



ولا ننسى
كي لا ننسى

NEVER FORGET

الإبادة السريانية سيفو
1915-2015

Conclusion

The above provides only a brief idea of the immense atrocities against our people. The genocide SAYFO صفا that was unleashed on our people left a profound impact due to its brutality and severity. For those who remained alive, they had no other choice but to flee their homelands, seeking shelter in a safer place, leaving behind their forefathers' land, monasteries and churches, disappearing from the area and unfortunately wiping out their presence. The genocide SAYFO صفا impacted the numbers of our people as we lost more than 500,000 Syrians during these atrocities, and the impact continues today as our numbers in Syria, Iraq and Turkey are on the decrease with the new wave of SAYFO صفا.

Indeed, this booklet is just a record of part of what our people sustained and suffered during the genocide against the innocent people of our Church. The memory of "Sayfo " صفا will remain with us to strengthen our resolve and pride in being a nation with a unique identity and strong connection to the message of Christ as we proudly carry His cross.

Christians will remain in the East ,promoting peace ,forgiveness and the love of Christ no matter what sufferings they face as they experience a renewed " Sayfo صفا " that brings religious discrimination, persecution, sufferings and displacement to our people, reciting with Saint Paul in his Letter to the Romans ٨:٣٥:

"What will separate me from the love of the Messiah: Suffering, or imprisonment, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

We will never forget the bloodshed of our forefathers and grandfathers which will remain as the fragrance of Christ, increasing our attachment to our land, so we may stand witnesses, as they did, and continue to be the salt of this earth and the light of the world as followers of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

| Bitlis vilayet | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---------|-----|--------|--------|-----|-----|----------------------------|
| 14 | Bitlis | 12 | 130 | 850 | 1 | | |
| 15 | Siirt | | 100 | 650 | 1 | 2 | F. Ibrahim, Vicar of Siirt |
| 16 | Shirwan | 9 | 283 | 1,970 | 2 | 4 | |
| 17 | Gharsan | 22 | 744 | 5,140 | 12 | 9 | |
| Harpur vilayet | | | | | | | |
| 18 | Harpur | 24 | 308 | 3,500 | 5 | 2 | |
| Urfa Saniak | | | | | | | |
| 19 | Urfa | | 50 | 340 | | | |
| TOTAL | | 345 | 11,350 | 90,313 | 156 | 134 | 7 |

Table 4: Table presented by Severius A. Barsoum [Thirce Blessed Mor Aphrem I] to the Peace Conference held in Paris in 1919, which provides a brief idea of the atrocities against our people [People of Mesopotamia] during the period 1915-1918 (de Courtois, 2004, p. 239)



| Name of Vilayet | Names of cities and Kazas | Number of villages | Number of families | People massacred | Churches and monasteries ruined | Priests and monks killed | Bishops and vicars |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Diyarbaker Vilayet | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Diyarbakir & Suburbs Shirwan Lice | 30 | 764 | 5,379 | 5 | 7 | |
| 2 | | 9 | 174 | 1,195 | 1 | 1 | F. Siman, Episcop, Vicar |
| 3 | | 10 | 658 | 4,706 | 5 | 4 | |
| 4 | Derek | | 50 | 350 | 1 | 1 | |
| 5 | Svreek | 30 | 897 | 5,725 | 12 | 12 | Msgr Denha B. of Siverek |
| 6 | Veran-sheir | 16 | 303 | 1,928 | 1 | | |
| 7 | Mardin | 8 | 880 | 5,815 | 12 | 5 | |
| 8 | Savur | 7 | 880 | 6,164 | 2 | 3 | |
| 9 | Nusaybin | 50 | 1,000 | 7,000 | 12 | 25 | |
| 10 | Jezireh | 26 | 994 | 7,510 | 13 | 8 | F. Stiphan, Patriar, Vicar |
| 11 | Besheriye | 30 | 718 | 4,481 | 10 | 10 | |
| 12 | Baravat | 15 | 282 | 1,880 | 1 | 1 | F. Gabrail, Archmin-drite F. Ephrem, Vicar, Mgr. Yacoub Bishop of Denalib |
| 13 | Midyat | 47 | 3,935 | 25,830 | 60 | 60 | |

Table 2: A schedule outlining the date of the massacres and the names of the cities in the province of Diyarbakir

MARDIN

| Village name | Date of massacre |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Bnabiel | 9/6/1915 |
| Dara | June 1915 |
| Massarta | 2/6/1915 |
| Bavaow | 4/6/1915 |
| Bakiera | June 1915 |
| Al Mansouriea | 21/6/1915 |
| Al Qousour | 14/6/1915 |
| Qalt | 3/6/1915 |
| Al Sour | June 1915 |
| Mor Aho – Arzon | June 1915 |
| Azekh – Beth Zabieday | April 1915 |
| Siert | 15/6/1915 |
| Karboran | June 1915 |
| Qalat Marah | 11/6/1915 |
| Nisibis | 4/6/1915 |

Table 3: A schedule outlining the date of the massacres and the names of the cities in province of Mardin

Below we provide a copy of a rare historical document by the Thrice Blessed Patriarch Aphrem I when he was the Archbishop of Syria, representing His Holiness Patriarch Elias III at the Peace Conference that was held near Paris in 1919.¹⁸ This table (TABLE 4) offers an idea of the number of people who were persecuted or converted to Islam in that time¹⁹:

¹⁸ After the end of the First World War, and the victory of the allies (France, Britain and the United States) over Germany and Turkey, all parties were invited to a Peace Conference that was held at the Versailles Palace near Paris.

¹⁹ This table was included in a submission to the World Council of Churches on SAYFO [سايڤو](#) by B. Issa and T. Issa of Australia in October of 2014, pp. 9 and 10.

The massacres of the Ottomans against the Syriacs in 1915

As highlighted earlier, and as Turkey joined the First World War as an ally of the Germans, a military order was issued on April 1, 1915, confiscating all weapons and demanding owners to surrender their weapons at the government house. The order included all Ottoman areas in Anatolia. The process to collect or surrender the weapons commenced, which brought out the main intention of this Ottoman order, which can be merely described as the brutal killing of our people with the sole intent of exterminating them. It was only 20 years after the 1895 massacres had taken place, and our people had, once again, become the subject of new atrocities



and a new genocide. This new genocide covered different areas such as Edessa, Diyarbakir and Mardin where our people suffered immensely and paid the ultimate price.¹⁷ Below we provide two tables which provide an idea of these atrocities, outlining the dates of the massacres and the names of the cities in which these massacres took place (TABLES 2 AND 3).

DIYARBAKIR

| Village name | Date of massacre |
|--------------|------------------|
| Qatarbel | 1/4/1895 |
| Kabiea | 10/4/1895 |
| Qarabash | 20/4/1895 |
| Garouqiea | 2/6/1915 |
| Saadia Brafa | June 1915 |

¹⁷ The events commenced on February 18, 1915 when an Ottoman decree in the province of Diyarbakir was issued for the execution of twelve young men in the village of Karabash as they failed to report for Ottoman military service. It is worthwhile to note here that these martyrs were Syriacs (nationality and Christian denomination). The decision to enlist these young men into the Ottoman military service was enacted prior to the decision to withdraw weapons from our people.

I extend the sympathies and sorrows to the clergy of the altar.

They separated the children from their mothers who were crying out loud in the public squares.

They threw the children in the rivers and shot the young men,

Kidnapped the women and the brides and threw them in the public squares,

Killed the men with no mercy and made the children taste the atrocities.

Unquote

Furthermore, the massacres of 1895 also extended to include the areas of Siedas, Sasson and Harput¹⁶. To help account for the massacres that were inflicted on the Syrians in 1895 please refer to (TABLE 1) below.

| City Name | Date of massacre |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Edessa | 1/1/1895 |
| Wayran Shahar -Tal Mozalt | 3/11/1895 |
| Al Mansouriea | 5/11/1895 |
| Deariek (Al Qousour) | 20/11/1895 |
| Banabli | 9/11/1895 |
| Nisibis | 10/11/1895 |
| Midyat | 20/11/1895 |
| Mardin | 3/11/1895 |
| Diyarbakir | 1/11/1895 |
| AL Saadiea | 1/11/1895 |
| Myafraqan | 1/11/1895 |
| Qarabash | 11/1895 |
| Qutarbal | 11/1895 |

Table 1: A schedule outlining the dates of the massacres and the names of the cities that were subject to these massacres

16 Eyewitness of atrocities Al-Qusara fi nakabat al-nasara (The Calamities of the Christians). p. 43.

The SAYFO ܣܝܦܐ Massacres (1895-1915-1924)

The Land of Mesopotamia (the land between the two rivers Tigris and Euphrates) witnessed the first massacres against our people commencing in 1895. The outset of the massacres took place on January 1, 1895¹¹ in Edessa which resulted in the martyrdom of 13,000 of our people. This was followed by the massacre of (Wayran Shahar) Tal Mozalt on November 3, 1895 when the Kurds and the Ottomans attacked our people, ransacking their homes and beheading more than 3,000 people.¹² Moreover, on the 20th of November of the same year, the Kurds attacked the village of Dierka, near Mardin, prior to the massacres of Tel Arman and Marrah Castle, near the Za'afaran Monastery, which saw 75 men killed.

In addition, other massacres took place. For example, the massacre of Amid (Diyarbakir), which took place on October 20, 1895, and was considered one of the worst massacres at that time. This massacre took place when the Kurds attacked the area in accordance with an Ottoman decree that was issued by Sultan Abdul Hamied II who ordered the extermination of the Armenians and Syriacs. This massacre lasted months and spilled over to include several other villages in Diyarbakir area such as Sadia, Mayafrien, Qarabash, Qutarbal¹³ During these raids and massacres, the attackers ransacked churches and stole crosses and church vessels, saying to the Christians: "Where is your God?"¹⁴ Regarding these massacres, Fr. Aphram Mirza Shekro wrote a poem describing these awful events¹⁵, and below we quote an extract of what he said:

Quote

I Cry and Cry more, lamenting the brothers and sisters.

11 Asmar Al-Kas Georges, A.D. (1986). Wounds in the History of the Syriacs, Translated by Subhi Youhanan, Beirut, The Syriac Communication Committee, 1st Edition, p. 15.

12 *ibid*, p. 23.

13 Eyewitness of atrocities - Al-Qusara fi nakabat al-nasara (The Calamities of the Christians). p. 51.

14 Asmar Al-Kas Georges, A.D. (1986). Wounds in the History of the Syriacs, Translated by Subhi Youhanan, Beirut, The Syriac Communication Committee, 1st Edition, p. 42.

15 *ibid*, p. 56.

honest historical record of what took place we looked at different aspects to understand the historical context that led to the “Sayfo” massacres.

Previously, we indicated that the Christians in this region were the pioneers of creative and innovative human thinking and civilization. They played a prominent and essential role in what is known as the “Arab awakening” which produced prominent figures that contributed to the awakening of patriotic feelings among the peoples of this region and encouraged independence from the Ottomans.

The international missionaries became very active in the area as the Ottoman state had failed to educate our local people, and these missionaries played a major role in dividing the Christians in the East which ultimately resulted in the weakening of the Christian Church in the Levant.

By the same token, the European nations also suffered immensely from the Ottomans as they approached Vienna in Austria. The Ottomans were stretched thin and started to show symptoms of weakness in the year 1750. However, their defeat only came to fruition during the First World War (1914-1918). Throughout that period, the Ottomans looked at the Christians of Europe as their main enemy and extended their abhorrence to the Christians of the East who were accused of conspiring to destroy the Ottoman Empire.





of the Ottoman state through consulates, schools and Christian missions, as we stated earlier, the Ottomans feared that local Christians could conspire with their European coreligionists against the Empire. This brought the “Sayfo سەفول» massacres as a pre-emptive strike to exterminate them and deport them further south of Anatolia.

In preparation for these massacres, the Ottoman authorities issued early orders in 1915 to remove weapons from all Christians in Mesopotamia, denying them the right to defend themselves, under the pretext of the obligation of each denomination to provide a quantity of arms to the Ottoman Empire. This was followed by forced entry into the villages and cities inhabited by the Syriac people, annihilating, torturing and displacing the residents of those villages.

We cannot justify or accept any excuse for these criminal acts against our people in the northeast region of Syria, southeast parts of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. We also cannot formulate reasons for this heinous crime. However, and in order to provide

one of the diverse nationalities in the Ottoman Empire like the Balkan residents, Macedonians and Greeks that gained independence from the Ottoman Empire after they rebelled and received great support from the French and English navies who destroyed the Ottoman and the Egyptian fleets at the Battle of Navarino in Greece in 1827. Because the Kurds lived in southeast Anatolia along side the Syriacs and their state claimed a large part of Southeast Anatolia and as the Ottomans had inner hatred for the Christians to the extent of extermination and deportation from the center of Anatolia, and as the Ottomans were preoccupied with religious discrimination, they issued decrees and sent orders for attacks upon the Syriacs in the region. Unfortunately, the Kurds were so blinded by their desire for independence that they remained blind regardless of witnessing young children, women and the elderly falling victims to their inhumane acts. They stood side by side with the Ottomans in the genocide of our people, their deportation, exile and expulsion from their homeland. It should be noted that the Ottomans looked upon both the Syriacs and Kurds with contempt. However, at the time, they considered the Kurds as one of their allies simply because they shared the same Islamic religion, while in their eyes they believed that the Christians were conspiring with the Europeans against the Ottoman Empire. All this resulted in one of the most heinous, dreadful and wicked crimes of genocide against our people, known in Syriac as the "Sayfo" massacre of 1895 to 1915.

Nor, in this regard, can we overlook the nationalization policy pursued by the Union and Progress Association following the coup that ended the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1908, and its attempt to melt other nationalities into one under the authority of the Ottoman Empire, establishing a Turkish character in language and identity. This resulted in a redrawing of the area's demographics, accompanied by the fear the Syriac Christians would sympathize with their fellow Christians in the First World War (1914 - 1918), especially since the Ottoman Empire had allied itself with Germany against France, Britain and Russia. With the wide influence of the French and the English in the territory

Muslims which resulted in favoring the Muslims with more rights and privileges when compared to those of the Christians. In fact, the divide principle was also applied in their dealings within the different denominations of Islam which was a very evident practice by the invaders who sought to apply this principle of 'divide and conquer'. The situation became worse towards the end of the Ottoman reign during the Hamedî era (1879-1908) when the Ottoman state came up with the 'conspiracy theory', accusing the Christians of having allegiance to outside European powers, with whom, as the Ottomans thought, the Christians shared a common faith, in an attempt to destroy the Ottoman state. As a result, they unleashed their wrath against Christians (e.g. Armenians and Syrians) and carried out the terrible massacres against them. Here, one would reflect upon and contemplate these events and ask rather a deeper question: Did the European countries forge these fabrications to deceive the Ottomans into believing such conspiracy existed? Or did the Ottomans themselves fabricate these allegations?

We hope that the latter hypothesis would be the most accurate record of events as it would be hurtful to know if our first hypothesis is correct. We are also invited to question deeper the intent of the European countries as to whether they collaborated with some of their Christian residents to present forged documents to the Ottomans. These unanswered questions remain under review and surely require further investigations.

We must keep in mind that the terrible carnage was not only the result of Ottomans perpetrators on their own, but that unfortunately the Ottomans used different tools to implement their crimes. As a result, the Kurds appeared on the stage as an instrument of murder inflicting atrocities on behalf of the Ottomans. As it is known, the Kurdish nationalists believed and strived to establish their statehood to enjoy freedom of belief, and thus they were prepared for the struggle to achieve their goals. But the Ottomans maliciously understood this thirst by the Kurds for the independence. It is worthwhile to note here that the Kurds were



THE OTTOMANS⁷ AND THE SYRIAC GENOCIDE صفر

Following the battle of Marj Dabeq⁸ and the occupation of the Levant⁹ (or what is also known as Greater Syria) by the Ottomans in the year 1516, the Syriacs were ruled by the Ottomans who made them subject to ALJIZYAH (which might be referred to as 'poll tax'), being Christians living in a Muslim land.¹⁰ In addition, they prohibited the Syriacs from riding horses except in the case of the patriarchs. Further, the Syriacs were not spared the tyranny and injustice suffered from the Ottomans by the other residents in the Levant, especially from an economic point of view as poverty and deprivation were the hallmarks of that era.

In their social dealings with the Christians, the Ottomans adopted a divide and conquer principle between Christians and

7 Their origin traces back to a Turkish clan that migrated from the southern parts of the land beyond Mesopotamia (the land between the two rivers) in central Asia under the pressure of the invasion of Genghis Khan. They settled on the banks of Lake Van near the Euphrates in the east of Asia Minor in the year 1224. Further, Othman Ben (i.e. son of) Artughrul Ben (i.e. son of) Suleiman Shah is the true founder of their state. Thus, they were called Ottomans after him.

8 This is an area located east of Aleppo where the battle between the Ottomans (Saleem I) and the Mamluks (Kanso Al-Ghoury) was fought with the Ottomans winning and occupying Syria.

9 The Levant currently includes: Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan.

10 Laila Sabbagh, (2000) *The Contemporary History of the Arabs*, Ba'ath University, Homs, p. 195.

they denounced their old name (i.e. Aramaeans) and adopted the name Syriacs which gave them their religious identity instead of the name Aramaeans that denoted paganism, thus differentiating themselves from the Aramaeans that remained pagans.⁴ They continued to speak their mother tongue that has many dialects based on the area of residence.

It is worthwhile to note here that Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke this language while in flesh with us, and the very first Holy Liturgy⁵ was celebrated in this language, which continues to be used by our people around the world. Furthermore, St. Peter the Apostle established the Holy See of Antioch in the year 37 AD. He is, therefore, rightly considered the first Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch which was the Capital of Roman Syria⁶. Since then, St. Peter has been succeeded by 122 legitimate Patriarchs. Our current Patriarch, H.H. Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, the Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, is the 123rd in the chronological order of the legitimate Patriarchs of Antioch.

The Syriacs lived in a peaceful manner over many centuries. However, despite their peacefulness, they sustained many atrocities because of their Christian faith. The Syriacs were and continue to be leaders in innovative thinking, creativity, civilization and faith. They treasured and safeguarded their homeland, maintaining its prosperity at all cost.

And during their long history in this area, the Syriacs have never initiated any rebellion or revolted and never asked for authority or worldly glory. Nonetheless, they were faced with tragedies and suffered from injustice, oppression, displacement and deportation. The massacres of the Ottoman occupation (SAYFO صفا) were the harshest genocide inflicted upon our people in their long history.

4 Isaac Sakka, (2006) My Syriac Church, Syriac Library, Aleppo, 2nd Edition, p. 28.

5 Aphrem Barsoum, Addurar Annafeesah (Valuable Jewels) (1940), p. 143.

6 Asad Rustum, History of the City of Antioch, Beirut (1958), volume 1, p. 14.

face of the region has been horribly stained with blood and suffering. These outrageous and brutal massacres under Ottoman rule reflect a shamefully barbaric and inhumane history.

This booklet serves as a reminder of the criminal Turkish Ottoman brutality against peace-loving, innocent and blameless believers who were indiscriminately killed merely because they were Christians, who bore the Cross of Salvation and the pains of Calvary together with the suffering of martyrdom for the sake of Christ. They were and will always be a beacon of Eastern Christianity that radiates the light of Christ to all the world.

Under the patronage and the guidance of H.H. Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, the Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, and in line with the directives of the Holy Universal Synod of Antioch, preparations have commenced for the commemoration of the centenary of these terrible atrocities and massacres against our Syriac Orthodox people at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in the area that extended far and wide and that included Edessa, Mardin, Tur Abdin, Deir El-Zour, Amid (Diyarbakir), Ras El-Ein, Za'afaran, and Nisibis during a dark era from 1895 to 1924.¹

THE SYRIACS² AND THE SYRIAC CHURCH

The Syriacs are the grandchildren of the Aramaeans that trace their roots to Aram, the Son of Sam, the Son of Noah. Their civilization flourished in the land of Syria and the Levant since the 15th century B.C.³ After the Arameans converted to Christianity, and as they were very faithful and proud of their new religion,

1 Asmar Al-Kas Georges, A.D. (1986). Wounds in the History of the Syriacs, Translated by Subhi Youhanan, Beirut, The Syriac Communication Committee, 1st Edition, p. 9 and also in Al-Kusar-ah Fy Nakabat Annasarah, p. 43.

2 The name Syriac/Syrian and Syria became anonymous with the Aramaeans before Christ, and it became clear in the Seleucid era when the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament was completed (280 B.C.) in which the names 'ARAM' or 'SYRIA' were used interchangeably. Therefore, the name of Syriac/Syrian became known for the Aramaean people and after Christ it became a religious and cultural name for the same people; cultural identity as being of Aramaean descent and religious identity as being Christian. Thus, every Syriac is Christian and not vice versa.

3 Nouredine Hattoum, Ahmad Tarbeen, Salah Madani, Nabih Akel, (1965) A Summary of the History of Civilization, Al-Kamal Press, Damascus, p. 254.

THE CENTENARY OF THE SYRIAC GENOCIDE SAYFO

INTRODUCTION

When we discuss the earliest civilization known to humankind, our thoughts concentrate on the area that is located between Taurus Mountains, Sinai Desert, the Levant and the Zagros Mountains by the Mediterranean coast. In this area, the seeds of creative and innovative human thinking were sown due to the strategic location and the richness of this region. However, it was to become a land of dispute and conflicts between forces throughout history, which had an adverse impact on its people, their religion and doctrines. The conflicts negatively impacted its life, and the people of the land suffered many dark periods that brought tragedies and sorrows. Perhaps the Christian people of this area have suffered the most due to injustice and oppression during these tragic periods.

..The people who took the Redeemer's beloved name have been and remain one of the key components of this region and an integral part of the locale as they trace their roots to the depths of the history of this land. This people, before and after Christianity, were leaders in dramatically carrying the Cross and declaring the message of peace and love as taught by Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

But, in spite of the majestic message delivered by the Christians throughout their history in this region, they suffered from oppression and displacements in periods that distorted the history of this region and left a sign of shame in the history of mankind due to the sorrows and the tragedies of the Christian people.

As for the terrible massacre of the Armenians and the Syriac Christians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, that can be described as the most terrible and criminal events of the time, the

organize seminars, lectures, art exhibitions and recitals. We will open the centennial year by celebrating the Divine Liturgy at our Holy Apostolic See in Damascus on January 11, 2015, and then in Lebanon on January 18th. Several activities will accompany the opening of the centennial year. The Patriarchate will also participate in celebrations and activities in Sweden, America, India and Rome during the course of the coming year.

These celebrations will convey a clear message to all humanity: the Syriac people are not extinct, they will not be defeated and they refuse to surrender to humiliation and murder; they want to live. The aim of this commemoration is not to harbor hatred or animosity; rather, it is to show faithfulness to the memory of our innocent martyrs and to remind ourselves and all future generations of the cruelty of what happened so that our people or any other people may never face similar massacres again.

As we prepare to celebrate this major occasion, we ask our Syriac churches throughout the world to dedicate the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on one of the upcoming two Sundays for the intention of this centennial observance. We also encourage our spiritual children in all our parishes to offer prayers and celebrate the Divine Liturgy in remembrance of all the martyrs of the Syriac genocide. We likewise invite all our brethren the Archbishops to set a program for appropriate celebrations and suitable activities during the year 2015. We pray the Lord to have mercy upon the souls of all martyrs, especially the Syriac martyrs of Sayfo. We implore the Lord, for Whose sake those martyrs have sacrificed their lives, to keep all those who believe in His name away from the bitter cup of suffering and to spread His peace and security throughout the world, especially in the suffering East, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and all the martyrs and saints. Amen.

**Issued at our Patriarchate in Damascus, Syria
On the 11th of December, 2014,
Which is the 1st year of our Patriarchate**

How little has changed since Sayfo. During this year's summer months, the people of Mosul were displaced from their city, and the citizens of the villages of the Nineveh Plain were uprooted from their forefathers' land. Our Syriac people are once again wandering about, seeking a place to settle down and live in safety and peace. Furthermore, our community in Syria is suffering from the tragedy of war. Tens of thousands have left Syria and have become refugees in different parts of the world.

Despite all of this, we are still hoping for a brighter tomorrow where truth triumphs, falsehood is crushed and we can once again freely worship the Lord in our own land, the cradle of civilization. We will never abandon the faith which was entrusted to us, believing in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Who said: "Take courage; I have conquered the world." (John 16:33). All these persecutions will not discourage us from holding firm to our faith in the Lord Jesus and remaining attached to our Holy Church and her teachings, like the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sake of spreading the faith as it has been said by one of our Syriac fathers: أَلَمْ يَكُنْ هَذَا؟ فَإِنَّهُمْ مَقْتُولُونَ . أَفَعَيْنَا نَحْنُ ؟ وَهَس : “Where martyrs have been killed, and have had their limbs severed, that is where the Holy Spirit dwells and spreads peace in the wilderness.”

Even if we were forcibly compelled to leave our land for a time, we shall stay connected to it, yearning for our ancestors' heritage, remaining faithful to our Christian mission and transmitting it to subsequent generations, while bearing in mind the words of the Lord: "He who endures till the end will be saved." (Matthew 10: 22)

Dear!y beloved in Christ, in the meeting of the Universal Holy Synod of our Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, which we presided over on May 30, 2014, we have decided to dedicate the year 2015 for the commemoration of the centennial of the 'Sayfo' genocide, the massacres committed against our Syriac people. Therefore, we have formed a Patriarchal Committee to prepare for this occasion and to coordinate with all concerned in order to

for animals, restaurants or factories; the aim of all these atrocities was to erase all signs of Christian presence in the region and to plunder the properties and wealth of Christians. We have truly become children of martyrs in very East where we, the Syriacs, made immense contributions in order to spread civilization, culture and faith as we are people known for their love of science, progress and strong determination despite all our tragedies.

All these tragic events were carried out by both the Ottoman state and the local people who stained the history of the region with suffering and misery. Our neighbor drove his Christian neighbor to death, exposing him to killing and persecution for no reason and with no justification. The Syriac people became known for enduring tragedies and becoming victims of conspiracy and complicity in an organized persecution designed to suppress and even annihilate them.

A whole century has passed since the massacres of "Sayfo", and the wounds are still bleeding. In witness to her martyrs, the Syriac Orthodox Church is committed to take a historical stand and to awaken the conscience of humanity which is in a state of deep sleep, unaware that he who remains silent about the truth is a partner in the crime. The Church has made it a duty to remind the world of one of the most disgraceful and ugliest crime of the twentieth century. This genocide will not fade away from human memory as long as there is someone who sheds light on it to open the blind eyes and deaf ears which we ought to wake up from the forgetfulness in which the international community has assumed.

Can we ignore a genocide that was the main reason of uprooting us from our land, destroying our churches and violating our honor and dignity?

After one hundred years, both killing and destruction continue: Christians are targeted anew and it seems that there are neither international covenants nor adequate legislations that protect the basic human rights of Christians. Moreover, it appears that the world lacks pity for them or is simply unconcerned. Each crime committed is crueller than the previous one.

نعم انما هذه هي الكنز انما هو وها
 انما هي في هذا وها هي في هذا وها هي
 وها هي في هذا وها هي في هذا وها هي
 وها هي في هذا وها هي في هذا وها هي



We extend our apostolic benediction, benevolent prayers and greetings to our brethren, His Beatitude Mor Baselius Thomas I, Catholicos of India, and their Eminences the Metropolitans; our spiritual children: Very Reverend Corepiscopoi, Reverend priests, monks, nuns, deacons and deaconesses and the entire blessed Syriac Orthodox people all over the world. May the divine providence embrace them through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and St. Peter, Chief of the Apostles, and the rest of the Martyrs and Saints. Amen.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (Romans 8:35)

2015 will mark the first centennial commemoration of the genocide of our Syriac people, "Sayfo". In the early twentieth century, during the Ottoman Empire rule, our defenseless and unarmed forefathers and mothers were killed by the sword. More than half a million Syriacs were massacred along with Armenians and other Christians. Those who survived were expelled from their homes and lands, their properties were confiscated, their dignity was violated and, in many cases, they were forced to renounce their religion and faith. Churches were turned into either stables

**Publications of Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
Damascus - Syria
2015**

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Mor Dionysius Jean Kawak, Patriarchal Assistant

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ولا ننسا

کي لائنسی

NEVER FORGET

لقد تركت هذه الإبادة، على شعبنا السرياني،
أثراً رهيباً بوحشيتها وقساوتها. فكانت حرب
إبادة بكل ما تعنيه هذه الكلمة من معنى.
فالذي بقي حياً هاجر تاركاً قراه ومواطني
أجداده وآبائه وأديرتة وكنائسه لمناطق أكثر
أمناً واستقراراً

ليختفي، وللأسف، وجوده وتاريخه من تلك
المناطق

ولا يخفى على أحد التأثير الكبير الذي
انعكس على أعداد شعبنا بعد هذه الإبادة
التي راح ضحيتها ما يقارب ٦٥٠٠٠٠ سرياني
حيث أثرت بشكل سلبي ومباشر في تناقص
أعداد الشعب السرياني في سوريا والعراق
وتركيا في وقتنا الحالي

إن ما يتضمنه هذا الكتيب ليس إلا غيض من
فيض، ونقطة دم من بحر الدماء التي سُفكت
وسالت في حرب الإبادة بحق شعبنا البريء
المسالمة. وستبقى ذكرى "السيفو" في أذهاننا
لتزيدنا تمسكاً بهويتنا وانتمائنا لرسالة
المسيح في حمل الصليب

وسيبقى المسيحيون السريان، في هذا الشرق،
دعاة تسامح وسلام ومحبة المسيح رغم كل ما
مرّ بهم، وما يمرّون به حتى الآن من اضطهاد
وعذاب وتهجير و "السيفو" جديد، عاملين
بقول القديس بولس الرسول: " من سيفصلنا
عن محبة المسيح، أشدة أم ضيق أم اضطهاد
أم جوع أم عُري أم خطر أم سيف؟".

ولن ننسى دماء أجدادنا وآبائنا التي ستبقى
رائحة المسيح الزكية، تزيدنا تمسكاً بأرضنا
لنبقى فيها على مثالهم، ملحاً للأرض ونوراً
للعالم

