



SYRIAC UNIVERSAL ALLIANCE

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

PRESS RELEASE

Date

22 August 2010

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MIDYAT CHURCHGOERS REMAIN ON EDGE AFTER ATTACK DURING SUNDAY MASS

Midyat, Turkey – Turkish police have arrested a local man charged with terrorizing churchgoers in Midyat, Turkey. The Syriac Universal Alliance (SUA),¹ the recognised United Nations NGO representing the Aramean (Syriac) people worldwide, condemns the actions of a 27-year-old Kurdish man intended to intimidate churchgoers at Mor Barsaumo Syriac Orthodox Church in Midyat on 22 August 2010.

Witnesses report seeing the assailant enter the church and walk directly to the altar. The individual then faced the terrified congregation and kissed the Turkish flag three times while simultaneously clutching a large hammer in his other hand. Members of the congregation then forced the man out of the church in an effort to avoid any further harm to those attending Holy Mass.



The SUA also understands that two weeks prior to this incident, the same perpetrator set fire to protected mountain lands of Mor Gabriel Monastery. No action was taken against the assailant at that time. The young man reportedly is of Kurdish descent from the village of Zinavle (Turkish: Eğlence).

The village of Zinavle lies at the border of Saint Gabriel Monastery in Midyat, which has claimed a sizable amount of land against the Monastery in recent court cases. In an amazing twist, the offender appears to be the son of Mahmut Düz, one of the three individuals who filed the Land Boundary Case against the Monastery on 20 August 2008. Furthermore, this same individual, Mahmut Düz, also issued a letter that outlined 10 false allegations against the Monastery. This contrived letter was submitted to the Midyat Public Prosecution Office on 27 August 2008.² His brother Abdullah Düz, however, is reportedly the mastermind behind all anti-Mor Gabriel acts.

Remarkably, the Midyat incident from outside the church property was captured on CCTV and can be viewed at http://www.midyathabur.com/haber_detay.asp?haberID=9061.

Following the incident, the local community leaders confronted the local police questioning the actions of the assailant, only to be told that he is mentally disturbed, a defence claimed often by the Turkish authorities to condone criminal behaviour. Such replies being recently used, for instance, when Luigi Padovese, a Catholic Bishop and Apostolic Vicar for Anatolia, was killed on 3 June 2010, being stabbed to death at his home in south-eastern Turkey by his driver.

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Represented in the USA, the UK, Australia, Turkey, Lebanon, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Mr. Daniel Gabriel, the SUA Human Rights and UN NGO Director, states that “this is not an isolated incident. Time and time again the Aramean (Syriac) population in Turkey is terrorized. There are clear inherent and systemic issues with the Turkish justice system and action must be taken quickly to alleviate the fear that the Aramean population continues to live through. The Turkish government and its people are standing by idly while danger and insecurity envelopes their everyday lives. Turkey claims to be a tolerant and democratic state, but it seems this is nothing more than rhetoric.”

Mr. Johnny Messo, President of the SUA, believes that “such developments point to ‘a silent genocide’. We are now witnessing the final phase of Turkey’s ethnic cleansing of its indigenous peoples. The Armenians, Greeks and Arameans (Syriacs) are not only victims from the past, but even in the present. We continually hope and pray for a new page to be turned in and by Turkey, especially in light of a push for its long-yearned EU Membership. Instead, the reality on the ground increasingly makes us believe that this is blind optimism, since these premeditated acts of terror seek to instill even more fear and insecurity in the Aramean people in as well as outside of Turkey – all with the objective of having the native populations abandon their ancient homeland so that a new local history and future destiny effectively can be written.”

The SUA calls upon the general public, media outlets and all those concerned with protecting human rights, to continue in their drive to protect the Aramean (Syriac) people. The increase in terrorization of Arameans in Turkey is evident (see most recently <http://www.sua-ngo.org/?p=media&bb=28>). In a quite decimated community, there are now currently less than 2,500 Aramean souls in the southeast of Turkey and no more than 25,000 in total dispersed through the whole of the Turkish country.

ENDNOTES

1. See Appendix 1, below, for further information on the Syriac Universal Alliance (SUA).
2. See Appendix 4 of the SUA Mor Gabriel Report 2008 at http://www.sua-ngo.org/userfiles/file/Media%20-%20Press%20Releases/SUA-report_Mor%20Gabriel.pdf.

APPENDIX 1: Background information on the SUA and Aramean (Syriac) people

About Syriac Universal Alliance (SUA)

Established in 1983, the Syriac Universal Alliance (SUA) is a global umbrella organization representing the various Syriac (Aramaic) national federations in the continents of Europe, America, Australia and the Middle East. The SUA is the widely acknowledged voice of the Aramean (Syriac) 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 ~~separatist~~ political and cultural organization that works independently, transparently and on a democratic basis. Among others, the SUA seeks close cooperation with national governments, the UN, the EU 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 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 ~~12005 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 (southeast Turkey, ~~eastern~~ Syria and northern Iraq), they were ubiquitous in this area as well as in Lebanon and South-Mesopotamia (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, 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 and Maronites are also the heirs of the Aramaic heritage. For many centuries, their ancient monasteries and churches functioned as intellectual centers and schools. Many intellectuals have also expressed the importance of the Aramean people and Aramaic language:

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 inter alia "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 USA, Netherlands, Germany, France, Belgium, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, Syria, India, Lebanon and Sweden.

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 ethnolinguistic and religious minorities of Turkey. In order to achieve this, the Aramean (Syriac) people need your support.