

## EUROPEAN SYRIAC UNION, ESU

European Syriac Union, ESU, was founded in Brussels, Belgium on 14-15 May 2004. The foundation Congress was attended by various personalities among them politicians, academics, and different organizations across Europe. Actually, ESU is present in big cities around Europe and working as international non-governmental organization. The headquarters of ESU is based in Brussels, Belgium.



Establishment of ESU became after long years of experience and knowledge within the Syriac people. From the beginning until now a days, ESU had been major actor within the Syriac people in order to defend the rights of people. In order to create public opinion around the issue of Syriac people, ESU holds meetings, projects with European partners and interlocutors. ESU organized various demonstrations, activities and conferences in the different cities across Europe in order to make heard the voice of Syriac people.

## MISSION

The primary mission of ESU is to defend the rights and demands of Syriac people in the European countries as well in Middle East countries namely; Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey.

ESU is a modern and democratic institution that aims to find solutions for the problems that face Syriac people in Europe and in Middle East countries. ESU highly believes in the cooperation between other groups and institutions of Syriac people as well with the organisations of different groups and cultures.

- Presenting and being voice of Syriac people in every platform and advance their situation in European society as well in their native homelands.
- Preserving Syriac identity, language, culture and traditions while encouraging the integration in the European society.
- Bringing the problems and issues of the Syriac people to the attention of European and world public opinion.
- Working intensively in order to improve conditions of women and youth within Syriac society.



## SYRIAC PEOPLE

Ancient Mesopotamian civilization is the cradle of the human development, discoveries, innovations and footprint to several other vital and important issues of history of mankind. Within this vital and undeniable great civilization Syriac people played very important role to the contribution of this great civilization.

Syriac people had been present in every field of Mesopotamian civilization and with their contributions they transformed and flourished Mesopotamian civilization.

Syriac people, also known as Assyrian, Aramean, are indigenous people of the Middle East. Syriac people are not a people who settled in the Middle East and Mesopotamia by wave of migration or as invaders. They are autochthones in the Levant and they conserved their presence during centuries despite all difficulties. They are the most ancient and deeply rooted people among the Middle Eastern nations.

Linguistically, Syriac language belongs to the Semitic family. From the early periods until 7th century Syriac language was the "lingua franca" in all Levant land and it was arrived until Asia. Syriac language was the only medium in economic and trade relations. Later on, Syriac language and Syriac linguists played very important role with the translation of Greek philosophy to the Arabs. The Greek philosophy's well-known works and books had been translated into Syriac language and later on to the Arabic.

Syriac people and Syriac language also had crucial role in the establishment of different academies in the history. Academy of Antioch (380 AD), Academy of Edessa (155 AD) is well-known to the historians and also Syriac linguists and philosophers played very important role at the Baghdad Academy.

Parallel to the rise of Arabic language and Arabs influence Syriac language lost its influence constantly. Despite this reality Syriacs have managed to preserve and develop their special linguistic and cultural characteristics in their own geographic areas even until today .

Throughout their six thousand year of long history, Syriac people have been living in the countries of the divided Mesopotamia, Syria, Iraq, Iran, South and South-eastern Turkey and Lebanon. Meanwhile, Syriac people in every period played crucial role in the construction and developments of above mentioned countries.

Syriac people converted into the Christianity since the first century AD and spread the Christianity from the Middle East to the Far East in a very large geographical area. The culture of Christianity, once created by the Syriacs, is still present in the Middle East. Meanwhile, upon Christological and theological divergences in the first centuries, divisions occurred among Syriacs. These divisions lasted by several churches.

During the centuries Syriac people had been present in different parts of Mesopotamia and in the Middle East. Syriac people suffered from all hegemonic powers which have controlled the Middle East. The Arab conquest and Islam had negative effect upon Syriac people in every aspect. Syriacs and Christians have been considered and accepted as “second class” citizens and they were subject to special tax. Following the Turk invasions Syriac people had been target.

They had been massacred, killed and their lands and properties had been plundered. The effects and consequences on Mongols invasions are still present at the different areas of Syriac people. The Ottoman Empire was last great power which dominated Syriac people among others. Syriac people as Christian entity with other Christian components were subject of special taxes, mode of conduct and rules. Christian entities were “second class” within Ottomans hierarchy.

Syriac people with other Christian groups had been subject of the genocide under Ottoman rule. Around 1900’s years Christians consisted of 30% of Ottoman population and Asia Minor was nearly all inhabited by Christians. The genocide of 1915, also known among Syriac people as “Sayfo”, annihilated Christian components. Sayfo literally means the “sword”.

Aftermath, Christian populations and Syriac people presence in the Anatolia dwindled and come to zero point. The long tradition, civilization and culture were the subject of horrible genocide and the consequences and trauma were colossal.

During the First World War, world powers did not take into consideration of the rights of Syriac people during different accords and treaties despite of some promises from Western powers. The new states that emerged in the Middle East region and in Turkey, Syriac people had been deprived from all constitutional, legal and political rights. Moreover, Syriac people had been constantly subject of harassments, conflicts and discriminative policies. Syriac people are still without any constitutional guarantees in the Middle East countries and in Turkey.

Last decade political developments in the Middle East region had major consequences on the Syriac people. Aftermath of the Iraq war, Christians and Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people faced great difficulties. Consequently to the attacks, killings, demographic changes and pressures from different powers, they fled the country. At the transitional period of Middle East region, Syriac people and Christians are valuable asset to the multi-ethnic and cosmopolite aspect of social fabric.

Syriac people are present in Middle East countries namely, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and in Turkey. Due to the difficulties faced in the region, Syriac people had migrated to Western countries. Today, there is high and strong Syriac diaspora in Europe, United States of America and in Australia.

### Information:

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