

## **Working Session 17**

**September 20, 2018.**

### **Discrimination against Assyrians in Turkey**

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

My name's Uzay Bulut, a writer for the Gatestone Institute.

The indigenous Assyrian community in Turkey have for decades been exposed to systematic discrimination, intolerance and annihilationist policies at the hands of multiple Turkish governments.

I recommend that the OSCE should raise awareness about the Assyrian plight in Turkey, and the rest of the Middle East. It should also urge the Turkish government to respect the Assyrian right to property, recognize the Assyrian language, and grant Assyrians the right to open their schools where they could be educated in their native language.

For Assyrian Christians, otherwise known as Syriacs, still do not have a single primary school in Turkey. Assyrian activists in the country have said that they are waiting for the government to grant them some financial support so that they could open a primary school in Istanbul.

Moreover, Assyrian properties and lands are still illegally seized by both the government and some local Muslims in southeast Turkey.

Today a stateless and persecuted people, Assyrians have been targeted and murdered over the centuries for their religion and ethnicity. According to the

Assyrian International News Agency, every fifty years, an Assyrian massacre took place.

During the 1914-1923 Christian genocide in Ottoman Turkey, nearly three-quarters of the Assyrian prewar population was exterminated.

However, the Assyrian plight did not end with that genocide. During the 1990s, for instance, human rights organizations documented the ongoing persecution of Assyrians in Turkey including abductions (including of priests,) forced conversions to Islam through rape and forced marriage, and murders, among other crimes.

Since its founding in 1923, the Turkish republic has not recognized Assyrians as an ethnic community and has not given them any cultural rights. The OSCE chairmanship should make the Assyrian survival a priority in its efforts of cultural heritage protection.

Thank you.

For more, please read:

“5000-year-old Assyrian Culture Facing Devastation,” by Uzay Bulut, Gatestone Institute, November 29, 2015: <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/6976/assyrians-genocide>

“Assyrian Christians Targeted in Turkey, Iraq and Syria,” By Uzey Bulut, Philos Project, November 18, 2016: <https://philosproject.org/assyrian-christians-targeted-turkey/>

“The Fate of Assyrian Christian Churches and Monasteries,” By Uzey Bulut, Philos Project, July 13, 2017: <https://philosproject.org/turkey-uncensored-fate-assyrian-christian-churches-monasteries/>

“Assyrians struggling for a primary school in Istanbul,” By Uzey Bulut, Philos Project, September 30, 2017: <https://philosproject.org/assyrians-primary-school-istanbul/>