive future for our people in Southeast-Turkey. Thus, we have always stressed that the SUA seeks solutions to the Aramean Question through dialogue with Turkish partners, based on mutual respect. We are hopeful that the current resolution, although not immediately well received by Turkey, will be a stepping-stone towards the greater need for solutions to the Aramean Question in general, and to Genocide recognition in particular.

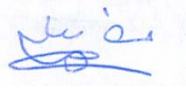
**Head Office:**

Syriac Universal Alliance  
Klockarvägen 104  
151 61 Södertälje, Sweden

+46 855 032 810  
info@sua-ngo.org  
www.sua-ngo.org

In due course, the SUA will follow up with further correspondence. Given our unique position as a leader in the Aramean community, we are in a privileged position to assist and support your position and this cause. I wish to again express our utmost gratitude for standing up for the truth and thereby honoring all the Aramean victims of the Genocide who were forgotten for close to an entire century.

Respectfully yours,



Johny Messo  
President  
Syriac Universal Alliance  
[johny.messo@sua-ngo.org](mailto:johny.messo@sua-ngo.org)

## **Attachment 1: Background information on the SUA and Aramean (Syriac) people**

*“The people we [Greeks] call Syriacs were called by the Syriacs themselves Arameans.”*

Poseidonios from Apamea, a famous Greek Stoic philosopher, geographer and historian (ca. 135-51 BC).

*“From the time the Greeks came to have a more intimate acquaintance with Asia, they designated by the name of the ‘Syrians’ the people who called themselves ‘Arameans’.”*

Th. Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (transl. from the German by J.A. Crichton) (London, 1904), p. XXXI.

### **About Syriac Universal Alliance (SUA)**

Established in 1983, the Syriac Universal Alliance (SUA) is a global umbrella organization representing the various Aramean (Syriac) national federations in the continents of Europe, America, Australia and the Middle East. The SUA is the widely acknowledged voice of the Aramean people whose interests and needs it aims to serve, defend and promote.

Since 1999, the SUA is the only Aramaic-speaking Non-Governmental Organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and the Social Council of the United Nations. The SUA is a socio-political and cultural organization that works independently, transparently and on a democratic basis. Among others, the SUA seeks close cooperation with national governments, the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe.

The SUA is dedicated to answer the call to protect and secure the rights, liberty and equality of the Aramean people, safeguard and promote the cultural heritage of its ancestors, ensuring justice, and uniting all its people as a self-determined and internationally recognized Aramean nation.

### **About Aramean (Syriac) people**

*Scholars note that ‘Aramean/Aramaic’ is the original self-designation of the Arameans and the equivalent of the Greek name ‘Syrian/Syriac’ which they adopted since the early fifth century AD. In order to avoid the oft-recurring confusion with the largely Muslim Arab citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic of Syria, this people at present either prefers the use of the artificial term ‘Syriacs’ or their ancient self-designation ‘Arameans’ in Western languages.*

The early Arameans were pastoralists who were an inherent and integral part of the Near East in 1550-1200 BC. In pre-Christian times, notably between 1150-700, they played a crucial role in the socio-political arena of the ancient world. As native inhabitants of Upper Mesopotamia (covering modern Southeast-Turkey, north-eastern Syria and northern Iraq), they were ubiquitous in this area as well as in Lebanon and South-Mesopotamia (corresponding to present-day South-Iraq).

Their Aramaic mother tongue enjoyed the status of international language of the Near East between ca. 700 BC and ca. 700 AD. Aramaic also features in the Old and New Testaments, was the mother tongue of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and left indelible traces in the Jewish and Muslim literatures (including the Qur’an).

Aramaic has for the most part been the main carrier of the identity of the Arameans (Syriacs), who were one of the first nations to adopt the Gospel in the early centuries of the Christian era. Besides the Syriac (Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant) community, the Chaldeans, Nestorians (since 1976 officially called ‘Assyrians’), Maronites and Melkites are also the heirs of the Aramaic heritage. For many centuries, their ancient monasteries and churches functioned as intellectual centers and schools. Many experts have also expressed the importance of the Aramean people and Aramaic language, for instance:

Prof. S. Moscati: “The Greeks and Romans knew the Near East mainly through the Arameans, for it was they who united and canalized the sources of its culture, bringing together Babylonian, Persian and Hebrew elements and transmitting them to Christianity, and with Christianity to the West. From the West, at a later date, the Arameans [sc. Syriac Orthodox & Nestorians] were to bring to the East Greek culture, especially philosophy, which became known to the Arabs through the medium of Aramaic.”

Prof. E. Kraeling: “Without the Aramaic language, “the expansion of Christianity in the Orient would have been unthinkable.” This is, among other things, “the historical debt which the world owes the Arameans.”

Today the Christian Arameans are a stateless and largely forgotten people who, as a result of ethnic cleansing, land theft, occupation and recurring persecutions, were forced to flee from the land of their ancestors. In Southeast-Turkey, for example, only 2.500 Arameans remain and in the entire country approximately 25,000. In fact, the number of Arameans in Europe substantially exceeds the number of Arameans left in their homelands with hundreds of thousands in exile in countries like Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Belgium and Switzerland.

This people and its ancient language are in serious danger of extinction today. Therefore, their future survival remains contingent on international recognition as an indigenous people and as one of the ethno-linguistic and religious minorities of Turkey. In order to achieve this, the Aramean (Syriac) people need your support.

## Attachment 2: The Arameans (Syriacs) as the forgotten victims of the Ottoman Genocide

*"The Children of Sem are the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, the Ludians and the Arameans who are the Syriacs, the Hebrews and the Persians"* [Cf. Genesis 10:22].

Patriarch Michael the Elder (d. 1199) of the Syriac Orthodox Church from Malatya in his voluminous chronicle in 1195 AD.

*"I would like to state that we, the Chaldeans, Assyrians and Syriacs are one people that is known as the Aramean people."*

Patriarch Emmanuel Delly III of the Chaldean Church of Babylon (Interview to Ankawa in October, 2008)

### Aramean (Syriac) – Armenian relations and Influence

Aramean (Syriac)/Armenian relations have always been quite positive. In fact, many Armenian scholars, both ancient and modern, admit that the Armenians are much indebted to the Arameans. Among other things, theologically, liturgically and Christologically. To a certain extent, even the origins and development of the Armenian script were advanced by the Arameans. Christianity was exported to Armenia from Edessa and Nisibin in the early third century. Aramean missionaries translated the Bible, especially the Psalms, from Aramaic into Armenian. It is agreed that Aramaic Christological views have clearly influenced the development of the Armenian Christological standpoints during the fourth and fifth centuries AD.

Armenian scholar Seta Dadoyan, in her book *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Near East*, stated: *"It was through Syriac channels that the early versions of the Scriptures were first introduced into Armenia."* In the chapter entitled *The Syriac Factor in the Development of Armenian Christianity and the Early Sects*, she noted: *"Syriac Christianity constituted the early faith of the Armenians, and it maintained its influence throughout the fifth century. Liturgy was initially in Syriac, and many terms in Armenian liturgical vocabulary are indications of this initial and major influence."*

### Ottoman Genocide

With respect to the "Armenian Genocide," the SUA persistently reminds the world of the fact that the Arameans (Syriacs) also suffered significantly. When the SUA speaks of the "Genocide," we always include all the groups who suffered. That is why we talk about Aramean, Armenian and Greek victims, without any distinctions. As far as the massacres are concerned, the Arameans suffered as much as the Armenians and lost approximately 600.000 people.

Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (1913-16), testified: *"And now the Young Turks, who had adopted so many of Abdul Hamid's ideas, also made his Armenian policy their own. Their passion for Turkifying the nation seemed to demand logically the extermination of all Christians--Greeks, **Syrians**, and Armenians...They would destroy all Greeks, Syrians, Armenians, and other Christians, move Moslem families into their homes and into their farms, and so make sure that these territories would not similarly be taken away from Turkey"* (Ch. XXII).

Morgenthau continued: *"The Armenians are not the only subject people in Turkey which have suffered from this policy of making Turkey exclusively the country of the Turks. The story which I have told about the Armenians I could also tell with certain modifications about the Greeks and the **Syrians**...For the larger part these were bona-fide deportations; that is, the Greek inhabitants were actually removed to new places and were not subjected to wholesale massacre. It was probably for the reason that the civilized world did not protest against these deportations that the Turks afterward decided to apply the same methods on a larger scale not only to the Greeks but to the Armenians, **Syrians, Nestorians** ['Assyrians' since 1976], and others of its subject peoples"* (Ch. XXIV).

Peter Balakian, a genocide scholar amongst the Armenian community, in his book, *The Burning Tigris*, also writes: *"...the extermination of innocent civilians in Turkey (the Armenians. but also **Syrian and Assyrian** ['Nestorian'] Christians and large portions of the Greek population, especially the Greeks of the Pontus, or Black Sea region, was pushing toward one million."*

Sébastien de Courtois, in his book called *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, The Last Arameans*, briefly explains how the non-Armenian victims were neglected: *"...there were two categories of victims: the Armenians on one side, and the other Christians on the other. This notion, used to establish a sort of hierarchy of victims' innocence, led to a simplification that slowly won out, denying or just ignoring the Syriacs' genocide in order to stress that only Armenians were targeted."*

Against this background, the description of "the Armenian Genocide," while being a historical truth, does not give the full picture, since it ignores the many hundreds of thousands of innocent Greeks and Arameans who also fell victim to this very same "**Ottoman Genocide**." We deem this latter name as much more appropriate, as it accentuates the masterminds and perpetrators of the same systematic massacres, so that none of the victims who still strive for international recognition of these horrible events as 'Genocide' will be either forgotten or neglected.