

The speech of Mr. Iskender Alptekin, The President of the European Syriac Union (E.S.U.)

Dear participant brothers and sisters,

Today is a very important day in our people's history. We have gathered here in Stockholm, regardless of our designation, geography, denomination, with one voice and one heart, in order to stop the ongoing attacks against our people, our churches, our church leaders, and our youth and all the atrocities carried out against our people in our ancestors land. Therefore, I am greeting you with respect from the bottom of my heart for your participation in this meeting.

Dear all,

Our people in Iraqi part of Mesopotamia are, once again, suffering as in the previous genocides of Seyfo and Simelle. During the democratization process of Iraq, as it has happened many times in the history, our nation is once more chosen as a sacrifice by some dark powers. Whenever there is a regional change in the Middle East, our people go through the same situation. And because we didn't want to leave our homeland, we gave so many sacrifices.

During the World War I. half a million of our people were killed because they refused to leave our homeland. In 1933, in Simelle, hundreds of our people were killed because they wished to continue their existence on their ancestor's soil. Today, the region of the Middle East is entering a new phase. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the destiny of the Middle East region is being re-written. The regional powers of the Middle East as well as all the global powers are aware of this situation. The region of the Middle East is being re-formed. With this new development our people, more than any other people, should have their rights in their homeland.

Exactly at this point, there are some dark powers who do not wish that our people, especially the roots of Christianity, to re-flourish. Accordingly, these dark powers have started a campaign of systematic attacks against our people between 2004 and 2008. These attacks have been targeting our history, our existence and our religion.

The acts of terror that turned Iraq into a hell, following the collapse of Saddam's regime, are trying to hit our people in their heart. The aim of these terrorist groups is to exterminate the existence of our people in Iraq. For this reason, they attacked our people, killed hundreds of them and beheaded some of them. They attacked our churches and then started to target our church leaders.

Firstly, the Syriac Catholic Archbishop of Mosul Msgr. George Qassmoussa was kidnapped, then the Syriac Orthodox Priest Fr. Paul Skender Behnam was beheaded in Mosul, once again in Mosul the Chaldean Priest Fr. Raghed Ganni was killed together with three deacons, then the Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul Msgr. Bolus Faraj Rahho was kidnapped and killed with his three guards and most recently the Syriac Orthodox Priest of Baghdad Fr. Yousef Adel Aboudi was shot dead outside his house in Baghdad. With these killings the aim of the aggressors is to drive out our religious leaders from their country, thus leaving our people without leaders and force them to flee abroad.

Our daughters are forced to veil themselves according the Sharia Law and go veiled to the schools. They force our business owners to close down their businesses. They explode vehicles in the neighbourhoods where our people are concentrated, killing our innocent people and forcing them to flee out of their country.

As a result of this situation, up to half a million of Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people have been forced to flee from their ancestor's country and have been drifted to an un-known future. The refugee camps in Jordan and Syria are filled with these refugees.

As a result of these attacks the cities of Basra, Kirkuk and Mosul have been mostly evacuated from our people. Prior to the war the population of our people living in Baghdad was at least 800 thousand people. Now, this number has dwindled to about 350 thousand people. Under these circumstances, we see that the dark powers who have an ambition of wiping out our people from their roots in Iraq, silently without drawing the attention of the world, have so far reduced the number of our population by one half. If the attention of the world is not drawn to these ongoing killings and attacks that are being carried out against our churches, soon, Iraq will be evacuated from our people, the Christians of Iraq.

Dear brothers and sisters,

The history is once more repeating itself. We had experienced this situation during the Seyfo Genocide (1915) and during the Simelle massacres (1933). And in both cases, they spilled so much of our blood, but we did not evacuate our ancestor's land. Today the destiny of our nation is in the hands of our today's generation.

Nowadays, the Middle East is going through some remarkable changes. Our biggest duty is to protect the national interests of our people. Accordingly, it is our duty to protect our people from the dangers they are facing and to work for their situation to be raised to an apposite level. If we are now required to make the voice of our people heard by the world, then we must do so. In the first demonstration that was held in Brussels last month, with the participation of our political parties, the political organizations, the Church and with all our people regardless of their denominations as well as with the diplomatic relations that followed the demonstration, the world was made to hear the cry of our nation.

Our gathering here today, once again, has a significant importance. On 29th of this month there will be an international conference in Stockholm which will be attended by representatives of 80 countries, in prime minister or foreign affairs ministers' level. Therefore, this meeting (demonstration) is the continuation of the march we started last month in Brussels, in order to make the voice of our people heard by the participants of the conference and demand from them to address the situation of our people in Iraq.

Dear all, dear patriots,

No one else in the world has loved their country as we did and no one else's blood has been spilled for their country as much as ours. We might sacrifice a lot, we might water the soil of our country with our blood, but we will never leave our homeland Mesopotamia, the Cradle of the Civilization that was founded by our forefathers the Akadians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Arameans and the Chaldeans.

Nowadays, our brothers and sisters and our friends in Iraq have begun a historic work in order to gather our people and provide them with the much needed security. Therefore, they have started to lay the foundations of an Autonomous region for our people the Chaldeans, the Syriacs, the Assyrians or with other words for our Suroye people. Accordingly, they have built up to 150 villages and recently they had meetings with the special representative of the Secretary General of the UN and with some influential figures of Iraq to discuss the issue with them. Thus, our friends are trying to found this Autonomy in our ancestors land Bethnahrin (Mesopotamia).

Dear participants,

When this Autonomy is established, at least, our people in Iraq will have security. Our people, our 2000 year old churches, their founders and our church leaders will escape the ongoing atrocities and killings.

But most importantly, our nation will come once again to the surface of the world stage, with its honour, its history and its future. Our culture, our religion and our language will be protected and developed. Our children's future will be secured. The history of our ancestors the Acadians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Arameans, the Chaldeans and the Syriacs will survive and continue. We, as the people who laid the foundations of the Christianity, our roots will flourish and thrive once again. With the foundation of the Autonomy, the blood of the martyrs of the Seyfo, the Simelle and the other genocides will not have been spilled in vain. It is an honour for this generation, our generation, to eye-witness this historic development. Also, it is an honour for us to be able to answer the unheard cry of all our people who were killed.

Dear participants, respectable brothers and sister,

In order to experience all these coming blissful developments, there are some heavy duties awaiting us all. The only solution for bringing the ongoing ethnic cleansing against our people in Iraq to an end is the foundation of this Autonomy. Therefore, we as the people living outside our homeland, regardless of our designation, our denomination, as we have gathered here with one voice and one heart, we must support the foundation of the Autonomy for our nation.

We as the European Syriac Union ESU, in order to fulfil the demands of our people, to make their voice heard by the world, for their unity, and the establishment of the Autonomy, here, before all of you respectable participants, we promise to continue with our exertion all the way.

- Our People will have a Future
- We salute the Autonomous region of our people in Mesopotamia
- Long live our Nation