



The Assyrian Monastery: an Opportunity For Turkey To Lead By Example

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The current crisis surrounding the St. Gabriel Monastery (AINA [12-24-2008](#)) in Midyat, Turkey is reprehensible and is vehemently denounced by the Assyrian American National Federation as another attempt to eradicate the Assyrian population by the rising Islamic movement in that general region of the world. Baseless and unfounded boundary disputes, criminal land confiscation and a ludicrous crime petition have forced this 1612 year old monastery to defend itself in the Turkish courts to prevent illegal seizure of its property by local Muslim squatters.

It is the hope of this Federation that the Turkish Legal System will justly resolve this matter. The monastery and its inhabitants have peacefully existed in the region long before the onset of Islam. The confiscation of the land will undoubtedly lead to the monastery's end and eventual forced exodus of the few thousand Assyrians that remain in that area.



On December 12, 1999, Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate for full membership by the European Council. Negotiations for its acceptance in the European Union began in 2005 and it is anticipated that this process will take 10 years to complete. If St. Gabriel's rights are not recognized and protected Turkey will face the threat of becoming an Islamist state and its bid for membership in the EU rejected. St. Gabriel shall become another statistic to be added to the Assyrians' long list of human rights violations.

This unfortunate situation boils down to a hate crime directed against a non-Muslim minority. It demonstrates intolerance, undemocratic principles and disdain for human rights. If not protected the systematic destruction of this ancient structure and its inhabitants shall be a loss of historical importance to posterity for the entire world -- equivalent to the senseless obliteration of the Buddhist statues in Afghanistan.

This is an opportunity for Turkey to lead the region by example and safeguard the values of freedom, democracy, tolerance and justice.

[Assyrian American National Federation](#)

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