

# IRAQ

## The Struggle to Exist



**Part II: Violence against Assyrian  
Communities in Nineveh**

**Province's Disputed Territories**

Assyria Council of Europe

Hammurabi Human Rights Organization



# **The Struggle to Exist**

## **Part II:**

### **Violence against Assyrian Communities in Nineveh Province's Disputed Territories**



February 2010

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# METHODOLOGY

This report is based on a six-week fact-finding mission in the northern Iraqi cities of Arbil, Kirkuk and Dohuk, the regions of Barwari-Bala, Sapna, Simel, Zakho and Nahla, and the towns or villages of Bakhdida (Qaraqosh), Tall-Kepe (Tell-Kayf), Tisqopa (Tell-Isqof), Batnaya, Beqopa (Baqofah), Alqosh, Ba'shiqa, Bahzani, Karimlish (Karemlis), Baritleh (Bartillah), Sharafiyah, Bahindawaya, 'Ayn-Baqrah, Karanjok, Dashqotan, Pirozawah, 'Ayn-Sifne, Shaqlawa and Diyana.

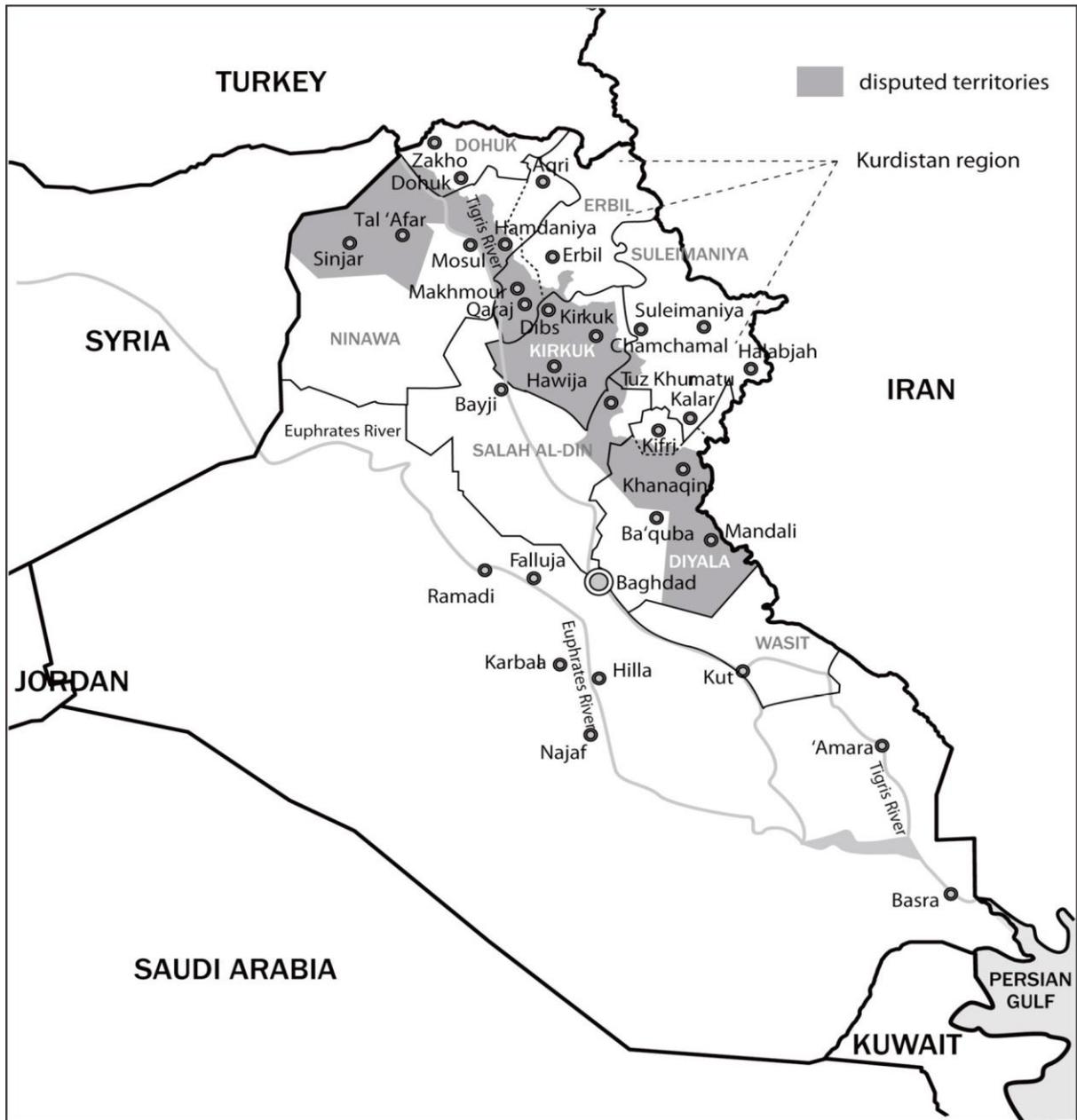
The fact-finding mission was conducted between November and January 2010 to investigate abuses against Assyrians in the disputed territories of the Nineveh Plains and in the Iraq Kurdistan Region. For security reasons the Assyria Council of Europe did not visit the city of Mosul.

Assyria Council of Europe interviewed over 70 men and women of the Chaldo-Assyrian community, both privately and in group settings. Interviews were conducted mainly in Syriac and Arabic, without a translator,

persons having been identified for interview largely with the assistance of Iraqi nongovernmental organizations serving Assyrian groups. In addition, Assyria Council of Europe conducted follow-up telephone interviews and consulted official documents provided by Assyrian representatives. All of these interviewees were informed of the purpose of the interview, its voluntary nature, and the ways in which the data would be collected and used, and verbally consented to be interviewed. The names and other identifying information of many of them have been withheld in the interests of their personal security.

The report also draws on meetings in Arbil with senior Assyrian official and Iraqi Parliament member Yonadam Yousif Kanna. Assyria Council of Europe also interviewed Nineveh Provincial Council elected representative Jevara Zaia, who in the 2008 provincial elections won the Christian minority quota seat.

### Map: The Iraqi Kurdistan Region and the Disputed Territories Claimed by the Kurdistan Regional Government



Courtesy of the International Crisis Group and Human Rights Watch

# THE STRUGGLE TO EXIST

The purpose of this report is to give the facts regarding the situation of Assyrians in northern Iraq, including the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). It also outlines the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) policies towards Assyrians and other Christians of all denominations, as well as other minorities in the region. The report also outlines the reality of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leadership's policies towards these groups. Additionally, it examines and responds to the seriously misleading report presented in December 2009 by Ms. Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the KRG's High Representative to the UK in retaliation to allegations of Kurdish involvement in the killing and displacement of Mosul's Christians, and lends its support to the November 2009 report by Human Rights Watch on violence against minority communities in Nineveh province's disputed territories.

Essentially at issue is the status of the Assyrians in the disputed territories immediately south of the semi-autonomous IKR, as well as those Assyrians residing within the IKR. For nearly three decades previous Iraqi governments attempted to "Arabise" northern Iraq, forcibly driving out hundreds of thousands of non-Arabs such as Assyrians and Kurds from their homes and settling ethnic Arabs in their place. Currently, since Saddam Hussein's overthrow, the leadership of the KRG insists that it is entitled to claim this land as part of an ever-expanding Kurdish territory, stretching from the Sinjar area near the Syrian border in the west all the way to Khanaqin near the Iranian border to the southeast.

Vast segments of these disputed territories claimed by the Kurdish authorities are historical regions of other indigenous Iraqi peoples. Kirkuk, for example is historically Assyrian and Turkmen, Mosul is Assyrian and Arab, and the Nineveh Plains are home also to Assyrians, Yazidis, Shabak, Turkmen and Kaka'is. Turkmen and Arabs also predominate and outnumber Kurds in the north of Diyala province. Furthermore, the Kurdish presence in most of these territories is not ancient and the non-Kurdish communities dominate. It would not be practical to thus construct boundaries and regions along ethnic lines.

The KRG has also intensified its Kurdish nationalist outlook since 2003, which through "Kurdification" is threatening the very existence and way of life of Assyrians indigenous to those areas presently under their control. The KRG authorities have been in power since 1991, governing with semi-autonomy. They hold a significant number of posts in the Iraqi state and the Iraqi constitution, grants the IKR powers almost equal to those of the central government. This impedes the state's functionality.

While both Kurd and Arab leaderships claim the 'disputed territories,' such as the Nineveh Plains or Kirkuk, the actual facts on the ground differ from the ethnically exclusive narratives they portray. These territories are historically one of Iraq's most ethnically, linguistically, culturally, and religiously diverse areas, and for centuries they have been home to indigenous Assyrian Christians, as well as Yazidis, Shabaks, Turkmen, and other minorities. The same is true for the IKR, which is not only home to communities of indigenous Assyrians and Yazidis, but also to considerable Turkmen, Arab and Armenian communities.

Of course, Iraq's Kurds deserve to be compensated for the atrocities committed against them by the various Iraqi governments, among them genocide and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. This issue though should be considered separate from the Kurds' current struggle for political control over the disputed territories, and does not justify one ethnic group controlling the area exclusively. All victims of Saddam Hussein's Arabisation campaign should be able to return to, and rebuild, their historic communities – including Assyrians. Kurds also should not claim exclusivity of suffering, especially since, historically Kurds have been the victimisers of indigenous groups less numerous than themselves, such as Assyrians and Yazidis. In a sense nowadays, history is once again regrettably repeating itself.

The competing efforts of Arabs and Kurds to resolve their territorial disputes over northern Iraq's future have left the Assyrians, and other communities who live there in an uncertain situation. It is they who ultimately bear

the brunt of this conflict and come under growing pressure to declare their loyalty to either one side or the other, or face the consequences. They are being victimised by the heavy handed tactics of the Kurdish authorities, not the least arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, and intimidation, directed at anyone resisting Kurdish expansionist plans. The Kurdish thrust into the region has also created an opportunity and reason for Arab ultra-nationalists and Sunni extremists to continue killing members of minority groups, especially non-Muslims. It is precisely this segment of society, the shade of grey being neither Arab nor Kurd, which is struggling to exist in the new Iraq.

## I. TORMENTING NINEVEH'S "MINORITIES"

The current events and political climate of the region are dangerous for the Assyrians and other communities because they are caught in a dilemma between two larger and more powerful ethnic rivals who have over half a century of animosity between them. Many members of these communities are mentally exhausted after years of oppression under the Arabs, and they also bear the emotional baggage of persecution, massacres and raids under the Turks and Kurds in Ottoman times. They now fear again being oppressed by the Kurds who under previous Iraqi governments also shared oppression, but now have returned as the oppressors. To strengthen their hold on Nineveh and to ease its inclusion into the IKR, Kurdish leaders are campaigning on two fronts. They offer incentives such as protection and financial support, whilst repressing them to keep them under control. The aim of this is to divide the Assyrians, who will not easily identify as Kurds, and get them to agree with the KRG's plan of expansion into the disputed territories by 'referendum,' as well as pushing Yazidis, Shabak and Kaka'i communities to identify as ethnic Kurds.

### **Kurdish Patronage and Control**

Kurdish leaders are currying favour with minority communities by spending hundreds of millions of Iraqi dinars building a pro-Kurd system of patronage amongst them, and financing organisations and even political parties to compete against, undermine and challenge existing, well-established ones – most of whom oppose Kurdish control. For about five years prior to the setback of losing the 2009 provincial elections in Nineveh, the KRG had flooded the largely non-Kurdish communities in the Nineveh Plains with money to gain their support. This patronage system fosters and aggravates political divisions within these communities by creating and funding alternative civil society organisations that favour Kurdish rule, while blocking those that do not. This tactic of suppression, classically known as divide and conquer, has been used successfully in the IKR since 1991 and has served to undermine and hinder the affairs of the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) with the establishment of rival Assyrian and separatist Chaldean political parties in the region. The ADM is basically the only independent Assyrian political organisation, in north Iraq, but its functioning is severely restricted. The Turkmen in the IKR have also been treated similarly.<sup>1</sup>

The former KRG finance minister and deputy prime minister, Mr. Sargis Aghajan Mamendu, himself an Assyrian Evangelical, is known to have spent millions of dollars from the KRG's coffers in the disputed territories.<sup>2</sup> These developments include the construction of new housing units (of cheap quality and in bad areas), newly-built and renovated churches (destroying their historical character), aid distribution (only to those who agree to support the KRG's ambitions), and newly formed youth sports clubs and cultural associations (to undermine and challenge already existing ones that do not agree with the KRG's expansionist policies). Aid is distributed through the local "Christian Affairs Committee," a network recently established by Mr. Aghajan to undermine the work of the Assyrian Aid Society (AAS), which has existed since 1991.<sup>3</sup> It has also been reported that the KDP has been pressuring needy Assyrians to sign forms pledging their support for the Nineveh Plains to be annexed to the IKR and placed under KRG rule – in return for much needed assistance, rations and emergency housing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Iraqi Turkmen Human Rights Research Foundation (SOITM), "SOITM report to the UPR of Iraq," February 2010, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders (names withheld), Arbil, Dohuk, Bakhda, and Alqosh, December 2009 and January 2010; Sam Dagher, "Iraqi Christians cling to last, waning refuges," Christian Science Monitor, March 6, 2008, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0306/p01s05-wogn.html?page=1> (accessed August 17, 2009); Leila Fadel, "Kurdish expansion squeezes northern Iraq's minorities," McClatchy, November 11, 2008, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/iraq/story/55711.html>.

<sup>3</sup> "Christians Face Extinction in Northern Iraq," Newsmax.com, April 24, 2008, [http://www.newsmax.com/timmerman/christians\\_mosul\\_iraq/2008/04/24/90555.html](http://www.newsmax.com/timmerman/christians_mosul_iraq/2008/04/24/90555.html).

<sup>4</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom, "Iraq Report 2008," [http://www.uscirf.gov/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2331](http://www.uscirf.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2331).



**A soccer field built for the young people of the purely Assyrian town of Alqosh by the KRG, notice the Kurdish flags attached to it.**



**Exterior and Interior views of the *Mahabbah* (“Love”) apartment complex on the outskirts of Baritleh, near the Shabak village of Khazna.**

Mr. Aghajan has (with KRG funding) created a widespread refugee housing program throughout Assyrian areas of the Nineveh Plains. In Karimlish for example, he purchased land from the local Chaldean Catholic Church to erect 50 prefabricated housing units he named “Martyrs of Faith”. A new “exemplary village” of 20 houses was also established between Karimlish and Bakhdida for Armenian refugees and named Aghajanian in his honour, as well as another established beside the Monastery of St. Abraham near Batnaya. Two other apartment blocks, each with 150 units and named *Mahabbah* (“Love”) and *Hayat* (“Life”) were established near Baritleh, and there are even some on the outskirts of Bakhdida. These housing units are often built close together with cheap materials, have poor infrastructures, and are miserably located far from the main Assyrian settlements, with no pastoral care, no privacy, little access to services or basic supplies – sometimes near garbage dumps or in areas where non-Assyrians predominate making them unhealthy slums and turning them into virtual prisons. More disturbingly, some of these units are placed under the control of Churches who

rent them out to the refugees, who have barely enough to survive on. If anything needs fixing in these units, the tenants must do this at their own expense.

The KRG has done everything in its power to control the Assyrians within the IKR and the disputed territories, and to keep them loyal to themselves. In the Assyrian villages of the Nineveh Plains, the *peshmerga*, the official army of the KRG, are in charge of this. The KRG illegally funds private militias ultimately loyal to it, instead of allowing members of minority communities to join the police force or Iraqi military – providing them with equipment and support, such as rifles, radios and meagre salaries. Without the KRG's support for this militia, they could not exist. Officially these are created not to provide a police role but to protect the minorities from exterior violence. In reality, though, they ingrain Kurdish dominance through creating a local armed group of mercenaries.<sup>5</sup> The militia are illegitimate since they fall outside the structure of official Iraqi government security forces and are more likely to support certain political parties and their KRG paymaster rather than uphold the rule of law.<sup>6</sup> In short, these militias known as “Church Guards” or even “Sargis’ Guards,” who guard the checkpoints at the entrance of each Assyrian town and village in the Nineveh Plains, are another means of KRG control on the region. The militia, funded by Mr. Aghajan, has at least 1,200 members deployed in Bakhdida and surrounding villages.<sup>7</sup> Kurdish authorities insist that if they and Kurdish security forces were not present to secure the Nineveh Plains, the ethnic communities in the area would be more easily exposed to infighting, and devastating attacks by armed Sunni Arab extremist groups. The KRG has even asked the federal government in Baghdad to incorporate them into the local police forces but this suggestion has been duly refused.

It was the KRG in the first place (through Mr. Khasro Goran) which vetoed the establishment of a local Iraqi police force in these villages since 2006<sup>8</sup> to ensure Kurdish control of the area, and insisted on creating this system of KRG-loyal “Church Guards,” similar to the Kurdish “Village Guards” used by the Turkish government against Kurdish civilians during its war against the PKK. Even Shabaks made a written request proposing the establishment of their own community police force of 500 men to protect their towns and villages, but a local Kurdish official dismissed it even though it had been approved by Prime Minister al-Maliki.<sup>9</sup> Under international law there is no right for minorities to set up their own security force, but rather the government has a duty to provide reasonable protection without discrimination. The Kurdish authorities though have set up militia, but refuse the idea of Iraq's armed forces protecting minorities and have rejected the idea of allowing them to establish their own police forces to protect their people.

More disturbingly, the Kurdish authorities have favoured and enriched many religious leaders of the minority communities, paying for expensive new places of worship and facilities in a bid to win over the support of their religious establishments.<sup>10</sup> In return, community leaders, village heads and clergymen have sent numerous requests to Iraqi officials requesting their areas to be added to the IKR:

*“We, the signatories below, leaders, clergymen, and village heads of the Christians (Chaldeans-Syriacs-Assyrians) in the Tell-Kayf district request the adding of the Tell-Kayf district to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. So that we may have autonomy as Christians included in the Government of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.*

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<sup>5</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders (names withheld) in Arbil, Alqosh and Bakhdida, December 2009 and January 2010.

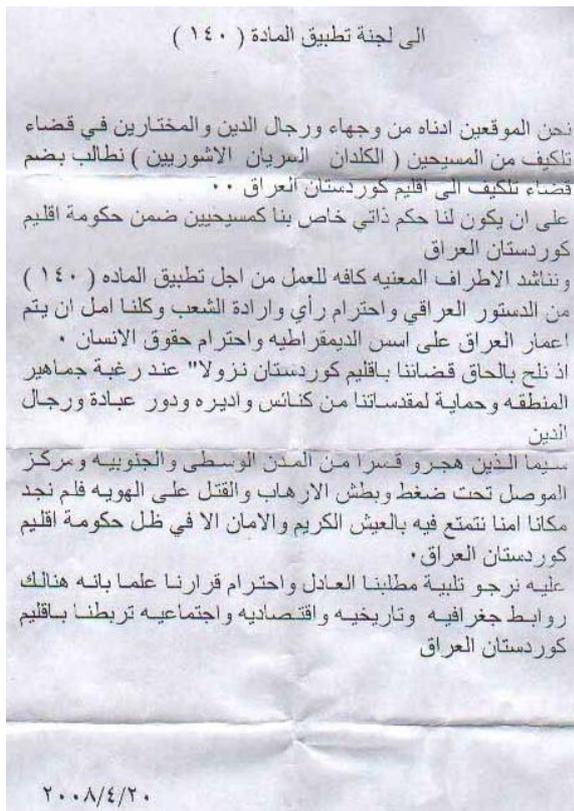
<sup>6</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders (names withheld) in Alqosh and Bakhdida, December 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Ernesto Londoño, “In Iraq's North, Ethnic Strife Flares as Vote Draws Closer,” Washington Post, January 28, 2009, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/27/AR2009012703436\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/27/AR2009012703436_pf.html).

<sup>8</sup> “Kurdish Militia, Iraqi Police Terrorizing Assyrians in North Iraq,” AINA July 7, 2006, <http://www.aina.org/releases/20060706111253.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch, “On Vulnerable Ground,” pp. 38-39; and Sam Dagher, “Minorities Trapped in Northern Iraq's Maelstrom,” New York Times, August 15, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/16/world/middleeast/16khazna.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders (names withheld) in Arbil, Dohuk, Alqosh, Bakhdida and Baritleh, December 2009 and January 2010.



A copy of the original letter quoted above.

The KRG denies many Churches and Christian aid organisations funding for assistance programs geared at Internally Displaced People (IDPs) for the simple reason that they have not pledged support to the KDP. The Kurdish authorities have also spent a significant amount of money on the cultural and religious activities of Yazidis, and pay the salaries of the employees of the Lalish Cultural Center, which has branches in most Yazidi towns.<sup>12</sup> Most of these towns also have uniformly built Lalish Halls and temples built with KRG funding.



**Left:** A Yazidi Lalish Hall at Deraboun, note the Kurdish flag above its main entrance; **Right:** A lavish new convent locals have dubbed the “five-star hotel,” built above Alqosh by the local Chaldean Catholic Bishop, with KRG funding.

<sup>11</sup> Letter to the committee enforcing Article 140, dated April 20, 2008, and kept on file by Assyria Council of Europe.

<sup>12</sup> Middle East Institute, “Social Change Amidst Terror and Discrimination: Yezidis in the New Iraq,” no. 18, August 2008, <http://www.mei.edu/Portals/0/Publications/Yezidis-in-the-New-Iraq.pdf>.

Since Nineveh's disputed territories represent some of Iraq's poorest, most under-developed, and neglected areas, which lack many basic services and employment opportunities (various estimates put the unemployment rate between 30 and 40 percent!); many impoverished families in the north have welcomed this Kurdish patronage and financial aid, which for most is the only support available to them. Some of them feel they are entitled to it after a long history of being oppressed by Kurds, not knowing that they are actually being used for their numbers and votes.

### **Kurdish Threats and Intimidation**

Through their patronage Kurds are also working to Kurdify the local population. During the Arabsation and Anfal campaigns, all non-Arabs suffered together and were similarly forced to "correct" their nationality to identify as Arabs or risk expulsion from their homes. Today, members of these ethnic communities speak of their fear of being forcibly assimilated once again, this time by the Kurds. In a similar fashion to the "nationality correction" policy of Saddam's former Baathist government, members of ethnic groups in the Nineveh Plains have reported that they were forced to not identify themselves as a member of a minority community since the two registration options provided are Kurd or Arab, in order to access education or healthcare services.<sup>13</sup> Yazidis and Shabaks are not recognised as separate ethnicities and Assyrians that originate from northern Iraq are encouraged more and more to identify as Kurdistani or Kurdish Christians. At checkpoints and in all levels of administration in the IKR and Kurdish-controlled parts of the disputed territories, Assyrians are called Christians with no recognition of their distinct ethnic identity.



**Left:** Bishop Isaac of the Assyrian Church of the East in Dohuk, prays over the coffin of Ammo Baba, notice the Kurdish and KDP flags draped over it; **Right:** An Assyrian lady in 'Aqrah, member of the Kurdistan Women's Union, wears a golden map of "Kurdistan" presented to her as a gift from the KDP for her many years of devoted service.

When Ammo Baba, the father of Iraqi soccer coaching and a proud Assyrian, passed away in at a hospital in Dohuk in mid-2009 after a long illness, not only was his coffin transported to Baghdad draped in the Kurdish and KDP flags, but the local bishop of the Assyrian Church of the East was forced to pray over it with them in place. The late Ammo Baba was neither a Kurd, nor was he a KDP

<sup>13</sup> UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, "Human Rights Report: 1 January – 30 June 2008," pp. 19-21.

member.<sup>14</sup> Those who reject this imposed Kurdish identity pose a direct threat to the Kurdish authorities' claim that Assyrian, Yazidi and Shabak territories belong in "Kurdistan", and are thus prone to harsh attacks and discrimination by Kurds. Those that do not reject it are targeted by insurgent Sunni Arab groups that view them as pro-Kurdish.

The KRG has also engaged in discriminatory behaviour against non-Kurdish minorities. Many Assyrians and Yazidis living in the Nineveh Plains claim that the KRG confiscated their property without compensation and that it has begun building settlements on their land. The KDP also dominates judiciary in Nineveh province, routinely discriminating against non-Kurds and failing to enforce judgments in their favour. Many Assyrians and Yazidis also face restrictions when entering the IKR and must obtain KRG approval to find jobs in areas within Nineveh province administered by them, or under the security protection of the *peshmerga*. Early reports from the area also mentioned killings of Assyrians by agents of Kurdish political parties.<sup>15</sup>

In the two towns of Ba'shiqa and Bahzani the Kurdification process has been more pronounced. Here the original inhabitants are Assyrians and Yazidis who for centuries have spoken neither Syriac nor Kurdish, but Arabic. Here, not only have Kurdish authorities renamed the towns Bashik and Barzan in the local signage, but most street and shop signs in and around the towns are now also written in Kurdish. On entering the towns one is greeted with yellow signs (yellow being the colour of the KDP) bearing the slogans: "Bashik and Barzan, heart of Kurdistan" in Kurdish, and "Ba'shiqa and Bahzani support al-Barzani!" in Arabic. The sign welcoming visitors to the municipality is also in Kurdish.

Taking for granted that Yazidis must be Kurds, the Kurdish authorities controlling Ba'shiqa and Bahzani have embarked on a campaign to force the Yazidis of these towns to learn and speak Kurdish. This is reminiscent of the "Citizen, speak Turkish!" campaign conducted in Kemalist Turkey where non-Turkish citizens were publicly shamed into speaking Turkish. They have also adorned the landscape below the local Yazidi shrines visible above the towns with a large Kurdish flag, and erected a statue of a Mirza Beg Daseni, a Yazidi Emir who governed Mosul in 1649, again with a Kurdish flag fluttering next to it. This statue has enraged local Sunni Arabs from Mosul who see this as separatist move taken to disrespect them.



**The Entrance to Ba'shiqa, and the yellow Kurdish signs to be seen there.**

<sup>14</sup> Interview conducted in Dohuk by Assyria Council Europe with an Assyrian journalist (name withheld) who was present at the ceremony, December 2009.

<sup>15</sup> "Kurdish Resolution Threatens Assyrian Lands in Iraq", AINA November 3, 2003, <http://www.aina.org/releases/landtransfer.htm>; and "Kurdish Mob Viciously Murders Two Assyrians," AINA December 2, 1997, <http://www.aina.org/releases/murder.htm>.



More yellow signs in Kurdish and Arabic at the square before entering Ba'shiqa.



Left: Kurdish flags compete with Yazidi shrines in the landscape; Right: The infamous statue of Mirza Beg Daseni.



Left: The former public image of Saddam, now part of Barzani's propoganda machine; Right: The sign at the entrance to Batnaya, marked in Syriac, Kurdish, then Arabic.

A former public portrait of Saddam Hussein, whitewashed since 2003, in the Assyrian town of Tall-Kepe is now adorned with an Arabic slogan which illustrates the length to which the Kurdish authorities are trying to Kurdify the region: “al-Barzani, an historic elected leader for the people of Kurdistan. Congratulations to the people of the Tell-Kayf district on their *Kurdistaniness* and their loving support for this leader.” Three consecutive frames around the central panel of this former portrait bear the graffitied slogan: “Peace, freedom, democracy” (the motto of the KDP) in Kurdish, Arabic and Syriac. Here Kurds number only 15 families, whilst Sunni Arabs now comprise about 60% of the population. The signs welcoming visitors to Assyrian towns in the same district are all written in Syriac, Kurdish and Arabic – despite the fact that they neither lie within the IKR, nor do they have any Kurdish residents.

It is apparent that whilst at the same time providing financial assistance to Assyrians and other communities (albeit at a price), the Kurdish authorities resort to heavy-handed tactics in response to dissidents amongst them who challenge the control of the KRG and especially the KDP. The *peshmerga* forces and their specialised *Asayish* intelligence units (who often disguise themselves as the police or military) rely largely on intimidation, threats, restriction of access to services, random arrests and extrajudicial detentions, to persuade their political opponents and ordinary members of these communities to support the KRG’s plan to expand into the disputed territories.<sup>16</sup> In late 2004 an armed group of KDP militia attacked St. John the Baptist Syriac Catholic church in Bakhdida, and several residents were gathered up, severely beaten, insulted, and finally taken away. On another occasion an armed KDP group attacked an Assyrian family in the same town.<sup>17</sup> On February 17, 2008, KRG authorities arrested and held incommunicado for four days Assyrian blogger Johnny Khoshaba al-Raykani,<sup>18</sup> a resident of Tall-Kepe, based on articles he had posted attacking KRG-linked corruption within the Assyrian Church of the East. For most of his ordeal he was kept in a makeshift prison in the village of Sikrine within the IKR. Also of note is the arbitrary arrest and detainment of Mr. Hazim Nuh, a member of the ADM, Hammurabi Human Rights Organisation, and Tell-Kayf District Council, in 2009.<sup>19</sup> Besides this fear factor Assyria Council of Europe found that in some extreme cases they often resorted to violence, and even torture. The victims are then threatened with death if they report the incident.<sup>20</sup>

According to many people who spoke with Assyria Council of Europe these tactics, combined with the financial and security incentives, have so far kept these groups in tow. The Kurdish authorities and their security forces are thus seen to be the tools of an overbearing, all-pervading and highly-effective authoritarian regime which, through its reach controls ordinary people through fear. KRG officials, in turn, have vehemently denied allegations that they have been responsible for these acts of intimidation and violence, blaming them solely on Sunni Arab extremists. Part of this blatant denial was the KRG’s desperate response in December 2009 to the Human Rights Watch report of November that year, a one-sided report presented by Ms. Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman titled, “The Status of Christians in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders (names withheld) in Arbil, Dohuk, Alqosh, Baritleh and Bakhdida, December 2009 and January 2010.

<sup>17</sup> “Armed Kurdish Groups Terrorize Assyrian Town in Iraq,” AINA January 4, 2005, <http://www.aina.org/releases/20050117124917.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interview with Johnny Khoshaba in Tall-Kepe, December 2009. Johnny’s blog is in Arabic and may be accessed at: <http://alsarkha.uv.ro/>.

<sup>19</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interview with Hazim Nuh in Batnaya, December 2009.

<sup>20</sup> UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, “Human Rights Report: 1 July – 31 December 2008,” pp. 15-16.

<sup>21</sup> Kurdistan Regional Government: UK Representation, “The Status of Christians in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq,” December 2009, p.2.

## Intimidation ahead of the 2009 Provincial Elections

According to the UN, allegations of Kurdish intimidation of other ethnic groups in the Nineveh Plains increased at the approach of provincial elections toward the end of 2008. The votes of the non-Kurdish communities were crucial to Kurdish hopes of winning the elections and thus boosting their territorial claims. The UN even reported death threats being used to warn people off voting in favour of candidates who were running against the KDP.<sup>22</sup> Firas Josef, Ramzi Audisho and Sabri Shaya were verbally insulted, tortured and fired from their jobs because they did not vote for the pro-Kurdish Ishtar slate in the provincial elections,<sup>23</sup> and in another report, Kurdish forces confiscated ration cards from Assyrians.<sup>24</sup> In Baritleh and Bakhdida (Qaraqosh), Assyria Council of Europe spoke with members of the Assyrian militia financed by the KRG as well as residents of the slum-like housing complexes built by Mr. Aghajan to house IDPs (and for which many pay rent). They said that representatives from the Ishtar Patriotic Slate and the allied Kurdish list told them they would lose their jobs, aid and could face eviction if they did not vote for either of them.<sup>25</sup> They were also instructed to inform other Christian IDPs living in their complexes that they too would face the same fate if they did not comply. Similar tactics have been used within the IKR during elections at all levels of administration to discourage Assyrians from voting for the ADM, as well as participating in the Assyrian New Year march which is organised by the ADM annually on April 1, and to which tens of thousands of Assyrians flock. The 2009 march in Dohuk deliberately did not receive permission from Kurdish authorities until the night before it was to be held, and was thus renamed the “March of Defiance.” To further dilute the turnout, supporters of Ishtar and Aghajan staged their own celebration at the nearby village of Shiyoz, enticing attendees with promises of money and free food.<sup>26</sup>

Some representatives from the various ethnic communities, as well as Arab officials and some eyewitnesses, have even claimed that Kurdish authorities were directly involved or complied with mass bombing attacks against Nineveh’s minorities and the brutal 2008 campaign that saw nearly 40 Christians killed and over 12,500 displaced during a period of about three-weeks. They have also been implied in similar attacks against Yazidi and Shabak communities, and have been suspected as the instigators of the 2009 Christmas Day violence between Shabaks and Assyrians in the town of Baritleh. This incident saw dead and wounded on both sides, and was used by Kurdish security forces as an excuse to take complete control of that strategic town. It has been suggested that the Kurdish authorities are even working in cooperation with Sunni Arab extremist groups in order to keep the disputed areas outside the KRG in constant turmoil, and in need of *peshmerga* protection, while at the same time providing an obvious target at which to point the blame. The KRG, which has the weapons and the urgent desire to control the disputed territories, is also suspected of having covertly carried out these attacks and others to “persuade” fearful members of these groups that they are better off under the protective aegis of the IKR which, as we shall see below, has been disastrous for Assyrians that have lived there since 1991.

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<sup>22</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders (names withheld) in Arbil, Alqosh and Bakhdida, December 2009 and January 2010.

<sup>23</sup> “Assyrians in North Iraq Fired for Not Voting for Pro-Kurdish Slate”, AINA, February 20, 2009, <http://www.aina.org/releases/20090220154846.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> “Kurdish Forces Confiscating Ration Cards, Weapons From Assyrians in North Iraq”, Christians of Iraq, October 23, 2008, <http://www.christiansofiraq.com/kurconfiscationofassyrianweapons.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with residents of an IDP housing complex, as well as two militia members, in Baritleh and Assyrian community leaders (names withheld) in Arbil, Dohuk, Alqosh and Bakhdida, December 2009 and January 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders (names withheld) in Dohuk, December 2009.

## II. Targeting the “Minorities” for Murder

With such diversity in its population and such wealth of natural resources, as well as a rich history replete with enmities centuries old, and a background of wrongs between the different ethnic groups, the Nineveh province was the most likely to become the battleground of the various factions fighting each other for control of the country. As this slowly has become the reality in the province, it has left the members of minority communities vulnerable to brutal attacks which have shaken them to the core. Faced with politically or religiously motivated killings by unknown assailants, threats and intimidation, some areas are seeing the last indigenous Assyrians leave forever.

### A Violent Cocktail

Soon after 2003, when US-led coalition forces entered Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) dispersed Iraq’s entire military, police force and security apparatus – except for the Kurdish *peshmerga*. Sunni extremist groups took advantage of this chaotic situation, recruiting from amongst the thousands of battle-hardened, disappointed, and newly unemployed Iraqi military and security personnel, as well as many Arabs displaced by the Kurds’ reversal of “Arabisation.” Their objective was to sow disorder throughout Iraq and initiate sectarian violence. The number of Sunni and Shiite men drawn into the fray increased as the fighting spread.<sup>27</sup> The sectarian conflict reached its height in mid-2006 with an unparalleled proportion of killings, enforced disappearances, kidnappings, torture, and attacks on places of worship, including mosques and churches.<sup>28</sup> While all Iraqis have suffered from the devastating bloodshed in the years that followed the regime-change, the smaller ethnic communities have been predominantly the ones at greater risk of attack. They also stand to lose more than the larger ethnic and religious groups in the country.

As one man interviewed by Assyria Council of Europe in Bakhdida stated, “Non-Muslim minorities represent about five percent of the country’s total population. Christians alone count for three percent. If one of us is killed, then that is equal to nearly 32 of the others – 20 Shiite Arabs, seven Sunni Arabs and five Kurds. By comparison, that would put our loss of 40 Christians in the 2008 Mosul killing campaign equal to about 800 Shiite Arabs, 280 Sunni Arabs, 200 Kurds – or 1,280 Muslim lives – all this in the space of a few weeks. I am unaware of this having happened to any of those larger ethnic groups.”<sup>29</sup>

Despite achieving security in many parts of Iraq by early 2008, Nineveh was still among those most dangerous and unstable. The attacks in the city or the province were not even swayed by a major military offensive in the spring of 2009, when 4,000 US and more than 25,000 Iraqi security personnel swept through each of Mosul’s neighbourhoods.<sup>30</sup> As part of a security agreement with the Iraqi central government, most US forces withdrew from the cities to their bases on June 30, 2009. After this date attacks in Nineveh, particularly against minorities, saw a considerable increase, and they continue even as this report is being prepared. In July and August, 2009, attacks against Yazidis, Shabaks and Turkmen at Tall-A’far, Shirakhan, Khazna and Sinjar, killing in all about 140 of their number and injuring nearly 500.<sup>31</sup>

While other cities in Iraq have seen improvements in their security situation, accompanied by a reduction in the number of armed attacks by Islamists, Mosul’s situation has grown desperately worse, with bombings and shootings nearly every day, and streets littered with rotting corpses.<sup>32</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas Wagner, “Wall to Divide Shi’a and Sunnis in Baghdad,” Associated Press, April 20, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> “Gunmen Blow Up Mosques,” Reuters, June 20, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interview with an Assyrian community leader (name withheld) in Bakhdida, December 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Steven Lee Myers and Campbell Robertson, “Insurgency Remains Tenacious in North Iraq,” New York Times, July 9, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/10/world/middleeast/10iraq.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch, “On Vulnerable Ground,” p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> “Al Qaeda shows resilience in N.Iraq-US commander,” Reuters, August 11, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/featuredCrisis/idUSN11532842>.

city has become a strategic centre for many enduring Sunni insurgent groups. In part this is because of Sunni Arab fears regarding the increase in Kurdish control over the region, but this is also strengthened by resentment over the displacement of fellow Sunni Arabs due to the reversal of Arabisation. Their continued disillusionment has made way for extremist safe havens to operate in their neighbourhoods, persecuting members of minorities at will.



**Left: Destruction is still visible at Khazna even four months after the devastating explosion of August 2009; Right: Due to the constant threat of bomb attacks, makeshift roadblocks have been constructed in Assyrian towns and villages to protect Churches.**

The attacks by Sunni Arab insurgent groups have caused direct damage to the social infrastructure of the minority communities, leaving their victims and others affected in shock – too scared to continue their day to day business. Despite the fact that deep political divisions exist within each of these groups, i.e. between those who suggest union with the KRG and others who prefer remaining under Iraq’s central government, members from both sides that Assyria Council of Europe interviewed conceded that their current situation has become desperate. Most believe they are now being faced with the ultimatum of either extermination or emigration– both of which would see the end of their centuries-old existence. Between August 2008 and August 2009 about 1,050 Assyrian families from the Tell-Kayf district alone left Iraq (120 from Tall-Kepe, 310 from Batnaya, 60 from Beqopa, 420 from Tisqopa, 90 from Alqosh, and 50 from others),<sup>33</sup> and many more are waiting their turn.

## **Killings of Assyrians**

Since 2003 armed groups of often masked assailants have repeatedly attacked Assyrians in Iraq. The first churches were bombed on June 24, 2004 and since then the total has amounted to 61 churches. Hundreds of Assyrians have been kidnapped (especially in Mosul’s Hay al-Sina’ah quarter) and between 730 and 2,000 killed throughout Iraq,<sup>34</sup> including at least 5 clergymen; and hundreds of Assyrian businesses have been firebombed, leaving hundreds of thousands of Assyrians internally displaced, or living as refugees in neighbouring countries. It is estimated that up to 50% of Assyrians have fled Iraq to Syria and Jordan. Of the 750,000 Iraqi refugees in Jordan up to 150,000 are Assyrians. Of the 1.2 million Iraqi refugees in Syria, between 70,000 and 500,000 are Assyrians.

<sup>33</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interview with Basim Bello, Alqosh, December 2009.

<sup>34</sup> “Christians feel heavy loss in Iraq war,” DPA, February 24, 2010; and “Report: 1,960 Christians killed in Iraq since 2003 invasion,” DPA, December 26, 2009.



**Left:** Imad, an Assyrian IDP from Baghdad now living in Bakhdida, lost his son and brother in to kidnappers near Abu Ghurayb in late July 2004. The day after their abduction, his brother in law was also taken as they were searching for them. He and his family still do not know whether or not they are still alive; **Right:** Practically an orphan: This Assyrian girl’s mother died of fear during heavy fighting between warring factions in Mosul during 2004. She is now being cared for by her grandparents.



**Left:** A grieving Assyrian father in Baritleh holds papers from US forces concerning his two young daughters who worked for them as cleaners at Mosul Airport, and were murdered by terrorists in 2004; **Right:** Iman, an Assyrian IDP from Baghdad currently living in Baritleh, clutches a photo of her husband who was murdered in the desert near Ramadi in 2005.

The assailants are apparently Sunni Arabs opposed to communities of different faiths living near them, especially ones with supposed ties to the West, which is perceived as Christian. The Assyrians are also targeted due to their perceived ties with US and coalition forces in Iraq, with many of them accounting for a large number of translators, cooks and cleaners. The Christians are also seen as supporting the KRG’s claim to the disputed territories, and media networks such as Ishtar TV have not helped by publicly broadcasting Assyrian calls for their own autonomous region in the Nineveh Plains, under KRG administration. Christians are also seen as a soft target for organised crime (under the guise of jihadist extremism), due to their perceived wealth and a traditional lack of tribal or militia

ties and protection, making them prone to extortion and thievery.<sup>35</sup> Many Christian businessmen, doctors, lawyers, academics, and especially jewellers and gold traders, have been targeted for ransomed kidnappings and killings. Many Christians also suspect the complicity of other community members in informing these extremist groups of the whereabouts of “wanted people” in exchange for money or protection, or out of genuine fear for their own lives.



**Left: A grieving mother from Mosul, now a refugee in Bakhdida, clutches photographs of her murdered son and daughters in law who died in 2004, 2005 and , as she wears the *hijab* she was required to wear in public to conceal her identity; Right: An Assyrian IDP at St. Abraham’s Monastery near Batnaya displays his scar from an attack on his sewerage tanker at Hillah in 2006.**

Under the former regime (as is current practice under the KRG), only Christians and Yazidis were allowed to sell liquor because their religions do not forbid alcohol consumption. This trade, which is frowned upon by most religious Muslims, both demonised them and made them easily identifiable as members of minority groups. Another trade which singled them out was driving sewerage tankers which empty out septic tanks and dispose of the waste – practised almost exclusively by Assyrians from the town of Batnaya. Extremists have bombed, looted, and defaced liquor stores all over Iraq, and murdered their owners.<sup>36</sup> Also, many truck drivers have been brutally attacked and killed.

In Mosul, Assyrian women and girls are forced to adhere to Islamic dress codes when leaving their homes. Assyrian students travelling to Mosul University by bus from the surrounding towns are also subject to random searches by armed Islamic extremists, who beat boys are found sitting next to girls, and chastise girls who do not wear the *hijab*, which they only need to wear on the bus, though on campus they must also dress in long sleeves and ankle-length skirts. “They [the terrorists] would tell us, ‘Iraq is an Islamic country, and we must adhere to its ethics and principles.’” A student’s father recounts, “I call my daughter literally hundreds of times a day to make sure she is alright. We die a thousand times inside every time she goes to University, and we can only rest when she returns.”<sup>37</sup> Recently, up to 2,000 Assyrian students have refrained from attending the University due to the deterioration of the security situation ahead of the March 7 national elections.

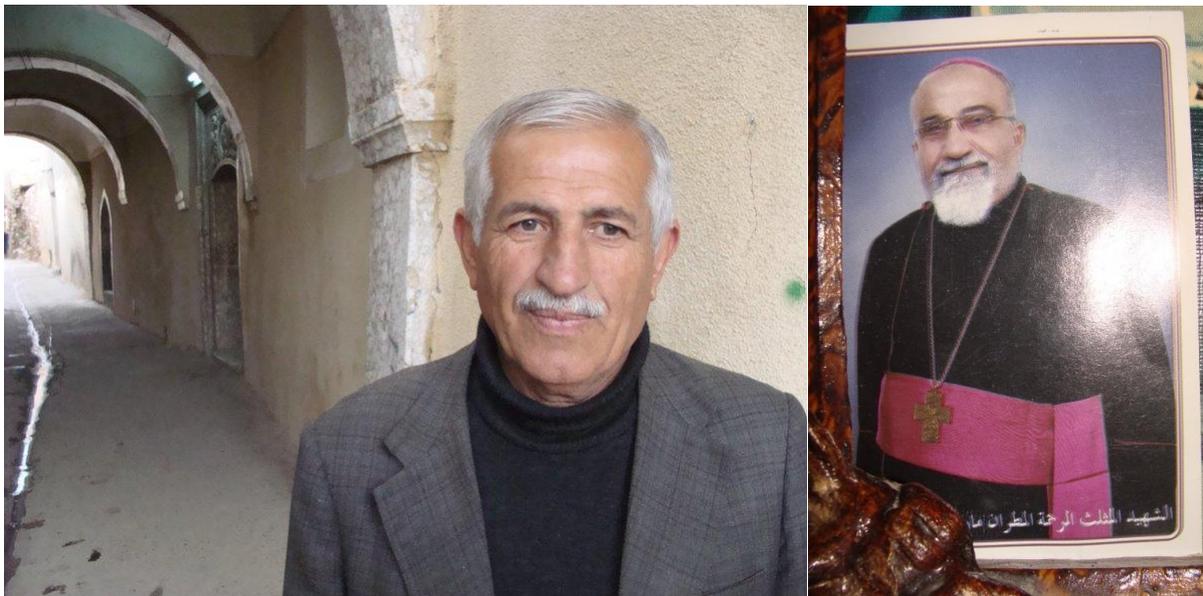
<sup>35</sup> Preti Taneja, Minority Rights Group International, “Assimilation, Exodus, Eradication: Iraq’s minority communities since 2003,” February 11, 2007, <http://www.minorityrights.org/2802/reports/assimilation-exodus-eradication-iraqs-minority-communities-since-2003-arabic-edition.html>.

<sup>36</sup> According to government sources, roughly 95 percent of the Iraq’s alcohol shops have closed after attacks and threats by Islamic extremists; *Ibid*.

<sup>37</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interview with an Assyrian Student of Mosul University and her father (names withheld) at Bakhdida, December 2009.



**An Assyrian student of Mosul University (left), and an Assyrian grandmother from Mosul (right), both in Bakhdida, demonstrate how they dress in public when in town.**



**Left: Aziz Matti Toma, father of murdered priest Fr. Ragheed Ganni, in Karimlish; Right: An image of Archbishop Rahho displayed in the home of a Syriac Orthodox man in Baritleh**

Probably the most significant attack targeting the Assyrian community was the kidnapping of Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Paulus Faraj Rahho in Mosul as he was leaving the Holy Spirit Church on February 29, 2008. The reason stated was that he failed to pay protection money or "jizya" to Islamic insurgents. His driver and bodyguards were shot and his body was found 10 days later. He is presumed to have died in captivity.<sup>38</sup> Iraqi officials duly captured the alleged leader of the kidnapers, Ahmad Ali Ahmad (known as Abu Omar), an al-Qaeda leader, and he was convicted in May 2008 and sentenced to death.<sup>39</sup> On October 9, 2006, Fr. Paulus Iskandar of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Mosul was kidnapped and his dismembered and beheaded corpse was found three days later. On

<sup>38</sup> UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, "Human Rights Report: 1 January – 30 June 2008," pp. 19-21. According to witnesses (names withheld) interviewed by Assyria Council of Europe, in December 2009, Archbishop Rahho was an ex-Baathist and his corpse was found in a Kurdish-controlled part of Mosul.

<sup>39</sup> "Death penalty over Iraq killing," BBC News Online, May 18, 2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7407489.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7407489.stm).

November 30, 2006, Pastor Mundhir al-Dayr of the Protestant Church in Mosul was kidnapped and killed with a bullet shot to his head. On June 3, 2007, Fr. Ragheed Ganni and three deacons of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Mosul were shot in their car as they left a church after conducting mass.<sup>40</sup> These killings remain largely unresolved, like most other similar killings of Assyrians, but they fit the pattern mostly used by Sunni Arab Islamists.

Between late August and November 2008 the Christian community in Mosul was shaken by a series of orchestrated killings by armed assailants, most likely Sunni Arab extremists, targeting them specifically. This wave of killings led to a mass exodus of about 2,500 Christian families from that city. No place was safe, with Christians being targeted in their homes, workplaces, and in places of worship. This began shortly after the community lobbied the Iraqi parliament to pass a law that would increase the quota of seats set aside for minorities in the upcoming provincial elections.<sup>41</sup> The attacks intensified after Christians held demonstrations in Nineveh and Baghdad on September 28 opposing the Iraqi parliament's decision to drop a provision of the provincial elections law ensuring political representation for minorities (which was later amended).<sup>42</sup> These killings left 40 Christians dead and displaced about 12,500 from their homes within a matter of weeks.<sup>43</sup> These were accompanied by the bombing of churches and Christian homes in Mosul, threatening graffiti in Christian neighbourhoods with messages such as "get out or die," and anti-Christian messages, threatening Christians if they did not leave, blasted from loudspeakers mounted on cars.<sup>44</sup> Most of the killings were based on the victims' identity cards, which the assailants would as for before they shot them dead, to make sure that they were Christian. This style of murder has known as "ID-based Killing" to the frightened local Christian community.<sup>45</sup>

According to most interviews conducted by Assyria Council of Europe, the victims had not received any direct warnings or threats prior to their murders, although other Christians may have been warned to leave by Muslim neighbours or received threatening mobile phone text messages and bullets in envelopes left on their front doorsteps. During this campaign of violence, the Kurdish-dominated security forces controlling the area were apparently unable to prevent or stop the killings.<sup>46</sup> After this Prime Minister al-Maliki replaced the Kurdish-dominated army units in Mosul with Arab units and sent in non-Kurdish policemen from Baghdad.<sup>47</sup> By mid-November roughly 80 percent of displaced Christians were reported to have returned to their homes in and around Mosul, partly because of an improvement in the security situation, but primarily for job security, and so as not to jeopardise their children's schooling.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, "Human Rights Report: 1 January – 30 June 2008"; and Assyria Council of Europe interview with Fr. Ganni's father Aziz Matti Toma Be-Ganni at Karimlish, December 2009.

<sup>41</sup> "Terrified Christian Families Flee Iraq's Mosul," FoxNews.com, October 11, 2008, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,436481,00.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Erica Goode, "Violence in Mosul Forces Iraqi Christians to Flee," New York Times, October 10, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/11/world/middleeast/11iraq.html>.

<sup>43</sup> UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, "Human Rights Report: 1 July – 31 December 2008."

<sup>44</sup> UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1830 (2008), November 6, 2008, [http://www.uniraq.org/FileLib/misc/SG\\_Report\\_S\\_2008\\_688\\_EN.pdf](http://www.uniraq.org/FileLib/misc/SG_Report_S_2008_688_EN.pdf), p. 11; and Corey Flintoff, "Some Displaced Iraqi Christians Ponder Kurds' Role," NPR, October 28, 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=96103301>.

<sup>45</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian IDPs (names withheld) in Bakhda, Dohuk, Alqosh and Batnaya, December 2009.

<sup>46</sup> UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, "Human Rights Report: 1 July – 31 December 2008," pp. 15-16.

<sup>47</sup> ICG, "Iraq's Provincial Elections: The Stakes," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5883>, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> UNHCR, "Iraq: Displaced Christians return to Mosul," November 11, 2008, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/SHIG-7LAGWG?OpenDocument&rc=3&cc=irq>.



## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَلَنْ تَرْضَى عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَى حَتَّى تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ قُلْ إِنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ هَدًى

وَلَكِنْ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

صدق الله العظيم

### تنبيهة الى من يحاول ابتزازنا

اننا نحذر وننبهة كل من يحاول ابتزازنا من خلال التعامل مع الامريكان ونشر قوات امريكية شرطة لحماية

العتبات المقدسة في دولة العراق الاسلامية وبهذا ستبقى هذه العتبات هدف المجاهدين

واننا نذكر اهل الذمة بان العراق للعراقيين الشرفاء لا كما انتم عليه الان

واللة من وراء القصد ولقد اعذر من انذرة



This is just one of the many letters received in Arabic by Assyrians and other Christians in Mosul, threatening them with certain death if they choose not to leave the city. It was sent by the “Phalanges of Just Punishment” of the “Base of the Jihad in Mesopotamia.”



**Left:** An Armenian IDP at Aghajanian shows the only photo she possesses of her late husband, who was murdered during the 2008 killing campaign in Mosul; **Right:** A grieving Assyrian man reminds himself daily of his late brother, shot dead at their factory near Mosul in July 2009.



**Left:** Many Assyrian IDPs, like this one in Batnaya, still keep the keys to their homes in the hope that one day increased security will allow them to return and live normal lives again; **Right:** *Mukhtar* George Ya'qub of Karimlish displays some of the files in his office related to IDPs that have sought refuge there.

On July 21, 2009, British Member of Parliament Edward Leigh made an Early Day Motion (EDM) regarding the “Killing of Christians in Mosul” (EDM 1964). In this EDM, Leigh notes that:

“... a *Washington Times* news report dated 26 October 2008, stated that on 17 October 2008 Iraqi security forces arrested six men in connection with the killings of Christians in Mosul and found that

*four of them had links to the Kurdish Regional Government militia, not Al Qaeda; further notes that the Kurdish Regional Government and its militia are dominated by the Kurdistan Democratic Party and that on 29 October 2008 Gulf News reported that investigations had been completed, and proved the involvement of Kurdish militias in the displacement and killing of Christians, a claim which was re-stated by Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki during a discussion with Iraqi lawmakers, according to Osama Al Nojafi, a deputy in the Iraqi parliament... ”<sup>49</sup>*

Suspicion and accusations of intent and accountability have been traded by representatives from the different communities. Some Arab and Assyrian community leaders have laid the blame on the KRG, stating that the attacks had taken place in areas where there was no insurgent activity and which whose security was controlled by the Iraqi army, dominated by a high percentage of Kurdish officers. This suggests that the terror campaign was designed to undermine the minorities' confidence in the central government's security apparatus.<sup>50</sup> Some of the murders occurred in parts of Mosul secured by Iraqi army checkpoints and, in some cases, in their immediate vicinity, leading some Assyrian and Arab representatives to believe that Kurdish officers or their proxies had a hand, or rather stood to benefit, in the attacks.<sup>51</sup> Immediately after the killings, Former KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani stated, “Those who accused the Kurds of driving the Christians and others out of Mosul are the same people who earlier accused the Kurds of an expansionist policy in Mosul and other areas.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, this leads one to speculate, in the light of the obvious Kurdish plan for expansion into the disputed territories, whether or not this may be seen as a confession of responsibility by Kurdish authorities.

The murders created for the KRG an opportunity to emerge as the benefactor of the Christian community in the eyes of the world by subsequently providing them with shelter, security, and financial assistance in the Nineveh Plains and the IKR. After the Iraqi central government promised the equivalent of about US\$127 to each displaced family, Mr. Aghajan offered each family \$212.<sup>53</sup> This would further strengthen Kurdish influence in any referendum or election that followed – as was the case with the victory of the Ishtar Patriotic Slate in January 2009 and the election of Mr. Tanios Iyou to the Nineveh provincial council. Kurdish authorities have vehemently denied these allegations and instead accused Sunni Arab extremist groups of carrying out the attacks to encourage sectarian strife.<sup>54</sup> Despite this, the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella organisation including many insurgent groups such as al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia, has rejected any allegations of responsibility.<sup>55</sup> Frustratingly, none of these allegations against the Kurds, or by the Kurds against Arabs have been backed up by evidence.

Whoever was responsible, these attacks were clearly orchestrated and widespread. Assyria Council of Europe interviewed family and friends of nine Christian victims murdered in Mosul between August and November 2008. While other Christians have returned to Mosul since, these beleaguered families remain in Assyrian villages in the Nineveh Plains, too frightened to return to their homes there. Some of them witnessed the murders first-hand, while others were able to obtain information from witnesses. They are few since many witnesses do not dare to speak, out of fear. Often bodies of murdered Christians would remain where they were killed or dumped, with notes explaining that they were to remain so as an example to others, and threatening anyone who moves them with immediate

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<sup>49</sup> Kurdistan Regional Government: UK Representation, “The Status of Christians in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq,” p.12.

<sup>50</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders (names withheld), Arbil , Bakhdida, Dohuk, and Alqosh, December 2009 and January 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders (names withheld), Arbil , Bakhdida, Dohuk, and Alqosh, December 2009 and January 2010.

<sup>52</sup> KRG.org interview with Prime Minister Barzani on attacks against Iraqi Christian community, 5 November 2008, <http://www.krg.org/articles/detail.asp?smap=02010100&lngnr=12&asnr=&anr=26340&rnr=223>.

<sup>53</sup> Fadel, “Kurdish expansion squeezes northern Iraq's minorities,” McClatchy, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/iraq/story/55711.html>.

<sup>54</sup> ICG, “Iraq's Provincial Elections: The Stakes,” Middle East Report No. 82, January 27, 2009, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5883>.

<sup>55</sup> “Iraq: Al-Qaeda denies Christian murders in north,” Adnkronos International, October 13, 2008, <http://www.adnkronos.com/AKI/English/Security/?id=3.0.2579084505>.

death. Families would also be too frightened to collect their loved ones' sadistically dismembered remains from morgues for the same reason, or to bury them. Many families were not present at their deceased's burial and do not even know where many are buried. Many still suffer from the effects of shock and trauma.<sup>56</sup> The survivors' harrowing depositions suggest a systematic and pinpointed campaign of terror, intending to devastate Mosul's Christian community with maximum impact.

Based on the interviews conducted, Assyria Council of Europe found no clear evidence suggesting that Kurds were directly involved in the killing campaign. According to most witnesses, the armed assailants spoke fluent Iraqi Arabic, which appeared to be their mother tongue, though it was most often not the dialect of Mosul but that of Arab tribesmen. Most of the gunmen were also of Arab appearance and dress, and made it clear that they were attacking Christians for religious reasons. One Assyrian witness interviewed by Assyria Council of Europe, though who has withheld her identity for fear of retribution, watched in horror from her second storey window as two armed men, dressed as Arabs and speaking Kurdish and broken Arabic to one another, proceeded to invade the home of her neighbour in a Christian neighbourhood of Mosul and attack its occupants.<sup>57</sup>

In October 2008, whilst the atrocities against Christians in Mosul were still being perpetrated, Iraq's Human Rights Ministry created a committee to look into these crimes and the resulting displacement.<sup>58</sup> The unpublished report did not conclude who was responsible for the killings, or whether Iraqi security forces could have prevented them. It did state though that evidence indicated this campaign was "targeted" "systematic" and "pre-arranged." It also stated that the "killings, targeting and threats were practiced in the eastern side (left) of the city, which was previously the safe side where security forces could move freely and smoothly as opposed to the west side (right) which is considered by the people of Mosul as the domicile of armed groups."<sup>59</sup>

### **Intimidation ahead of the 2010 National Elections**

In November 2009 Iraq had seen the lowest amount of civilian deaths since the regime-change over six years previously,<sup>60</sup> and the Chaldean Catholic community also celebrated the appointment of a new archbishop to replace the late Mgr. Faraj Rahho.<sup>61</sup> Despite this apparent calm, members of minority communities in the Nineveh province began in mid-November to appeal to local and national authorities for protection amid warnings of increased attacks in the lead-up to the national elections, scheduled for March 2010.<sup>62</sup> These appeals were not unwarranted. On November 26, 2009, St. Ephrem's Chaldean Catholic Church and St Theresa Convent of Dominican nuns in Western New Mosul (an area under the control of Sunni Arabs and previously safe) were subjected to bombings.<sup>63</sup> Local Christian sources reported that the "attack was like a Mafia warning", a message to Christians "to get out of the city," and suggested that Kurds might be involved in the action in order to get Christians out of the area and into the Nineveh Plains.<sup>64</sup> In fact, the Church had already received threats calling for them to leave before the elections.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders and IDPs (names withheld), Dohuk, Bakhdida, Shiyo, and Alqosh, December 2009 and January 2010.

<sup>57</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian IDP (name withheld), Tell-Kepe, December 2009.

<sup>58</sup> Administrative order no. A/15178 dated October 14, 2008.

<sup>59</sup> Iraq Ministry of Human Rights Fact-Finding Committee, "Report on Displacement of Christian Families in Nineveh Governorate," see "Human Rights Watch, On Vulnerable Ground," p. 36.

<sup>60</sup> "Iraq Civilian Deaths Drop to Lowest Level of War," Reuters, November 13, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> "Mosul Celebrating the Appointment of New Archbishop After the Death of Mgr Rahho," AsiaNews, November 30, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> "Minority Communities in North Iraq Appeal for Protection," IRIN, November 16, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> "Iraq Attacks Hit Christian Sites," AFP, November 26, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> "Christian Buildings Attacked in North Iraq," AsiaNews, December 1, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> "Iraqi Christians Flee Pre-Election Violence," DPA, December 11, 2009.

The first killings began on December 10, 2009 (nearly three months ahead of the elections), with the shooting that night of two Assyrian brothers - Ranko, 24, a newly-wed, and Rimon, 18, sons of Najib Patros from Batnaya – in the northern Mosul district of Hay al-Baladiyat. They had been working in Mosul driving sewerage trucks – a job which made them easy targets as Christians – and had received no prior warning that they would be prone to attack. When interviewed by Assyria Council of Europe, their father expressed how disappointed he was that he and other family members were unable to obtain any information from witnesses regarding the assailants. “They are too scared to talk,” he said, “I guess they fear for their own lives too.” Patros is planning to leave Iraq with the rest of his family since he is too frightened to remain in the country, and his community is facing an uncertain future if they remain and their rights are not secured.<sup>66</sup>



**A Grieving father. Najib Patros of Batnaya holds up photos of his two murdered sons, Ranko, 24 (left), and Rimon, 18 (right).**

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<sup>66</sup> Assyria Council of Europe interview with Najib Patros at Batnaya, December 2009.

Amidst this tide of uncertainty, the Hammurabi Human Rights Organisation and Christian Solidarity International held a conference in Baghdad on December 11 and 12, 2009, researching the future of the Christian presence in Iraq under the slogan “a dignified return for Iraqi refugees.” It was a successful meeting attended by Christian community and government representatives from all over Iraq, and abroad. Most significant was the attendance of Assyrian IDPs and refugees that had been the victims of violence in Mosul and Baghdad, and who were brave enough to tell of their harrowing experiences.

On December 15, 2009, two more explosions targeted the Annunciation Syriac Catholic church in New Mosul’s Majmu’ah al-Thaqafiyah quarter, as well as the centuries-old Mary Immaculate (al-Tahirah) Syriac Orthodox church and a Christian school in the al-Shifa’ quarter of Mosul’s old city.<sup>67</sup> Five people were killed in the attacks in Mosul, including a newborn infant, and another 40 wounded. The US Military issued a statement to the effect that they had detained several al-Qaeda members responsible for the attacks. On December 17, 2009, Assyrian Zaid Majid Yusuf, 30, was killed in a drive by shooting as he was walking to his home after parking his car. The gunman had first asked him if he was a Christian and even got out of the car to make sure that Zaid was dead. On the morning of December 23, 2009, another set of explosions struck the historic Chaldean Catholic church of St. George and the eighth century Syriac Orthodox Cathedral of St. Thomas in the Khazraj quarter of Mosul’s old city leaving three dead, including one Chaldean Catholic and two Muslims, and five injured. By this time the Christian death toll had reached five.<sup>68</sup> On December 24, Basel Isho Yohanna, 23, was shot at point-blank range in front of his home in the Mosul neighbourhood of Hay al-Jaza’ir. On December 28, 2009, Sarah Edmond Youkhana, an Assyrian student in the Faculty of Education at Mosul University, was kidnapped. Sarah’s kidnappers contacted her family and informed them they are an Islamic front, calling themselves “Islamic State of Iraq, an al-Qaeda organization.” No demands were made. Between October and December 2009, two Assyrians had been killed in Hay al-Tahrir and one in the 17 Tammuz neighbourhood, as well as four Christian homes bombed in Hay al-Wahdah, Tall-Rumman, Matahin and al-Hadba.

It was not until January 2010, though, that the attacks against Christians and other minority groups began, intensifying in February with a slowly-escalating campaign of “targeted executions” that have horrified the community in Mosul. On January 12, an armed group killed Hikmat Sleiman, 75, who owned a small grocery store. On January 17, Saadallah Youssif Jorjis, a 52-year-old Syrian Catholic, was shot dead. The man, married and father of two daughters, was the owner of a shop selling fruit and vegetables in the Thaqafah neighbourhood, near Mosul University. His murder coincided with the arrival of the new Chaldean Catholic archbishop, Msgr. Emil Shimoun Nona, in the city.<sup>69</sup> At noon on January 18, an armed commando executed Abdullahad Amjad Hamid, a married Syriac Catholic, who owned a small grocery store in the al-Siddiq neighbourhood, in northern Mosul. He was killed outside his home in the suburb of Hay al-Baladiyat, not far from his workplace. Local witnesses reported that the murder took place in front of the security forces, who saw all the phases of the attack, but did not intervene. On January 26, Raghid Sabah Tobia, a young Assyrian, was badly wounded when his store, not far from the Chaldean Catholic church, in the Dawwasa neighbourhood, was attacked. That same afternoon another shop in the same neighbourhood, but owned by a Yazidi and near the Syriac Catholic chapel of Qasr al Mutran, was also attacked.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> John Pontifex, “Churches come under attack in Iraq,” ACN, December 15, 2009; and “Iraqi Christians fear more attacks after two church bombings in Mosul,” Catholic News Agency, December 16, 2009, [http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/iraqi\\_christians\\_fear\\_more\\_attacks\\_after\\_two\\_church\\_bombings\\_in\\_mosul/](http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/iraqi_christians_fear_more_attacks_after_two_church_bombings_in_mosul/).

<sup>68</sup> “Mosul attacks on two Christian churches, three dead and several injured,” AsiaNews, December 23, 2009; also Hamed Ahmed, “1200 year old church bombed in Mosul,” AP, December 23, 2009.

<sup>69</sup> “Two Christians killed in Mosul, Iraq,” AsiaNews, January 18, 2010.

<sup>70</sup> “Young man wounded in new anti-Christian attack in Mosul,” AsiaNews, January 26, 2010.

On February 14 armed assailants killed Rayan Salem Elias, 43, a Chaldean Catholic who ran a business dealing in a traditional meat dish, outside his home in Mosul's east on Sunday. On February 15 greengrocer Fattuhi Munir, 40, a Syriac Catholic, was gunned down inside his shop in a drive-by shooting in the city's western Sahaba district.<sup>71</sup>

On February 16, a gunman accompanied by two others emerged from a car in Mosul's northern neighbourhood of Hay al-‘Arabi and fired at two Assyrian university students they waited at a bus stop with an automatic weapon. Speaking in Arabic, the assailants asked them for their identity cards.<sup>72</sup> After Zia Toma, a 21-year-old engineering student, produced his card, one of the assailants shot him point-blank in the head, killing him instantly. Ramsin Shmael, a 22-year-old pharmacy student, tried to run but was shot twice; one bullet shattered his teeth. The assailants fled the scene, apparently assuming they had killed both students, although Shmael is seriously wounded with little hope of survival.<sup>73</sup> The students and their families had escaped to northern Iraq from Baghdad in the summer of 2007 after receiving threats to kill them unless they converted to Islam. Now their family members plan to move again - this time out of Iraq.<sup>74</sup>

At around 1:00 pm on February 17, the bullet-riddled body of Wissam George, a 20-year-old Assyrian, was recovered on a street in the south Mosul residential neighbourhood of Wadi al-‘Ayn. He had gone missing that morning on his way to his institute, where he was studying to be a teacher.<sup>75</sup>

By February 20, at least 10 Christian families known to the new Chaldean Catholic archbishop had fled Mosul.<sup>76</sup> That same day police found the body of Assyrian shopkeeper Adnan Hanna al-Dahan, 57, Syrian Orthodox, in Hay al-Baladiyat, shot to death with bullet wounds to his head. He had been kidnapped by unknown assailants from inside his grocery shop in the neighbourhood of al-Habba, also in northern Mosul, the week before.<sup>77</sup>

On February 23, a Syriac Catholic man, Ishoo Maroki, 59 and his two sons, Mokhlas, 31, and Bassim, 25, were gunned down in their west Mosul home by unknown assailants. The gunmen also stole the family's gold before escaping on three motorcycles.<sup>78</sup> They were the family of Fr. Mazin Ishoo, who had despite being kidnapped in 2007 and released upon payment of ransom had decided to stay in Mosul to serve the community. In one Christian house in Mosul all the family members were killed - five people. First the attackers drove by and shot from their car, they then forced themselves into the house and gunned them down, throwing two bodies outside as a cruel warning for others.

It has been estimated that in the previous week, 40 to 50 Christian families, consisting of an average of five members per family, had left Mosul and, since the previous weekend, one or two families left the city every day. Between February 24 and 26, Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Emil Shimoun Nona stated that Mosul is going through a "humanitarian emergency" and that "hundreds of Christian families" have left the city in search of shelter, leaving behind their homes, property, commercial activities.<sup>79</sup> The fleeing families are heading for the string of Assyrian villages, towns, churches and monasteries to the east and north of the city,<sup>80</sup> as well as Dohuk and Ankawa in the IKR. The majority

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<sup>71</sup> "Gunmen kill two Assyrian shop owners in Iraq," AFP, February 16, 2010.

<sup>72</sup> Although identity cards in Iraq do not indicate religion or ethnicity, assailants have often used the victim's name as a marker of his or her religious or ethnic affiliation. Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Protect Christians from violence," February 24, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> "Three Christians killed in north Iraq," AFP, February 17, 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Protect Christians from violence," February 24, 2010.

<sup>75</sup> Mujahid Mohammed, "Fourth Assyrian killed in northern Iraq in as many days," AFP, February 18, 2010; and "Spate of Christian killings before Iraq March vote," Reuters, February 18, 2010.

<sup>76</sup> Simon Caldwell, "Mosul Archbishop says Christians live in panic, targeted in killings," CNS, February 20, 2010.

<sup>77</sup> "Fifth Assyrian killed in a week in north Iraq," AFP, February 20, 2010.

<sup>78</sup> "Five dead, including three Assyrians, in Iraq attacks," AFP, February 24, 2010.

<sup>79</sup> Edward Pentin, "Mass media ignore Iraq Christian emergency," February 27, 2010, <http://www.ncregister.com>.

<sup>80</sup> Jareer Ahmad, "Christians flee Iraq's Mosul," February 25, 2010, <http://www.azzaman.com>.

of those remaining in Mosul are those who cannot afford to leave, such as the poor, elderly and handicapped. Estimates from less than 10 years ago enumerated well over 100,000 Christians in Mosul, though today they vary from 150-300 families (or 2,000 to 3,000 people) living in the city. As some observers have described, Mosul has become “a graveyard for Christians.”

The authorities do not have the power to put a stop to the deteriorating situation. The governor of Mosul and the police chief are reported to have even warned certain individuals that they should leave Mosul because they could not guarantee their safety and could not protect them from the killers.<sup>81</sup> Reports also state that Kurdish and Arab security forces were looking on as several were killed in front of the last checkpoint before leaving the town in northern Iraq.<sup>82</sup> At the same time, Kurdish militias are reported to have mounted a politically motivated arrest campaign ahead of the general elections, imprisoning Hussain Hamadi, head of the municipal council in the Hamdaniyah district and the head of the police force in the Tell-Kayf district.<sup>83</sup> Also on February 24, Syriac Catholic Patriarch Ignatius Joseph III Younan addressed a letter to Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki reminding him of the Iraqi government’s responsibility towards its citizens, blaming Iraqi authorities for the slaughter of Christians in Mosul and demanding justice and a proper investigation.

It is obvious here that the events that have occurred in Mosul between November 2009 and February 2010 are linked to the March 7, 2010, national elections.<sup>84</sup> In a way mimicking the events of 2008, this campaign has seen the bombing of five churches, a convent, and a school; as well as the kidnapping of an Assyrian girl and the murders of between 15 and 20 Christians. As a result hundreds more Christian IDP families have fled Mosul to the Nineveh Plains and the IKR, adding to those already seeking relative safety in those areas. The situation is drastic and, if proper steps are not taken by authorities to mend it, not only will Mosul be empty of Christians but also, faced with discrimination by Kurdish authorities in the IKR and disputed territories, many will choose to leave their ancestral homes in Iraq forever.

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<sup>81</sup> Jerry Dykstra, “Five family members gunned down in Mosul,” February 25, 2010, <http://www.christiannewswire.com>.

<sup>82</sup> Allie Martin, “Iraq’s Mosul perilous for Christians,” February 23, 2010, <http://www.onenewsnow.com>.

<sup>83</sup> Zeena Sami, “Kurdish militia tighten grip on non-Kurdish districts in Iraq’s Mosul,” February 19, 2010, <http://www.azzaman.com>.

<sup>84</sup> “Politician says Iraqi Christians targeted in pre-election violence,” DPA, February 23, 2010.

### **III. Conclusions**

The situation regarding land-control in Nineveh province and other disputed areas teeters on the edge of full-scale violence. Kurdish leaders demand their incorporation into the IKR through an ultimately controlled referendum, whilst Sunni Arabs and Iraq's central government insist that the Kurdish forces withdraw from lands outside the KRG's jurisdiction. Most Kurd and Arab political leaders even refuse to consider the option of sharing power in these areas. Indeed, the disputed Nineveh Plains are neither exclusively Kurdish nor Arab. As arguably Iraq's most multicultural, multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious area, any solution to this its future must recognise its diversity and the right of human beings not only to live in security and dignity, choosing their identity and which language, religion, and culture they will choose to practice, but also to have a say in their own political future, free of any external influences.

### **Recommendations**

#### To the Kurdistan Regional Government:

- Modify the constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region to recognise Assyrians (including Chaldeans and Syriacs) as one group, and as an indigenous population; and accord legal recognition to Shabaks, Yazidis and Kaka'is as distinct ethnic groups.
- Repeal all decrees relevant to "nationality correction" and "Kurdification", and permit affected persons the right to determine their own ethnic affiliation free from coercion and duress.
- Protect and guarantee the dignity and empowerment of indigenous non-Kurdish ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities at all levels of government, including provincial, regional and local administrations.
- Remedy the injustice caused by the Kurdistan Regional Government's practices in altering the demographic character of certain regions by intimidating and threatening those who oppose them, causing them to flee their places of residence, forcing migration in and out of the region, settling individuals alien to the region, depriving the non-Kurdish inhabitants of work, and correcting nationality.
- Recognise non-Kurdish IDPs with ancestral roots from villages in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region as locals and refrain from making them apply for residence permits.
- Restore all expelled and deported non-Kurds to their homes and property, or, where this is unfeasible, provide just compensation. Cease placing obstacles in their search for employment and sources of income and crack down on discrimination and corruption.
- Promote employment opportunities for non-Kurds who were have been deprived of employment or other means of support in order to force their migration out of the region.
- Cease repression of political and civil society organisations that oppose Kurdish nationalist policies in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and the disputed territories. Allow such organisations to operate freely and without intimidation and fear.
- Cease funding political and civil society organisations that divide ethnic communities and support the KDP's nationalist policies by undermining and challenging existing ones which do not.

- Ensure that independent non-Kurds can fully participate in public affairs without fearing retribution for differing political views. Cease arbitrarily arresting and detaining non-Kurdish activists.
- Transfer detainees originating from Nineveh and Kirkuk Provinces from prisons in the IKR to Nineveh and Kirkuk prisons supervised by local judicial bodies, and allow treatment of such detainees according to due process of law.
- Initiate independent and impartial investigations of individuals, including Kurdish security forces, alleged to be responsible for carrying out killings, kidnappings, beatings and torture against minorities. Make the results public and discipline or prosecute, as appropriate, the criminals and even officials who authorised or used excessive force.
- Recognise Nineveh Province's 19 March 2003 boundaries until such time as the status of the disputed territories may be altered by constitutional means, and take steps to resolve bilateral issues with the Iraqi Government, avoiding inflammatory rhetoric concerning mutual relations, the status of disputed territories and the issuance of oil and gas contracts in these areas. Also, seek to minimise security risks by refraining from military manoeuvres in disputed territories without pre-notifying the other side.
- Cease funding private militias to carry out public security responsibilities in non-Kurdish towns and villages located in the disputed territories outside the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.
- Consult with the representatives on non-Kurdish communities to put in place policies for their protection. Allow municipalities to hire police officers from among their own communities, in accordance with existing procedures outlined by Iraq's Interior Ministry.
- Increase funding to non-Kurdish immersion schools and cease the obstacles placed in their operation.
- Cease the indoctrination of non-Kurdish children through educational programs in which they are made to glorify Kurdistan at the expense of their own ethnic identity.
- Cease the obstacles placed before non-Kurds claiming lands they have lost to Kurdish squatters and conduct proper inquests into incidents of non-Kurds being abducted or murdered in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.
- Cease electoral fraud and allow foreign observers to monitor the election process in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and disputed territories, as well as count the votes.
- Allow independent Iraqi and international human rights organisations to work unfettered in the Nineveh Plains and in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and to provide unbiased information.
- Invite the UN independent expert on minority issues to provide an impartial assessment of the situation of non-Kurdish ethnic communities in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and in the disputed territories.

#### To the Government of Iraq:

- Facilitate rebuilding the Iraqi state by reducing violence in the country and instituting stability in the region, to create a powerful and viable centralised Iraq.

- Amend the Iraqi Constitution to: Reduce the restrictions on the state authorities, remove contradictory articles, clearly define and strengthen the power of central government, and grant priority to the central government in shared authorities and all future decisions.
- Article 4 of the Iraqi constitution should be rephrased so that it ensures protection of minority groups' linguistic and cultural rights, removes discrimination between the ethnic communities in Iraqi society, improves the access of ethnic communities to education in their own mother tongue, and prevents the publication of immense Iraqi state documentation in Kurdish.
- Implement joint administration in educational matters in disputed districts' educational facilities through the creation of a committee comprising members of all ethnic communities in the education directorates of Nineveh and Kirkuk.
- Transfer teachers in the disputed districts who receive their salaries from the KRG to the authority and payroll of Nineveh and Kirkuk's education directorates.
- Protect and guarantee the dignity and empowerment of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities at all levels of government, including provincial, regional and local administrations. Ensure protection of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities in the disputed territories through security measures, by ceasing discriminatory resource and service allocation to areas with heavy minority presence, halting efforts to manipulate such groups or enlist them to their side and providing fair political representation.
- Local recruitment into Nineveh's security forces and especially integration of members of diverse ethnic groups in security forces deployed in disputed territories.
- Implement, as the new provincial governments are formed, an ambitious economic recovery program focused on infrastructure repair and revitalising the agricultural sector. Pressure the Nineveh Provincial Council especially to pledge to release \$500 million in unspent past budget funds to the local government sector.
- Facilitate the effective involvement of Iraqis in rebuilding of the state on a democratic basis – NGO laws should be instituted to international best practice.
- Encourage international human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty international to open offices in northern Iraq.
- Create an independent inquiry to determine who was responsible for the carefully-planned systematic campaign of killings and bombings that targeted Assyrians in Mosul between September and November 2008, and November 2009 and February 2010, and the subsequent displacement of over 12,500 Assyrians. The inquiry should not only identify the killers, but also underline why the security services failed to prevent the attacks.
- Restore the rule of law and the control of the Iraqi central government, police and military in all areas outside the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.
- Emphasise to the Kurdistan Regional Government the need to remedy the injustices caused by the it's practices in altering the demographic character of certain regions by intimidating and threatening those who oppose them, causing them to flee their places of residence, forcing migration in and out of the region, settling individuals alien to the region, depriving the non-Kurdish inhabitants of work, and correcting nationality.

- Initiate independent and unbiased investigations of all individuals, including Kurdish security forces, allegedly responsible for carrying out killings, beatings, and torture against members of minority communities.
- Pressure the Kurdistan Democratic Party to cease electoral fraud in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and disputed territories. Invite and allow foreign observers to monitor the election process in the area, as well as count the votes.
- Look into the establishment of an area where indigenous minority communities can prosper, progress and protect themselves within the framework of a united and free Iraq.

#### To the United States, Coalition Countries and the United Nations:

- Urge the government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to investigate allegations of human rights abuses of minorities by Kurdish and Arab officials.
- Assist relevant Iraqi parties to reach the necessary compromises in Nineveh, primarily by: a) pressing the Iraqi government to reintegrate certain members of the Baath party and the insurgency in local civilian and security institutions; b) pressuring local allies that rely heavily on the U.S., notably tribal forces, to promote a power- and security-sharing agreement; and c) insisting on the necessary protection of the diverse indigenous ethnic groups.
- Seriously consider adding U.S. military officers to Arab and Kurdish patrols as a transitional confidence-building measure to improve communication, coordination and cooperation.
- Emphasise to the Kurdistan Regional Government the need to remedy the injustices caused by the it's practices in altering the demographic character of certain regions by intimidating and threatening those who oppose them, causing them to flee their places of residence, forcing migration in and out of the region, settling individuals alien to the region, depriving the non-Kurdish inhabitants of work, and correcting nationality.
- Emphasise to the Iraqi government the need for a thorough and independent inquiry into the September-November 2008, and November 2009-February 2010, killings of Assyrians in Mosul, as well as independent and unbiased investigations of all individuals, including Kurdish security forces, allegedly responsible for carrying out killings, beatings, and torture against members of minority communities.
- Do not cooperate with the Kurdish Regional Government until the Kurdish authorities stop the suppression of other indigenous Iraqi communities, abandon claims to lands inhabited mainly by non-Kurds, and abandon the use of militias, intimidation and violence.
- Encourage the establishment of an area where indigenous minority communities can prosper, progress and protect themselves within the framework of a united and free Iraq.

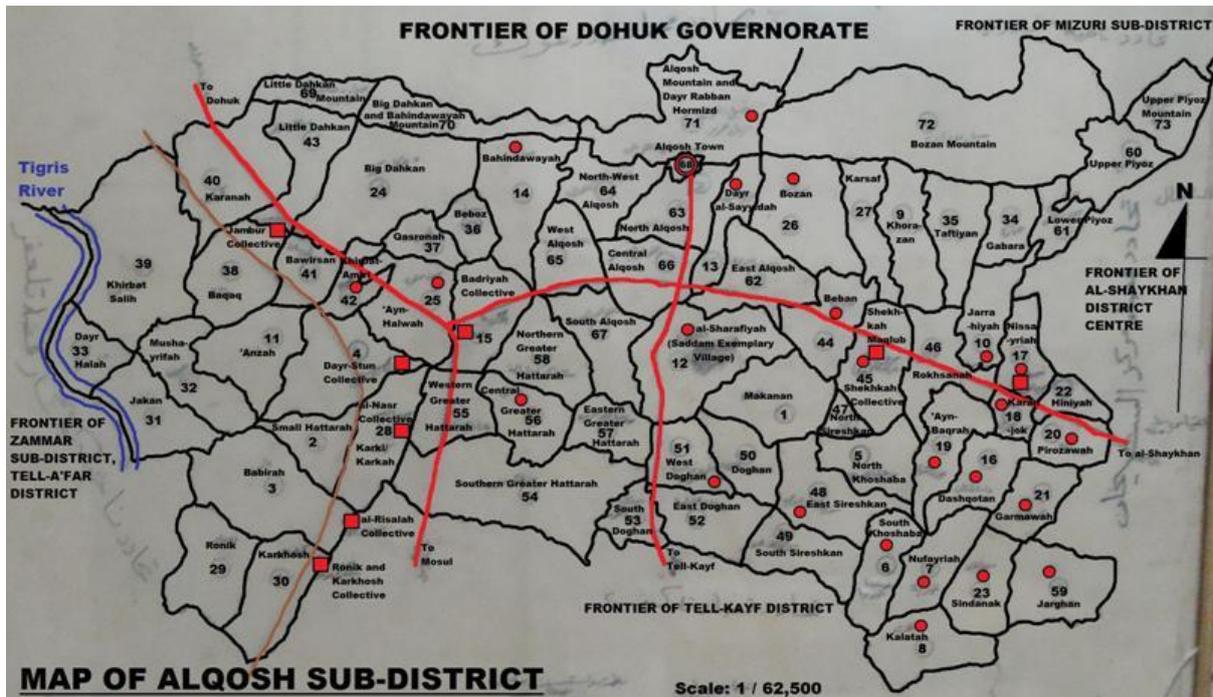
#### To UNAMI and International Human Rights, Humanitarian and Aid Organisations:

- Complete the institution of offices in the disputed territories, such as Kirkuk, Mosul, the Nineveh Plains, Tell-Afar, Tuz Khurmatu and Diyala, and provide them with sufficient staff and experts.

- Initiate regular fact-finding missions independent of the Iraqi Government and Kurdistan Regional Government to discover what is really happening to minority communities on the ground.
- Cease employing minders, guides or translators that have links to the governments and ruling parties and ensure that all guides or translators employed belong to the same community as that being researched. Otherwise informants will be too scared to provide accurate statements regarding abuses against them.
- Offer to act as foreign observers to monitor the election process in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and disputed territories, as well as count the votes.

## APPENDIX I:

The Alqosh Sub-District of the Tell-Kayf District and its Sub-Divisions, with a note on the ethnicities of their inhabitants:



Sub-Division	Name	Ethnicity
1.	Makanan	Assyrian, uninhabited
2.	Small Hattarah	Yazdi
3.	Babirah	Arab, originally Assyrian (name derived from Assyrian Beth-‘Bira)
4.	Dayr-Stun Collective	Yazidi, Arab and Assyrian (name derived from a ruined monastery)
5.	North Khoshaba	Yazidi, originally Assyrian (name derived from an Assyrian personal name meaning Sunday)
6.	South Khoshaba	Yazidi, originally Assyrian (name derived from an Assyrian personal name meaning Sunday)
7.	Nufayriah	Arab

8.	Kalatah	Arab
9.	Khorazan	Yazidi, originally also Assyrian
10.	Jarrahiyah	Yazidi and Assyrian
11.	‘Anzah	Arab, now underwater
12.	al-Sharafiyah Exemplary Village	Assyrian, originally also Yazidi
13.	Dayr al-Sayyidah	Assyrian
14.	Bahindawayah	Assyrian, originally also Yazidi, now also some Kurds
15.	Badriyah Collective	Arab, originally Assyrian
16.	Dashqotan	Assyrian
17.	Nissairiyah	Yazidi and Assyrian
18.	Karanjok	Assyrian
19.	‘Ayn-Baqrah	Assyrian
20.	Pirozawah	Assyrian
21.	Garmawah	Assyrian
22.	Hindiyah	Yazidi
23.	Sindanak	Yazidi
24.	Big Dahkan	Yazidi
25.	‘Ayn-Halwah	Assyrian, Yazidi and Arab
26.	Bozan	Yazidi, originally Assyrian (name derived from the Assyrian Bozaye)
27.	Karsaf	Yazidi, originally also Assyrian (still home to an ancient church called Beth-Mariam)
28.	Karki/Karkah	Yazidi
29.	Ronik	Yazidi, now underwater
30.	Karkhosh	Yazidi
31.	Jakan	Yazidi, now underwater
32.	Mushayrifah	Arab, now underwater
33.	Dayr-Halah	Arab, originally Assyrian (named after a ruined monastery),

		now underwater
34.	Gabara	Yazidi, originally Assyrian (its name is of Assyrian origin)
35.	Taftiyan	Yazidi, originally also Assyrian
36.	Beboz	Yazidi, originally Assyrian (name is derived from the Assyrian Beth-Boze)
37.	Qasronah	Assyrian and Yazidi, also some Arabs
38.	Baqaq	Yazidi, Assyrian, Arab and Kurdish (name derived from the Assyrian Beth-Qaqa)
39.	Khirbat-Salih	Arab and Assyrian, now underwater
40.	Karanah	Yazidi
41.	Bawirsan	Yazidi
42.	Khirbat-‘Amiri	Arab
43.	Little Dahkan	Yazidi
44.	Beban	Yazidi, originally Assyrian (name is derived from the Assyrian Beth-Bane)
45.	Shehkhah Collective	Yazidi and Kurdish
46.	Rokhsanah	Yazidi and Arab
47.	North Sireskan	Yazidi
48.	East Sireskan	Yazidi
49.	South Sireskan	Yazidi
50.	Doghan	Yazidi
51.	West Doghan	Yazidi
52.	East Doghan	Yazidi
53.	South Doghan	Yazidi
54.	Southern Greater Hattarah	Yazidi, originally Assyrian (name derived from Khattara)
55.	Western Greater Hattarah	Yazidi, ditto
56.	Central Greater Hattarah	Yazidi, ditto
57.	Eastern Greater Hattarah	Yazidi, ditto
58.	Northern Greater Hattarah	Yazidi, ditto

59.	Jarghan	Shabak
60.	Upper Piyoz	Assyrian, uninhabited
61.	Lower Piyoz	Yazidi, originally Assyrian
62.	East Alqosh	Assyrian
63.	North Alqosh	Assyrian
64.	North-West Alqosh	Assyrian
65.	Central Alqosh	Assyrian
66.	West Alqosh	Assyrian
67.	South Alqosh	Assyrian
68.	Alqosh Town	Assyrian
69.	Little Dahkan Mountain	Yazidi
70.	Big Dahkan and Bahindawayya Mountain	Yazidi and Assyrian
71.	Alqosh Mountain and Dayr Rabban Hormizd	Assyrian
72.	Bozan Mountain	Yazidi, originally Assyrian
73.	Upper Piyoz Mountain	Assyrian, uninhabited

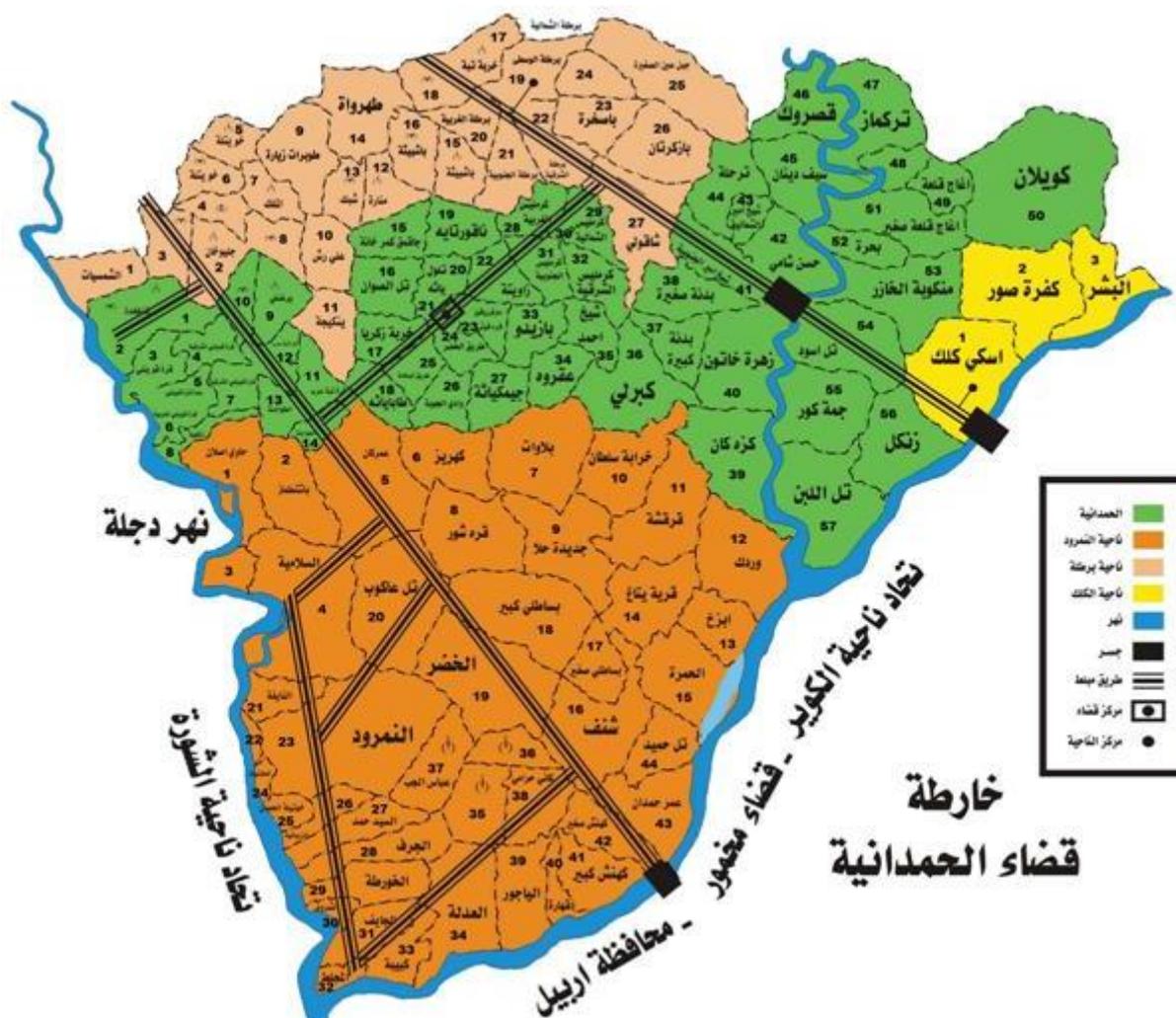
**Notes:**

Out of the 73 sub-divisions of the Alqosh Sub-District, roughly 17 are inhabited exclusively by Assyrians, 12 shared by Assyrians and Yazidis, 29 mostly by Yazidis (13 of these were historically Assyrian, as can be gleaned from their name derivation), eight by Arabs (three of these also bear Assyrian names), six are mixed and include members of various ethnic groups (though two have clearly Assyrian names), and one is inhabited by Shabak. Six sub-divisions are under the waters of the Mosul Dam. Ethnic Kurds here are a minority and are only found in three of the sub-divisions.

In other words Assyrians exclusively inhabit 23% of the Sub-District and Yazidis 40%. A further 17% is shared by Assyrians and Yazidis, 8% more by more than two ethnic groups. Arabs also count for 8% and Shabak for 1%. In addition to the 40% of the sub-district inhabited in whole or partially by Assyrians, a further 25% possess names of Assyrian derivation.

## APPENDIX II:

The al-Hamdaniyah District, its Sub-Districts and their Sub-Divisions, with a note on the ethnicities of their inhabitants:



**Bartillah (Baritleh) Sub-District (coloured pink on the map)**

Sub-Division	Name	Ethnicity
1.	al-Shamsiyat	Turkmen, name derived from Arabic
2.	Jilu Khan (A)	Shabak, name derived from Turkish and Assyrian
3.	Jilu Khan (B)	Shabak, ditto

4.	Jilu Khan (C)	Shabak, ditto
5.	Khuwaytlah (A)	Shabak, name derived from Arabic
6.	Khuwaytlah (B)	Shabak, ditto
7.	Almalik (A)	Shabak, name derived from Turkish
8.	Almalik (B)	Shabak, ditto
9.	Toprak Ziyarah	Shabak, name derived from Turkish
10.	‘Ali Rash	Shabak, name derived from Kurdish
11.	Yangijah	Shabak, name derived from Turkish Yenice
12.	Manarat Shabak (A)	Shabak, name derived from Arabic
13.	Manarat Shabak (B)	Shabak, ditto
14.	Tahrawah	Shabak, name derived from Persian
15.	Bashbitha (A)	Shabak, originally Assyrian (name derived from Beth-Shupitha)
16.	Bashbitha (B)	Shabak, ditto
17.	Khirbat Tappah (B)	Shabak, name derived from Persian or Turkish
18.	Khirbah Tappah (B)	Shabak, ditto
19.	Central Bartillah	Assyrian
20.	Western Bartillah	Assyrian
21.	Southern Bartillah	Assyrian
22.	Eastern Bartillah	Assyrian
23.	Basakhrah (A)	Shabak, originally Assyrian (name derived from Beth-Sakhraye)
24.	Basakhrah (B)	Shabak, ditto
25.	‘Ayn al-Saghirah Mountain	Arab
26.	Bazgirtan	Shabak, originally Assyrian (name derived from Beth-Zqirta)
27.	Shaqoli	Shabak, name derived from Persian Shah-Qoli

**Notes:**

Out of the 27 sub-divisions of the Bartillah (Baritleh) Sub-District, roughly four are inhabited exclusively by Assyrians, 21 mostly by Shabak (five of these were historically Assyrian, as can be gleaned from their name derivation), one by Arabs, and one is inhabited by Turkmen. Ethnic Kurds are nowhere to be found here.

In other words Assyrians exclusively inhabit 15% of the Sub-District, Shabak 77%, and Arabs and Turkmen each count for 4%. In addition to the 15 % of the sub-district inhabited wholly by Assyrians, a further 19% possess names of Assyrian derivation and were originally Assyrian settlements.

**Qaraqosh (Bakhdida) Sub-District (coloured green on the map)**

<b>Sub-Division</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>
1.	Qiz Fakhrah (A)	Turkmen
2.	Qiz Fakhrah (B)	Turkmen
3.	Qarah Qoyunli	Turkmen
4.	East Qarah Qoyunli (A)	Turkmen
5.	Qarah Qoyunli Town	Turkmen and Arab
6.	West Qarah Qoyunli	Turkmen and Arab
7.	East Qarah Qoyunli (B)	Turkmen
8.	Zangubah	Arab
9.	Yarghanti (A)	Arab
10.	Yarghanti (B)	Arab
11.	Qarah Tappah ‘Arab (A)	Arab and Shabak
12.	Qarah Tappah ‘Arab (B)	Arab and Turkmen
13.	al-Tawahinah (A)	Shabak, name derived from Arabic
14.	al-Tawahinah (B)	Shabak, ditto
15.	Chaqmaq Gumrkhanah	Assyrian, name derived from Turkish
16.	Tall al-Siwan	Assyrian, name derived from Arabic
17.	Khirbat Zakariya	Assyrian, name derived from Arabic
18.	Tabayathah	Assyrian

19.	Naqurtayah	Assyrian
20.	Tilulyathah	Assyrian
21.	Qaraqosh (Bakhdida) Town	Assyrian
22.	Zawitah	Assyrian
23.	Mar Quryaquz	Assyrian
24.	Tariq al-Khidhr	Assyrian, name derived from Arabic
25.	Tariq al-Sallamiyah	Assyrian, name derived from Arabic
26.	Wadi al-Jubah	Assyrian, name derived from Arabic
27.	Chemikyatha	Assyrian
28.	West Karimlish	Assyrian
29.	North Karimlish	Assyrian
30.	Karimlish Town	Assyrian
31.	South Karimlish	Assyrian
32.	East Karimlish	Assyrian
33.	Bazido	Assyrian
34.	'Aqirwah	Assyrian
35.	Shaykh Ahmad	Assyrian, name derived from Arabic
36.	Kaberli	Shabak and Kaka'i, name derived from Turkish
37.	Big Badanah	Shabak, originally Assyrian (name derived from Beth-Daniel)
38.	Little Badanah	Shabak, ditto
39.	Karah Kan	Kaka'i
40.	Zahrah Khatun	Shabak, originally Assyrian (possesses ruins of St. Sarah's convent)
41.	South Shaykh Amir	Shabak
42.	Hasan Shami	Arab
43.	North Shaykh Amir	Shabak
44.	Tarjillah	Shabak, originally Assyrian (name derived from Targilla)

45.	Sayfdinan	Arab, name derived from Kurdish
46.	Qasrok	Kurd
47.	Turkmaz (A)	Arab, name derived from Turkish
48.	Turkmaz (B)	Arab, ditto
49.	Big Aghach Qal'ah	Arab, name derived from Turkish
50.	Gawilan	Arab and Kurd
51.	Little Aghach Qal'ah	Arab, name derived from Turkish
52.	Bahrah	Arab
53.	Mangubah al-Khazir	Arab
54.	Tall Aswad	Arab
55.	Chammah Kor	Arab, name derived from Kurdish
56.	Zangal	Kaka'i
57.	Tall al-Liban	Kaka'i, name derived from Arabic

**Notes:**

Out of the 57 sub-divisions of the Qaraqosh (Bakhdida) Sub-District, roughly 21 are inhabited exclusively by Assyrians, eight mostly by Shabak (four of these were historically Assyrian, as can be gleaned from their name derivation), 13 by Arabs, five by Turkmen, two by Kaka'is, one by Kurds. The other sub-divisions are mixed and include Shabak, Turkmen, Arabs and Kurds. Ethnic Kurds here are a minority and are only found in three of the sub-divisions.

In other words Assyrians exclusively inhabit 37% of the Sub-District, Arabs 23%, Shabak 14%, Turkmen 9%, Kakai's 5% and Kurds 2%. A further 10% is shared by Shabak, Turkmen, Arabs and Kurds. In addition to the 37% of the sub-district inhabited wholly by Assyrians, a further 7% possess names of Assyrian derivation and were originally Assyrian settlements.

**al-Namrud (al-Khidhr) Sub-District (coloured orange on the map)**

Sub-Division	Name	Ethnicity
1.	Hawi Aslan	Arab, name derived from Turkish
2.	Bashtitmaz	Turkmen

3.	al-Sallamiyah (B)	Turkmen, name derived from Arabic
4.	al-Sallamiyah (A)	Turkmen, ditto
5.	‘Umarkan	Turkmen, name derived from Kurdish
6.	Kahriz	Arab
7.	Balawat	Shabak and Arab, originally Assyrian (name derived from Beth-‘lawatha, also possesses ancient Assyrian ruins)
8.	Qarah Shor	Shabak, name derived from Turkish
9.	Judaydat Hala	Arab
10.	Kharabat Sultan	Turkmen and Shabak, name derived from Arabic
11.	Qara-Qashah	Turkmen and Shabak, originally Assyrian (name derived from Turkish meaning Black Priest)
12.	Wardak	Kaka’i
13.	Abzakh	Kaka’i
14.	Qaryat Yatagh	Turkmen, name derived from Arabic
15.	al-Hamra’	Arab
16.	Shanaf	Arab
17.	Little Basatli	Arab, originally Assyrian (name derived from Beth-Satlaye)
18.	Big Basatli	Arab, ditto
19.	al-Khidhr	Arab, Shabak and Assyrian (location of St. Behnam’s Monastery)
20.	Tall ‘Agub	Arab
21.	al-Nayifah (A)	Arab
22.	al-Nayifah (B)	Arab
23.	al-Namrud	Arab, location of ancient Assyrian Imperial capital Kalhu (ruins)
24.	al-Haftiyat	Arab
25.	Khuwaytlah al-Hisan	Arab
26.	al-Zaybaniyah	Arab
27.	al-Sayyid Hamad	Arab
28.	al-Jaraf	Arab

29.	al-Khurtah	Arab
30.	al-Shuruq	Arab
31.	al-Jayif	Arab
32.	al-Makhlat	Arab
33.	Kubaybah	Arab
34.	al-‘Adlah	Arab
35.	‘Abbas al-Jubb (A)	Arab
36.	‘Abbas al-Jubb (B)	Arab
37.	‘Abbas al-Jubb (C)	Arab
38.	Kani Harami	Arab, name derived from Kurdish
39.	al-Yajur	Arab
40.	Qaharah	Arab
41.	Big Kahnish	Arab
42.	Little Kahnish	Arab
43.	‘Umar Hamdan	Arab
44.	Tall Hamid	Arab

**Notes:**

Out of the 44 sub-divisions of the al-Namrud (al-Khidhr) Sub-District, roughly 32 are inhabited exclusively by Arabs, five by Turkmen, two by Kaka’is, one by Shabak. The rest are mixed and include Shabak, Turkmen and Arabs. The Sub-District centre al-Khidhr is home to Arabs, Shabaks and Assyrians. Six of the sub-divisions were historically Assyrian, as can be gleaned from their name derivations. Ethnic Kurds are nowhere to be found here.

In other words Arabs exclusively inhabit 73% of the Sub-District, Turkmen 11%, Kaka’is 5% and Shabak 2%. A further 9% is shared by the various ethnic groups, including Assyrians. Furthermore, 14% of the sub-divisions were originally Assyrian settlements and possess names of Assyrian derivation.

**Aski Kalak (Khabat) Sub-District (coloured yellow on the map)**

<b>Sub-Division</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>
<b>1.</b>	Aski Kalak (Khabat)	Kurd (originally Yazidi and Assyrian), name derived from Turkish <i>Eski Kelek</i>
<b>2.</b>	Kafrah Sor	Kurd, name derived from Assyrian <i>Kpar-Ashor</i>
<b>3.</b>	al-Bashar	Kurd, name derived from Arabic

**Notes:**

This sub-district has been governed by the KRG since 1991 since its inhabitants are mostly Kurds. A small minority belong to ethnic groups such as Assyrians, Yazidis, etc. Most of the place names are also not of Kurdish derivation indicating relatively recent Kurdish settlement in the area.