



-Press Release-

We Suryoye longing for an end to the crisis surrounding the establishment of the Sayfo memorial in Enschede!

Urgent call for the establishment of a Sayfo memorial under the name of our community, the Suryoye, and with the official logo of our churches.

We have learned from the media that mayor Roelof Bleker, in a letter to the council of our city of Enschede, has withdrawn his support to establish a monument for the Sayfo Genocide of 1915. The Suryoyo Media Foundation is deeply disappointed and saddened by this news: the Sayfo monument in the Volkspark will not be - for the time being.

The failure to come to a public and communal memorial and commemoration is like pouring salt on our wounds. The mayor and councilmembers know the sensitivities within our Suryoye community in Enschede all too well. It is therefore not right to leave such a far-reaching decision - about a historical fact that touches the deepest essence of our Suryoye community - to name fanatics entrenched on the dogmatic, yet marginal flanks of our long and rich cultural history. Despite the good intention of the Committee 1915 to establish a monument for the Sayfo Genocide, polarization unfortunately flared up again. Giving in to disputes and interests that should be secondary to the historical suffering of our community, the ongoing trauma and the commemoration of our martyrs is highly condemnable.

The name conflict between Aramean Suryoye and Assyrian Suryoye has divided and exhausted our community in the Netherlands for many years. The current stalemate is unfortunately yet another consequence of that conflict.

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Trenches are the features of war, not of a process of rapprochement to achieve a joint commemoration for a genocide. The Dutchman invented 'poldering' because he is fed up with the trenches. It has brought him stability, a cultural anchor and economic prosperity. And do the Assyrian Suryoye not call themselves Dutch? Do the Aramean Suryoye not call themselves Dutchmen either? Why is this unified attitude possible in the case of citizenship of their new homeland but not with regard to their origins? Moreover, within our community we do not draw lessons from the history of our new homeland that has left behind centuries of religious strife and 'verzuiling' and has embraced the principle of unity in diversity.

Our Suryoye community in the Netherlands must no longer remain at the mercy of strife and division over our name and Sayfo symbols. The two concerned Suryoye advocacy groups have shown that they have not learned from the vicious cycle of name conflicts that we as a community have had to endure over the past decades. Why is unnecessary polarization being sown within the Suryoye? Who here is playing an ironic and dangerous game of exclusion with our inclusive Suryoyo history? Who here is playing into the hands of the Turks and Kurds - the perpetrators of the Sayfo Genocide? The Sayfo monument in the Volkspark will not come about - for the time being - because of our own actions! Surely it cannot be that we in the Syriac Orthodox Church pray together to the same God but cannot come together in a common commemoration of our ancestors and, thus, frustrate the further internalization of the Sayfo within our Dutch Suryoye community.

Suryoyo Media Foundation would like to see an end to this name conflict and, given the stalemate that has arisen over the Sayfo memorial, we therefore consider it important to consult other cultural, political and religious organizations within the Suryoye community in our city and include their point of view. Suryoyo Media Foundation stands ready to take responsibility, come to the table and contribute to a solution for a communal Sayfo memorial and commemoration. We also point to the [official](#) approach of our churches since 2015. This consistent approach cannot be ignored.

We therefore call on the mayor of our city of Enschede to reconsider his revoked decision of support for the establishment of a Sayfo monument. Our call is to continue the process under the name of our community, the **Suryoye**, and with the Sayfo logo as propagated by our churches.

We gladly would start the dialog with all parties involved.

Yusuf Kangus

On behalf of Suryoyo Media Foundation

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