



Assyria Council of Europe

29th September 2008

Press Release

A POLITICAL COUP AGAINST IRAQ'S MINORITIES

Iraq's Council of Representatives voted in a new provincial elections law on Wednesday 24th September 2008. The new law has been described as a major step forward for Iraq, but it also means a serious attack on the rights of the minorities as it strips them of their quota seats.

Brussels -- Despite talks about the importance of securing rights of its minorities, Iraq is moving in the direction of minimizing the minorities' role in the political process. The new provincial elections law passed on the 24 September saw the elimination of the quota seats designated for minorities in the provincial councils in what could be best described as a political coup.

The former provincial elections law, adopted on the 22 July this year, guaranteed Assyrians 13 seats in six provinces, as well as seats for other minorities. The elimination of these quotas means the Assyrians can never attain 13 seats in elections because the mass exodus of Assyrians due to the war has been proportionally bigger than the other groups. The lawmakers of the majority groups cannot pretend not to know this fact.

Assyrians and other minorities see the passing of the new provincial elections law as a serious threat to their future presence in Iraq. The Assyrian representative in Iraq's parliament,

Mr. Yonadam Kanna, gave the following comment to the International Herald Tribune: *"We are really disappointed. It seems they are confiscating the free will of the minorities and trying to impose their own puppets to represent them"*

This action by the Council of Representatives amounts to political oppression against Iraq's indigenous minorities who now find themselves excluded from any meaningful political representation on the provincial level. It is especially regrettable to note that the actions of the Kurdish lawmakers in the Iraqi parliament run contrary to the Kurdish leadership's proclaimed care for the rights of minorities

The Assyria Council of Europe calls on the European Union to pay attention to the dangerous and gradual exclusion of Iraq's minorities from the political process and reiterate to its Iraqi partner that minority rights must be strengthened in deeds, not words. The European Union must call on Iraq to reinstate the quotas of the minorities.

The Assyria Council of Europe (ACE) is a Brussels based non profit advocating rights of minorities in Iraq since 2007.

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