



Opinion Editorial

Mr. Stallone, Don't Forget the Assyrian Genocide

By Basna Beth Yuhanon

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(AINA) -- *Editor's note: Sylvester Stallone is making a film about the Turkish genocide of Armenians in World War One. The film does not include Assyrians and Greeks, who were also massacred in the same genocide.*

Dear Mr. Stallone:

Please allow me to write you this letter to ask for your support for the oppressed Assyrian people.

I have read that you are going to produce a film based on Franz Werfel's novel "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh" which deals with the Armenian Genocide. I would like to thank you sincerely for taking this step to make the plight of the victims of this genocide known to the whole world so that justice may finally be done, but also I would like to bring to your attention that during World War I there was not only a Genocide against the Armenians but also against the Assyrian people and other Christians such as the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire.

The Assyrians, with a history spanning 7000 years, are the indigenous people of Mesopotamia (Assyria). They are Christians and builders of a great civilization in Mesopotamia. They were the first to accept Christianity and spread with their strenuous and passionate spirit the Gospel of love and salvation to other nations and places. The Assyrians speak a semitic language, Assyrian, also called Aramaic and Syriac, which was spoken by Jesus Christ and which was for many centuries the lingua franca in Middle East.

Unfortunately, this glorious part is also marred by centuries of persecutions and atrocities at the hands of Moslems, in particular of Arabs, Turks and Kurds, who invaded and occupied their land over the centuries till this day. One of these horrible calamities that befell the Assyrian nation was the Genocide of 1915. Over 750,000 Assyrians - two third of the Assyrian population - were murdered by Young Turks and their henchmen, the Kurds. The Assyrian people were systematically subjected to massacres, deportations, expropriation, torture, pillage and starvation, concurrently with their Armenian and Greek brethren. Assyrian recruits in the Ottoman Army were reduced to forced labor battalions and worked under conditions of torture, hunger and thirst equalling slavery. Women, girls and children were victims of horrible abuses and abasement.

The following statement from a report of an Assyrian eyewitness describes the barbarous methods used by Turks and Kurds to slaughter Assyrian children:

"One day the Moslems assembled all the children of from six to fifteen years and carried them off to the headquarters of the police. There they led the poor little things to the top of a mountain known as Ras-el Hadjar and cut their throats one by one, throwing their bodies into an abyss." (Joseph Naayem, [Shall This Nation Die?](#))

In the years after World War I Assyrians were subjected to further massacres, expulsion and destruction. The persecution and oppression of the Assyrian Christians by the different Islamic groups, Kurds, Turks and Arabs, continues till this day. As a consequence of these atrocious and destructive experiences the Assyrian people continue to carry pain and unhealed wounds with

them.

The purpose of my letter is to appeal to you Mr. Stallone to mention in your new film also the Genocide perpetrated against the Assyrian people. By doing this, you would help to create awareness for the unmentioned plight and sufferings of the Assyrian Christians. Since the Genocides against the Assyrians and Armenians were carried out at the same time, it would be a sin not to include the sufferings of the Assyrians in your film.

The Assyrian people, organizations and friends would give you all their support to let your film become more successful and should you require access to any material, such as the book quoted above, to gain a deeper insight into the Assyrian Genocide, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will be more than happy to be of assistance.

We hope for your solidarity and sense of justice.

Thank you for your help and efforts and I wish you every success for your new film.

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