

## They Are Sobbing in Their Graves: In Memory of Martyr Francis Shabo.

Fred Aprim  
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The souls of the Assyrian national leaders of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century are devastated; they are striking their faces in lamentation, mourning and wailing in their graves. The bleeding of martyrs Prof. Ashur Yusuf and Dr. Fraidon Atouraya, the patriotic teachings of Naum Faiq, the messages of Raabi Benyamin Arsanis, and the agony of the Assyrian martyrs did not teach us anything.

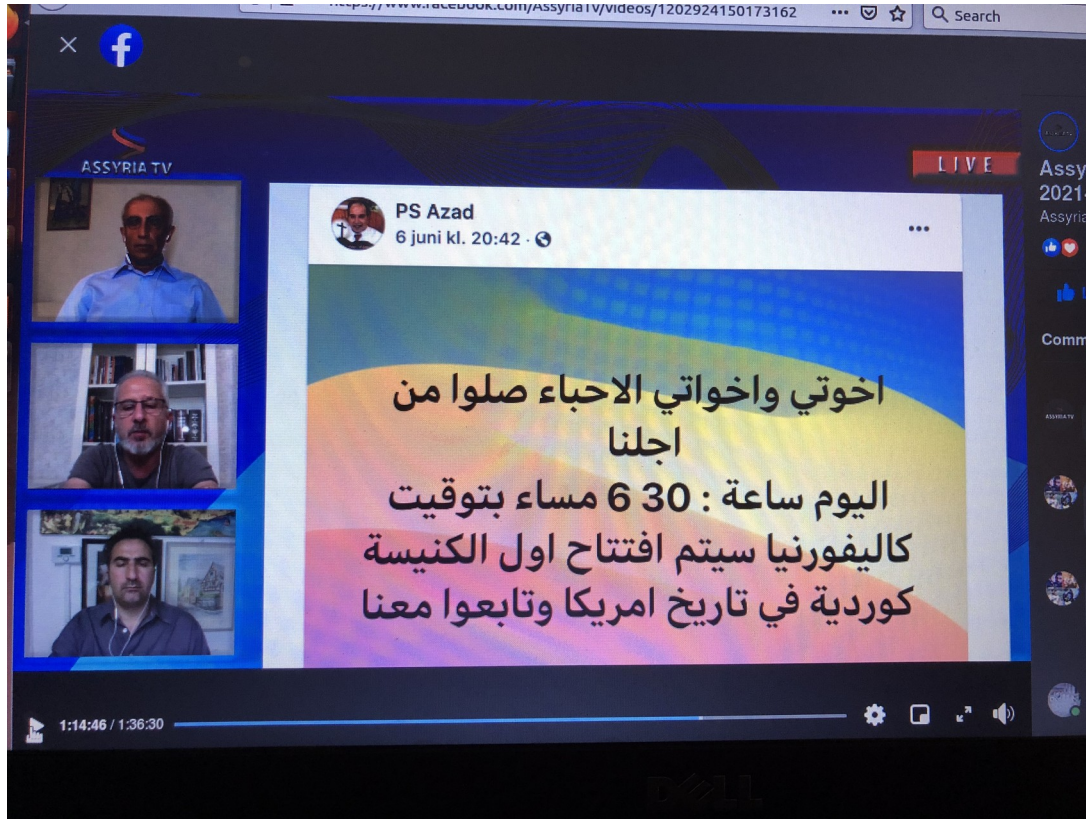
How are we honoring the brave soul of martyred Assyrian MP Francis Yousef Shabo who was assassinated on June 1, 1993 by known Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) hit-man Wahid Koveli? For many Assyrians, it is just another “incident” that lines up next to that of the late Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun who was assassinated on Nov 6, 1975. The prior assassinated by the KDP and the latter by the Iraqi government operatives. How did we react as the first assassin walked freely in the streets of Dohuk while the second got honored during Assyrian Church of the East sermons around the US?

What kind of a people are we? We indulge in acts of silencing true Assyrian voices, when most of our institutions, political or religious, have not bothered to confront Kurdish leaders or their organizations that continue to enforce a meticulous policy of soft genocide against the indigenous Assyrian people. Why do many of our leaders chose to be silent towards the KDP, which uses political patronage to undermine and marginalize the true Assyrian voice while attacking genuine Assyrian voices? What does that tell us about those who are following in that path? Many argue that we are not a nation seeking salvation and resurgence rather a bunch of tribal gangs and sectarian groups. The Assyrians were a millet under the Ottoman Empire rule, took few steps to transform to a nation post WWI, but we could not find it in ourselves to stay the path and opted to return to the millet that we were but this time under the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) rule.

When the past patriarch Mar Dinkha officially added the name “Assyrian” to the Church of the East title in 1976, he, as some argued, intended to transform the new Assyrian Church of the East into a national church. However, two catastrophic things happened. First, the new church did not become a medium to back up and support the Assyrian national movement as expected. In contrast, since 1976, and especially since the creation of the KRG in 1992, the expectations of this new church were that the nationalists must receive the church’s stamp of approval before any political or national steps were to be taken. The involvement of the church in political matters has continued. Second, the members of the Chaldean Catholic Church, Syriac Orthodox Church and other Syriac-speaking churches were pushed away and discouraged from gathering under the Assyrian national designation, because the Assyrian name was now synonymous with a church and because an officially recognized country under the name Assyria does not exist today. The Greek, Armenian and Russian Orthodox Churches, for example, could be seen as national churches because Greece, Armenia and Russia exist as countries, Assyria does not - so far. Remember, the members of the Church of the East in Trichur, Kerala, India (a very large congregation) or many in Seattle, Washington are not ethnically Assyrians. The dream to keep the Church of the East truly universal vanished.

Under what justification are we expected to remain silent when we are witnessing injustice against the Assyrian people, trying to educate them or defending their basic principles? Are we expected to remain politically silent because Mr. Barzani has built a few churches in northern Iraq? Will churches save the Assyrians as the indigenous people of northern Mesopotamia? Churches do not save people. Hundreds of empty and destroyed churches in the Middle and Near East today prove it. Furthermore, encouraging

and promoting few Kurds to convert to Christianity and even opening Kurdish churches in America must awake the Assyrians to the intentions of the Kurdish national movement. The opening a Kurdish church in California was announced on June 6, 2021 and brought to the attention of Assyria TV viewers during an Assyrian News in Focus program. The program referred to a Kurd, PS Azad, who on June 6, 2021 shared the following on social media, quote: “My dear Brothers and Sister, pray for our sake and follow us. Today, at 6:30 pm, PST, the opening of the first Kurdish church in America’s history will be inaugurated.” End quote.



Tomorrow, these so-called Christian Kurds will occupy the Christian quota seats in the Iraqi Federal and Kurdish regional parliaments. They will attend Assyrian churches in northern Iraq since they are now Christians as well. They are our brothers as Mar Dinkha and Mar Melis have claimed repeatedly<sup>1</sup> and in time take from our women as wives in the name of Christianity and brotherhood. And with time, they will take credit for the history of Christianity in the region as we continue to turn the other cheek and be forced to immigrate out of Occupied Assyria. Have we forgotten the claims of Kurdish writer and nationalist Mehrdad R. Izady who claimed that Queen Helena of Adiabene (Arbil), of the early days of Christianity, was Kurdish and that Kurds played a role in spreading Christianity in Adiabene (northern Mesopotamia)?<sup>2</sup>

1 <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2021/It%20Takes%20Courage%20to%20Tell%20the%20Truth.pdf>

2 <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2007/MehrdadIzady-HistoryOfKurdishChristianity.pdf>

What is this atrocious silence by the diaspora Assyrians while our existence in Assyria is on the brink of disappearance? Robert Kennedy said, "Each time a man stands for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope."

What hope are we gifting mother Assyria by being sectarian or tribal and empowering few who have questionable motives?

Koveli assassinated martyred Shabo with bullets; however, our leaders are murdering this nation by inciting sectarian rivalries, promoting old mentalities, enriching hatred and serving our real enemy, the KDP and the KRG. When will we end this destructive path? This status quo cannot continue, because we just cannot afford it and we cannot hide behind our own shadows of fear and sectarianism in this age of enlightenment.