



## Assyria Council of Europe

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2008

Press Release for Immediate Release

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### Assyrian Bishop Kidnapped in Iraq

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Brussels - Reports from Iraq have confirmed that on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008 the Catholic Assyrian Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahoo of the Chaldean Catholic Church of Mosul was kidnapped as he left the Holy Spirit Church in the Al-Noor area of Mosul city. The archbishop was accompanied by his driver, Faris, his bodyguard, Rami, and another security guard, Samir, all of whom were killed in the kidnapping. The funeral of the victims took place on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008 in the city of Karimlesh in the Ninawa Province.

The Pope and various Assyrian organizations have expressed shock and dismay at the recent kidnapping and killing of the abovementioned men, and this recent event further confirms the instable situation minorities in Iraq are living in and the daily harassment and intimidation that they face. This recent event simply is a continuation of the targeting Assyrian religious and political representatives have faced since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

The European Union, together with other international organizations, must create a united stance and not only condemn these violent acts against Iraq's vulnerable minorities but take affirmative and immediate action to protect the already dwindling minorities in Iraq. This is a moral obligation which we all share to the people of Iraq and we must prevent genocide from occurring before it is too late so that situations such as those in Rwanda and Darfur are not repeated in any country in the world again.

Despite calls from Assyrian representatives in the homeland and the Diaspora for the establishment of an Assyrian police force to protect Assyrian communities, religious buildings, representatives, etc. from such attacks, no steps have yet been taken by Iraq or the international community in this regard.



Archbishop Paulos Rahho

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.