

Report Warns of Final Generation of Assyrian Christians in Iraq

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A fact-finding report has warned that there may be just one generation remaining in which to safeguard the Assyrian Christian community in Iraq.

The results of the report, released on June 6th, explain that Iraq risks being "severely and negatively impacted" by failures to preserve the rights of Assyrians.

Assyrian Christians in Iraq feel a sense of abandonment and entrenchment, the report describes. Furthermore, over the past few years there has been a continual flow of the Assyrian community to neighboring countries and further abroad, and this has left the community's very existence on a knife-edge.

"Without support and promotion for security and sustainable economic development in the region there can be no firm basis upon which the Assyrian community can remain rooted in Iraq," the report states.

The report urged for greater international engagement, especially from the European Union, towards Assyrians as well as with Iraq's minorities as a whole.

"Looking to the past will be key to promoting the country's past cultural heterogeneity and raising awareness locally and internationally of Iraq's history of pogrom, discrimination and emigration," the report stated.

The Assyria Council of Europe (ACE) is an international advocacy group, established in 2007 and formed to take responsibility for raising awareness of the plight of Iraq's Assyrian people after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime within the institutions of the European Union (EU).

The specific requirements as laid down by the report are laid out below.

For the Iraqi government to:

- Support the establishment of a regional university within the Nineveh Plains area to stem the current brain-drain, permit continuity of study amongst IDPs, and support economic development;
- Promote the economic potential of northern Iraq through greater international outreach, including but not limited to, the websites of its embassies and ministries;
- Facilitate international exchanges of elected representatives and their staffs, to build capacity within local, regional, and national governance structures;
- Facilitate feasibility discussions into the application of Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution in the context of establishing an autonomous regional administration in the Nineveh Plains;
- Take measures to restore, maintain, and safeguard urban fabric and monuments reflecting the country's Assyrian history and culture.

For the Kurdistan Regional Government to:

- Promote, without amendment, the adoption of Article 35 of the draft constitution of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and its provision for the formation of autonomous regions within the KRI;
- Work to ensure fair, transparent, and equitable hiring practices are observed, particularly in the education sector;
- Ensure the cultural and historical heterogeneity of the KRI is appropriately reflected in the use of Assyrian names for towns, and landmarks, and that Assyrian contribution to the history of the KRI is reflected in public collections and historical sites and discourse;
- Revise current land restitution procedures to allow faster and more equitable adjudication and compensation;
- Recognize the 1933 Simele Massacre and support construction of a monument as an important commemorative and educational initiative.

For the Assyrian coalition to:

- Establish committees capable of working collaboratively to inform and support initiatives to address insecurity, unemployment, and human rights contraventions;
- Support local investment assessments to augment the existing but limited information available from the National Investment Commission and other governmental bodies;
- Provide and publicize confidence-building measures to discourage emigration and encourage long-term investment in Northern Iraq;
- Facilitate youth programs that aim to strengthen civil society, promote active citizenship, support job creation and develop skills

For the international community, and the European Union and its member states to:

- Act immediately to halt the ethno-religiously motivated discrimination, intimidation and violence against the Assyrian community of Iraq;
- Re-evaluate asylum policies that facilitate the large-scale exodus of Assyrians from Iraq without addressing the root

causes of emigration that also prevent many Assyrians from returning to their homeland;

- Promote investment by local and international companies and raise awareness of economic opportunities, such as micro-credit schemes, among both established communities and IDPs within Northern Iraq as a means of stemming the flows of asylum seekers to the EU;
- Manifest their support for local sustainable income generation and reconstruction by extending financial, academic, and moral support for the construction of a Nineveh Plains University;
- Support initiatives to safeguard, preserve, and protect for the future ancient Assyrian archaeological, historic, and cultural sites, particularly those that are thousands of years old.

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