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War in the country, war in the world

It was the first years of the past decade... when Ahmet Davutoglu became foreign minister there were signs that Turkey was moving closer to the principles of the rule of law. His statements and comments attracted the attention of the media. At the beginning of his term in office, he published a commentary in the magazine Foreign Policy on March 21, 2013 with the headline "Zero Problems in a new Era". He wrote about the process of democratization of North Africa and the Middle East and about the conflicts that were to be settled with the neighboring countries of Europe.

During this period, the AKP government attempted to solve the ongoing conflict with Cyprus, to loosen enmity with the neighboring Syria and to normalize relations with Armenia. It was also thought that Turkey would open itself up to the question of the 1915 genocide, try to resolve the Kurdish question peacefully, and seek dialog with the other minorities. All this provoked positive reactions both inside and outside the country.

If you look back, you can see where it all led to and what the results are. In retrospect, it becomes clear that all ideas were illusory. Today Turkey has over 90 unresolved conflicts with 90 neighboring countries. It should take over the co-chairmanship of the project "Great Middle East". Today one asks oneself, how a country, which has so many unsolved conflicts, can take over the co-chairmanship for such a project.

And in domestic politics... the situation became even more troubled. The peace process with the Kurds, which resulted from the dialogue with the imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan, came to a standstill, the rapprochement with the Armenians stopped, and the country's minorities no longer feel safe. The desired opening of the country was not achieved, journalists and opponents were imprisoned. Even democratically elected members of the HDP were put in prison for criticizing the government. Selahattin Demirtas, Can Dündar, Ahmet Altan, Osman Kavala and many other politicians, journalists and scholars were removed from the political stage because of their critical views.

As if it was not enough to eliminate the country's cultural diversity, the state's own cultural objects have recently been targeted and Islamized according to the motto of the "Islamique concours". The latest example is the famous Hagia Sophia, which has been turned from a museum into a mosque. As a result of this behavior, many Suryoye (Aramaic-Assyrians) have given up their efforts towards their homeland in southeastern Turkey. Every time confidence and hope for better conditions grew, they were deliberately destroyed. The confidence of our people in the officials has suffered a lot and hopelessness, in the scope of a better future, has spread. Even the burning of the fields and land around the villages of Suryoye in Tur Abdin by the local functionaries had no other aim than to expel the small group of Christian people remaining there.

The well-known sentence of the founder of the Turkish Republic Atatürk: "Peace in the country, peace in the world", is trampled on. Instead, today the principle of "war in the country, war in the world" is dominating. Because Turkey has no inner peace, it becomes an aggressor against neighboring countries and peoples. Turkey has always tried to divert attention from its history and internal conflicts. Therefore, it does not succeed in resolving the internal troubles within the different population groups, the polarization and alienation.

The turmoil in Turkey is not just limited to the interior of the country. It is in dispute with Greece and Cyprus because of the search for natural gas in the Mediterranean, with Armenia because of the fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, with Libya because of its support for the Muslim Brotherhood, to name but a few conflicts with neighboring states. Turkey regards every development around it as a threat. That is why it invaded northern Syria and northern Iraq. Any emerging attempts for autonomy in the Nineveh plain or in the Shingal mountains are countered without hesitation. Even if this behavior is regarded as reflex-like on the part of Turkey, the deep nationalism, the ideology of an exclusively Turkish-Muslim nationalism is behind it. It is the sticking to the ideas of the Young Turks after the 1st World War.

The attacks on Cyprus were followed by Turkish interference in northern Syria and the occupation of the border towns Afrin and Kobane. If no one would have opposed Turkey, today it would also seek to bring down the autonomous government of northeastern Syria. For this purpose, the Suryoye and the other Christian minorities were to be used as a cover to legitimize it. But through the work of the international coalition - especially the USA - Turkey was stopped. The Turkish aim was clear: the destruction of the autonomous administration in the northeast of Syria, which was formed by Suryoye, Kurds and Arabs. There were many provocations to achieve this. Since this did not help, they tried to bring those Suryoye, Kurds and Arabs, who are against the autonomous administration, on the Turkish side. But even that failed. This does not mean that the danger of a Turkish invasion in northeastern Syria is gone. Turkey is still waiting for an opportunity to gather forces against the autonomy on its side in order to topple it.

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The autonomous self-government was founded in 2015 by joint efforts of the Suryoye, Kurds and Arabs. The basic principle is that every group of the people can teach in their mother tongue, speak their own language and preserve their identity. The constitution states that each people may preserve and live its traditions and customs, religion and culture without restriction - with mutual respect. There is no doubt that there are still deficits and there is still room for improvement. It is the beginning of a process in which different ethnic groups can live together on an equal level, which must be developed further.

I consider this an important step for many peoples of the Middle East. I even believe it is a model that can solve many problems and conflicts of the many different ethnic groups, religions and cultures. Unfortunately, self-government is not accepted by current leaders and states that want to keep their position. At the top of the list is Turkey, which denies its relations with the IS and other terrorist organizations. With these relations it tries to cause trouble in the neighboring countries and to support radical Muslims against emerging democratic efforts. For them, every opening, every new peace based on equality is a threat to their territory.

Today, the Suryoye have also become more careful about their nationality and their own needs in their homeland.

They have political organizations and politicians who represent them in the autonomous self-administration.

They have the Syriac Military Council (MFS), which defends them militarily.

They have the Sutoro (police forces), which cares for a peaceful coexistence.

They have teachers who can officially teach their mother tongue in the schools.

All these points are a benefit for us Suryoye, which in the context of equal treatment of all citizens is only the beginning of the process mentioned above. Because Turkey regards this process of rapprochement and equality among peoples and ethnic groups as a threat, it is isolated in both domestic and foreign policy. Turkey has degenerated into a country in which one's own identity is no reason for happiness.

Yawsef Beth Turo

Yawsef Beth Turo was born in Mirde in the southeast of Turkey. After completing his school education in primary and secondary school, he went to the monastery "Dayro du Zahfaran" where he continued his training / knowledge / education in Arabic and Aramaic (Suryoyo). In 1993 he moved to the Netherlands and settled in the city of Enschede. He is the founder of SuroyoTV, the world's first television station to broadcast programs in Aramaic. Yawsef Beth Turo is also an activist in various institutions, such as the "Bahro Production" organization, the Enstitut Mesopotamie Bruxelles or the European Syriac Union ESU.

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