

Human Rights - Cultures



Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

Working Group on the Indigenous Populations - 24th session

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Is the Aramaic language from the lands of the forefathers disappearing?

The Classic Syriac (Aramaic)
Estrangelo -script developed in
Urhoy/Edessa (Urfa)
"Our father in the Heaven"

West-Syriac (Aramaic)
"Our father in the Heaven"
(Spoken by West- Aramean Syrian
Orthodox, Catholics and Maronites)

East-Syriac (Aramaic)
"Our father in the Heaven"
(Spoken by East- Aramean
"Chaldeans" and "Nestorian"
(Assyrians))

Oral statement under item 4 (a): General Debate

Review of developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, including their human rights and fundamental freedom:

Mr. Chairman;

We wish to bring to your attention the fragile situation of Aramaic language; the sacred language of the Indigenous Aramean people spoken for thousands of years in the area of Aram-Nahrin (Mesopotamia). This language was also spoken by Abraham, Moses and Jesus Christ. *According to the indigenous Aramean traditions, this language was also spoken by the first man, namely Adam. We also believe that from this language all the other languages originated. Noteworthy is that not only the Aramean tradition testifies about this; but also some Islamic renowned scientists attest this fact For example, Sheik Abdel Aziz Al Tabagi says that "Adam, his wife and his children were communicating with each other in Aramaic From this language all the other languages were derived."/*

The importance of Aramaic is perhaps best summarized by an eminent scholar of the Oxford University, Sebastian Brock who said,

"...it is undeniable that the simple Aramaic alphabet of 22 letters has had the most extraordinary impact on the development of alphabetic writing systems throughout the world. Indeed, it is very hard to imagine how human culture and scientific learning could have progressed without it...

"Almost all societies are dependent upon the use of writing, but very few peoples realise that the great majority of the world's scripts can be traced back to a common ancestor, an alphabet invented in the Middle East four thousands years ago. which was subsequently refined by the Phoenicians and the Aramaeans who spread it throughout the known world, it is thus without doubt one of the greatest gifts of the Aramaean peoples to world culture" (Page 27 of Hidden Pearl) Brock quotes the famous German Professor Franz Rozenthal who says "In

my view, the history of Aramaic represents the purest triumph of the human spirit as embodied in language (which is the mind's most direct form of physical expression) over the crude display material power.... Great empires were conquered by the Aramaic language, and when they disappeared and were submerged in the flow of history, that language persisted and continued to live a life of its own "(Page 6 of the Hidden Pearl)

Unfortunately this language which contributed to the well-being of mankind and once was the lingua franca of the Middle East and parts of Asia is in danger of disappearing. In 2003, a meeting by UNESCO was organized in regards to the languages in danger of disappearing, among them Aramaic. How could this sacred language survive in a hostile environment for thousands of years and disintegrate in times of sophisticated technology?

Mr. Chairman, two parties can be held responsible for the decline of Aramaic language; those who committed spiritual genocide followed by those who committed physical genocide.

In the complex situation of the Middle East, not only those who practice the path of the "sword" can be blamed for the weakening and decline of Aramaic language, but also those who came from outside and present themselves as the children of the "light" and "peace" can be blamed for the decline of Aramaic cultural heritage. We will explain this to you in short. In the 16th century (precisely 1552) the western missionaries came to the Middle East, which then was a homogeneous area with no borders, and brainwashed a part of East- Aramean clergy by means of bribery to call themselves "Chaldeans" with the result that Aramaic became known as the "Chaldean" language and a part of Aramean nation became known as "Chaldean" in some parts of the Western literature, the first attack on the Aramean heritage.

A standard work has been published by Professor John Joseph regarding the activities of the Western missionaries amongst the East- Aramean Nestorians of the Middle-East to fragmentize and create hatred amongst them¹. John Joseph quotes original sources to explain many matters. He explains that the Catholic missionaries started first to split the east- Arameans "Nestorians" and officially established in 17th century the Chaldean church (page 6). On page 56 he says regarding the split of the east-Aramean Nestorians by the Catholic missionaries *"...influential families encouraged by recently- arrived Roman Catholic missionaries, elected Hanna (Youhannan) Sulaqa, a monk from the monastery of Rabban Hurmizd, as a more suitable person. With the aid of the Franciscan missionaries at Mosul, Sulaqa was sent to Jerusalem and then to Rome where he was well received by Pope Julius III. He was accepted as "Catholic" and ordained in 1553 as the first Uniat patriarch...."*

As a result of competition between the Western Catholics and Protestants^{^^} in the late 19th century the same process was repeated and the other part of the East- Aramean nation was brainwashed to call themselves "Assyrians" with the result that Aramaic became known as the "Assyrian" language and Aramean nation as the Assyrian nation, this was the second and more severe attack on the Aramean heritage- a kind of spiritual genocide.

After they were brainwashed by the Anglicans; the East-Aramean "Nestorians" prefer, since then, to call themselves "Assyrians" and try, by all means possible, to force this term onto other Aramean denominations by spreading plenty of biased information regarding the origin of our people and our language. They became so nationalistic/fanatics that they started to distort historical facts. For example: Aramaic language they changed in "Assyrian" language, Aramean people in "Assyrian" people. Saint Ephraim the Syrian became "Saint Ephrem the Assyrian" Syrian Church became "Assyrian Church". In this way they try by all means possible to falsify our history and our sacred Aramaic language.

The fanatic/nationalistic people, who seize every opportunity to distort the heritage of our people, have even killed their own Patriarch in 1976 because he refused to change the name of the (Syrian) Church of the East into the,, *Assyrian Apostolic Church of the East'*. After Patriarch Mar Eshai Shamun XXIII was killed and a new one was elected; the name of the Church was changed into *Assyrian Apostolic Catholic Church*. Regarding this assassination, Professor John Joseph says: *"The District Attorney further argued that one of the motives in the*

killing was Assyrian nationalism; he tried to prove that the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) was involved in the assassination' (page 133)

The painful and mythical descriptions in reference to our people, invented by outsiders, who were unaware of the Hidden PearlPI - truths which have been- till the present day, buried beneath the persecutions and ethnic cleansing of past centuries, are definitely not in agreement with the historical facts recorded by the brilliant historians of the Syrian Church of Antioch who enlightened the world of their time, not only with the theological knowledge but with profane science as well.

The weakness and fragmentation of our nation remained obviously not unnoticed to those who practice the path of the "sword" and resulted in physical genocide deportations, discrimination and ethnic cleansing. Because of these traumas a vast amount of our nation fled to the west causing the near disappearance of the presence of Aramaic language in the sacred lands of the forefathers.

When in 2003 the war on Iraq started, hundreds of articles have been published on the Iraqi minorities in which the Aramean nation undeserved and in contradiction with the historical facts were being presented as Assyrians or sometimes as Chaldeans - unfortunately there wasn't any reference to the Aramean nation.

This misinformation was in particular spread by the US ("Christian") press. It was very unpleasant experience to notice that in no article our nation was referred to as Arameans. The by themselves created spiritual colonial fanatical slavery product "Assyrians" was widely glorified and exalted; while the indigenous Aramean people were completely ignored as if they did not exist. We felt this as discrimination and exclusion of first order!

It is worthy to note, that in particular the so-called "Christian" press in US and elsewhere spread overwhelming misinformation. Not only the US press, but also the US administration glorified and exalted the Western

Colonization product.

In the New Constitution of Iraqi; the Indigenous Aramean people are excluded. The Western Spiritual Colonization

and slavery products however are included in the constitution. In Article 124 we read, *This Constitution shall*

guarantee the administrative, political, cultural and educational rights for the various nationalities, such as

Turkmen, Caldeans, Assyrians and all other components. A law shall regulate this

In the Netherlands, the Evangelical ("Christian") broadcasting (www.eo.nl); spread in 2003/2004 in a series of Radio Programs called "Ochtenden" a vast amount of (deliberate) misinformation regarding the Aramean people calling our sacred language "Assyrian" language and Aramean nation as Assyrian nation or Syrian Orthodox Assyrians. In this way, the Dutch Evangelical Broadcasting glorified the product they had created, while deliberately ignoring the Aramean heritage.

In 2000/2002 in few articles published in the Dutch National Newspaper "Trouw" (<http://www.trouw.nl/>); again the Aramean heritage was misrepresented to the independent reader under the pretext of Freedom of Press. A vast amount of misinformation was also deliberately spread by the local news paper called "Dagblad Twentsche Courant/ Tubantia" concerning the Aramean heritage of our people. In fact they still continue to spread misinformation regarding our heritage.

In Germany there are two Human Rights organizations that spread deliberate misinformation regarding the Indigenous Aramean people, calling them ""Assyrians", "Assyrian- Aramean" or

"Chaldo- Assyrian". The International Society for Human Rights In Frankfurt (ISHR, www.ishr.org) or *Internationale Gesellschaft fur Menschenrechte* (IGFM, <http://www.igfm.de>). They have been contacted by our people in Germany, unfortunately they continue to glorify the Western spiritual Colonization product "Assyrians" (For example: 12-12-2002, 24-4-2003; 23-3-2003; 23-4-2004; 17-6-2004, 16-6-2004; 23-4-2003; 18-9-2003; 17-6-2004). The same police is also followed by, *Gesellschaft fur bedrohte Volker or Scoiety for Threatened peoples "* (<http://www.gfbv.de/>). GFBV claim that they want to defend the interests oV'threatened' peoples. In case of Aramean people however they threat their existence by glorifying the Western Colonisation production "Assyrians" (For example: -7- 2005, 1-7-2004, 21-7-2005, 30-1-2006, 5-4-2006; 14-5-2006; 31-8-2005 etc.. etc..)

The Aramean people in Iraq definitely don't want to be identified as „Assyrians". There are only few fanatics who are eager to falsify the history of our people. These kind of "Human Rights" organisations seems to be a good and effective mean in their hands to vomit as much as possible biased information regarding our history. These are however but a few examples to explain to you the misinformation about our people. However, in our report of March 7, 2005 we sent to the High Commissioner for Human Rights; the matter is much more explained in detail.

Regarding this misinformation and misrepresentation of the Aramean heritage, we prepared in 2005 a comprehensive report and sent it to the High Commissioner for Human Rights. A copy of this report was among others sent to the secretary of this working group.

Mr. Chairman, as we have shown to you, the Aramean heritage is actually not only our heritage but in deeper sense the heritage of all peoples. Therefore we call upon you and say:

- * Please help us stop the Western spiritual colonialism invented in the name of development and education.
- * Please demonstrate your sympathy towards the Aramean nation.
- * Please help us keep the sacred Aramaic language alive.

Thank you.

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Footnotes

[I] The book "Ma'arat Ghazee" (=Treasure of Caves), attributed to St. Afrem the Syrian.

[I.1] Hanna Aydin: <http://www.aramnaharaim.org/HannaAydin.jpg>
(Page 58, quoting Turkish Translation of Al Tabagi (page 398 " EL- IBRiZ"))

[2] Multimedia Project: Hidden Pearl Volume I, Page 58
Hidden Pearl: http://www.aramnaharaim.org/film_arammeans.htm

[3] http://www.aramnahrin.org/EngHsh/Aramaic_In_Danger.htm

[4] Aramean Spiritual and Physical Genocide:
<http://www.aramnahrin.org/English/ArameanGenocide.htm>

[5] http://www.aramnahrin.org/Yuhannon_Yusef.htm

[6] The western missionaries were waging a spiritual war at the costs of the Indigenous east- Aramean Nestorians. Professor John Joseph quotes a Protestant missionary who says about Catholics '*thou enemy of righteousness, thou child of the devil*', may be applied, that individual is the European Jesuit in his wily efforts to oppose and

embarrass Protestant

missionaries. One of the first works of the American mission press in Urmiyah was a tract in Syriac entitled "twenty-two Plain reasons for not being a Roman Catholic"The corrupt doctrines and practices of Catholics are exposed by an array of Scriptural texts (Page 98)

[7] More about this: www.iraqichristians.info;

http://www.aramnahrin.org/English/Faq_IraqiChristians.htm

http://www.aramnahrin.org/English/Aramean_Spiritual_Genocide.htm

[8] Compare: <http://www.aramnahrin.org/roomofshame.htm>

See also: http://www.aramnahrin.org/English/Arameans_Iraq_3_5_2006.htm

[9] http://www.aramnahrin.org/English/Testimonies_Historians.htm

[10] Mr. George Bush and the Aramean nation:

http://www.aramnahrin.Org/English/G_W_BUSH_Arameans.htm.

[11]

<http://www.iraqigovernment.org/Content/Biography/English/consitution.htm>

[12] Please compare:

http://www.aramnahrin.org/English/Hakkenes_Baard_GHB.htm

[13] September 30, 2005 we also sent a letter to the US Embassy in Baghdad regarding this misinformation on the Aramean nation. Please find here our letter and the answer we c[^]nt from the US Embassy http://www.aramnahrin.org/English/Answer_From_US_Embassy_20_10_2005.htm

Background information on Aramean people[^] ncluding "Assyrians" and Chaldeans)

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The area where the Aramean people come from was known as "Mesopotamia" and has been divided into the modern countries Iraq, Syria, and Turkey since the 20[^] century.

In the ancient times the cradle of the Aramean forefathers was called *Aramnahrin* (or: *Aram-Nahrin*) in Aramaic. In Hebrew it was called *Aram-Naharaim* which we encounter in the Old Testament. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the term *Aram-Naharaim* was translated into *Mesopotamia*, which many become familiarized with through reading many educational and historical texts. The northern area of Aram-Naharaim was called *Paddan-Aram*, meaning *the land of Aram*

Because of overwhelming presence of Arameans in the southern part of Aram-Nahrin, in the era of early Christianity, it was called **Beth-Aramaya**, meaning (in Aramaic) "*the house of the Arameans*".

Roughly speaking, this area is situated in present south-eastern Turkey. A section of Paddan-Aram is now called *TurAbdin* in the Aramaic (Syriac) language, which means "*the mountains of the sen/ants of the Lord*", due to the overwhelming presence of monasteries and churches. According to the Aramean historical traditions, the area of Paddan-Aram- in particular *TurAbdin* - is the proto-land of the Aramean nation. From this proto- or indigenous land, in the course of time, the Arameans started to expand all over the near east.

In Genesis 24:4 Abraham says to his servants,

"You must go back to the country **where I was born** and get a wife for my son Isaac from among my relatives."

Abraham says, "....the country where I was born...." meaning the country of his Aramean fathers Paddan-Aram (part of Aram-Naharaim).

Regarding *Beth Aramaya*, Yacob Avgin Manna (Jacques-Eugene Manna 1867-1928), Bishop of the East-Aramean Chaldean church wrote,

"The people from Babylon and Assur, **are Arameans**. The countries of Babylon and Assur were **always called Beth Aramaye**, that means **country of the Arameans**." ^

Regarding the proto-land "Tur- Abdin"; the East- Aramean Chaldean metropolitan Aday Sher, born in 1867 in Shaqlawa [Northern Iraq] and became the archbishop of Seert [Turkey]; says, "*The first inhabitants of Tur Abdin are the Arameans, for they inhabited the whole Mountain of Masios...*" This is also repeated by Patriarch Afrem Barsauwm, also called 'the star of the middle-east'

Aramean people (including "Assyrians" and Chaldeans) and the Christianity

After the coming of Jesus Christ, the Arameans (including Assyrians and Chaldeans) *of Aram-Naharaim* accepted the teachings of Christ and established together with the apostles of Jesus and the converted Jews, the Syrian Church of Antioch, the second Patriarchy after Jerusalem, where for the first time the followers of Jesus Christ were called Christians (Acts 11:26). This church was the mother of all the Churches and the first Church established outside Israel, whose Patnarch currently resides in Damascus, Syria.

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The Arameans where spread throughout middle-east. However, in the very beginning of the. Christianity; geographically they were divided into East-Arameans; those living in Persian Empire and West-Arameans; those living in the Roman (Byzantine) Empire.

The Church in the Roman Empire: **Syrian orthodox church ofAntioch**, the mother Church; with Antioch as the Ecclesial Jurisdiction.

The Church in Persia: **The Church of the East or the Church of Persia**, Seleucia Ctesiphon and the seat of the Catholicos. However the Arameans in Persia were still under the jurisdiction ofAntioch.

