



ARMENIAN EVANGELICAL BETHEL CHURCH

MINISTER: REV. HAROUTUNE SELIMIAN

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OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

Partnership Visit to the Reformed Church of Hungary

Upon the invitation of the Reformed Church of Hungary, Rev. Haroutune Selimian, President of the Protestant Community in Syria, and Rev. Joseph Kassab, General Secretary of the National Evangelical Synod in Syria and Lebanon, visited Hungary from 8-12 October 2018. The main purpose of the visit was to deepen the partnership and cooperation between the Reformed and Protestant churches in Syria and Hungary.

During their five-day visit, Reverend Selimian and Kassab met with the leaders of RCH and senior colleagues of its ministries. They also participated in public fora.

They became aware of the mission and educational work of RCH; they also met with Bishop István Szabó, President of the Synod of RCH. They visited Debrecen, and they also had a meeting with the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán who offered support for the education and social activities of Syrian Armenian and Arab Reformed churches. They also participated in the event of the Ministry of State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians at the Prime Minister's Office.

-On Monday, October 8, 2018, Rev. Haroutune Selimian, the President of the Armenian Protestant Community in Syria, along with Rev. Odor Baladz, Head of the Ecumenical and International Relations Department of RCH, and Ms. Diána Erdelyi, Ecumenical Secretary of RCH, attended a meeting with Zsófia Esztergály, leader of the Armenian ethnic minority in Budapest, and Issekutz Sarolta, president of the Armenian Cultural Heritage Association of Transylvania. He also visited the Armenian Catholic Church of St. Gregory and its Armenian museum. At the end of the meeting, the two sides exchanged symbolic gifts as a token of love and appreciation.





-On Tuesday, October 9, 2018 the Prime Minister of Hungary Mr. Viktor Orbán received the leaders of the Syrian Protestant Churches, Rev. Haroutune Selimian, President of the Armenian Evangelical Community of Syria, and Rev. Joseph Kassab,

General Secretary of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, in the Parliament Building



During the meeting, which was attended by Azbej Tristan, Minister of State for helping persecuted Christians at the Prime Minister's Office, and István Bogárdi Szabó, Bishop of the Dunamellék Diocese of the Reformed Church in Hungary, the Reverends informed the Prime Minister and Bishop about the current situation of the Protestant churches in Syria and the challenges which these churches are facing nowadays. They also talked about the importance of the rehabilitation and reconstruction processes of Syria.

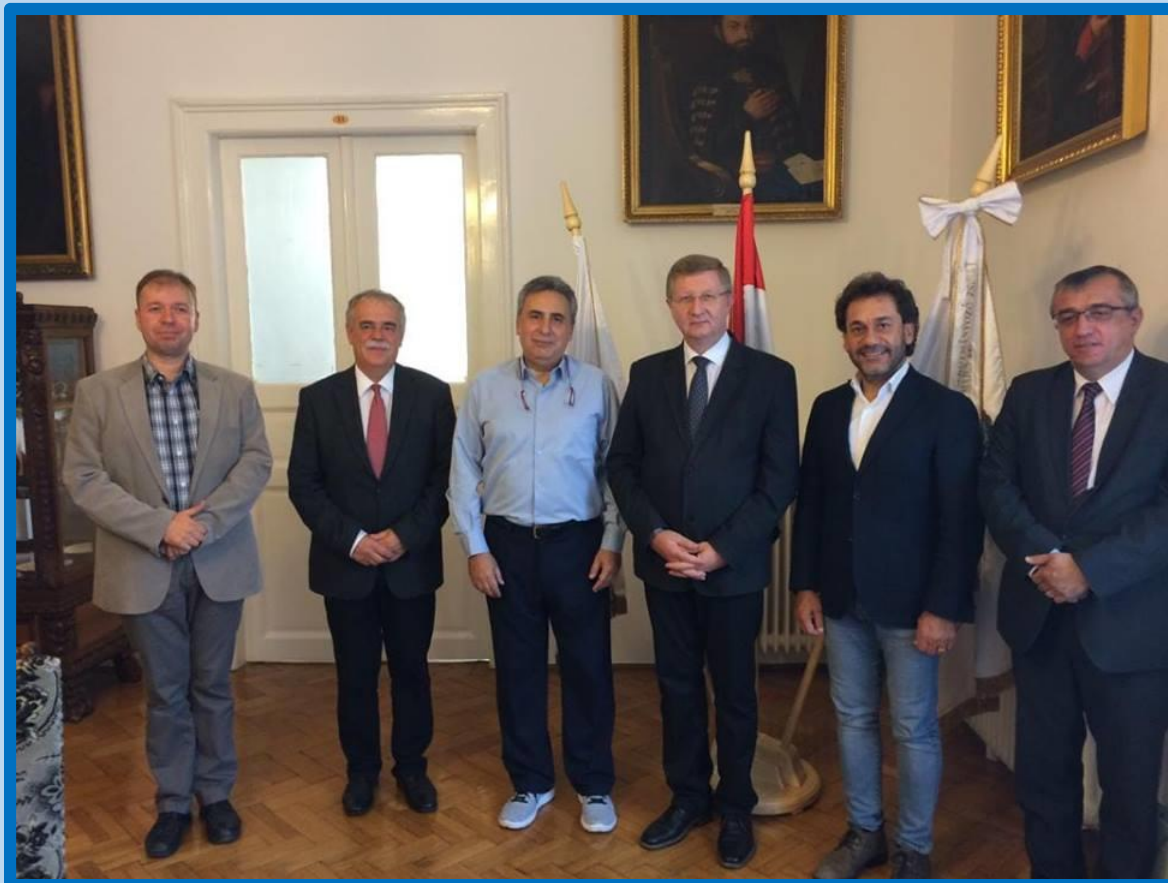
On behalf of the Hungarian Government, the Prime Minister assured that Hungary will always be ready to support the Christian population in Syria, especially those who were displaced during the war.

On that same day, Rev. Selimian and Rev. Kassab were invited as guest speakers of a roundtable discussion entitled "the Situation and Life in Syria, and the challenges of Evangelical and Presbyterian minorities", moderated by Rev. Aaron Stevens at St. Columba's Church of Scotland in Budapest. The discussion mainly focused on the surviving issues, persecution, education, and the relationship between different churches in Syria.





-On Wednesday, Oct. 10, 2018, Rev. H. Selimian along with Rev. J. Kassab, General Secretary of NESSL, visited Debrecen, the center of the Transcibiscan church district of RCH. They had a special meeting with the head of the board of Trustees of the Reformed Church Aid Foundation Rev. Istvan Olah, Dean of the Debrecen Presbytery of RCH, the Convener of the Ecumenical and International Affairs Committee of RCH Rev. Zsigmond Vad, Bishop of the Transcibiscan Church District, Deputy Presiding Bishop of the RCH Synod, Rev. Karoly Fekete, Ecumenical officer of the Transcibiscan Church District as well as Associate Professor of Missiology at Debrecen Reformed Theological University. The meeting was unique in its kind.



-On Thursday, Oct. 11, 2018, a public lecture entitled “Faith for Peace and Reconciliation” was held at the Károli Gáspár University (KRE) of RCH. The event was organized by the State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians. The guest speakers of the event were Rev. H. Selimian and Rev. J. Kassab.

Rev. H. Selimian’s lecture was based on Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” He spoke of the faith of the Christians living in Syria, mentioning that even through the horrors of war, many were able to witness. He said, “God takes care of His church, he uses local church members to take part in changing the world”.

In His speech, Rev. Kassab stressed that to achieve complete rehabilitation and reconstruction of Syria, religious communities must be vessels of reconciliation working towards tolerance and restoring schools to encourage the people to stay in their homeland.

During the event, many words of encouragement and hope were shared. The love for Syria and its people was strongly illustrated in the words of Rev. H. Selimian & Rev. J. Kassab. Concluding the public lecture, Rev. H. Selimian asked for prayers for the Christians who choose to stay in Syria.



Prior to the public event, the two church leaders met with István Szabó, Presiding Bishop of the Synod of RCH, to discuss further issues related to the cooperation of the three churches and the ongoing support of RCH. Future plans include a visit of senior church leaders of RCH in Lebanon and Syria next year.



Special thanks to the Reformed Church of Hungary (RCH), Rev. Odor Balaz (Head of the Ecumenical and International Relations Department of RCH), and the delegation of the Hungarian Reformed Church for making this visit possible as well as meaningful.

The visit provided an opportunity to deepen the sense of fellowship of the churches, sharing and inspiring one another with testimonies of strength amidst the challenges of the world today. The visit also introduced the various ministries, as well as the diaconal and educational institutions of the RCH, including a visit to Debrecen, the City of Reformation and the capital of the Transibiscan Church District.