

**ARABIC**

## **International Mother Tongue Day, February 21<sup>st</sup>**

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**Bereket KAR**

Hatay - BIA News Center

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People may be luckier or less lucky depending on the geography they are born in with regards to learning their mother tongue. Unfortunately, all from Arabs from Hatay are on the less lucky side. Because, although they are born Arabs, they were not permitted to learn their mother tongue. The language they are speaking at home and on the rural areas is neither Turkish nor Arabic but rather a mixed language specific to the region.

Arabs did have the opportunity to learn their language through private courses if not at school till Hatay is annexed to Turkey (1939). During the 40s, Arabic is banned in private courses as well as official areas. Pressure was used to prevent Arab children to speak their language at schools. I have beaten all along the primary school from 1961 to 1966 because I could not speak Turkish properly and I speak Arabic. The assimilation policy known as "tetirk" in Arabic is applied by all governments but more fiercely during coup d'état periods. Arabic that was banned in schools and state offices was further banned during weddings, holidays and all sorts of entertainment and music. After the September 12th, the people watching Arabic TV channels were reported and interrogated. The Arab chiefs running Koran and Arabic courses were taken into custody and were shaved and humiliated. At the beginning of 2011, when court cases were filed by the public attorney's office in Samandağ county of Hatay, this attempt did attract the protest of thousands of Arabs and all democratic bodies. As seen, Arabic being a language of a minority is banned from being taught as a mother tongue by the state for eighty years. This assimilation policy of the state is not only towards Arabic, but also to Kurdish and all other minority languages. Denouncing all restrictions applied to all mother tongues in Turkey, I take this opportunity, in this day of International Mother Tongues I ask all members of the Arabic minorities to persist on speaking Arabic. I once again declare that I am in support of all people striving to for the right of education in mother tongue.