

We Must Not Condone the Hypocrisy of Our Political and Religious Institutions

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What is becoming most apparent to this writer is the outrageous and repulsive hypocrisy of many of the Assyrians' political and religious institutions. While many of the leaders of these institutions claim to be, or try to give the impression that they are, Assyrian nationalists, their actions and questionable associations and dealings prove that they are far from being truthful. I am not going to talk about the negative consequences of this unconstructive behavior since that is obvious to the readers. But, I would like to point to few examples to justify what I just said. Furthermore, I would like to pose few questions and hope that the reader would ponder them.

In his 1987 book "The Assyrian National Question", Sargon Dadesho writes the following in the book's "conclusion" on page 293, quote: "We often expect the world to adjust to our course, but alas, we find we must adjust to the realities around us. I would go further—I believe it is the duty and the obligation of each Assyrian generation to perceive the realities of their times. It is easy to be wise in retrospect. Anyone can tell you yesterday's issues, yesterday's realities. But our challenge, and certainly the challenge of every generation of policy makers, is to confront today's and tomorrow's realities." Later, Mr. Dadesho states: "...The task of the Assyrian National Congress is based on real formulas and not on false equations. I would like to tell you why I should be a pessimist and why I am an optimist regarding the efforts of the Assyrian National Congress to bring unity among the Assyrian ranks..." End quote.

My questions are:

1. Does Mr. Dadesho really understand what he writes and why doesn't he prescribe to what he had published?
2. Does Mr. Dadesho really understand the realities of our people and where Assyrians stand and what they represent on the ground?
3. Most importantly, could Mr. Dadesho describe those real formulas that he presumably applied to bring his mysterious unity to the Assyrian home for the past 30 years as a politician and where is this claimed unity about which he is writing? Does he really practice anything that is about unity?

Since 2003, Mr. Dadesho has made it his almost daily mission to unfairly attack, attempt to belittle and smear the reputation of certain Assyrian politicians, organizations, activists and/or writers, whether directly or indirectly, and refer to them as "traitors," among other demeaning adjectives. All these actions were contrary to his claims of bringing unity among the Assyrian ranks mentioned in his book. He and/or those in his circle have based their accusations on claims that those who use "ChaldoAssyrian" for example have sold out the Assyrian nation and name because they have adopted, promoted, accepted, or supported the compounded name at the expense of the "Assyrian" name and that they are inventing new ethnic group by using ChaldoAssyrian.

Interestingly, on page 30 of his same aforementioned book, Mr. Dadesho personally promoted a compound name when he referred positively to the term "Assyrian-Chaldean Catholic Church." Meaning, he linked the religious name "Chaldean" to the national name "Assyrian" through a hyphen. Furthermore, on pages 53, 72, 78, 79-80, 88, 91-93, 94, 100, 159 he promoted, whether directly or indirectly, the compound title Assyro-Chaldeans (which is the French equivalent of

ChaldoAssyrians). Additionally, Mr. Dadesho did not criticize or attack those Assyrian leaders who used the compound name during and after WWI and did not explain anywhere in his book that such compound name was wrong or that those who used it at the time were "traitors" as he has done lately.

A man of principle who is, for example, against a compound name must be always against anyone who promotes, uses and/or supports (directly or indirectly) a compound name. This man of principle must be firm, fair and should not talk with both ends of his mouth at the same time. I would understand if a person clearly declares upfront that he distinguishes between the historical and political aspects of the name. I, for example, decided three and half years ago to support the political compound name ChaldoAssyrian because I understood how important unity was during this crucial period. Historically, meanwhile, I use only the Assyrian name and the proof is in both my 2004 book *Assyrians: The Continuous Saga*, and 2006 book *Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein*.

In his working paper titled *Cultural Rights and Democracy: Iraqi Assyrians A Case Study for Government Intervention*, Michael Youash of Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project explains it best how and why the title ChaldoAssyrian was used by the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) in 2003's Baghdad Conference. He writes, quote: "The term ChaldoAssyrian did not mark the formation of a new identity or people. Its purpose was defensive in a chaotic political arena. The hope was to present a unified political name to keep the community counted as one while their problems of divisions and historical challenges were dealt with internally." End quote. Mr. Youash too understands the significance of unity at this time. But Mr. Dadesho refuses to use logic and commonsense in dealing with this matter. Furthermore, if Mr. Dadesho is against a certain compound name, he then should attack all those who promote, use and/or support (directly or indirectly) any version of a compound name. A fair person would not only attack the ADM and Younam Kanna for using "ChaldoAssyrian," but also should attack Sargis Aghajan, Minister of Finance in the Northern Iraq Kurdish Regional Government, Nimrod Baito (APP), Romeo Hakkari (BNDP), Fawzi Hariri, or others that use or support a different version of a compound name, i.e., "Chaldean Syriac Assyrian."

Additionally, as the editor of his Bet Nahrain Magazine, Mr. Dadesho made a mockery of Yosep Dero in the December – February 1979 issue of that magazine and drew a caricature of the "Assyrian stooges" as he called the three Assyrians from Iraq who poisoned the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) delegates in Australia for taking money from Ba'athist Iraq. However, He returned in recent years to make that same Mr. Dero a hero and referred to him as Raabi when the latter calls AssyriaSat live repeatedly to converse with Mr. Dadesho and attack the ADM? I wonder, would Mr. Dadesho take a moment and explain to AssyriaSat viewers and/or to the readers of Bet Nahrain Forum or his Assyria Times these hypocrisies?

Few of the AUA officials that are within the camp of the Acting Secretary General of the AUA Praidon Darmo support the recent Ankawa gathering held in March 12-13, 2007. I guess this explains the recent peculiar and sudden cooperation between Mr. Dadesho's BNDP and the AUA? I am not against any cooperation between Assyrian groups, but this one chuckled me. I realized that our churches are capable to bring groups together if they really worked on it. If that was the case, why didn't the Churches do that before the 2005 Iraqi national elections? The latest reports indicate that two members of the Executive Board of the AUA have resigned during the past six months. Then came the unexpected resignation of Dr. Emmanuel Kamar, AUA Secretary General. Another one is expected soon. The AUA has received a personal invitation from Mr. Dadesho to attend the 8th General Assembly of the ANC in Ceres, California. While few members of the AUA have initiated new ties recently with Mr. Dadesho's ANC, others within the

AUA have their strong reservations from such ties. On March 1, 2007, Mr. Darmo asked for an emergency AUA congress in California to take place prior to Mr. Dadesho's ANC gathering, to discuss the AUA mess, elect a new secretary general and a new executive board. Most importantly, the AUA new congress would discuss whether to attend Mr. Dadesho's gathering or not. Are we seeing another break up in yet another Assyrian institution?

Mr. Dadesho needs supporters to survive, thus, when he felt isolated and desperate he, as a politician, offered his unconditional services and support to a religious institution, i.e., the Assyrian Church of the East (ACOE). Why? It is because Mr. Dadesho's ANC and BNDP are politically bankrupted institutions and the groups that he supported in the 2005 Iraqi national elections failed miserably; therefore, he needed to back up a religious institution to get the sympathy and support of the ACOE members. The late Ivan Kakovitch puts it best when he on December 16, 2006 wrote on the Beth Suryoyo Assyrian Forum, quote: "Degraded and disgruntled for the past decade, it [Bet Nahrain Organization (BNO)] is taking refuge under the tutelage of the Assyrian Apostolic Catholic Church of the East (AACCE), merely because the latter is a fortified bastion in the hearts and minds of the Assyrian communities worldwide, as a major ecclesiastic and somewhat quasi-national entity. AACCE cannot eject any person or any association from its tent and its tenets. Hence, realizing this factor, BNO is usurping the privileges of AACCE, and is embedding itself with the latter's motto, which I sincerely hope shall retain its streamline of being purely an observer on the political arena(s), and to strictly abide by its sacrosanct duties of faith and religion." End quote.

The unequivocal fact today is that with the exception of the ADM, which proved that it has the support of the people, all the other Assyrian political organizations that failed to muster any votes in the Iraqi national elections have opted to put their services under their respective church leaders. I leave the details to the Assyrian reader to ponder that fact and the consequences of such actions. I would just ask: Do Assyrians want to go back to the era of the millet and Dhimmitude system when their patriarchs led them?

Mariam Shimoun asked in the January 29, 2007 issue of Zinda, quote: "Nations do not have 'leaders' any more - this is the 21st century. We do not have 'Aghas' and 'Maliks'. We have elected representatives whom we criticize, change, re-elect, or discard. Can anyone say that we can point a finger to a Patriarch and criticize him for foolish mistakes? Can we hold him accountable and ask for his removal? Can we even tell him he is wrong? Never." End quote. I praise Mariam for being courageous in bringing forth such legitimate and important concerns. Why is asking a question or raising a concern about ACOE actions or matters portrayed as an attack on the Church as Bet Nahrain media imply? Are we living in an age or a place where the Church prohibits one from asking a reasonable question or making a legitimate inquiry regarding a certain stand? Mr. Dadesho has been adamant and strong supporter of the ACOE and His Holiness Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV and that is clear from his TV programs and from what is allowed to be posted on his various media outlets. Do not misunderstand me; there is nothing wrong with supporting the ACOE or its leadership. I support the ACOE as well; it is my church and the church of my father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and some ninety generations of my family. However, this does not mean that I would close my eyes and ears and say nothing about Church problems because of anticipated intimidation or personal attacks labeling my simple questionings as an attack on the Church. The Church is you and I and anything negative about it reflects on you and me. We live in a democracy; we escaped the Middle East so that we would be able to look at things, express our opinion and say this is right, but that is wrong. No one is going to intimidate me, or take that right away from me, as long as I am discussing issues and questioning stands in a respectable manner.

Patriarch Mar Dinkha prides himself of being Atouraya (Assyrian). His Holiness added the Assyrian name to the title of the Church of the East in 1976 immediately after his consecration as the new Patriarch. His message to his flock has been always to honor the Assyrian name and be proud of it. That is admirable, but then one wonders, why did the Patriarch bestow on Mr. Aghajan two medals of honor if Mr. Aghajan is promoting a compound name? Why did the Patriarch allow his photo with Mr. Barazani and Mr. Aghajan to be on the front cover of the latest issue of the official ACOE magazine "Voice From The East"? Is it appropriate to have the photo of KDP's Barazani on the cover of the official ACOE magazine, knowing that Mr. Barazani and KDP consider Kurdish warlord Simko, who cowardly assassinated martyred Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimun, as a Kurdish national hero? At the same time, if the Chaldean Catholic Church (CCC) was for the Chaldean name only, allow me again to ask, why did His Holiness Patriarch Mar Dalli bestow on Mr. Aghajan medal of honor when Mr. Aghajan is using a compound name? I am not sure about you, but I do not understand these double standards unless the compound name was never the real problem that prompted both patriarchs not to support the ADM and the ChaldoAssyrian compound title in 2005 elections. If that is the case, what is the problem then? Could it be power struggle between the churches and the ADM or is it the ever presence influence of Mr. Barazani on the churches to weaken the rising star of the ADM thus crippling our national cause? The other question is: Does bestowing medals on Mr. Aghajan mean, for example, that the ACOE and CCC are accepting Mr. Aghajan's compound title "Chaldean Syriac Assyrian"? If yes, the million-dollar question is why accept the compound name of Mr. Aghajan and reject that of the ADM when both are compound names of different forms?

On the other hand, consider Yonatan Bet Kolia, the AUA head in Asia. He is the Assyrian representative in the Iranian Majlis (parliament). His official title is "The Assyrian AND Chaldean Representative" in Iranian parliament. I understand that powerful entities were behind the institution of this term, but that is beside the point. Not a single Assyrian leader, whether political or religious, has been able to do anything about changing this compound name in Iran since the title came first into use in 1963 and our people in Iran have accepted it and lived with it quietly. Does this reflect a political and patriotic maturity of our brothers and sisters in Iran? May be. Okay, this is wonderful. If that is the case, why is a small selected group, including Mr. Bet Kolia, against Mr. Kanna and the ADM's compound name? Why this hypocrisy? Furthermore, if 15,000 Assyrians in Iran are allowed to elect their own representative and the decision is honored by all Assyrian groups and individuals throughout the world, including this author, why not honor the decision of our people in Iraq for electing the ADM and Mr. Kanna in two Iraqi national elections in 2005? Furthermore, is Mr. Bet Kolia fair and honest when he claims on June 6, 2006 for Payvand Iran News that there are no violations whatsoever against the rights of minorities in Iran. If that were the case, how would Mr. Bet Kolia explain why since 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's Assyrian population has dwindled to some 10,000 only? You see, we realize that Mr. Bet Kolia is not in position to criticize his Iranian government and for that I am not going to sit in California and criticize him; however, I would ask, why is Mr. Bet Kolia supporting KDP man Mr. Aghajan and not the ADM, the truly Assyrian elected group?

Now lets revisit the final statement of the general gathering sponsored by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and led by Mr. Aghajan that took place in Ankawa, Arbil, on March 12-13, 2007. The final declaration of the gathering touched on the followings:

1. The institution of "Chaldean Syriac Assyrian" (Suraya) as the united name of our people.
2. Respect all names used by our people through the different stages of history.
3. Iraq to be a democratic, federal, pluralistic and constitutional country.
4. Institution of the rights of "Chaldean Syriac Assyrian" (Suraya) including self-rule within united Iraq.

How original! In 2003, the ADM's Baghdad conference called for a united name (ChaldoAssyrian), a self-rule in Nineveh plain, and respect of all our names among other things. Those who participated in the 2007 Ankawa gathering and those who organized it stood against the ADM since 2003. Three and a half years later, those same individuals and institutions that stood against the ADM and attacked it for making its recommendations and demands returned to recommend and ask the same exact things. Is that laughable or what?

Zinda Magazine reported on January 29, 2007 issue that Fawzi Hariri of KDP and Mr. Darmo met lately in Washington and that meeting was described as a means to protect the 'Assyrian' only name, in contrast to "Chaldean Syriac Assyrian" title. Zinda continued to state that AssyriaSat presented Mr. Hariri and Mr. Darmo as guardians of the Assyrian name against a Ba'athist conspiracy. A staff writer with Assyria Times on January 20th explained that "some elements of conspiracy against the Assyrian identity, the Assyrian national church, and the Assyrians' political, national, and land rights in Iraq are trying to influence the U.S. Congress through the Assyrian Congresswoman, Anna Eshoo" and that AssyriaSat last week praised the efforts of Mr. Darmo and Mr. Hariri. However, a closer investigation of this matter Zinda Magazine showed that the name issue was never discussed at the meeting in Washington and both Mr. Hariri and Mr. Darmo's primary goal in meeting with Congresswoman Eshoo was to prevent the establishment of an administrative area for the Assyrians in Iraq. Zinda continued to state that Mr. Dadesho's Assyria Times recently wrote: "The ANC, BNDP, the AUA, and some ACOE authorities will meet with Congresswoman Anna Eshoo and contact other Congressmen and women to show their opposition to the draft resolution."

I am not sure how anybody is going to explain this mess, but if one visits for example the Bet Nahrain Forum he/she would discover that this issue is completely swept under the rug and if any person tried to post about it then the post will never see the light. Of course, the moderators of the said forum do not allow direct posting; they have to approve the post before they release it. Therefore, I guarantee you that any discussions about this matter are very unlikely if not impossible. The AUA issued a statement denying such involvement of Darmo. Many Internet users reflected unsatisfactory sentiment towards the AUA statement and described the justification of Mr. Darmo's meeting in Washington as non-convincing. Was this one of the reasons that prompted AUA Secretary General Dr. Emmanuel Kambar to resign his position on February 22, 2007 after only a year and a half in that position?

Why are these claimed patriotic media outlets, i.e., AssyriaSat, Assyria Times and Bet Nahrain Forum not attacking and exposing KDP-man Hariri or Mr. Darmo when they, according to Michael Youash, claimed the following condescending, negative and foolish remarks and lies during their meeting of Wednesday, January 17, 2007 in the office of Congresswoman Eshoo:

1. That Assyrians do not have the necessary concentrated population anywhere in Iraq even in Nineveh plains to justify having a region of their own.
2. That Assyrians do not have the resources and capability to administer themselves.
3. That Mr. Yonadam Kanna is simply a figurehead and that the ADM has no supporters/power in northern Iraq.
4. That the establishment of an administrative region for the Assyrians would bring more damage than good.
5. That there are better channels through which Assyrians could be served and that those are through the KDP. Such ways include, for example, building the headquarters for the ACOE in Arbil so that Patriarch Mar Dinkha would return to Iraq.

Oh really?

Where do the real patriotic Assyrians stand from all this? Why is the KDP and Mr. Barazani sending individuals to Washington to undermine the Nineveh Plains proposal and resolution? Mr. Barazani does not want another region next door in par with the Kurdish region; he wants to usurp the Nineveh Plains and Kurdify it just as he and his predecessors did to other Assyrian regions of Mosul, Dohuk and Arbil in northern Iraq for the past 100 years.

You see, this game of picking and choosing whom we crucify and whom we glorify is so unfair. It is also obvious from the above that many of our political and religious leaders are hypocrites and are steered by foreign elements that historically have been the enemy of this nation. Still, they play God regarding whom they see as good and a saint and whom they see as bad and a devil and worthy of stoning. To all these I say: Please, stop playing God because you are not in position to do so.