

Assyria Council of Europe condemns Iraq Church Bombings

9th January 2008

Brussels - Reports have confirmed that on Sunday 6th of January seven churches and monasteries in Iraq were bombed. There are reports that the targets were three Christian churches and three convents belonging to religious orders. Furthermore, it has been reported that four of the churches bombed were located in the city of Mosul, capital of the Nineveh province. Ninos Warda, ACE Project Director states that:

"The Assyrian community in Europe is shocked and appalled by the recent church bombings in Iraq but unfortunately this is not the first time that churches in Iraq have been targeted and if something is not done in the immediate future it may not be the last time either. It is clear that the aim of such attacks is to intimidate and undermine the Assyrian Christian community in Iraq so as to lead to a mass exodus from their ancestral lands. This is affirmed in the recent European Parliament resolution of 15th November 2007 on Christian Communities whereby the Parliament admitted of the fact that to take just one example, in recent years hundreds of Assyrian Christian families from Dora, a neighbourhood in Baghdad, have left the city as a result of intimidation, threats and violence. Such a status quo cannot be maintained and the Assyria Council of Europe has made some recommendations as to what steps the EU can and should take to alleviate the situation in Iraq."

The Assyria Council of Europe strongly condemns these recent church bombings and calls upon the European Union to act immediately by:

1. Issuing a joint declaration signed by the European Commission, Council of the European Union and the European Parliament strongly and vehemently condemning these recent church bombings and urging the government of Iraq to take adequate and immediate measures to protect the dwindling Assyrian Christian community in Iraq by preventing such events from recurring.
2. Setting up a delegation or commission whose role is purely to promote inter-faith dialogue within Iraq so that through dialogue and understanding such atrocious events can be prevented in the future.
3. Following the example set by five members of the Dutch Parliament who addressed pertinent and important questions regarding this issue to the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maxime Verhagen, urging all national parliaments within the European Union to take similar action so that awareness of this recent tragedy can be increased and tangible action can be taken to remedy its unfortunate affects to the Iraqi community as a whole.

As the Assyrian International News Agency has reported (<http://www.aina.org/news/20080107163014.htm>), since June 26, 2004, forty Assyrian churches¹ in Iraq have now been the targets of bombings. It is clear that the aim of such bombings is the intimidation and eventual cleansing of the indigenous Assyrian community in Iraq. Action must be taken by the international community immediately to put an end to such intimidation and harassment.

For more information on the recent bombings please visit www.aina.org, www.ankawa.com, www.asianews.it or www.esna.se.

¹ It should be noted that the Assyrian community in Iraq is made up of various denominations including the Syriac and Chaldean Catholic churches, the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East, the Syriac Orthodox Church and also Protestant churches.