



ASSYRIA COUNCIL OF EUROPE
18 December 2011
Press Release

US WITHDRAWAL LEAVES MINORITIES IN DANGER – INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY URGED TO ACT

The US withdrawal from Iraq could spell the last push factor for the remaining members of Iraq's vulnerable minorities. Iraq is far from a safe and functioning country. Attacks continue to threaten civilians. The violence has forced more than 60 percent of Iraq's Assyrian population to flee the country. Assyrians in Iraq continue to be the targets of systematic violence, whether in areas under the central government or the Kurdish administered area. The latest attacks on Assyrian businesses in Northern Iraq clearly prove the continuing discrimination.

Political participation and decision-making in the country remain seriously impaired by sectarian and insurgent violence, widespread corruption, and the influence of foreign powers.

A withdrawal of the Iraqi troops does not end the US and international community's responsibility for establishing greater stability in Iraq. The departure must not lead to a withdrawal of the full support for the millions of displaced Iraqis who continue to live in a state of uncertainty. The following steps must be taken for the minorities to be able to remain Iraq:

- **Minorities must be integrated in the Iraqi security apparatus, especially in areas where they have a strong presence such as the Nineveh plain.**
- **Article 125 of the Iraqi constitution must be applied to the Nineveh plain area which would give the minorities possibilities to form and govern their own local area under the command of the central government.**
- **All lands illegally seized by Kurdish groups in Northern Iraq must be returned to the minorities.**