



Sweden Appoints First Assyrian Minister

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(AINA) -- Sweden's Prime Minister, Mr Goran Persson, appointed Ibrahim Baylan, an Assyrian, to the post of minister of education -- the first non-European to hold that post. Baylan will administer Sweden's primary and secondary schools beginning on November 1st.

Ibrahim Bayland was born 1972 in a small village in south-Eastern Turkey, on the border to Iraq and Syria. Peasants from a christian minority, the Assyrians, Ibrahim's family had to flee Turkey after the military coup in 1980 because of persecution of the Assyrian.

In Sweden Ibrahim joined the large Assyrian community living in Norsborg, a suburb of Stockholm. It was here that he encountered instances of racism, when some Swedes would yell at him "Go home, turkish bastard!". Ibrahim found this bitterly ironic given that he had fled Turkey because he was not a Turk.

In the early 1990's Ibrahim left Norsborg for Umea, in north Sweden, where he enrolled in the university and obtained a Master of Economics. It was in Umea that he started to engage in politics. His experience from the segregated and poor suburb in Stockholm, combined with the racist atmosphere in the Swedish society at that time, convinced him that something needed to be done, and he joined the Social Democratic Youth, SSU.

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(Edited by AINA)

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