

Religious cleansing in Iraq

Report of a working visit to Northern Iraq (March 31st – April 4th 2008)



Joël Voordewind

Member of Parliament of the Netherlands of the Christian Union Party

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
1. Background and Motive	4
2. Findings	5
2.1 Security Situation	5
2.2 Humanitarian Aid	8
2.3 Democracy, Rightful Governance and Human Rights	10
3. Recommendations	12
Appendix 1:	13
• Travel Itinerary	10
Appendix 2:	14
• Resolution of the European Parliament Addressing Religious Minorities in Iraq	14
Appendix 3:	15
• Humanitarian Aid Organizations in the Nineveh Province	15
• Humanitarian Aid Needs	15
• The Major Problems and Needs facing the Displaced Families	16
• Programs implemented by the AAS in the Nineveh Plains	17

COLOPHON

Responsible for the translation	: The Assyria Foundation – Netherlands www.assyrie.nl
Translation from Dutch into English	: Mr. A. van Diepen
Editing	: Ms. W. Canon & Mr. N. Warda
Thanks to	: Mr. A. van Diepen, Ms. W. Canon and Mr. N. Warda

© Text: Joël Voordewind, ChristenUnie Party
PO Box 20018, 2500 EA Den Haag
+31 (0)70-3182930 | j.voordewind@tweedekamer.nl | www.joelvoordewind.nl

© Photography and Layout: Ruben Timman
+31 (0)75 612 58 06 | look@nowords.nl | www.nowords.nl
For other (Iraq) reports please call: 06 1240 82 26





Picture of the assassinated bodyguard of the Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Faraj Raho of Mosul

Introduction

I trust this report of my working visit will contribute to an increased knowledge about the terrible circumstances in which minorities like the Assyrians Christians (Chaldeans, Syriacs and other Christian communities), but also the Shabaks, the Yazidis and the Turkmen are living in on the Niniveh Plains in Northern Iraq. Around 100,000 refugees of these minority groups have fled from their houses from cities like Bagdad and Basra due to threats, kidnappings, or after the killing of husbands or sons. These minorities are not protected by any (armed) force like the Shiite, the Sunni and the Kurds. They stay in small villages north of Mosul, but the threat is still present and this area has also been declared as unsafe. As a result, international humanitarian aid organizations are not entering this area to provide them with the necessary aid. In the last chapter I will list 8 political recommendations that can improve the situation of these displaced people. I call on the reader to take to heart the situation of these displaced people, including so many widows and orphans.

I would like to thank Ms. Attiya Tunc of the Assyria Foundation - Netherlands for organizing this fact finding mission to Northern Iraq and her pleasant cooperation. Also thanks to the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) and Assyrian Patriotic Party (APP) for taking care of our safety during our visit to Iraq. Finally I would like to thank Josine Wiskerke for her substantive support and to Ruben Timman for taking the photos during this visit and providing them for this report.

Joël Voordewind

Member of Parliament of the Netherlands of the Christian Union Party

1. Background and Motive

From July 8th till July 15th 2007, together with a Chamber commission of Foreign Affairs, I conducted a working visit to Israel, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Jordan and Syria. During this trip, I spoke with several people from humanitarian aid organizations about the situation of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan. By their stories, I became aware of the very difficult circumstances in which the ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq are remaining. I was shocked in particular by proclamations of crucifixions of Assyrian Christians in Iraq. This formed an immediate cause for me to visit the North of Iraq from April 1st till April 5th 2008. I wanted to comprehend the situation of the Assyrian Christians in Iraq personally, in order to determine the best actions that can be taken by the Dutch Government and the international community for improving the situation of Assyrian Christians as well as other minority groups in Iraq.

The Assyrian Christians are the indigenous people of Iraq and form the oldest population. Their language is Aramaic, related to the Hebrew language. The history of the Assyrian church has a history that dates back to the first century A.D. During the Saddam Hussein regime (1979-2003), a total of 1.4 million Assyrians lived in Iraq. After the regime of Saddam collapsed, the situation of the Assyrian Christians has deteriorated dramatically. They have become victims of religious cleansing executed by extremist groups like Al Qaida, militia of Muqtada Al Sadr and the Mujahedin. Out of the 1.4 million Assyrian Christians, only 400,000 are remaining in Iraq, of which 100,000 live in the relatively safe area of Northern Iraq. A large amount of the Assyrian Christians that fled from Iraq now live as refugees in Syria or Jordan. A simple fact proving that Assyrian Christians are particularly suffering from the ethnic and religious violence in Iraq is that out of the total number of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan, 36% are Assyrian Christians. In the total population of Iraq, Assyrian Christians formed only 5%. Besides the Assyrian presence in the Middle East, large communities are present in Turkey, the United States (over 300,000) and Europe. The Assyrian people of today are members of different churches such as the Chaldean Catholic Church of Babylon, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch and Syrian Catholic Church. Besides these traditional churches a significant number of Assyrian protestant churches exist such as the Assyrian Presbyterian Church and other Assyrian evangelical communities.



2. Findings

2.1. Security Situation

The Assyrian Christians in Iraq are suffering from specific targeted violence against them. They are threatened, kidnapped, tortured and killed by extremist organizations like Al Qaida, Muqtada Al Sadr's militia and the Mujahedin. The vast number and specificity of the violence that is taking place, to my belief, justifies the classification of these acts as religious cleansing.

Recently, many churches and monasteries have been bombed (42), among which are 6 churches in Mosul. Religious leaders form a specific target of these attacks. In February 2008 Archbishop Rahho from the Chaldean Church in Mosul was kidnapped and killed. Also priests and nuns have been kidnapped and often brutally killed, in many cases by beheading. Two cases of crucifixions have been reported. These crucifixions were also known by the Assyrian Democratic Movement (for more detailed info regarding violence against Assyrians please read the AINA Report, 2007).

The violence is directed particularly against the male part of the Assyrian Christian community. Not only adults are targeted, but also youngsters of sometimes only 14 years old. It seems that one is attempting to destroy two male generations at once. By these practices, indirectly also the women and children are victimized. They do not only lose their husband or son, but in many cases also the breadwinner of the family.

The Assyrian Christians are threatened by means of phone, letter or SMS. In these messages they are specifically being addressed with regard to their Christianity. The message is persistent and every time the same: "disappear or you will be killed", signed by the Mujahedin or another extremist organization. Many times also the Assyrian Christians are being accused of collaborating with the Americans. There is a reason for these assumptions. Assyrian Christians work relatively often for the Americans, both for the army and American companies. This is explained by their considered loyal character, as well as their high education level and knowledge of the English language. Also Assyrian Christians are being associated with Americans because of their western religious conviction.

Surprising is the lack of financial support from the Americans for the families of killed Assyrian employees. One of the refugees told about an Assyrian that was shot dead accidentally by the Americans. No financial compensation was allowed by the Americans. The relatives only received a reference note stating that the person was a 'good worker'.

A lot of kidnappings are taking place. High amounts of money are being requested as ransoms. I heard amounts of money varying between \$20,000 up to even \$160,000. To summarize these amounts of money, Assyrians Christians are sometimes forced to sell a significant part of their possessions, including sometimes even their home. Often the victims are also helped by the Assyrian community with collecting the money for paying the ransom. Unfortunately, in the majority of the cases, even paying the ransom doesn't guarantee a positive outcome and the kidnapped son or husband is still killed.

STORY # 1

When people are being kidnapped they receive no information or help from the Kurdish Government, the Americans, the Red Cross, or even the Iraqi authorities.



STORY # 2

A family with 6 children was captured in their home by an Islamic militia. The father was accused of collaboration with the Americans, but this was denied.

In front of the whole family he was executed. The mother of the family who resisted was also shot. The oldest son got away, but was captured later by the militia. He was later found killed. After wandering for a year, of the remaining 5 sisters, the youngest (10 years old) died of a disease.



Amer Toma Slewa, the wife of the Nada Yohana Elesha who has been kidnapped since May 7, 2007



Noorla Hanna (mother of 5 children), her husband Akram Mansour was killed even after the payment of the demanded ransom (4000 dollar)



Nidal Rufaol, her husband Jamel Toma Yonai (1970) was killed in 2004



Nibras Hikmet Polish, 5 children, husband kidnapped since August 18, 2000



Basmos Aziz, 5 children, husband Hayat Ibrahim killed in 2005



Junaina Abdalla, son Fadi Sami kidnapped on August 27, 2005 and her brother kidnapped on June 2, 2007



Dalrela Zaya, husband Adel Slewa Botros, kidnapped since May 7, 2007



Ghazala Behnam, her husband Mikha Azo Shamoon killed at an incident by the American army on March 28, 2005



Rakena Jamel, husband Esam Sabah kidnapped since May 7, 2007

Very often relatives remain in absolute uncertainty about the fate of their kidnapped sons or husbands. In many cases nothing is heard of them ever after. Although a body is not always found, after a time has passed, nothing else remains but accepting the loss of a beloved. In very few cases there is a happy ending. One of the refugees explained that he was released after a ransom of \$20,000 dollars had been paid.

Young teenage girls are also kidnapped. They are being abused or forcibly married off to a Muslim.

The Assyrian Christians are an easy target because they live in known, discernable areas in the cities of Bagdad, Basra and Mosul. This is also true for other ethnicities in Iraq. Such a situation makes it easy for extremist organizations to organize and target per district. No particular preventive actions are undertaken in these districts by the Iraqi police, e.g. surveillance or patrols. According to the refugees that I have spoken to, the Iraqi police are undertaking only very little action with the threats or even kidnappings. One of the refugees showed me an SMS with a threatening message. He declared having received this message frequently, every time from the same sender. Even though the police had been informed and were aware of the phone number of the sender, no action was taken.

A large amount of Assyrian Christians have fled from unsafe areas in and around Bagdad, Basra, Mosul and Kirkuk into the relatively safe Kurdish region in Northern Iraq. The Kurdish region comprises the 3 northern provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulamanyah. The government of these provinces is conducted by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Most displaced Iraqis (67%) have come to the province of Dohuk. Of the total amount of displaced people, the Assyrian Christians form 85%, the biggest group by far. Most of them originated from this province in earlier years, but were expelled from this region by the Ba'ath party of Saddam Hussein's regime. This also happened to the Kurdish people in that period. The Assyrians have now settled themselves in the city of Dohuk and the villages on the Niniveh Plains, an area northwest-southeast oriented between the cities of Dohuk and Mosul. But even here the Assyrian Christians are not completely safe. Even in northern Iraq, threatening continues and assaults are still being committed. In the past 5 years yet another 20% of the Assyrian Christians decided to leave northern Iraq and opt for a future in a foreign country. Not only did the security situation play an important role here, but also the lack of a positive future perspective. Northern Iraq is a region with a weak economy and little employment possibilities.

The Assyrian Christians are not able to protect themselves against the present violence. In the three northern provinces, they are dependant for their safety on the Kurdish militia, the so called Peshmergas. But their influence does not include the Niniveh Plains, as this region is officially ruled by the Iraqi government. Until now, the Iraqi government has not been able to provide the necessary security for the Assyrian Christians living in the Niniveh Plains. Therefore in this area the Assyrian Christians would like to see more possibilities to protect themselves against the violence. In 2005 and 2006 two attempts by the Assyrians to organize a protective police force by themselves on the Niniveh Plains were frustrated by the KRG. The KRG wants to keep as much as possible control over the complete area, including the Niniveh Plains and therefore is anxious about a protection force installed by Assyrians.

STORY # 3

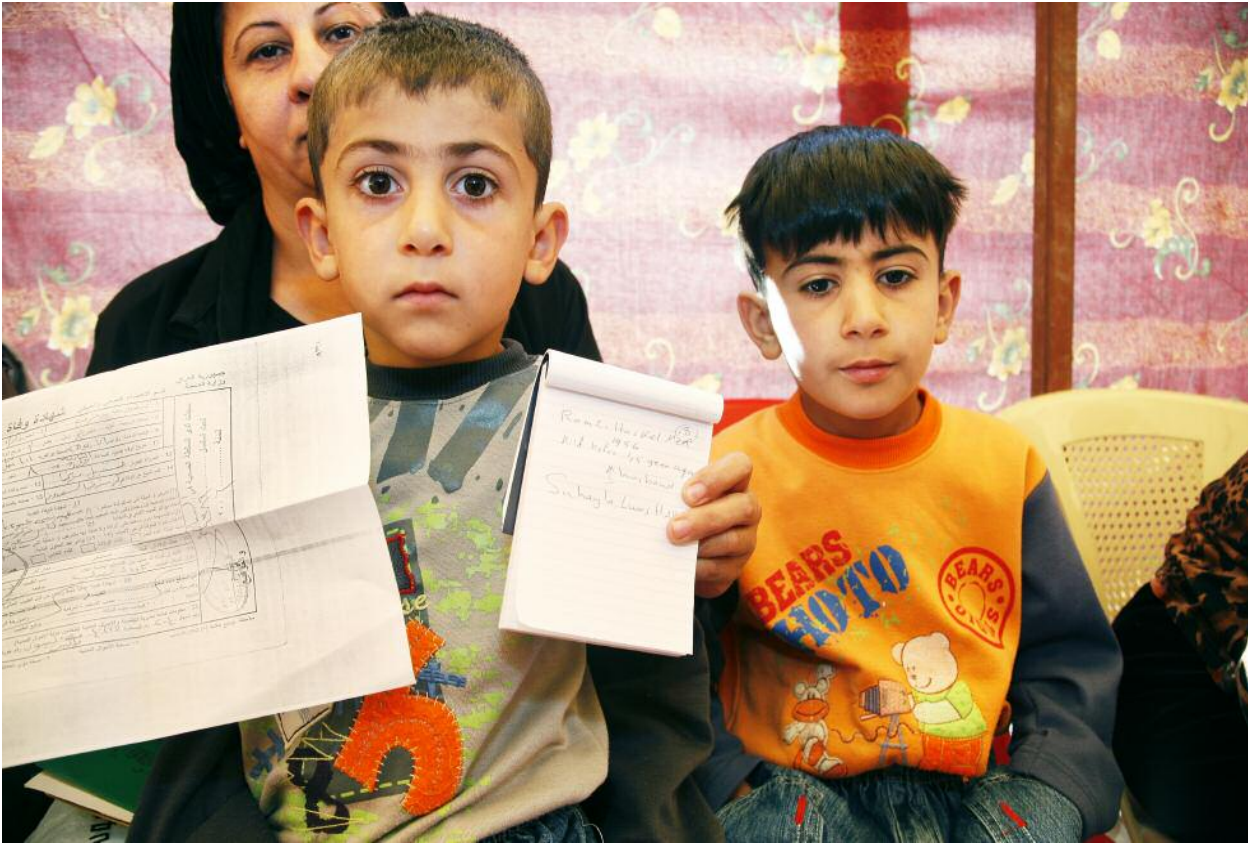
A 16 year old son was kidnapped and every week a CD was sent to the family with the son proclaiming to pay the ransom. When finally the 20,000 ransom had been paid, still the youngster was killed.



STORY # 4

A man had collected a ransom of \$65.000 for the release of his brother. He had sold everything he possessed. His brother was released but died from a disease within a year because no money was left over to pay for the medical treatment. He left behind his wife and three children.





2.2. Humanitarian Aid

It is difficult to determine the exact number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Northern Iraq. They are widespread over the total area and their registration is poor. UNHCR reports 347,777 IDPs in Northern Iraq, of which 213,277 people reside in the three northern provinces. Only a small percentage of them stay in refugee camps, roughly around 1,250 families, approximately 6,000 persons. The vast majority are renting houses or are staying with relatives or friends.

The total number of IDPs in Iraq is estimated to be around 2.7 million people. The exodus of people fleeing from the violence started back in 2003, but peaked after the bombing of the Al- Askari Mosque in Samarra on February 22nd 2006. This initiated a wave of sectarian violence, which resulted in an enormous internal migration of around 1.5 million people. (Source: International Organization for Migration)

It is not known precisely how much of the total amount of IDPs in Iraq are Assyrian Christians. From the data that I collected during this visit, one can conclude that currently a number of at least one hundred thousand displaced Assyrian Christians have migrated into the three northern provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulamanyah. Most of them reside in Dohuk and the Niniveh Plains¹.

The refugees receive only very little support from the government. Few of them are entitled to receive a financial allowance by one the Assyrian ministers in the Kurdish Government of Northern Iraq, Mr Sargis Aghajan, who governs the Finance Ministry. Aghajan does a lot in helping the Assyrian Christians by funding house building programs, renovations of churches and building infrastructure like roads. Still, he is not favoured by all Assyrian Christians. Aghajan is a member of the Kurdistan

¹ The estimation of around 100,000 internally displaced Assyrian Christians is supported by numbers of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) that has traced the ethnic and religious background of a vast number of displaced people in Northern Iraq. See also: IOM Emergency Needs Assessments, post-February 2006 displacement in Iraq, 1 April 2008 bi-weekly report, www.iom.int.

Democratic Party (KDP) and is often looked upon as a straw man of the Kurds. According to the committee members of the Assyrian Democratic Movement that I have spoken to, only 10% of the financial support of Aghajan reaches the Assyrian refugees. Also they have become suspicious after they have seen the direct assistants of the minister become rich in an unexplainable way.

The refugees are in need of basic humanitarian aid like food and housing. The housing conditions are especially problematic and require special attention. A lot of refugees live under miserable circumstances in far too small houses or in houses of deplorable quality, which puts their health and safety at risk. Besides the quality, because of the enormous flow of incoming refugees, also the prices have seen stark rises in the region. Most refugees at this moment cannot afford a rental house anymore.

The humanitarian aid organizations are not reaching the people in need at this moment. Organizations like the ICRC and UNHCR are not entering the Niniveh Plains because the area has been declared unsafe. Furthermore, the humanitarian aid organizations for their work depend on the registration of IDPs by local authorities. When local authorities do not provide the right or enough information, this prevents them from allocating the aid for the people in need. Regrettably, not all refugees could be registered as many of them had to leave their identification papers in the place of provenance. Also local authorities refuse to register those without their identification papers in an attempt to discourage the inflow of people to the region. Likewise it can be assumed that some of the refugees that found shelter by family, relatives or acquaintances didn't register. Furthermore, for renting a house it is necessary to register.

As a result of the declaration of the area as unsafe and a poor registration process, the displaced people on the Niniveh Plains are completely dependant on local NGO's like the Assyrian Aid Society (AAS) and CAPNI (Christian Aid Program Nohadra Iraq).² They provide the people with food packages but also non-food items. However, the capacity of these organizations is limited and can have therefore only little impact.

According to the vice-president of the Kurdish Parliament, the KRG does a lot for the Assyrian displaced people in Northern Iraq, but is simply lacking the funding for really being able to support them. During the budget negotiations of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Parliament adopted a motion, in which a humanitarian aid package of 6 million was awarded for the displaced people in Northern Iraq. (Board) Members of the ADM pointed out not to use the KRG for furthering this aid package to the people. They strongly suggested using NGO's like AAS. Within the KRG corruption is present and this nourishes the fear of money ending up somewhere unintentionally. Their strong request was in any case to put sufficient effort in monitoring the allocation of the money.

More aid is definitely needed from the international community. This aid should not be restricted to only humanitarian help for the short term. Also for the long term an aid package is needed for the rebuilding of the area and the creation of jobs and employment.

² Nohadra is the historic Assyrian name of the city of Dohuk.

STORY # 5

Even after an earlier kidnapping, a man was threatened again with letters with bullets and SMSs which stated in which car he drives, where he travels to every day, etc.



STORY # 6

People are killed because they run a little shop in which they sold beverages containing alcohol.



STORY # 7

Some families received videos at home on which the beheading of their family member was put on tape by their assassins.

2.3. Democracy, good Governance and Human rights

The Assyrian community is represented in both the Kurdish Government and the Kurdish Parliament. In the Kurdish government three departments are occupied by Assyrian ministers. In the Parliament five seats have been assigned to Assyrian representatives, two of which are members of the ADM.

In practice the democratic rights of the Assyrian community are hindered by the Kurds. (Board) members of the ADM have stated as an example that despite the regulations no Assyrian was seated or participated in preparation committee for the elections, and the Assyrians had no possibility to nominate their own candidates for the Parliament. The Assyrians were entitled to occupy five seats in the parliament, but the fulfilment of these positions was controlled by the Kurds.



During the elections and the referendum in 2005 a large number of the Assyrian Christians on the Niniveh Plains were denied access to the voting booths. Voting locations stayed closed, ballot-boxes were not delivered and reports have mentioned fraud and intimidation. For qualified jobs, or a position as clerk, membership of the KDP is necessary.

The ADM has declared that the rights of the minorities are not fully secured by the constitution. This addresses for instance their rights in the fields of governance, education and culture. In the education system, religious celebration days of minorities are not considered.

The KRG and NGOs put a lot of effort in the rebuilding of the cities and settlements in the northern provinces that were largely demolished during the Saddam Hussein regime. In this process however, the Assyrian villages are neglected by not repairing damaged houses or by not connecting them to public infrastructure. Assyrian villages on the Niniveh Plains lack to a large extent potable water, electricity, accessible roads, schools and medical services.

Most of the Assyrian Christians that fled to northern Iraq have their roots from this region. During the Saddam Hussein regime, they were expelled massively from their homeland by the Ba'ath party. Often they still own a house or (farm)land in their territory. But many of these possessions have been expropriated in the past few years by the Kurds, without any compensation. The Assyrians accuse the KRG of active participation in this process although this is denied by the KRG. Kurdish Authorities state not to be aware of any expropriation still currently taking place. Probably most of the disowning of Assyrian properties is being done by private individuals but the Kurdish Authorities are not working hard enough to prevent and do not take a strong action against this. The Kurdish Authorities have stated that they are working on a solution, but indicate that it is a complex case. The properties could have switched several times between different owners and this makes it a strenuous task to determine who the original owner was. It is a time consuming process to come to a good solution in this complex matter.

Being the original inhabitants of the region, the Assyrians feel themselves strongly related to the region, but they feel being unequally treated and neglected by the Kurds and also feel themselves unsafe in the present situation. Therefore, they have a strong wish to establish an autonomous region on the Niniveh Plains with the possibility of better protecting themselves against external threats and start a new future. Also other minorities like the Yazidis and the Shabaks should be welcomed in this region. The justification for this step can be found also in Article 125 of the Iraqi constitution. The ADM is very much in favour of a solution according to the 'article 125 amendment'. Furthermore, the Assyrian Minister of Finance, Mr Sargis Aghajan, has declared to be in favour of this solution. The legitimacy of this ambition is however disputed. Some people are stating that the aforementioned Article 125 of the Iraqi constitution doesn't entitle minorities the right to self-governance but only commits the authorities to respect the rights of minorities. In this aspect, Dr. Kemal Kerkuki, vice-president of the Kurdish Parliament, declared that if there would be a referendum about self-governance of the Assyrians on the Niniveh Plains, the Kurds would respect the outcome. At this time however he sees the stride for self-governance as unnecessary as in his opinion the rights of minorities in the Kurdish region are fully respected. The Assyrian Minister of Tourism, Mr Nimrud B. Youkhana, pledged for more support from the international community, especially the European Union. Until now the international community has not pronounced its support for Assyrian self-governance on the Niniveh Plains.

STORY # 8

An Assyrian was shot dead by accident by an American soldier. The relatives didn't receive compensation for the funeral, nor a reimbursement for supporting family expenses.



STORY # 9

When, following continuous threats, the Christians decided to leave their homes their houses were immediately confiscated by Muslims.



3. Recommendations

1. The Netherlands must urge, in a bilateral way and also within a European context, the Iraqi Government to allow the Assyrians to establish a protecting police force or to enlist more Assyrians in the Iraqi army in order to increase their safety on the Niniveh Plains.
2. The international community has to provide for more humanitarian aid to the displaced persons in northern Iraq. This aid should not only be distributed by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) or via multilateral channels (Red Cross and UN institutions), but also via regional and local NGOs like the AAS and CAPNI.
3. The international community has to provide for long term support needed for the rebuilding of Northern Iraq. The support should be targeted towards agricultural development and the repair of (more) houses.
4. The democratic rights of Assyrian Christians, Shabaks, Yazidis and Turkmen have to be respected. In particular their right to vote should be granted and secured.
5. The Assyrian Christians have to be able to vote for regional self-governance in the Niniveh Plains by means of a referendum. Governing the region should include the accommodation of other minorities like the Yazidis and the Shabaks.
6. The KRG has to ensure that expropriated land will be given back to Assyrian Christians or that they will be compensated.
7. The rights of minorities have to be respected; the right for religious freedom has to be anchored better in the Iraq Constitution.
8. The Netherlands has to be susceptible, as a result of current extra threats and persecution of Iraqi Christians, for accepting a higher number of Iraqi Christians as refugees. This would be in accordance with earlier declarations of both France and Germany.



Appendix 1:

Travel Itinerary

Tuesday, April 1st:

- Attending the celebration of the Assyrian New Year in Dohuk
- Interview with local and national (board) members of the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) in Dohuk

Wednesday, April 2nd:

- Visit to around 100 IDPs in Tel Isqof (Nineveh Plains)

Interviews with:

- Employees of CAPNI (Christian Aid Program Nohadra Iraq)
- Mr. Shadrak Shabbas and Mr. Napoleon G. Pattoo, Assyrian Aid Society (A.A.S.)
- Dutch Consul in Erbil

Thursday, April 3rd:

Interviews with:

- Mr. Kemal Kerkuki, vice-president of the Kurdish Parliament
- Mr. Nimrud B. Youkhana, Minister of Tourism (KRG)
- Mr. Fuad Hussein, Chief of Staff, President Barzani
- Mr. Marko Jaminki, Head of sub-delegation, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Mr. Ferhad S. Abdulqadir, Assistant Field Officer, UNHCR

Friday, April 4th:

- Conference Call with Mr. Yonadam Kanna, chairman and national Member of Parliament for the ADM.
- Interview with local and national (board) members of the ADM in Erbil



Appendix 2:

Resolution of the European Parliament Addressing Religious Minorities in Iraq

European Union Foresees Bigger Future Role in Iraq

3-13-2008

Brussels -- The European Parliament celebrated its 50th anniversary in its latest plenary session in Strasbourg which took place between the 10th and 13th of March 2008. One of the items on its agenda was a resolution on the European Union's (EU) role in Iraq after a report prepared by the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The resolution was adopted by the Parliament by a resounding 506 votes for and 25 against, statistics which themselves affirm the importance of this resolution.

The resolution is an important initiative taken by the Parliament and is of specific concern to minorities in Iraq, including the Assyrians. The resolution makes it clear at paragraph J that 'the EU needs to be more strategic in supporting Iraq in its progress towards becoming a democratic federal state', a sentence which is important in that it reflects the EU's acceptance of Iraq choosing to become a federal state.

Of specific importance however are the Parliament's recommendations to the Council of the European Union. The Parliament urges the Council to adopt with the Commission a new strategy that will help the UN in building a safe, stable and united Iraq which, amongst other things, 'protects its minorities and promotes inter-ethnic tolerance'. Furthermore, the Parliament urges the Council to ensure that electoral procedures at the local level are strengthened, a factor especially important this year with Iraqi elections coming up. It is hoped that this emphasis on strengthening electoral procedures prevents the voting irregularities which took place in 2005 from recurring so as to ensure fair and free elections for all Iraqis.

Some points of the resolution are of specific concern to the Assyrian minority in Iraq. For example, paragraph 1.g) urges the EU, under its new strategy, to: "support the reconciliation process, namely on Kirkuk and other internally disputed territories, including the Assyrian areas known as the Nineveh Plains with their Christian minorities; [...] encourage European NGOs to engage with their Iraqi counterparts -- which are already particularly active in the Kurdish region - - and make extensive use of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in providing technical and financial assistance to civil society organizations, in order to address the following issues: [...] the rights of indigenous peoples and of persons belonging to minorities and ethnic groups, including the Assyrians (Chaldeans, Syriacs and other Christian communities), the Yazidi and the Turkmen; increase EU support - namely through the Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) for NGOs and international organizations in their efforts to alleviate the plight of Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries, as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs), including the 4,000 Assyrian families who have principally sought refuge in the Nineveh Plains; [...]"

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.

Appendix 3:

Humanitarian Aid Organizations in the Niniveh Plains

CAPNI

Christliches Hilfsprogramm – Europa CAPE e.V

(Sister organization of CAPNI in Dohuk, Iraq)

Postfach 420 207 Tel: +49-6122-17645 Konto Nr.: 243 15 05

65103 Wiesbaden Fax: +49-6122-993889 Wiesbadener Volksbank

Deutschland <http://www.capiraq.org/> email: cap-e@web.de BLZ: 510 900 00

Assyrian Aid Society

Contact person: Christina Patto

AAS-I Secretary

Napoleon G. Patto

AAS-Iraq President

Dohuk, Iraq

E-mail: aas_i@yahoo.com

E-mail: n_georges2000@yahoo.com

Home phone: +964627615096\+96467220361

Mobile: +9647504456759

Humanitarian Aid Needs:

According to most recent statistics, around 70% of Iraqi people are under the poverty line. As usual, the minorities are suffering the most under such circumstances. Iraqi Christian Assyrians, a minority whose people are the indigenous people of Iraq - their churches are the oldest in the orient, dating back to the first century - are one of the most suffering minorities in the current situation, together with the Yazidis, Shabaks and Turkmen.

The Christian minority groups are portrayed by Islamic fundamental groups as co-operators with the Americans who are considered as crusaders. In addition, they are looked upon as infidels who must be defeated. For being peaceful and weak people who do not seek revenge, they are the easy target for every group. The terror against Christians has different sources and is for different reasons: gangs of organized crime who pursue financial benefits find in the Christians easy targets by blackmailing them and the Islamic Jihad organizations designed to purge Iraq of "infidels". These groups, mainly the JIHADIS, practiced different means to spread terror and fear among the Christians and push them to escape, including:

- Churches' bombings
- kidnapping and murder of the clergy
- kidnapping and murder of youth
- targeting sources of livelihood
- abduction of children and youth and asking for the ransom
- imposing Islamic lifestyle and culture
- distributing inflammatory leaflets
- issuing fatwas (Religious edict) targeting Christians

In addition to the general atmosphere in the country, adopting and imposing Islamic lifestyle and patterns in every field, media, schools, universities, streets, etc

The message is clear: you are to be killed or you have to leave.

The Iraqi Assyrian Christian people responded to the terror, violence, lack of services, etc by fleeing the big cities and a significant and huge exodus of their families is continuing.

One is inside the country as the families are fleeing to Iraqi Kurdistan region and Nineveh plain. The other direction is to neighbouring countries, namely Syria and Jordan.

However, the families who are fleeing to Nineveh Plain and Kurdistan region are within the focus of CAPNI and AAS and there is a great need to support them in different means.

The major problems and needs facing the displaced families are:

First: Housing

Of course, we may think of the first need of the families. This is how to find the house to live. This need is beyond the capacity of any NGO because of the numbers of the families and the very high rent costs for the houses and flats.

However, the displaced families are trying their best either to deal with the problem by renting small rooms in the minor towns or to be hosted by their relatives. In very rare cases, they are asking the support of the church or friends to cover their rent.

The limited financial resources of the friends and churches limit the amount and duration of the support. As for the families who have their own villages and are willing to go back and settle in their villages, the construction program by Mr. Sargi Aghajan, Assyrian Christian finance minister in the Kurdistan Regional Government, is offering the chance and possibility for them.

Second: Feeding

Since 1990, when the international embargo was implemented against Iraq, the Iraqi government adopted a special food supplies system based on monthly food coupons for the families. Every family is registered by a food agent close to her residential address and is given a coupon for monthly food supplies.

The basic food items, e.g. rice, sugar, tea, cooking oil, etc., are supplied according to this coupon for a very little price (almost for free compared with the prices in the markets).

This coupon is a great help for the needy families who do not have financial income to cover their life costs. However, with these families being displaced from their residential addresses to other cities in the north, they miss the possibility to get the basic foods through this food coupons. They are obliged to purchase their food from the markets for high prices.

So, in other words, it is a real need for the needy displaced families to get food baskets with main food items.

Third: House items

The other need of the displaced families is to get basic house living supplies, such as blankets, cooking heater, chicken items, etc.

This is due to the fact that the displaced families fled their houses without having their house furniture, beds, chicken, equipments, etc.

Of course, we can not think about supplying all the needs for a family house!!! But we may think of basic needs and equipments.

Fourth: Cooking/Heating fuel

The other need is the cooking gas and/or white kerosene for cooking/heating.

This is also one of the items which was supplied to the families in last years for little price.

Now they have to purchase it for very high prices.

Fifth: Health care

The other very important need is to provide the medical health care and medicines for the displaced families. CAPNI and the AAS are doing this for the families in the far villages through the mobile clinics. However, there is need for medicines, mainly the antibiotics, children medicines and chronic diseases medicines. In addition, there is a need for at least two health centres in the township of Sharafiya and the village of Karanjo, both in Nineveh plain.

Sixth: Unemployment

This is the most serious problem to focus on it, as its impacts are on both immediate and long term, and in the different fields: economic, social, etc

Taking in consideration the social, cultural and economic structure of the region of Iraqi Kurdistan and Nineveh Plain, we may conclude that the region cannot contain all the existing unemployed youth of the region and the numbers of the displaced youth as well.

Programs until now implemented by AAS in the Nineveh Plain:

In 2006:

- Distributing food substances to some displaced families with the participation of Migration and Displaced Bureau in Mosul under the supervision of AAS-I
- Distributing beds and other food substances with the participation of International Health Organization (IHO) to some displaced families under the supervision of AAS-I\ Nineveh Branch.

in 2007:

- Distributing food substances and blankets to (500) families in Nineveh Plain in coordination with the International Medical Corp. (IMC).
- Distributing food substances and blankets to (1100) families in Nineveh Plain in coordination with the Mercy Hands Organization.
- Distributing basic house materials to (4783) families in Nineveh Plain, for two times, in coordination with the Qandel Organization from Sweden.
- Distributing food substances and blankets to (1300) families in Nineveh Plain by AASI.
- Distributing food substances and blankets and house materials to (130) families in Nineveh Plain in coordination with the Ministry of Immigration and the Internally Displaced People (IDPs)/ Nineveh Branch.



