

A Dream Realised

After thirty-six years of working in Germany, the esteemed Gabriel Özmen returned six years ago to the land that had always remained close to his heart: Mardin. On a hillside in the Eskikale neighbourhood, overlooking the Deyrulzafaran Monastery, he transformed a long-cherished dream into reality. With a pizza restaurant established on a peaceful five-acre plot, he now experiences the joy of serving the local community with sincerity, delighting both palates and hearts with his hospitality.

This entrepreneur, who has translated decades of professional experience and accumulated knowledge into social benefit at precisely the right time and place, has nurtured a strong hope in the land of his birth. For the Syriacs of the region, many of whom have scattered across the world for various reasons, this investment holds profound significance: it reflects their spiritual roots, strengthens their sense of belonging, and contributes to the continuity of their culture. It stands as a meaningful bridge between past and future.

Today, the business provides employment for twenty individuals and represents more than just an economic venture; it is a meaningful cultural contribution. Gabriel Özmen's words, ***"I did not come merely to invest; I came because I love my country,"*** reveal the depth of his heartfelt connection to his homeland, reflected in every detail of the enterprise. With a capacity to welcome up to 500 guests simultaneously, this pizza restaurant breathes new life and energy into the local economy and regional tourism.

This investment, born of patriotic devotion, is not only an economic initiative but also a culturally significant gesture that rekindles the bond between the Syriac business community and their ancient homeland. It serves to make visible the productivity of the Syriac identity and its character, deeply intertwined with local

values. By connecting past and present, this venture nourishes collective memory and carries hope for the future.

There exists a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between humanity and culture: culture contributes to intellectual and emotional growth, while human beings carry, preserve, and transform it, guiding its development. Intellectual growth strengthens the cultural fabric, while cultural development directly contributes to the advancement of both individuals and society. From a sociological and anthropological perspective, humans are both products of culture and its active custodians.

Conversely, cultural weakness is a fundamental factor that leads to fragility and regression on both individual and societal levels.

It is with heartfelt admiration that I congratulate the distinguished Gabriel Özmen for realising this significant project, prompted by the longing for his homeland. May the determination he has shown not only foster economic development but also allow the revival of an ancient heritage. I wish him abundant prosperity and sincerely hope that this exemplary initiative will continue to enrich the Syriac culture and the wider region.

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