

## Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

25 January 2005

Mr. President:

We are writing to express our concern for the future of Christians, Mandaeans, Yazidies and other non-Muslim minorities in Iraq. There are three critical actions that you can take to help guarantee their survival.

- We would like you to instruct the United States Agency for International Development to insure that the ChaldoAssyrian community receive an equitable assignment of funds that have been committed for reconstruction;
- Urge the interim Iraqi government to implement Article 53 (d) of the Temporary Administrative Law creating an administrative district in the Ninevah Plains to serve as sanctuary and to secure the welfare of ChaldoAssyrian people; and,
- Strongly encourage the creation of alternative seats in the Iraqi Assembly constitutional drafting committee for non-Muslim minorities to enhance the inclusiveness of the constitutional process.

Assyrian, Chaldean, Syriac Christians of Iraq, called ChaldoAssyrian, now comprise only between 5 and 10% of the population although they are the indigenous people of Iraq. Religious/ethnic discrimination and persecution over the last half-century have driven one-half of their population into diaspora. Over 80% of all Iraqis living in the United States today are Christian. ChaldoAssyrians have been targeted by Islamic fundamentalist militias and insurgent forces that use kidnappings, assassinations, murders of little children, and the bombing of churches in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Mosul.

ChaldoAssyrians are also being persecuted and displaced in Iraq due to active and passive policies of Kurdish administrative authorities, which encroach on their lands, not allowing them to return to villages or rebuild churches and schools. These acts intimidate the Christian community, leaving them with few alternatives but to flee their indigenous homeland in Iraq. During the past six months an estimated 40,000 Christians have fled to Syria and Jordan. Other non-Muslims, such as the Yezidi and Sabeen Mandaeans, have experienced similar pressures. Thousands have left Iraq to Jordan and Syria fearing for their lives.

In order to prevent a mass exodus that would destroy an indigenous population, detrimentally affect the preservation of diversity in the Middle East, and, critically, deprive Iraq of an educated and forward-thinking skilled and professional class, it is essential for the United States to pay special attention to the welfare of Iraq's ChaldoAssyrian community and other non-Muslim minorities who are strong allies for the promotion of democratic ideals and moderation.

Two years ago the U. S. committed \$20 billion for reconstruction purposes. These funds are being distributed by the State Department and its contractors through Arab and Kurdish governing agencies. None of those reconstruction funds have been received or administered by the ChaldoAssyrian community, nor has their input been sought in use of these funds.

To correct this inequity, we ask you to direct the United States Agency for International Development to allocate designated funds specifically for use in redevelopment and the promotion of the welfare, education and resettlement of ChaldoAssyrian villages, towns and agricultural areas in northern Iraq where they live and have historically been most concentrated.

We ask that you urge the interim government of Iraq to implement Article 53 (d) of TAL to establish an administrative area for the ChaldoAssyrians in the Nineveh Plains in order to protect and preserve the safety and future of ChaldoAssyrian people and to serve as a sanctuary for returning refugees and the currently threatened and internally displaced ChaldoAssyrians.

We encourage you to urge the interim government of Iraq to create alternative seats in the Iraqi Assembly's constitution drafting committee for non-Muslim minorities who are not likely to muster the votes to gain representation by the electoral process as it stands.

With reports of tens of thousands of ChaldoAssyrians, Mandaeans and Yazidis fleeing Iraq in terror, there now exists the real possibility of the permanent loss of the indigenous ChaldoAssyrian people in Iraq for the first time in their 6700 year continuous existence. The final litmus test for the new Iraqi government and the international community's genuine commitment to pluralism and democracy remains the preservation of ChaldoAssyrians, Mandaeans and Yazidi, the indigenous people of Iraq, as well as other existing non-Muslim minorities in Iraq.

Respectfully,

The Rev. Canon Keith Roderick, D.D.  
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