

EU Lawmakers Raise Concerns Over Threats to Assyrian Monastery in Turkey

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Stockholm (AINA) -- Muslim village leaders in south eastern Turkey have initiated a legal process to confiscate lands belonging to the Assyrian monastery of Saint Gabriel in the south eastern part of the country (AINA [12-2-2008](#), [9-16-2008](#)). The monastery was established in 397 AD, before the birth of Islam and the arrival of Kurds and Turks to the region.

Several European politicians are standing by the Assyrians and the Saint Gabriel monastery (AINA [12-9-2008](#)). The German ambassador to Turkey, Dr. Eckart Cuntz, visited the monastery and Swedish MPs Mats Pertorft and Yilmaz Kerimo are planning to attend the second court hearings which will begin on the 19 December. German chancellor, Angela Merkel, has been approached by the large Assyrian community in Germany.



German ambassador to Turkey, Dr. Eckart Cuntz, at the St. Gabriel monastery

The Swedish foreign minister, Carl Bildt issued the following statement:

"The continued ambiguity concerning the judicial process of the lands surrounding the Mor Gabriel monastery is worrisome. The issue remains under further observation by EU personnel in Turkey. For example, the European Commission attended the trial held on the 19th November. The Swedish embassy will continue to work to raise the issue within the framework of, for example, the EU:s guiding principles for defence of human rights."

The Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church, Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, sent a [letter](#) to the Turkish government regarding the harassment and persecution of St. Gabriel Monastery by Turkish and Kurdish villagers

Many Assyrians have started a process of reclaiming their lands in the Tur Abdin region, where the monastery is located. The threats against the monastery are interpreted by Assyrians as a signal from Muslim Turkey that they should not feel welcome back to re-establish their roots in their ancestral lands.

Click [here](#) for pictures of the St. Gabriel monastery.

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