Thank you very much; it is a pleasure to be here. I am Assyrian and participating from Turkey. I would like to start off by sharing a case. In 2008, Mor Gabriel Monastery in the Tur Abdin region faced two challenges: the occupation of its land by the neighboring villages and the Turkish Ministry of Forestry’s claim on forest lands which meant that the land had to register in the name of the Treasury. There were several allegations against the monastery[[1]](#footnote-1) for conducting anti-Turkish activities, conducting missionary activities, and trying to incite people to the insurgency.[[2]](#footnote-2) The court ruled against the monastery and declared it as “occupier.” Despite the Assyrians’ campaigns against unjust allegations, the case is still pending at the European Court of Human Rights.

Taking its lead from the Mor Gabriel Monastery case, the recommendations on possible solutions promoting solidarity and safe space for Assyrian human rights advocates would be on local and international levels.

1. First, Assyrians and other unrecognized non-Muslim minorities have to be acknowledged as minorities according to Lausanne Treaty[[3]](#footnote-3) (1923).[[4]](#footnote-4)
2. Secondly,  and to relieve the tension caused by financial scarcity, projects should be provided to financially improve the situation of both the dominant groups and the minority groups.[[5]](#footnote-5)
3. Thirdly, the bond between local minority people and Assyrians should be supported by paving the way for creating alternative media where minorities can create a common public opinion on the decisions related to the minority groups and express themselves freely.
4. Last but not least, in the international arena, the institutions dealing with minority and indigenous rights[[6]](#footnote-6) should engage with other minorities and Assyrian activists in Turkey and the diaspora to promote solidarity between the groups and preclude these groups from social exclusion.

1. Mor Gabriel Monastery Community Foundation [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Naures Atto. 2011. *Hostages in The Homeland, Orphans in The Diaspora: Identity Discourses**Among The Assyrian/Syriac Elites in The European Diaspora*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Although the Lausanne Treaty (1923) offers protection to all minorities in Turkey, all Turkish governments arbitrarily approached the treaty by considering only Armenian Orthodox Christians, Greek Orthodox Christians, and Jews as the non-Muslim minorities whose rights can be protected. As a result of this narrow definition, other non-Muslim minorities like Assyrians cannot benefit from the rights as the recognized minorities. For this reason, Assyrians are deprived of human and financial resources, property rights, and language rights, and they are also excluded from bureaucratic and political processes. (Soner Önder. 2012. “Minority rights in Turkey, Quo Vadis, Assyrians?” in The Slow Disappearance of the Syriacs from Turkey and of the Grounds of the Mor Gabriel Monastery.) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Such as actively participating in making decisions in the preparation of the upcoming regulation on the elections of the minorities’ community foundations. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This includes everyone living in the region, such as, Kurds, Yezidis, Turks, Armenians, and Assyrians. The projects could be on employment or support of small businesses in the region. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Such as united nations human rights institutions, anti-discrimination institutions, and freedom of religion and thought institutions. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)