



## Assyria Council of Europe

2<sup>ND</sup> June 2010  
Press Release

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### BUS ATTACKS ON ASSYRIANS IN THE NINEVEH PLAINS

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On the morning of Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, terrorists attacked a column of buses transporting Assyrian students to Mosul University, which lies in the most volatile area in Northern Iraq. Four died in the blasts which also injured 171 according to [recent reports](#).

This tragedy has stunned the Assyrian community, whose position in their native homeland has been under existential threat for many years.

Iraq, still troubled by the confusion surrounding the recent election, has proved again to be an unstable environment for its minorities.

The Iraqi government, whatever its future composition, must step up its efforts to ensure the safety of groups such as the Assyrians (also known as Chaldeans and Syriacs), who are only beginning to find their footing in a state which has long been oppressive of its smaller groups.

In a bid to prove to the soon departing allied forces that Iraq is a stable and functioning democracy, the Iraqi government must address this security issue with its utmost attention.

By [rejecting](#) plans proposed by the Assyrian Christians to field their own police force and instead opting for security checkpoints manned by groups who are still locked in territorial disputes, the Iraqi government must now reconsider this strategy.

The indigenous Assyrians have lived in Iraq for thousands of years, before even the birth of Christianity. However, their position in their homeland has always been strained and under threat from neighbouring ethno-religious groups who have violently targeted them.

It is tragedies like this which are a throwback to the barbaric past. It is imperative that more must be done by the security and judicial forces to prevent devastating attacks like this to happen again.

The repeated attempts to either drive away or exterminate the Assyrian people from their own homeland cannot continue. An immediate investigation is imperative, with the arrest and prosecution of the attackers the only acceptable outcome.

Europe too must act before all of the Assyrian Christians leave Iraq. In the Dutch Parliament, Joël Voordewind, a Christian Union MP who has been following the violence against Assyrian Christians, asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Verhagen to organise a roundtable discussion on how to stop the violence against the Assyrians and ensure their safety.

Mr Voordewind has visited Christians in the Middle East many times, including over 100 Assyrians in the Nineveh Plains, writing a [report](#) on his findings. The UN office in Arbil considers the Nineveh Plains an unsafe region. To remedy this, the Assyrians in the Nineveh Province need:

- A Nineveh University to be established and financed as soon as possible, so students will not need to travel to volatile places like Mosul where they can be violently targeted and Arbil where discrimination against Assyrians is a [reality](#).
- A dedicated, locally derived security force for the Nineveh Plains, much like other regions and minorities enjoy.

The Assyria Council of Europe will soon publish an annual human rights report for 2009 regarding the plight of the Assyrians in Iraq.

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The Assyria Council of Europe (ACE) is a Brussels based non profit advocating rights of minorities in Iraq since 2007.

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