



ASSYRIA COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Press Release

ACE CONVINCES DUTCH PARLIAMENT TO URGE FOR PROTECTION OF ASSYRIANS IN IRAQ

Dutch Parliament passes a bill demanding Minister of Foreign Affairs Uri Rosenthal to urge the Iraqi government and the EU for recognition and protection of the Assyrians living in the Nineveh Plains.

This resolution has been passed due to intensive lobbying of Assyria Council of Europe (ACE) in the run-up to the debate. In April 2011 ACE, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), and Finland-Assyria Association had conducted a fact-finding mission to Northern Iraq concluding that there may be one generation remaining in which to safeguard the Assyrian community in Iraq. In consequence ACE spent time and effort in urging relevant political actors to bring about change in the European policy agendas on the security situation of the Assyrian people in the Niniveh Plains.



MP Joël Voordewind, CU

The bill outlines that Assyrians in Iraq suffer serious threats and daily attacks. Therefore a police force of about 5000 has been organized by locals which is, however, not recognised by the Iraqi government, resulting in a total lack of material and training. Since official recognition is non-existent these forces also lack any mandate to arrest perpetrators or use force against the threat of violence.

Christian Union Parliament member Joël Voordewind took these concerns very seriously and convinced the Dutch Parliament that only a formal police force offers enough prospects for Assyrians to stay in Iraq.

Motivated by the Christian Union party, the Dutch Parliament will urge the Iraqi government and the EU to recognise, train and finance this police force so it will be able to supply real and effective protection to the Christian population in the Nineveh Plains.

'This is a major breakthrough for the Christian population in the Nineveh-plains' states Christian Union Parliament member Joël Voordewind. 'This means recognition by the Dutch Government of these Christian people who face daily threats of violence and lethal terrorist attacks. This bill provides Minister of Foreign Affairs Rosenthal a mandate to plead with his Iraqi colleagues and the EU for recognition and the right for protection of these peoples.'

It is the first time that a European parliament passes a bill on the security situation of the Assyrians in Iraq which has been recognized by all political parties represented in the parliament.