

IRAQ

The Struggle to Exist



Part III: Treatment and Discrimination of Assyrians in the “Iraqi Kurdistan Region”

Assyria Council of Europe

Hammurabi Human Rights Organization



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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 (Karemles), Baritleh (Bartillah), Sharafiyah, Bahindawaya, 'Ayn-Baqrah, Karanjok, Dashqotan, Pirozawah, 'Ayn-Sifne, Shaqlawa and Diyana.

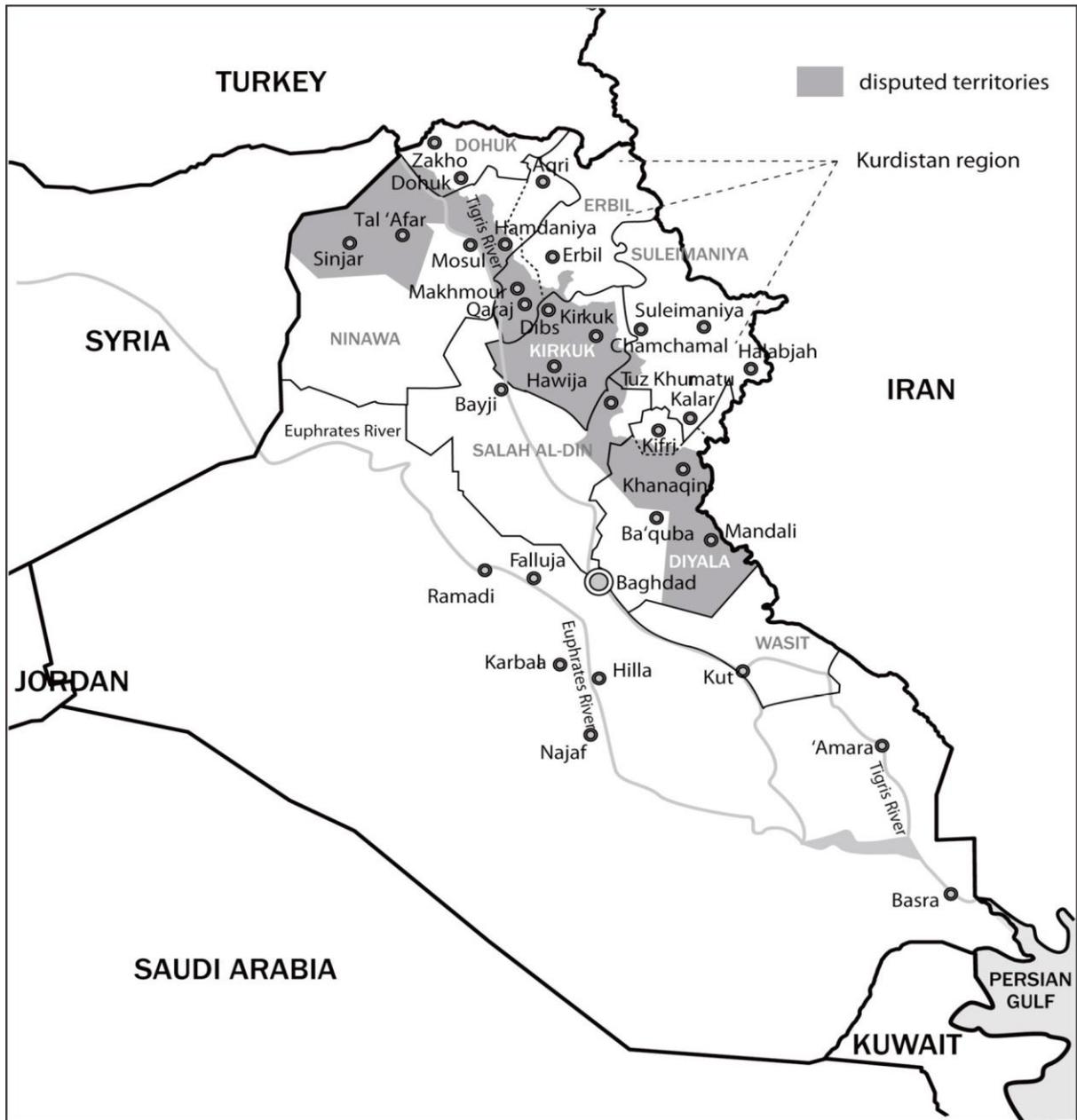
The fact-finding mission was conducted between November and January 2010 to investigate abuses against Assyrians in the disputed territories of the Nineveh Plains and in the Iraq Kurdistan Region. For security reasons the Assyria Council of Europe did not visit the city of Mosul.

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



Courtesy of the International Crisis Group and Human Rights Watch

Map 2: A close-up of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region showing some of the places mentioned in the text of this report



Adapted from an official map of the region published in Kurdish by the official website of the Kurdistan Region Government (www.krg.org)

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. Treatment of Assyrians in the “Iraqi Kurdistan Region”

To really understand what Kurdish authorities have in store for the ethnic communities of the Nineveh Plains if they do annex the disputed territories, one must fully comprehend their current situation within the IKR since 1991 and more specifically after the 2003 regime-change when the ruling Kurdish parties, no-longer fearing retribution by Saddam, became more open with their nationalist and exclusivist rhetoric. Part of Assyria Council of Europe’s fact-finding mission was to investigate the actualities of Assyrian life in the IKR, and especially how they are treated under the KRG. The plain fact of the matter is that the IKR is practically a military dictatorship dominated by the KDP in Dohuk and Arbil provinces (where Assyrians and Yazidis predominate), controlled by its *peshmerga* forces, and closely scrutinised by its *Asayish* intelligence units which have centres in every town and district centre and strike fear into the hearts of those who oppose them. As was the norm under Saddam, portraits of Mas’ud Barzani (or his late father Mullah Mustafa) eerily smile from the walls of every shop, restaurant, hotel and government office. It is definitely not unusual to see *Kak Mas’ud*’s image paired up with that of Iraqi President and PUK leader Jalal Talabani, as well as large images of KDP “heroes” such as Idris Barzani (Mas’ud’s brother and father of former KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan) in prominent places. This is a culture which is already slowly creeping into the Nineveh Plains with Yazidi villages in the Shaykhan district displaying large images of Mas’ud Barzani at their entrances. The KDP does not even attempt to hide the fact that it is a front for the nepotism of the Barzani dynasty and thus, in many respects, Kurdish rule is no different to Baath party rule under Saddam.

Refuge for “Minorities”?

The IKR has naturally become a safe haven for Iraqi IDPs of all ethnicities, religions and sects, since violence has erupted everywhere else in the country. According to the International Organisation for Migration 39% of the 83,333 IDP families that it has assessed in the IKR belong to religious or ethnic minorities.¹ By 2006, the KRG had accommodated and ‘welcomed’ as many as 50,000 individuals, the majority of whom are not in camps but stay with relatives and acquaintances, or in public buildings.² This ‘welcome’ means only that they are allowed the privilege of entering the region. Muslim Arabs, if not belonging to tribes that have alliances with the Kurds, are turned away even if their lives are in danger. For all those that do enter though, residence permits are required and these must be renewed periodically, causing IDPs to feel like foreigners within the borders of their own country.³

Many Assyrians have nowhere else to go. They feel like Iraq is their country, since they are so well-integrated into the society, and they believe that they belong there. One Assyrian IDP recounts,

*“I am a real Iraqi. I was born in Baghdad, registered in Kirkuk, my family is from Nahla, I now live in Tall-Kepe, I’ve worked for the past 10 years in Arbil, and my parents are now in Syria waiting to leave for the West... Where am I from? Where should I live? Where can I go? I don’t want to leave my country.”*⁴

The several thousand Christian families estimated by the UN and international NGOs to have found refuge in the IKR, are not foreigners. In reality most of them are indigenous Assyrians and originate

¹ International Organisation for Migration, Dahuk Governorate Profile August 2009, IDP and Returnee Assessment, http://www.iom-iraq.net/Library/idp_gov_profiles/2009/Governorate%20Profiles%20-%20Dahuk.pdf.

² UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, “Human Rights Report: 1 July – 31 August 2006,” p. 13.

³ The KRG persists to emphasise the distinct existence of a ‘Kurdistan’ separate to Iraq, despite the fact that it is in legal reality an autonomous region that is part of Iraq. This is even done in school textbooks. Kurdistan literally means “land of the Kurds,” ignoring the fact that there still exist indigenous communities of Assyrians that predate Kurdish settlement in the area. Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders (names withheld), Dohuk and Arbil, December 2009 and January 2010.

⁴ Assyria Council of Europe interview with an Assyrian IDP (name withheld) in Tall-Kepe, December 2009.

from villages that have existed for thousands of years, even before the region was known as Kurdistan, and have begun to return to these villages which they were forced to abandon due to persecution by Kurds and Iraqi government brutality. The International Medical Corps (IMC) reports indicate that 3,800 families have moved to the city of Dohuk, and according to International Relief and Development, as of 30 September 2006, there were approximately 7,502 Christian IDP families in Dohuk.⁵

These IDPs are officially considered outsiders, unwanted guests in Kurdistan, and are treated as such by the general Kurdish populace. They are discriminated against because they do not speak Kurdish. Many Kurds refuse to converse with them in Arabic, Iraq's official language, and will charge them double or triple the price of anything they purchase if they make the transaction in Arabic. For the same reason they are also discouraged from tertiary education in the IKR because much of the instruction is conducted in Kurdish, and they are practically unemployable since they again do not speak Kurdish. The general question presented to all of them is, "if you are originally from this region, or wish to live here, why do you not speak Kurdish?"⁶ They ignore the fact that Assyrians have their own language and identity. For many of the poorer IDPs the price differences in the more affluent IKR are staggering since they were used to lower prices in other parts of Iraq. Faced with this ethnic and economic discrimination, and being unable to work or study, indigenous Assyrian IDP families are being forced out of Iraq completely and given the more painful and difficult option of emigrating to the West.

According to Ms. Abdul Rahman's report: "*The KRG estimates that, to date, some 20,000 Christian families from Basra, Baghdad and Mosul have found a safe haven in KRG administered governorates of Dohuk and Erbil, and in the Nineveh (sic) plains (as well as many thousands who have moved to Suleimaniah).*"⁷ What is disturbing about this is that the KRG finds it within its duty to enumerate the exact number of Assyrian IDP families in the Nineveh Plains, along with those in the provinces of Dohuk and Erbil (which are controlled by the KDP), but not those in Suleimaniah (which is controlled by the PUK). Here it is thus obvious that KRG should be replaced with KDP in the report.

The KRG (or more correctly, the KDP) provides support and financial assistance for 11,000 of these IDP families to the sum of 40-50,000 Iraqi Dinars (less than USD\$40) per family per month through affiliated Assyrian Organisations such as the High Commission for Christian Affairs (HCCA) established by Mr. Aghajan and the Christian Aid Program – Nohadra, Iraq (CAPNI), which is aligned with the Assyrian Patriotic Party (APP) – both of which are allied with the KDP, receive special permission to operate by the *Asayish*, and deny Kurdish injustices against Assyrians in the IKR. In 2008, online publication Ankawa.com reported that the Department of Christian Affairs in the Kurdish Ministry of Finances, headed by Mr. Aghajan, collected signatures from IDPs in favour of the annexation of the Nineveh Plains to the IKR before handing out monthly aid to them. Those who did not sign were reportedly denied vital food rations.⁸

Some Assyrian IDPs are employed by the KRG, mostly in defending their churches, apartment complexes and towns in the Nineveh Plain as the paramilitary "Church Guards" loyal to the KRG and KDP especially. These are also widely referred to as "Sargis' guards" (*Hirasat Sarkis*) in reference to Mr. Aghajan. Such jobs are demeaning and allow for no continuation or acquisition of skills, reducing

⁵ National Report on the Status of Human Development in Iraq 2008, p. 69; and UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, "Human Rights Report: 1 September – 31 October 2006," p. 13.

⁶ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leaders and IDPs (names withheld), in Dohuk, December 2009.

⁷ Kurdistan Regional Government: UK Representation, "The Status of Christians in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq," p.3.

⁸ "Pressures to annex northern Christian villages of Kurdistan," AsiaNews, May 15, 2008, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pressures-to-annex-northern-Christian-villages-to-Kurdistan-12264.html>; See also Layla Yousif Rahema, "Kurdish guns threaten to bring a new humanitarian catastrophe to Iraqi minorities," AsiaNews, November 11, 2009, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Kurdish-guns-threaten-to-bring-a-new-humanitarian-catastrophe-to-Iraqi-minorities-16833.html>.

the quality of potentially employable young Assyrians, putting a great many of them in danger, and adapting them to a lazy work ethic.



**Left: Members of an Assyrian IDP family in Tisqopa;
Right: One of the “Church Guards” in the Assyrian village of Beqopa.**

The assistance mentioned above though is not provided to those that support independent Assyrian political parties such as the ADM, and it is not unknown for it to be withdrawn, employees terminated from their only source of income, and tenants with nowhere else to go being evicted from the housing initially offered to them – for the sole reason that they did not vote for the KDP-supported Ishtar slate, or the Kurdistan coalition in the elections (as mentioned above). These needy Assyrian IDP families are thus being psychologically abused into relying solely on the scant handouts provided to them by the KDP, and thus are put at risk of being used in order to cast votes in favour of it, in order to continue receiving aid so that they don't completely starve. Indeed, all this is far from the sugar-coated rhetoric found on the KRG official website, and in the speeches of former Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani.

Certainly, the relative instability of the rest of Iraq has worked to the KRG's benefit. The influx of doctors, lecturers, lawyers, traders and businessmen, flocking to the IKR's relative security may itself be seen as a motive for the KRG to not just actually wish for, but also contribute to the continuance of this situation in any way possible. The Babylon College for Theology and Philosophy, the major seminary of the Chaldean Catholic Church, was moved to Ankawa – adjacent to the Regional capital of Arbil – not through the Church's own funding, but that of Mr. Aghajan, i.e. the KRG, and more specifically the KDP. It is unbelievable that a Kurdish political body would fund an Assyrian religious organisation out of the goodness of its own heart. They used the threat of violence in Baghdad as a tool to bring this powerful intellectual institution and think tank of the Chaldean Catholic Church into its own sphere of influence. The same can be said of the new Ephremite Seminary of the Syriac Catholic Church built at Bakhdida, the newly established seminary of the Ancient Church of the East at Sharafiyah, and the new Patriarchates of the Chaldean Catholic Church and Assyrian Church of the East at Ankawa and Arbil (the latter costing ten million dollars to build), as well as the restoration and construction of numerous churches, chapels, monasteries, convents, orphanages, etc. – all funded by the same source.



The new Seminary of the Ancient Church of the East at Sharafiyah

Political Representation of “Christians” and other Minorities

Of the 111 MPs in the IKR Parliament, five are reserved for “Christians.” Since its very beginnings, the Parliament has ensured representation of Christians. In the July 2009 IKR parliamentary elections, and as stipulated in the IKR election law, 11 out of the 111 seats were reserved for “minorities” – five for “Chaldean, Syriac and Assyrian” parties, five for Turkmen parties, and one for an Armenian. By denying the Assyrians a unified ethnic designation, and instead breaking them up into 3 entities, as well as putting them on par with Turkmen and Armenian minorities in the region, the KRG also denies them the recognition of being an indigenous group. Neither do the Turkmen in the IKR have the same geographical spread as the Assyrians, nor do the Armenians even have enough numbers for a seat in parliament.

The information provided in the KRG report regarding the 2009 election law is confusingly contradicting: “... in 2009 the Kurdistan Parliament amended the provincial councils election law by adopting guaranteed seats for minorities. In Dohuk governorate, three council seats are reserved for the Assyrian Chaldeans, and one for the Armenians; in Erbil, two are reserved for Christians and three for the Turkmen; and in Suleimaniah one seat is reserved for Christians.”⁹ It is also interesting to note that the KRG chooses to call the Assyrians of Dohuk ‘Assyrian Chaldeans,’ but those in Arbil and Suleimaniah ‘Christians.’ By denying the Assyrians their ethnic designation the KRG also denies them the recognition of being an indigenous group separate to the Kurds. According to one concerned Assyrian in the region, “They are diluting our nationality with our religion. There are already some 8,000 Kurds that have converted to Protestant Christianity in Suleimaniah. If in the future they

⁹ Kurdistan Regional Government: UK Representation, “The Status of Christians in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq,” p. 5.

increase our seats in the parliament and provincial councils will be lost to them one by one since, legally they are Christians and the seats are for Christians – not indigenous Assyrians!”¹⁰ Although quite idealistic in its outlook, the KRG and its Parliament does anything but ensure inclusiveness and fair representation.

Ensuring government representation for Assyrians, or ‘Christians,’ at the highest levels is not the prerogative of the main ruling political parties in the IKR (i.e. the KDP and the PUK). This is the right of an indigenous people living on its own land, not a privilege to bestowed upon them from the top down by those more powerful. It is also not incorrect to concede that any Assyrian who is a member of, or supports a party that belongs to a different ethnic group, will first owe his allegiance to his party and would not be as helpful to his people as an Assyrian that is a member of an independent Assyrian party. Indeed, one may question how Kurds would have reacted to one of their number being a member of the Iraqi Baath party under the previous regime.

Assyrian members of the KDP appointed to key government positions include the current Minister for Transport and Communications, Anwar Jabali Sabo; the KRG Finance and Economy Minister for 10 years (1999 to October 2009), and Deputy Prime Minister (2004 to 2006), Sargis Aghajan Mamendu; the Deputy Governor of Dohuk, Mr. Georgis Shlemon; former Regional Minister with responsibility for civil society affairs, George Yousif Mansour; and former Governor of Arbil, the late Franso Hariri. In addition Nimrud Baito, the former Minister for Tourism (2006 to 2009) and leader of the APP, would not have made it into the KRG parliament if he had not entered his Party under the Kurdistan slate in the 2005 elections.

The KRG (in reality the KDP) is also making efforts to recruit from minorities into the police, intelligence and security forces, not only within its boundaries, but also as far as Mosul, Kirkuk and beyond (including in the Diaspora). Often these people are working solely for the benefit and goals of the KDP and are actually doing harm to their own ethnic groups, as well as damaging their future within a united and free Iraq.

Recognition of the KRG’s “Support for Christians”

The reasons why the KRG has been recognised for “supporting Christians” by Christian patriarchs and leaders of different denominations include the following: often their knowledge regarding what is actually occurring on the ground is superficial at best; religious leaders in this under-developed and neglected part of the country are being offered vast amounts of financial support, the likes of which they have never received before; and they are also motivated by the fear of retribution by Kurdish security forces if they spoke the truth regarding what is really happening to them. Mr. Aghajan, himself an ethnic Assyrian, has thus been decorated several times for his “work for Christians.” In fact when Mr. Aghajan was Finance Minister, all such efforts were fully funded by the KRG under the instructions of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani¹¹ – which leads one to wonder why Nechirvan was not the one receiving all the decorations from Patriarchs instead of Aghajan. The ultimate result of this work, in reality an investment by the KRG in Assyrian areas, is their planned annexation by the IKR.

Land Disputes

The origins of land disputes between Assyrians and Kurds are not only the Arabisation policies of the Baath and earlier regimes, as the KRG claims. Rather this has always been a bone of contention

¹⁰ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Assyrian community leader (names withheld), Arbil, January 2010.

¹¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Karim Sinjari, KRG minister of the interior, Arbil, February 25, 2009. Quoted in “On Vulnerable Ground,” p. 26; see also Kurdistan Regional Government: UK Representation, “The Status of Christians in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq,” p. 8.

between them as Kurds have gradually bled Assyrians into the ground over the centuries, not the least in Iraq, and used every opportunity to seize their villages and lands through massacre, systematic killings and intimidation. Often indigenous Assyrian communities have been driven out due to Kurdish violence and return only to finding Kurds living in their homes or benefitting from their lands years later. This has been the case during the Kurdish revolt of the 1960s, the Simel massacre of 1933, the First World War and even much earlier. It was in 1310 that Assyrians were massacred and forced out of the citadel of Arbil by Kurds and Mongol troops, and the city's Christian governor executed.¹² Now it is the capital of the KRG and above it flutters an enormous Kurdish flag. Thus the myth of peaceful co-existence between Kurds and Assyrians is clearly just that.



The citadel of Arbil, which in 1310 was lost by Assyrians to Kurdish invaders.

The KRG has never officially had a policy of taking lands or properties of Christians, and at least in writing believes that land disputes between individuals must be resolved through the courts of law. Though, at the same time, the KRG makes it more difficult for Assyrians that have lost their land to reobtain it – examples of such cases abound in the IKR. The ADM is the only Assyrian political organisation that claims the rights of Assyrians to their lost or stolen property. Its Zakho branch reported on October 28, 2009, that at least 17,750 *donums* (equivalent to approximately 4,437.5 hectares) had been illegally taken from eight Assyrian villages in the region in 1980 and 1991, as well as four villages and their lands in their entirety – all up amounting to 10,000 hectares in total.¹³

¹² E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Monks of Kublai Khan, Emperor of China*, (London, 1928), pp. 261-302; David Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East: 1318-1913*, (Louvain, 2000), pp. 18, 169, and Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: an illustrated history of Assyrian Christianity*, (London, 2006), p.232.

¹³ Report of Mr. Ya'qub Giwargis, Assyrian Democratic Movement, Zakho Branch, October 28, 2009, copy obtained and on file with Assyria Council of Europe.

The ADM branch in Inishk also reported agricultural land, orchards, springs and other water supplies illegally appropriated from eight Assyrian villages in the surrounding Sapna district in 1965, 1976 and 1988, but mostly between 1990 and 1992, by Kurds from neighbouring villages – including 1.25 hectares from the village of Benatha and 312.5 hectares from Inishk itself. The worst case by far is Hamziyah, which was settled by Kurdish refugees from the Nerwa region bordering Turkey in 1991. They have built their houses on the village’s Christian cemetery and have taken full control of its agricultural land, water supply and orchards, routinely harassing the Assyrians that have returned since 2003. They refuse to leave unless they are paid compensation (roughly \$20,000 each family). The Kurdish authorities, despite promising to remove the Kurdish squatters after continuous complaint from the Assyrian returnees, have recently built them a Kurdish school and a new mosque – sealing the fate of the village and permanently changing its demography.¹⁴



The new mosque (left) and Kurdish school (right) built by the KRG for the Kurdish squatters in the Assyrian village of Hamziyah.

Also of particular note are the regions of ‘Aqra and eastern Nahla, where there were once between 15 and 20 Assyrian settlements, and whose original Chaldean Catholic inhabitants fled to Mosul because of Kurdish brutality in the 1960s. Those who have attempted to return to their original villages since 2003 have been barred from this and instead have been forced to create artificial new settlements at Banasora (in the plain south of ‘Aqra) and Rumta (in the mountains north of Dohuk), as well as settle for residing in the mixed Azadi collective town near ‘Aqra’s town centre. Furthermore, the *mukhtars* (village leaders) of Cham-Rabatke, Hizane, Khalilane Kashkawa in the western Nahla region (which consists of seven villages still populated exclusively by Assyrians), have also reported lands illegally expropriated from their villages by Kurds since as early as 1979, but also in 1994 and 1997, and have petitioned both the Iraqi central government and KRG for their return since 2003.¹⁵

The Assyrian village of Lower Chaqala in the Barwari-Bala district is a case where Kurds from neighbouring Bireefka, including high ranking KDP members claiming to represent the KRG, have blocked attempts by its inhabitants to rebuild their homes and tend their orchards since 2000. In the old village school, with no access water, electricity or roads, four lonely old men hold the fort, changing the guard with four others every 15 days. Their irrigation hoses have continuously been cut, their wells refilled and their liquor shop and bar on the main road constantly ravaged and looted in order to harass them into leaving. Even the village sign, in Arabic, has been defaced and damaged, lying in the knee-high grass to the side of the main road.¹⁶

¹⁴ Report of Assyrian Democratic Movement, Sapna Branch, undated, copy obtained and on file with Assyria Council of Europe; and Assyria Council of Europe interview with villagers (names withheld) at Hamziyah, December 2009.

¹⁵ Three letters of complaint from these *mukhtars*, undated, copy obtained and on file with Assyria Council of Europe.

¹⁶ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with community leaders (names withheld) at ‘Ayn, Nune, Dure and Chaqala, in December 2009.



Left: Two Assyrians from Lower Chaqala warm themselves by a fire outside their makeshift bar; Right: Lower Chaqala’s vandalised and damaged village sign.

The KRG authorities have only served to strengthen the Kurdish presence in Assyrian villages that Saddam had turned into collective towns during the Anfal campaign. A case in point is Birsive, where 500 Kurdish families from 20 villages in the mountains were settled, and who since 1991 have refused to return to their original homes. Birsive has now become a municipality with a large Kurdish infrastructure, a mosque, and a sumptuous new school, putting the local Assyrian school (also government-owned) to shame. Houses have also been built on Church land in the centre of the village, for families of Kurdish “martyrs,” who died serving the KDP. Kurdish authorities have also allowed three Kurdish families from nearby Kani-Gulan to remain in the Assyrian village of Bahindawaya, west of Alqosh, despite evicting all the Arab families that had been settled there through the Arabisation policies of the previous regime.



Left: The Syriac, Arabic and Kurdish village sign of Birsive. Crudely covered with Kurdish election campaign posters; Right: The main irrigation channel supplying water the fields and mills of Birsive, now illegally dried up by Kurdish villages upstream.



Above left: The run-down Syriac school at Birsive, complete with Kurdish signs and flag; Above right: The sumptuous new Kurdish school at Birsive; Below left: Houses for families of Kurdish martyrs in Birsive; Below right: The Mosque of Birsive.



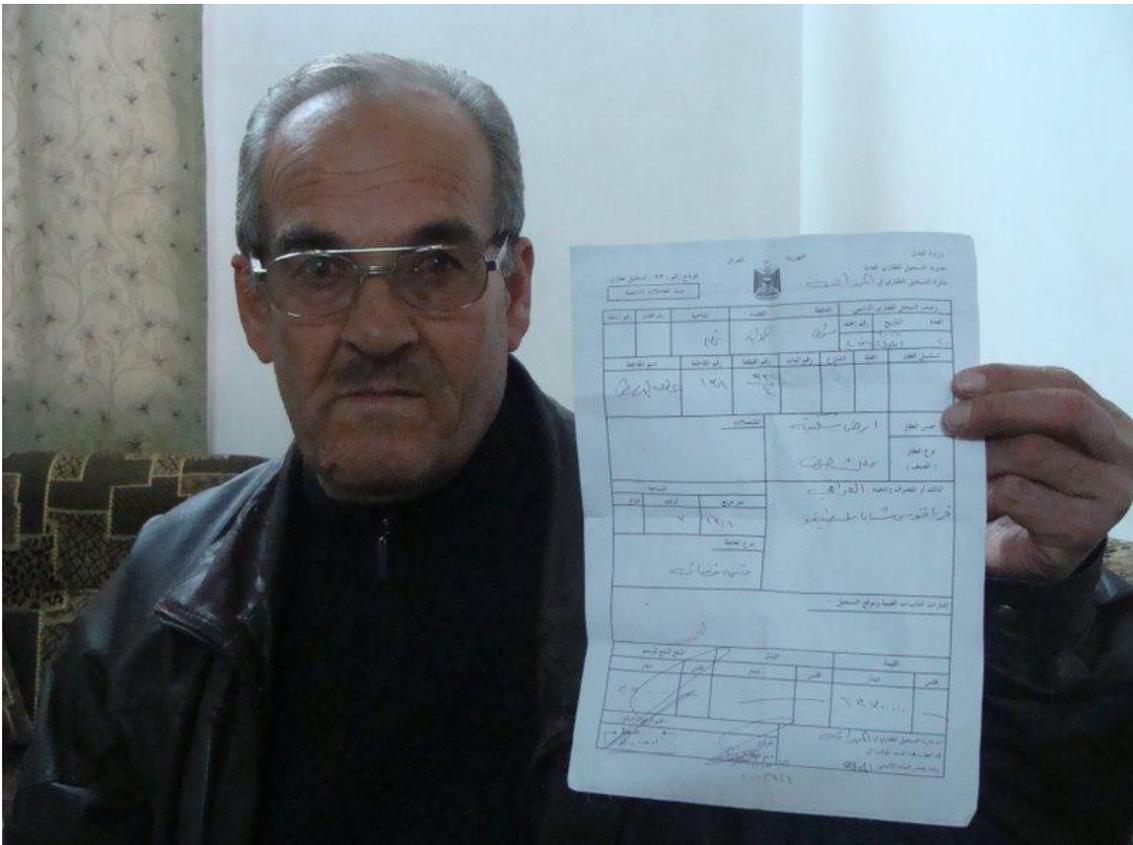
Often the KRG itself has confiscated Assyrian lands to build government offices and housing for officials and employees, as well as business ventures, providing the landowners with terribly little or no compensation – as has been the case in Dohuk (the Mazi, Dream City and Istikbal complexes built on 17.5 hectares belonging to the family of Hanna Bede), Ankawa (Erbil International Airport), Sarsing (Azadi collective town built on their land) and ‘Ayn-Nune.¹⁷ They have often used the excuse that this had already been done before 1991 by Saddam’s regime and that it was impossible to return the lands since they had become government (i.e. KRG) property by default.

The same process is occurring in the Nineveh Plains town of Baritleh, once wholly Assyrian, but where they now comprise only 60% of the population. Shabaks granted land confiscated from Assyrian farmers under the Baath regime are now refusing to return to their own villages and are demanding the establishment of their own places of worship, changing the area’s demography. In addition, the Kurdish-controlled local administration is forbidding Assyrians from building on their own plots of land, neither is it responding to calls from Assyrians to have their confiscated lands returned to them (as the Kurds are currently doing in Kirkuk). This is also happening on a smaller scale in Bakhdida and Karimlish.

¹⁷ Assyria Council of Europe interviews Assyrians (names withheld) at Dohuk, ‘Ayn-Nune and Arbil, December 2009 and January 2010.



Left: Azadi collective town, built on land confiscated from the Assyrians of Sarsing; **Right:** The KDP office in ‘Ayn-Nune (Kurdish: *Kani-Masi*), built on land illegally confiscated from a local Assyrian. The building in the background flying the Kurdish flag is the village school, which teaches only in Kurdish.



Disenfranchised, an Assyrian in Baritleh displays the title deeds to his land, which local authorities do not permit him to build on.

It only stands to reason why Mr Nimrud Baito, the leader of the APP and the KRG’s Tourism Minister from 2006 to October 2009, has continuously insisted that, “... *not even one metre has been taken by force by the KRG.*”¹⁸ As previously noted, he would not have made it into the KRG parliament if he had not entered his party under the Kurdistan slate in the 2005 elections. Quite interesting is his mention in a 2006 interview with Zinda magazine of the return of the village of Peshabur (also known as Fishkhabor) – since the KRG is still refusing to demolish a mosque built

¹⁸ Interview with Zinda Magazine, November 20, 2006.

illegally on the villagers' land, and the Kurdish flag and security forces dominate this purely Assyrian village. It is also the case of Peshabur which set a precedent for other Kurdish squatters on Assyrian lands who now demand a sum of \$20,000 per family for their removal – which most Assyrians cannot afford.



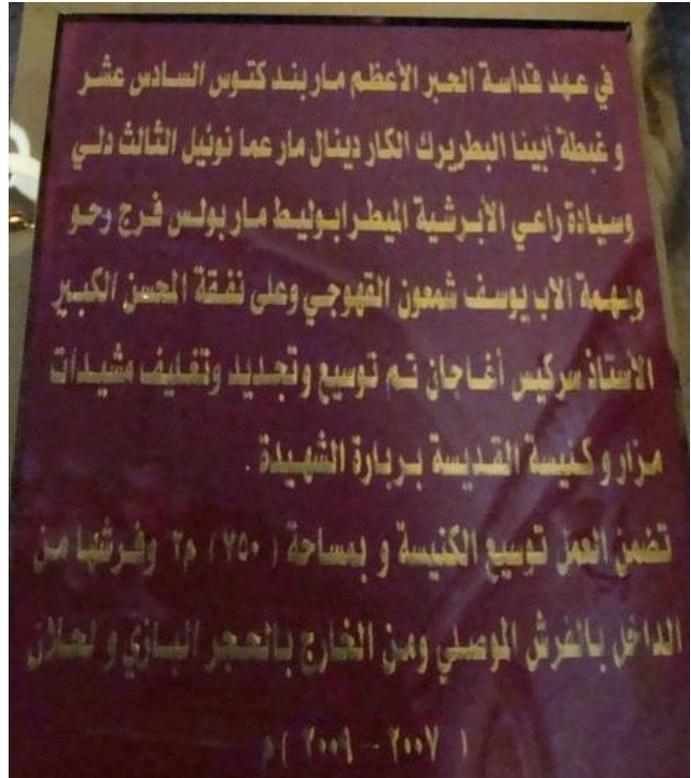
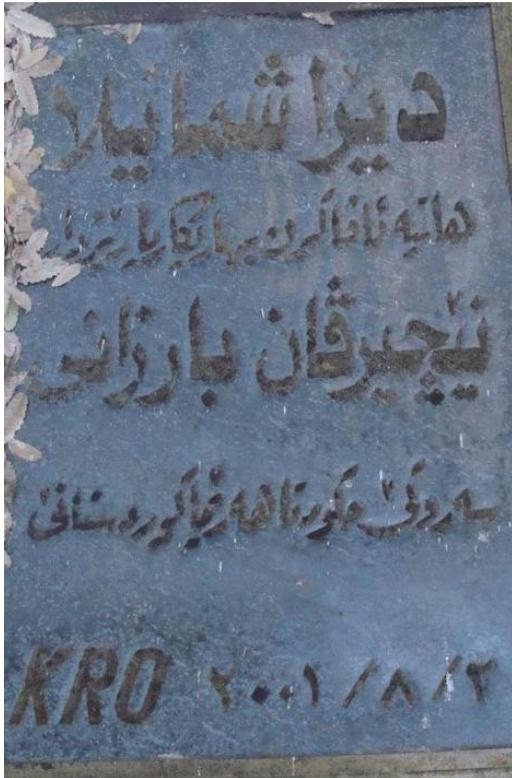
**Left: A Kurdish military checkpoint inside Peshabur;
Right: Left alone, the mosque on the outskirts of Peshabur.**

Reconstructing Churches and Villages

Since 1991, the KRG has overseen the rebuilding and renovation of over 20 churches in the IKR – often resulting in a partial or complete loss of the buildings' historical character and detaching them completely from their context as structures providing evidence of a continuous Assyrian presence. As a result, these churches also include dedicatory plaques honouring the KRG and its leaders, making them tools in the artificial “Kurdistani” nation-building process.



Left: Our Lady Guardian of Plants Chaldean Catholic Church in Peshabur, completely detached from its historical context; Right: St. George's Ancient Church of the East at Sharafiyah.



Signs in Kurdish, Syriac and Arabic glorifying Nechirvan Barzani, Mas'ud Barzani and Sargis Aghajan for building and restoring churches at Bishmiyaye (2001), Shaqlawa (2006), Peshabur (2007), and Karimlish (2009)



Left: The modern facade of the medieval St. Shmuni Syriac Orthodox Church in Baritleh; **Right:** All that remains of the sixth century Syriac Orthodox church of St. George at Bakhdida, with its thirteenth century fresco – the only one of its kind in Iraq. The rest of it was ruined to build a new structure with KRG money. The silhouette of the gigantic new belfry is also visible.



KRG-built water tanks at Dure (left), and Bishmiyaye (right) painted with Kurdish flags.



Left: The new KRG-built water-tank in Hazarjot; **Right:** A foundation stone, inscribed in Kurdish, at St. Shmuni Chaldean Catholic Church and cemetery, Mangesh.

The KRG has also overseen the reconstruction of more than over 100 destroyed Assyrian and villages as well as the few Armenian villages in the region. International NGOs with assistance from international governments, as well as the AAS and CAPNI, began this work in the 1990s, and later the KRG continued it under the UN oil-for-food programme and through the High Committee for Christian Affairs (HCCA). The HCCA, under Mr. Amir Goga in Zakho, is also responsible for illegally using money promised to build houses for Christians to fund new luxurious villas for Kurdish Aghas in the region, in return for their protection. Mr. Goga has also built a private school in Bedaro, with mostly Assyrian students, where the core-curriculum is taught in Kurdish, and the exterior walls gaudily decorated with Kurdish flags. Also, in keeping with its nationalist policies for Kurdification of the region, the KRG makes a clear point of painting the Kurdish flag on water tanks it provides purely Assyrian villages, as is the case in Dure, Bishmiyaye and Hazarjot. Whilst in theory the KRG believes that everyone in the IKR is entitled to return to their traditional communities and rural areas, and that villages should be maintained and supported, it is often the non-Kurds who suffer discrimination and other difficulties.



Homes by Aghajan. A worried Assyrian man in Shiyoz points to the cracks in the walls of his foundationless, and shoddily built house.

Faced with the large influx of Assyrian IDPs since 2003 seeking security and stability, and returning to their ancestral villages and homes in the IKR, the KRG has provided them with new homes, churches and community halls. These new property developments are helping to temporarily alleviate the problem, but the long term problems which plague the foreseeable future are disastrous for the Assyrians. These houses are hastily built with cheap materials, often with poor foundations, leading them to develop severe structural damage and cracks – and costing about a third of the \$45,000 allocated to build each one. It is even estimated that many of these will collapse entirely within three years of being built. Even many of the churches are built cheaply with their paint fading and peeling, their roof tiles going from red to green, and marble wall panels and floor tiles cracking and

dislodging. The blame may be partially laid upon unscrupulous contractors, but this is not the issue at hand. If the Assyrians were able to earn a living, then fixing the houses, or building new ones would not be too much of a problem.



Churches by Aghajan and the KRG: St. George's Ancient Church of the East in Bakhitme (left). Not only has the paint peeled off the dome, but the floor tiles have also come loose. At St. Sawa's Assyrian Church of the East in 'Ayn-Nune (right), the marble facade has dangerously cracked and is collapsing.



At oil-rich but impoverished Navkandala, not only have the roof tiles of the Aghajan-built church gone green (left), but many of the houses (right) are so dangerously cracked they are practically uninhabitable.

A case in point is the Assyrians of the Barwari-Bala district, which is a social disaster zone. In 21 Assyrian villages which have been repatriated 469 houses have been built, largely with KRG funding. Due to the lack of roads, schools, services, sound jobs, a recent drought and the failure of agriculture in the region, these houses are inhabited by less than 100 families, as well as 23 individuals. The Assyrian villages of Avsarke (10 houses), Tashish (14 houses) and Upper Challik (15 houses) have also been largely taken over and settled by Kurds in recent years because they are so lacking in any means to support a living that Assyrians have refused to resettle them.¹⁹ This has also occurred in the Assyrian village of Meze to the south in the Gahra mountains where 20 houses were built by the KRG, and which are now inhabited by Kurds. In the

¹⁹ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with community leaders (names withheld) 'Ayn-Nune and Dure, in December 2009.

western Nahla region, the village of Upper Hizane and some houses on the outskirts of Lower Hizane are completely empty, prompting the KDP to open up offices for it and related Kurdish organisations in two of them.



Open for business: The KDP and affiliated organisational offices in houses originally built for the Assyrians of Lower Hizane, in the purely Assyrian region of western Nahla.

Employment and Money-Earning Opportunities

At present Assyrians in the IKR face blatant economic discrimination in what can only be described as a covert campaign of ethnic cleansing. Assyrians are discriminated against in the workforce if they are not members of the KDP, and even more so if they do not speak Kurdish. Despite being indigenous to the area they are often questioned as to why they do not speak Kurdish and are thus suspected of being sympathetic to the Arabs. Assyrians and Yazidis are not allowed to open large and successful businesses unless they accept the partnership of a high-ranking KDP official, who will contribute nothing towards it. This is an unspoken rule, which if disregarded leads to mafia-style attacks and ransacking of the business by unknown assailants who are then not sought after, investigated or brought to justice. This corruption has also been noted by foreign journalists.²⁰

The only businesses Assyrians and Yazidis are permitted to open without being expected to have a KDP “partner” are those involving the sale and consumption of alcohol, since their religions do not forbid it (as was the norm under the Baath regime). This has led to their demonisation amongst religious Muslims, and may lead to future murders as have occurred in other parts of Iraq since 2003. This practice is almost identical to the way Jews were unwanted and mistreated in medieval Europe:

²⁰ Michael Rubin, “Bad to worse in Iraqi Kurdistan,” February 17, 2010, <http://corner.nationalreview.com>.

they were pushed into usury, considered an unclean job by religious Christians, which often led to them being the victims of pogroms and persecution. Because of this, Assyrian areas in the IKR are being rapidly ghettoised. For example, religious Muslim Kurds in Arbil will not dare set foot in Ankawa (the Assyrian quarter) because it is home to places where alcohol and drugs may be bought or consumed, and is also a venue for brothels, undercover prostitution, wild parties, and has a reputation for women with loose morals.²¹

This only leaves farming, which at present is an unsuccessful venture in the IKR. Most food produce in the IKR is imported from neighbouring Iran and Turkey, to dissuade local farmers from occupying themselves with agriculture, and to instead encourage them to rely solely on more lucrative employment as *peshmerga* fighters. This also affords them more rest time to attend to their homes and families since they serve on a basis of ten days on duty followed by ten days off. Since Assyrians ideally would not join the *peshmerga*, an army belonging to a Kurdish nationalist party, unless in desperate circumstances, this leaves most of them with no other option but to attempt to make a living off their land holdings. But prices for crops and foodstuffs are at an all-time low. In most cases the profit on the produce sold pays for no more than its transportation to the city.²²



Scenes of devastation at Lower Challik: July 2009.

In other cases Assyrian villagers have returned to find that the land around their villages is already being exploited by Kurds from elsewhere who demand monetary compensation (roughly \$20,000 each family) if they were to be returned. Countless petitions to the KRG have provided no outcome for scores of villages with unemployed youths watching as their ancestral lands are illegally taken from them. In the village of Lower Challik on July 7, 2009, Kurds from neighbouring Kesta²³ set fire

²¹ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with community leaders (names withheld) at Arbil and Ankawa, in January 2010.

²² Assyria Council of Europe interviews with community leaders (names withheld) at Dohuk, in December 2009.

²³ Kesta is known by villagers of Challik to have once been a mixed Assyrian Christian and Jewish village, though it is not known when it was taken over by Kurds. Its name is derived from Syriac too, and it is home to the ruins of some churches and a synagogue. Assyria Council of Europe interview with community leader (name withheld) at Lower Challik, December 2009.

to their crops, including their priceless apple orchards and vineyards, damaging 75 percent of their land, as well as a few houses, hay and firewood, and leaving them penniless for the winter.²⁴ No inquest was made into the arson attack, which burned for three days, and neither were the culprits brought to justice. Crops and vineyards have also been deliberately damaged in Sarsing, and cases of Kurds stealing produce from Assyrian crops in the villages of Dere and Sarsing have been documented since 2002.

Assyrian villages such as Inishk and Sarsing are also being exploited by the KRG for the tourist industry with their Assyrian inhabitants standing to profit nothing from the re-development of restaurants, hotels and tourist chalets built by the previous regime. Whilst under Saddam local Assyrians shared a cut of the profits and contributed to the maintenance and operation of these facilities, the KRG now hands them over to contractors with no guarantee of employment or profit for the local Assyrians.²⁵



**Left: Developing the touristic cave restaurant at Inishk;
Right: Tourist chalets under construction at Sarsing.**

Another serious issue is the exploitation of Assyrian lands for oil drilling, as has occurred in the village of Navkandala since June 2009. The owners of the land upon which the oil has been discovered (covering roughly 175 hectares) are not allowed to visit it, and the Assyrian inhabitants of the village are not provided the opportunity of working on the oil-drilling facility operated in cooperation with Norwegian company DNO. This privilege has been reserved for Kurds from nearby Sarsulavke, with which they already have an ongoing property dispute. All the Assyrians of Navkandala have seen in return for their land and its strategic oil supply are glass souvenirs bearing the eagle representing the KRG, given to them by the company drilling the oil.²⁶

Because of their general disenfranchisement, Assyrian villages have become like some Native American reservations. Here the lack of employment opportunities has created a generation of young people with social problems fuelled by a desperate need for basic resources. Some of these serious issues now at large amongst Assyrians in the villages are drug and alcohol abuse, gambling and prostitution.

²⁴ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with community leaders (names withheld) at Dohuk and Challik, in December 2009.

²⁵ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with community leaders (names withheld) at Inishk and Sarsing, in December 2009.

²⁶ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with community leaders (names withheld) at Navkandala and Zakho, in December 2009.



Peanuts: A glass memento given to certain inhabitants of Navkandala by DNO and the KRG in return for the oil under their agricultural lands.



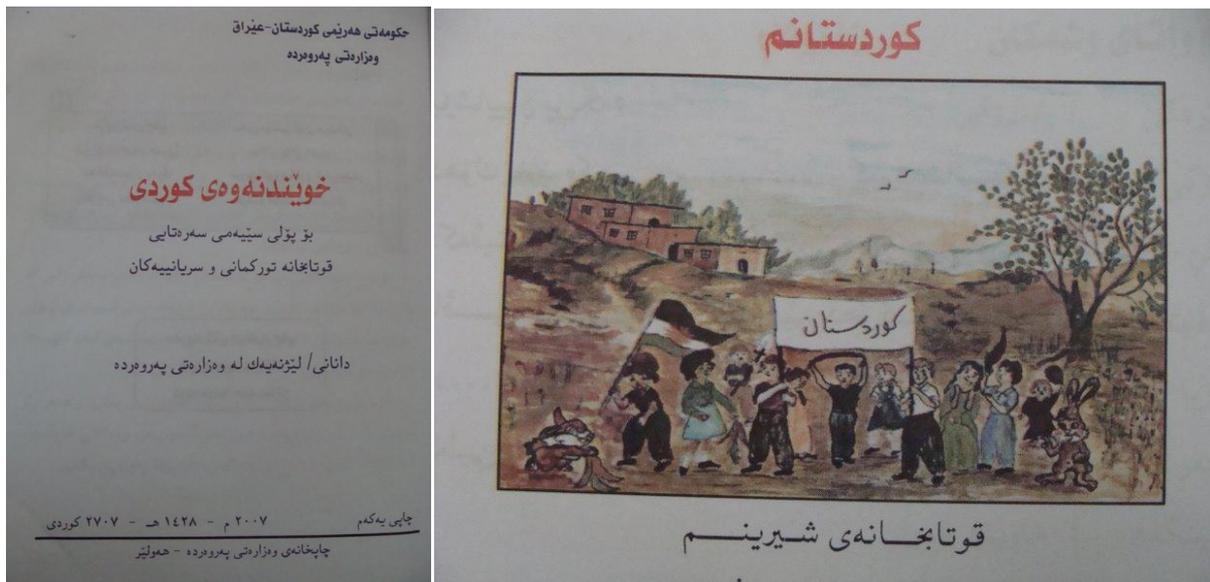
Gambling and alcoholism are two serious problems in the Assyrian community today, as a direct result of their disenfranchisement by others more powerful than them.

Education

Theoretically, the KRG believes in the right of all nationalities to learn and study in their mother tongue, and has put this principle into practice since 1992, not without creating various obstacles to impede this. That year the KRG Ministry of Education passed Article 4 in Law No. 4, establishing primary education in their mother tongue for minorities in the IKR. The first KRG-funded Syriac and Armenian primary schools were opened a year later in March 1993. There are currently 62 primary

and preparatory Syriac and Armenian schools in Arbil and Dohuk provinces, with nearly 7,000 pupils. Following the successful start of the primary schools, in 1997-1998 the KRG Ministry of Education started planning for Syriac secondary schools, and today there are more than 10 in Arbil and Dohuk provinces combined. The first round of these secondary school students graduated in 2004, and attempts are being made to open a Syriac language department in the University of Dohuk in the future after the successful establishment of one at the University of Baghdad in 2005.

Unfortunately just over half of the abovementioned Syriac schools are immersion schools, teaching all core subjects in Syriac. As an indigenous people with an endangered language, Assyrians are rightfully entitled to a complete education in their own mother tongue – and not just to study it as a language beside a core-curriculum taught in Kurdish, which is the norm for the rest of the “Syriac” schools. The former though are discouraged and left underfunded by KRG authorities, in comparison with latter; and Assyrian teachers are not encouraged to teach at those schools because, “They are set to be closed down in the future.” For those who insist, the process is made so hard for them that many just give up and consent to teaching in Kurdish schools.²⁷ Not only Assyrian, but also Turkmen education, has been deliberately neglected and since the registration of new students has significantly decreased it is reported to be closing down.²⁸ In the IKR basic linguistic human rights are tolerated, barely, but not respected for non-Kurds since this runs counter to the nationalist program of the KRG leadership. This violates Article 14.1 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



Kurdish workbook for Turkmen and Syriac Schools (published 2007). One of the poems is titled “My Kurdistan” and is illustrated with a group of children dressed in Kurdish costume waving a Kurdish flag and a banner that reads “Kurdistan.”

In the Syriac and Turkmen immersion schools Kurdish for non-Kurdish speakers is obligatory as a second/foreign language. Though, after a close study of the specific textbooks used in its instruction, it has been found to be replete with Kurdish flags and nationalist poems glorifying Kurdistan – alienating members of these communities who identify on the whole as Iraqis and not Kurdistanis. Kurdish flags fly above these schools and their signage is also in Kurdish. If the schools require signage in their own language this is to be provided privately at the school’s expense. Often where the school is named after the village, the village’s Kurdish name is used even though there are no Kurds living in the village, further completing the process of Kurdification.

²⁷ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with teachers (names withheld) in Dohuk, December 2009.

²⁸ Iraqi Turkmen Human Rights Research Foundation (SOITM), “SOITM report to the UPR of Iraq,” February 2010, p. 4.



Syriac immersion primary and high schools at Sarsing (left) and Shiyoz (right). The signage is in Kurdish, gives Kurdish names of villages, and there is always a Kurdish flag. The Syriac sign at Sarsing was privately supplied.



Left: The Syriac immersion primary school at Dehe; Right: The Kurdish flag used at the Syriac immersion primary school in Bakhitme for the weekly flag-raising ceremonies.

It is also obligatory for children educated in these schools, even though there are no Kurdish students present, to conduct a Kurdish flag-raising ceremony once a week, sing Kurdish national songs and pledge allegiance to it and the Barzani family (of course, under the watchful eyes of the Kurdish language teachers who also double as KRG agents). Many Assyrian teachers are also pressured into joining the KDP and the Kurdistan Student Union is given complete freedom to recruit Assyrian students into their ranks.²⁹

²⁹ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with teachers (names withheld) in Dohuk, December 2009.



The Kurdistan Student Union office in Ankawa, notice its name written also in Syriac.

Other difficulties faced by the Syriac immersion schools include the perhaps deliberate lack of textbooks and basic facilities and services such as photocopiers. Often textbooks arrive months from the end of the school year with the excuse that the Kurdish ones had to be printed first, then the Arabic ones. Whole classes of Assyrian children work from photocopies for the rest of the year. Even janitors for the Syriac immersion schools are no longer subsidised by the KRG and now must be privately funded.³⁰

Transportation is also a big issue, with many Assyrian students in remote areas being forced to either pay up to go to school, or settle for attending a Kurdish one. The KRG's Education Ministry has clamped down on funds formerly allotted for this purpose and now demand the full details of all drivers who are employed to transport students and teachers, and even their vehicle registrations. Instead the pressure to fund this rests on the AAS, diverting it from other more important humanitarian and infrastructure building projects in Assyrian towns and villages. According to Mr. Napoleon Patto, director of the AAS, "If we do not fund the transportation of students and teachers, we may need to accept the closure of some of the Syriac schools, and this will be the beginning of the end."³¹

Within the IKR, as well as the disputed territories Assyrian community and religious leaders known to be funded by the KRG, and specifically the KDP (among them Mr. Nimrud Baito, Bishop Petros Harboli, Bishop Mikha Maqdassi and others), have publicly denounced the Syriac immersion schools voicing their concerns for the "students' futures." Assyrian families have often been offered financial incentives to enrol their children in Kurdish schools instead of Syriac ones. Sometimes social pressure has even been applied by community and religious leaders with KRG backing.

Although the December 2009 KRG report states that they are unaware of any government schools in other parts of Iraq that offer education in Syriac, such immersion schools have existed in the Nineveh

³⁰ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with teachers (names withheld) in Dohuk, December 2009.

³¹ Assyria Council of Europe interview with Mr. Napoleon Patto whilst on a visit to Sydney, Australia, November 2009.

Plains towns of Bakhdida and Baritleh, as well as Kirkuk and Baghdad, since 2004. Syriac is also offered as a language course in primary and secondary schools throughout the towns and villages of the Nineveh Plains. Most of these also receive their textbooks from the General Directorate for Syriac Education in the KRG's Education Ministry.

The Media

In Arbil as well as in Dohuk are the bases of some of the major Assyrian/Syriac language media in Iraq. Several Syriac newspapers and magazines are published in these cities, partly with KRG funding, by pro-KRG Assyrian groups. Among them are *Quyaman* (by the APP), *Bet-Nahrain* (by the Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party), *Radya Kaldaya* (by the Chaldean Cultural Centre), *Simtha* (by the Union of Assyrian Writers), *Motwa* (by the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Popular Council), *Hizel* (by the Hizel Centre in Zakho) and *Ankawa* magazine.

Interestingly, the December 2009 KRG report fails to mention the ADM's newspaper *Bahra*, circulated in both Syriac and Arabic editions for nearly three decades, as well as *Kikhwa d-Beth Nahrain* by the Assyrian Cultural Centre in Dohuk – which has not been registered as an official civil society organisation by KRG authorities since its inception in 1992. On similar lines, the Assyrian Cultural Directorate in Arbil was renamed the Syriac Cultural and Arts Directorate after 2004 and its administration has gradually passed from members of the ADM to Assyrian KDP members. It also publishes a magazine called *Banipal*.

Ishtar TV was established in 2005 with KRG funding and broadcasts from Ankawa. It is the mouthpiece and propaganda machine of KDP member and former KRG minister Mr. Aghajan, and the pro-KRG Ishtar Patriotic Slate, Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Popular Council and the Committee for Christian Affairs. Its sole purpose is to compete against, undermine and challenge the hugely underfunded Ashur TV, mouthpiece of the ADM, which has existed since the 1990s and went to air on satellite after 2003. Kurdistan TV, the mouthpiece of the KDP, also presents a one-hour weekly programme, called *Soraya*, in Syriac.

In the past few years, crews from Ashur TV have found it increasingly difficult to cover special events at Assyrian churches in Iraq and the Diaspora, since a monopoly is now held by Ishtar TV. Countless times Ashur TV's reporters and cameramen have been verbally and physically abused by Assyrian "Church Guards" who do not grant them access to churches or other parts of some Assyrians towns and villages – simply because of their affiliation with the ADM.

As a whole, Assyrian print media, TV and radio networks that are not aligned with the KRG and its interests are not funded and thus suffer major setbacks in terms of paying their staff and buying up to date equipment. They are also undermined by the alternative media which are amply funded by the KRG and are more numerous, thus drawing many needy professionals to them.³² In this way KRG authorities sideline the independent Assyrian media so that they are less noticed by the broader community, but as the underdog they continue to maintain popularity.

The IKR's constitution: Equality and safeguards for minorities?

The IKR's draft constitution³³ was approved on June 24, 2009, by a majority of MPs in the KRG Parliament and will be put to a referendum. The constitution, which evolved from debates by politicians, intellectuals and civil society groups since 1992, is said to guarantee religious and language rights for all nationalities and religions, and is apparently explicit about the multi-ethnic

³² Assyria Council of Europe interviews with Ashur TV staff (names withheld) in Dohuk and Bakhdida, December 2009.

³³ Constitution of Iraqi Kurdistan Region, 2009, <http://www.perleman.org/files/sitecontents/300609092607.pdf>.

identity of the Region. The constitution grants the KRG all the powers and institutions of an independent country and clearly contradicts the Iraqi constitution. The draft regional constitution also lays claim to areas within Nineveh and other disputed territories, and asserts the KRG's right to deploy *peshmerga* outside of the region.³⁴ This has provoked outrage from the various ethnic groups in the region³⁵ and the central government, and further united Sunni and Shiite politicians. In the days after it was passed, 50 Iraqi MPs from different political parties signed a petition criticising it.

Article 5 names the Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmen and Arabs, as well as the Kurds, as the people of the Kurdistan Region. In Article 35, the constitution guarantees national, cultural and administrative rights to all minorities including Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, and Armenians. It also gives minorities the right to self-rule in areas where they are a majority of the population. Under Article 20 on equality, all forms of discrimination are prohibited, including discrimination based on religion, origin or nationality.

At the outset, though, what seems to be a progressive move from the KRG, is in actual fact a denial of the Assyrians as the indigenous people of the region, and a further denial of their ethnic identity splintering them into Chaldeans, Syriacs *and* Assyrians, equally on par with Armenians, Turkmen and Arabs. Yazidi, Shabak and Kaka'i minorities are clearly not mentioned because the Kurdish authorities do not recognise them as anything but Kurds.³⁶ It is also interesting to note that self-rule is not possible within an already existing semiautonomous region, such as the IKR, although its new constitution supports it.



Official signage for the Assyrian villages of ‘Ayn-Nune (Kurdish: *Kani-Mase*, left), and Hamziyah (Kurdish: *Hamzike*, right).

The constitution ensures the rights of all nationalities and religions to develop their own education, media, culture, and organisations. But as we have seen, this only applies where they tow the official line of the KRG and are not independent in their outlook. It also guarantees the right to use traditional local place names, though throughout the IKR and the disputed territories all signs give place names

³⁴ Article (2)(1) states, “Kurdistan-Iraq is a historical and geographic entity that includes ... the districts of Aqra, Al-Shaykhan, Sinjar, Tall Kayf, Qarqosh; and the subdistricts of Zammar, Ba'shiqah, Aski Kalak from the Governorate of Nineveh ...”

³⁵ In a joint statement issued on July 10, 2009, four groups representing Shabaks, Yazidis, Chaldo-Assyrians, and Turkmen contended that the Kurdish constitution opens the door to further conflict and “will destabilize the Middle East for centuries and result in disastrous outcomes.” See Human Rights Watch, “On Vulnerable Ground,” p. 36.

³⁶ The KRG constitution does recognise the Yazidis as a distinct religious group though.

of Assyrian villages in Kurdish. For example: Shiyoz has become Seje, Hizane has become Hezanke, Komane has become Kowani, Bishmiyaye has become Ishmayela, Iyat has become Yate, Araden has become Aradina, ‘Ayn-Nune has become Kani-Mase, Hamziyah has become Hamzike, and Badriya has become Badrike. Even the Turkmen town of Altun-Kupri near Kirkuk, in the disputed territories, has been renamed in signs to Pirde. We have already discussed Ba’shiqa and Bahzani.



Only Kurdish flags fly above the offices of the Chaldean Democratic Union Party (CDUP) at Inishk (left), and the Chaldean Cultural Centre in Zakho (right).



Only Kurdish flags fly above the offices of the Syriac Cultural and Arts Directorate in Dohuk (left), and the Chaldean-Assyrian Cultural Centre in ‘Aqra (right).



Only Kurdish flags fly above the offices of the Chaldean Catholic Cathedral in Dohuk (left), and the Shemsha Group for Acting in Ankawa (right).



Kurdish flags at the entrance to the purely Assyrian village of Dehe (left), and on a bus shelter at the purely Assyrian village of Bebede (right).

On the topic of cultural equality, Assyrians in the IKR are not allowed to fly their flag publicly. Most Assyrian offices belonging to political and civil society organisations that oppose exclusivist Kurdish nationalism, such as the ADM, fly neither the Assyrian nor the Kurdish flags in protest, and those that are aligned with the KDP and KRG only fly the Kurdish flag above their buildings. It is not unusual to see the Kurdish flag hoisted by Assyrian KDP members in purely Assyrian villages such as Dehe, Shiyoz, Bebede, Tilla and others. In Shiyoz, Assyrian flags that had remained hoisted after a celebration of the Assyrian New Year organised by the Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Popular Council (aligned with the KRG) were forcibly removed and replaced with Kurdish flags by *Asayish* intelligence officers, with the excuse that they represented the ADM. Even cars in Dohuk bearing Assyrian flags on their rear-view mirrors are not spared, pelted with rocks or keyed.³⁷ The only Assyrian village where not one, but three, Assyrian flags are hoisted is Jedideh, home to controversial figure Franso, chairman of the HCCA and a high-ranking KDP member.

³⁷ Assyria Council of Europe interview with Assyrian community representatives (names withheld) in Dohuk and Shiyoz, December 2009.

Many more articles of the KRG's new constitution seem excellent on paper, but there remains doubt as to whether or not, given the Kurdish leaders' current track record, they will be implemented and enforced in reality. Article 31 states, *"The obligation of the authorities to ensure equality: Authorities in the Kurdistan Region will ensure the implementation of the principle of equality, will work to achieve it for national and religious components, and will create conditions to preserve their identity and take the necessary measures to strengthen them."*³⁸ This has already been violated numerous times in the KRG, with numerous murders and kidnappings of Assyrians since 1991 left uninvestigated – terrorising relatives and friends into leaving. The most conspicuous case is that of former KRG parliament member Mr. Francis Shabo of the ADM, who was an outspoken critic of Kurds stealing Assyrian land, and a major campaigner for unity between the various Assyrian denominations. He was shot dead in 1993, a year after he entered parliament, and his killer – a high ranking KDP member and known assassin – is still living a luxurious life in a Dohuk villa.³⁹ No attempt has been made at investigating the assassination or bringing the killer to justice.



Left: Settlements of Kurdish squatters in the old tourist village of Inishk; **Right:** The Kore-Gavana collective town built by Saddam on Assyrian land, and which the Kurds are neither leaving, nor paying compensation for.

Article 32 states, *"The Kurdistan Regional Government is committed to the prevention of deliberate change in the proportion of the population in areas inhabited by different nationalities or religions, without prejudice to the removal of the effects of Arabization and the forced displacement by the Baathist regime in Kirkuk and other areas of Kurdistan - Iraq."*⁴⁰ Of course, it does not mention the deliberate demographic alterations already affected by the KDP's nationalist policies which have seen hundreds of Kurdish families from Iran settled in the Assyrian town of Sarsing. Neither does it address the continuing grievances of Assyrians from places such as Komane, Birsive, Kore-Gavana, Mangesh, Hamziyya, Inishk and others where Kurds were settled in collectives under Baath party policy or found refuge after the First Gulf War. In many of these locations Kurdish authorities settled the refugee families settled as "guests," until such time as their villages could be rebuilt. Nearly 20 years on, even in cases where this has been achieved, the vast majority of these unwanted guests are refusing to leave due to their new locations' convenience and good access to land, water and basic services such as roads and electricity. They are instead keeping their homes in their original villages, harassing the Assyrians indigenous where they now live and, due to the links of many of them with the KDP, they intimidate them into leaving for good.

Despite all these injustices against them, Assyrians and members of other minority communities are largely silenced through fear and threats, being unable to freely share truth regarding their experiences in the IKR. Foreign academics, reporters and human rights advocates are often closely minded and

³⁸ Kurdistan Regional Government: UK Representation, "The Status of Christians in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq," p. 11.

³⁹ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with community leaders (names withheld) in Dohuk, December 2009.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 11.

even blocked from meeting with independent Assyrian political and civil society organisations which oppose KDP policy, in order to whitewash their appalling situation. One informant from the ADM, who chose to remain anonymous, received phone call from a high-ranking Assyrian member of the KDP after it was discovered that he had been accompanying a foreigner sent by his government to compile a human rights report on Assyrians in northern Iraq. “He asked me, ‘do you want a bullet between your eyes? Why are you looking for trouble and putting yourself in danger?’”⁴¹ The Hammurabi Human Rights Organisation is also not registered in the IKR and thus has no permission to operate and collect data regarding human rights abuses against Assyrians in that region.

The Question of an Autonomous Region for “Christians”

The KRG states that it supports the principle of an autonomous region for minority nationalities, where they form a majority in an area. It does not stipulate the possible size of such a region, nor does it define what it may comprise of administratively. Article 35 of the IKR constitution “*guarantees the rights of national, cultural and administrative Turkmens, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Armenians, including self-rule where any of them form a majority of the population and regulated by law.*”⁴²

The KRG states that it believes that this principle should apply also in the disputed territories in the Nineveh Plains, not in imposing the idea on any group or nationality, “who should decide for themselves by democratic means how they wish to be governed.”⁴³ Rather in reality through their two-pronged campaign of patronage, and intimidation, as well as their obvious military and administrative presence in the area, they are clearly and deliberately influencing matters in a way which would favour them.

Of the parties that stood in the IKR parliamentary elections of July 2009, the KRG backed and funded Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Popular Council (which won 54% of “Assyrian” votes in the election through fraud) is obviously in favour of the Nineveh Plains becoming part of the IKR, and Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Autonomy List wants to absorb the Nineveh Plains into the IKR as an autonomous unit (8.5% of votes). Many of these votes in fact came from Kurdish towns and villages such as Begova and Batufa where there are no Assyrians residing. The National Rafidain List of the ADM (28% of votes) is against the Nineveh Plains joining the IKR, while the Unified Chaldean List does not seem to have expressed a strong view on it (almost 9% of votes).

In the Nineveh 2009 provincial elections, Assyrian parties that are in favour of the Nineveh Plains being incorporated into the KRG administered areas fared much better than those that oppose it. Of the three main blocks fighting for the reserved Christian seats, the pro-KRG Ishtar Patriotic List won 66% of the vote, and the ADM won 28%. It should be noted that Mr. Jevara Zaia of the ADM, the Assyrian representative elected to Nineveh’s provincial council in 2005 was unable to serve his full term due to being imprisoned for two years on false charges of fraud laid by his mostly Kurdish colleagues. He was released after being found innocent, only when it was too late for him to campaign for the 2009 elections.

The election results of 2009 are quite different to previous Assyrian election trends. Election results such as these though often must be taken with some speculation due to the very real problem of Kurdish electoral fraud. In previous election campaigns it has been known not only for Assyrians being told who to vote for; but also underage voting, the dead voting, multiple votes, and non-Iraqi Kurds being allowed to vote boosting their numbers dramatically. Many Assyrian IDPs in the IKR are told that they cannot vote since they are not on the electoral registers, and instead must go to another

⁴¹ Assyria Council of Europe interview with an Assyrian community leader (name withheld) in Dohuk, December 2009.

⁴² Kurdistan Regional Government: UK Representation, “The Status of Christians in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq,” p. 11.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 11.

polling station or the local electoral office – a process which takes hours. In many cases these Assyrians would not make it to the polls on time, or would give up out of frustration.⁴⁴

In the 1992 elections of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, roughly 55% of Assyrian voters chose the ADM, giving them four seats in the Regional Parliament. Supporters of Mr. Aghajan, the Kurdistan Christian Unity, gained 23% of the vote and one seat. The following year Mr. Francis Shabo, one of the four ADM representatives and an outspoken Assyrian land rights and unity advocate, was shot dead. His killer, a high ranking KDP member and known assassin, is still at large and unapprehended.

In the January 2005 Iraqi parliamentary elections, 76% of the Assyrian vote (36,255 out of 47,515) went to the ADM. It is unknown how many Assyrian votes would have gone to three other Assyrian parties that had entered under the Kurdistan List (among them the APP, CDUP and Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party) – since they would have been counted as Kurdish votes. Despite this, only one ADM member made it to the parliament and four seats were taken by Assyrians who had entered under the Kurdistan List, undermining the influence of the ADM. In a similar fashion, an ADM member was elected to represent Assyrians in the Nineveh Provincial Council, whilst an APP member who entered under the Kurdistan List was chosen to represent Assyrians in the Kirkuk Provincial Council. That same year, in the elections for the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Parliament, three of five seats were won by Assyrians from Kurdish-backed parties and two were won by the ADM. In these elections the ADM was forced to enter under the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan, if they were to win any seats.

In the second Iraqi parliamentary elections held in December 2005, roughly 81% of the Assyrian vote (44,263 out of 54,802) went to the ADM, gaining them one representative. Five parties and an independent that have Kurdish backing entered together under a separate list, but only won 7% of the Assyrian vote and no seats. The CDUP entered again under the Kurdistan List and gained one representative in the Iraqi Parliament, along with an Assyrian member of the KDP who also won a seat. It is not known though how many Assyrians would have actually voted for these two though since they would have been counted as Kurdish votes. This result again would have further served to undermine the influence of the ADM.

It is quite amusing that the December 2009 KRG report labels the ADM as anti-KRG, probably due its insistence on the dignity and integrity of the Assyrian people even when it opposes their ambitions to expand the territory under their control and indoctrinate its citizens with Kurdish nationalism. If the ADM was anti-KRG it would have refused to participate in the IKR's political life and would have withdrawn its representatives from its parliament years ago. Rather, over the years, it has become apparent that the ADM has been bullied and gradually marginalised by the KDP, losing seats and even a ministry to KDP-backed Assyrian parties. Using their same logic, the KRG may also be termed anti-Assyrian, but this is beside the point.

Fortunately the tables have somewhat turned in the recent 2010 elections, with the ADM winning 38% of the Assyrian vote (28,095 out of 73,315), with significant victories in Baghdad, Dohuk, Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah and Anbar provinces, and three of the five reserved "Christian" seats in the new Iraqi Parliament. The KRG-backed Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Popular Council won 30% of the vote, and three separate lists belonging to other Kurdish-backed Assyrian parties won altogether 21% of the vote. Their significant victories were in the provinces of Nineveh, Arbil, Basrah and Diyala. The Popular Council won the two remaining reserved "Christian" seats.

For most Assyrians in northern Iraq, especially in the Nineveh Plains, the question of a Christian province or autonomous region is quite touch and go. From a political point of view, such an area would make it appear to Sunni Arab extremists and Iraqi ultra-nationalists that Christians harbour ambitions for an ethnically or religiously divided Iraq, which is plainly the main cause of the current

⁴⁴ Assyria Council of Europe interviews with community leaders and IDPs (names withheld) in Dohuk, December 2009.

violence in Iraq.⁴⁵ “Many fellow Arab students tell us, if autonomy is what you want then go to the Kurdish autonomous region, we don’t want you here.”⁴⁶ The choice as to whether to attach such an area to either the IKR or the central government is also a dilemma, though most independents opt for Iraqi government control. If this occurs they may become a target for the resentful Kurdish leaders who have invested so much money in the area, and lost the chance to exploit its natural resources, though if it does not, it will become the first battleground in any future war between Kurds and Arabs. Assyrians and other ethnic communities living in these territories have no desire in being a buffer between these two antagonistic ethnic groups. When asked whether they sided with Kurds or with Arabs, most Assyrians interviewed by Assyria Council of Europe would reply, “Neither. We side with Iraq!”

A majority of those interviewed by Assyria Council of Europe wished instead to be able to administer themselves locally as part of the existing government structure, be able to teach all core subjects in their mother tongue, and have local Iraqi police and military forces staffed by members of their own communities protecting their towns and villages. Due to the complex ethnic makeup of the area, others suggested the establishment of a new province under the central government’s control comprising the districts of Tell-Kayf, Hamdaniyah and Shaykhan and where Assyrians, Yazidis, Shabaks, Turkmen and Kaka’is can form a system of united cantons based on their existing settlement patterns and demography, again providing the local Iraqi military and security forces with personnel. Both the above ideas seem to be feasible since they do not compromise Iraq’s territorial integrity, and they also provide sound boundaries within which each of these small and endangered ethnic groups can continue to live on lands they have inhabited for centuries, safely and securely. Such models have also been suggested for future application in the provinces of Dohuk and Arbil, though this is a long way off due the nationalist policies of the ruling KDP which is attempting to ethnically cleanse the areas under its control to create a Kurdish nation-state.

⁴⁵ Saad Hanna Sirop, “Kidnapped Chaldean Priest: No to the Niniveh plain ethnic project,” AsiaNews, August 6, 2007, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Kidnapped-Chaldean-Priest-:-No-to-the-Niniveh-plain-ethnic-project-9498.html>; See also Louis Sako, “Nineveh Plain: a ghetto for Iraqi Christians is an illusion,” AsiaNews, April 20, 2009, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Nineveh-Plain:-a-ghetto-for-Iraqi-Christians-is-an-illusion-15025.html>.

⁴⁶ Assyria Council of Europe interview with a student of Mosul University (name withheld), December 2009.

II. Conclusions

The KRG has a clear and consistent policy of ethnic cleansing through threatening and intimidating and disadvantaging members of indigenous minorities, including the Assyrians. This pressure, as well as discrimination and heavy-handed terror tactics, has prompted scores of disenfranchised Assyrian families to flee the country in the last few years. Having suffered oppression themselves in the past, the Kurdish leadership have now become the oppressors as they attempt to turn the areas under their control into a Kurdish nation-state along the lines of Kemalist Turkey and Baathist Iraq. All rights for non-Kurdish minorities to political representation, education, free expression in the media, and safety and security are tightly controlled and kept under close scrutiny. Those who openly disagree with the KRG, KDP and their nationalist policies live in constant fear of retribution.

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.