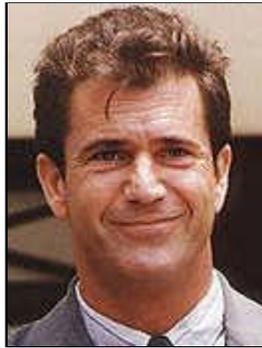


**This Week In Zinda**



cover photo

**Zinda Says**

Assyrian Delegation to Join the Conference in Belgium  
Assyrians are Misrepresented in the Newly Proposed Constitution  
Mr. Lethal Weapon to Produce Jesus Film in Aramaic

**The Lighthouse**

Youel Baaba: The Umbrella Syndrome  
Aprim Shapira: A Call For A New AUA Secretary General  
Fred Aprim: The Proposed Kurdish Constitution  
Ashor Giwargis: Until When? - The Assyrian Ethnicity Persecuted...

**Good Morning Bet-Nahrain**

Three Men Arrested in Stabbing Death of Assyrian Nun  
Assyrian Community Wants Minority Status in Turkey  
AP Calls Mardin Home of Assyrian Christians  
Assyrians Join Iraqi-Democrats-Net

**News Digest**

Car Accident Injures 16 at San Diego's Chaldean Church  
Chaldeans Mourn 3 in Family; 1,000 at Funeral For Crash Victims  
Successful Fundraisers in San Jose  
Professor Kamber Helping Plan For a post-Saddam Iraq  
Sam Andrews, the Controversial AUA Leader, Dies At 71  
New Christian Satellite TV Service to Iran  
Kerala's High Court Reserves Order in Church Case  
German Team Uncovers 3,400-Year-Old Tablets in Syria

**Surf's Up!**

Mar Bawai Soro: I Believe in the Unity of Faith & Love  
Funds were not Mismanaged in San Jose  
It's Time to Sit Down Together  
Watch Defensive Tackle Ashur Benjamin!

**Surfers Corner**

AUA Presentation at The Religious Discrimination Against Minorities  
Association For The Preservation of Assyro-Chaldean-Syriac Arts

**Literatus**

Assyrian Film Producer Writes to President Bush  
October Issue of Discover Magazine: Treasure Under Saddam's Feet

**Bravo**

New Book in Russian: Nikolai Seleznyov's "The Christology of The Assyrian Church of the East"

**Calendar of Events**

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Zinda Says

**ASSYRIAN DELEGATION TO JOIN THE CONFERENCE IN BELGIUM**

The Iraqi groups opposed to Saddam Hussein, including the Assyrians, will hold an important conference in Belgium at the end of October to discuss post-Saddam Iraq.

Mr. Yonadam Kanna, Secretary General of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, has been asked to compile the list of the Assyrian delegation for this meeting. In an interview with Zinda Magazine Mr. Kanna indicated that at press time only 3 percent of the entire assembly can consist of the Assyrian representation. Mr. Kanna explained that no names other than his are yet secured for this list and further talks and negotiations will be needed to produce such a list. It is expected that one hundred to two hundred and fifty opposition members (hence 3 to 7 Assyrian delegates) will be conferring at the meeting in Belgium.



**Mr. Albert Yelda, Assyrian opposition activist confers with Sheik Mohammed Ali, Chairman of the National Campaign to free Iraq from dictatorship during a meeting of the Iraqi National Campaign in London Monday Sept.23, 2002.( Courtesy of AP Photo / Max Nash)**

Zinda Magazine urges the Assyrian Universal Alliance or the Assyrian National Congress to call a meeting of all major Assyrian political parties from around the world to assemble within the next two weeks (October 4 – 18), preferably in Washington D.C. The purpose of this meeting shall be two folds: a) To determine now and to put forth at the Belgium Conference the demands of the Assyrian people during and after the post-Saddam transition government in Baghdad and of the regional government in North Iraq; b) To determine the names of the Assyrian delegates to the Belgium Conference.

It is Zinda Magazine's recommendation that the Assyrian delegation comprise the moderate elements of the Assyrian political spectrum, namely the Assyrian National Coalition (Awyoota) represented by Dr. Emmanuel Kamber (AUA) (see the Lighthouse) and the Assyrian National Congress represented by Mr. Sargon Dadesho (ANC). It is important that each delegate fulfill the following five requirements in order to participate at the Belgium Conference:

1. a native of Iraq
2. a fluent speaker of Arabic language
3. an executive member of one or more Assyrian political parties in the past or present
4. an Attendee of one or more "opposition" meetings in the past
5. recognized by other Iraqi opposition groups as an active anti-Saddam personality

All past differences must be set aside during these crucial times of change in Bet-Nahrain and all efforts be focused on a new future for the Assyrian people. Rabbie Yonadam Kanna, Dr. Sargon Dadesho, and Dr. Emmanuel Kamber fulfill all the above requirements and will jointly form a strong voice for Assyrian unity at the Belgium Conference. Other qualified candidates should augment this list upon an increase in the number of all Iraqi attendees to the Belgium Conference.

## **ASSYRIANS ARE MISREPRESENTED IN THE NEWLY PROPOSED CONSTITUTION**

Between 18-23 September, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) reviewed the final text of a draft constitution, which was first prepared by the KDP.

The two parties will soon ask the Regional Parliament to vote on and approve the text of the draft constitution during its meeting in the northern Iraqi city of Arbil on October 4. The "regional parliament" has not been able to convene since 1996, when the rival KDP and the PUK forces clashed again. The parliament comprises 51 members from the KDP, 48 members from the PUK, and five Assyrians.

Under the draft constitution, Iraq is divided into Kurdish and Arabic sections and minority rights are vaguely guaranteed by the constitution in both sections of the federation (see Mr Fred Aprim's article in the Lighthouse section).

The "Federal Kurdish Region" includes such northern Iraqi cities as Duhok, Arbil, Suleymaniye and Kirkuk, the last three being cities with a dense Turkoman population. Sincar, Sehan, Zumar, Mandili, Kanakin, Gelavla and Mikdadiye regions are also envisaged to be within the Kurdish section of the proposed federation.

The existing structure of the political system will be preserved in the "Federal Kurdish Region", under the draft constitution, and the power sharing with the central government in Baghdad will be made on the basis of the size of the Kurdish population in the country.

The establishment of a democratic system in Iraq will mean the fulfillment of the objectives and aspirations of all ethnic groups, regardless of size and economic power. The guarantees for the rights of the minority populations in Iraq must be well defined in the new Iraqi constitution with clear reference to each ethnicity and religious group.

## **MR. LETHAL WEAPON TO PRODUCE JESUS FILM IN ARAMAIC**

Last week Zinda Magazine was informed that the popular Hollywood star, Mr. Mel Gibson, is making a film in Latin and are you ready? – ARAMAIC language. Mr. Gibson is spending his own money into "The Passion" which tells the story of Jesus Christ's last 12 hours on earth. So far he has been unable to find a single distributor for the film which started shooting in Italy last week. Why? Mr. Gibson plans not to have subtitles for his film.

Zinda Magazine did not like Mr. Gibson's comment: "No body wants to touch a film in two dead languages." So we contacted Mr. Gibson's agency in Los Angeles and spoke with his public relations manager to learn more about the motives behind the filming of the Passion in Aramaic. We also enlightened them upon the fact that millions of Christians around the world indeed speak Aramaic or a newer form of this living language.

Old Aramaic as spoken by Jesus and his contemporaries survives only in Eastern Syria in the town of Malula. Zinda Magazine explained that "authentic" speech in the film should be cast from Syriac, a modern form of Old Aramaic.

Mr. Gibson is said to be a Catholic faithful and believes that his film will be a great success story. Zinda Magazine offered its support and recommended the names of a few Assyrian and non-Assyrian Aramaic and Syriac scholars as technical advisors for the film. Mr. Gibson's agency and public relations manager were astonished to find that there may be so many Aramaic speakers around the world who may not require the subtitles after all.

## **THE UMBRELLA SYNDROME**

It is an established scientific fact that all human beings are created equal. It is also a fact of life that certain races possess physical characteristics that are unique to their nature. These characteristics do not necessarily mean that those who possess them are either superior or inferior to the rest of the human beings. The variety of color of skin or eyes is a good example to illustrate the difference in physical features.

There is another area where certain aberrations seem to concentrate themselves within a certain breed of people. Sickle-cell anemia seems to be restricted to the blacks and Tay-Sachs disease to the Jews. The scientific world has researched and written extensively on these topics. I am sure there are other characteristics that are unique to certain races, but no need to exhaust the readers' patience in a detailed mundane list of these deficiencies.

Sadly not much research has been done to study an aberration that appears exclusively among Assyrians. We certainly can see why this negligence by the scientific world. Since present day Assyrians do not possess a country of their own which has natural resources like oil, gold or a strategic position., there is not much interest in them. After all, if the rest of the world has managed to ignore our existence for almost 2,000 years, why bother for the remaining 100 years when we will be officially listed as an extinct species.

Having determined that no research has been done on this unique Assyrian aberration, I ventured to study it to the best of my limited resources. Admittedly, I do not qualify as a scientist or have access to some elaborate laboratory where research and experimentation can take place in a scientific manner. Albeit that I consider myself fairly qualified to look at this aberration in a qualitative approach. As a geologist I have a good knowledge of evolution and study of fossils; as an engineer, I have the expertise to design and build things; and as a manager, I know how to plan and execute projects.

From the unique symptoms that characterize this particular Assyrian aberration, I have identified it as the "Umbrella Syndrome". This aberration is not physical in nature.. I mean you cannot find it in the body or blood of the Assyrians. Actually it is a behavioral abnormality and of recent evolution. It manifests itself more clearly among those individuals who aspire to the national leadership. The aspiration by itself is an abnormal inclination as we have had no legitimate national leadership for almost 2500 years.

At any rate we will assume that there is a legitimate need for this aspiration in the souls or psyche of these people. Psychiatrists state that a sudden or traumatic experience does impact individuals and change their behavior. On that basis and the fact that this syndrome is of recent development, I have concluded that the trauma of the First World War is the culprit in our situation. Having lost almost half of our population and being terrorized and eventually driven out of our own country is certainly adequate to qualify our experience during the First World War as traumatic.

Those who are afflicted with this syndrome seem to be driven to making umbrellas, not the kind that protect people from rain or heat. These are very unique umbrellas; they exist only in the cerebral segments of their makers. These invisible umbrellas are designed to protect the Assyrians in accordance with their makers' specifications.

The first documented case of this syndrome is that of Rev. Joel Warda, an Assyrian Presbyterian minister and a patriot and writer of renown fame. He constructed the first regional umbrella using the then existing organizations representing various villages of Urmia as the ribs of his umbrella. Lacking other reliable materials of construction, he used himself as the central shaft to hold these ribs together and his genius as the fabric to gather under it the scattered Assyrian settlers in the United States. With the passing of time and the shifting political winds, the various ribs bent and eventually broke piercing the fabric and leaving the whole umbrella in tatters.

In the early 1930's when Assyrians experienced another trauma (Simel Massacre), a new group of umbrella makers got together and built a national umbrella to shelter the traumatized Assyrians. They had high hopes. After all, they had managed to find stronger ribs made from superior substance. Unquestionably, the ribs were more in numbers and somewhat stronger than their predecessors, but the handle, central shaft holding these ribs together, and the fabric proved to be much weaker than that of Rev Warda's. While the umbrella still exists in the minds of many, it is totally perforated and wobbles back and forth giving protection to no one except to those who take turn in grabbing the handle and pretending that they have finally steadied the trembling umbrella.

With the passing of time a new generation of umbrella makers appeared on the scene. These people appeared to be more ambitious and determined to finally build the one universal umbrella that would shelter the Assyrians for good. They were ambitious,

positive and projected a magnanimous outlook. They offered shelter not only to those without umbrellas, but also to the existing national umbrella. The name “universal” implied clearly how encompassing was the stretch of the new umbrella. All Assyrians were invited to come and seek shelter under this unique umbrella.

Alas, the universal umbrella proved to be much weaker than its predecessors. It had absolutely no structural integrity. It soon was shredded to pieces, leaving each rib with a piece of fabric attached to it. Now in place of one universal umbrella, we have a multitude of ribs each claiming the title to the vital components of the umbrella, the central shaft and the handle. Some of the original makers of the universal umbrella are now seeking shelter in anonymity and isolation.

With the collapse of this huge umbrella, the field was wide open to all types of umbrella makers, big and small. Now Assyrians are cursed with this behavioral abnormality, the umbrella syndrome. We have so many umbrellas, that we are totally confused as to the ranking of these umbrellas and the areas they encompass. Rumors have it that symptoms of this aberration have been detected among Assyrians in Western Europe, Russia and even as far away as Australia.

We have researched the scientific literature extensively and have not found a single medication in either tablet or liquid form to cure this syndrome. However, in the annals of behavioral sciences there are suggested cures. Though not guaranteed, but are highly recommended on the basis that these cures have worked for other syndromes. We strongly recommend this suggested cure. It may work and prove that the aspiration to national leadership is not necessarily an aberration.

The suggested cure may be summarized as follows: Gather all umbrella makers together, collectively evaluate each component of construction and select those ribs that still possess structural integrity and are not contaminated with foreign substances, cut and patch together remnants of the fabric, melt down the various shafts and handles and cast a new strong central shaft and a well formed handle that can be easily held and passed on to others. The suggested cure has a serious warning: Proceed with caution or you may be shafted.

Youel A Baaba  
California

## **A CALL FOR A NEW AUA SECRETARY GENERAL**

Undoubtedly the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) is an important international organization and its creation in April 10, 1968 was a very significant moment in the contemporary Assyrian national and political history. AUA’s establishment was based on facts, which spurred the founders to deal with unprecedented challenges that confronted the Assyrians in early 1960s, in particular in the Middle Eastern countries and specifically in Iraq. It was here that the Kurdish rebellion began in the heart of Assyria, and the eruption of armed conflict between Kurds and the Iraqi government led to a great exodus of the Assyrians away from their historic land.

Thinking rationally, the founders of the AUA recognized that no single Assyrian organization could represent the entire Assyrian nation and confront the new challenges especially in a time when our people were facing more persecution in the homeland and continued to be scattered throughout the world. The only answer available to them was that of creating an international federal alliance, in effect an umbrella for all Assyrian political and national organizations which was seen as the reasonable approach to the development of one voice for one nation.

However, we should keep in mind that the ideal principles and their implementation in reality are not the same. Principles without mechanism of implementation are no more than absolute thoughts and remain imperceptible in practical life. In politics, principles without praxis are utopist. Principles form strategy, which is generally distinguished by steadiness and affirmation, and is related to identity or destiny of a certain group of people. Tactic guides praxis, which is flexible, changeable and deals with current situations and day-to-day issues. Without tactic, strategy cannot be implemented.

Unfortunately, the history of the last three decades proved that AUA was, and still is, unable to implement its principles representing our people as a single Assyrian voice, in particular with regard to the concept of the “national umbrella”. No doubt, there were many effective factors and harsh circumstances, which resulted in such a failure. They were beyond the AUA capabilities and out of the control of the Assyrians in general. In a personal contact with a founder and ex-Secretary General of AUA, he likened AUA’s failure to a student who has been in to examination before preparing his lessons. He said “We gathered in Pau - France in 1968 with an extraordinary enthusiasm and full of nationalistic thoughts of uniting our nation but we were

unequipped with instruments of implementation and unprepared to answer the question of how we can practically implement our principles in political arena". In other words, AUA established an ideal and perfect strategy for our nation but it was unaware of the significance of tactics to fulfill this strategy or was, and still, incapable of adopting an appropriate and practical policy for a certain situation. This dilemma is obvious on many aspects of AUA's futile performance; the most significant of which is that of its current Secretary General, the subject of the last issue of Zinda Magazine, which needs to be dealt in details.

Before that, I would like to discuss the following actuality about our nation, which is closely related to the main subject: Strategically and in principle, there is no doubt that we are Assyrians and we are so wherever we go and live around the world. On the other hand, practically we are not one society or a single community, as long as we are living in our homeland and Diaspora which both of them are comprised of many different states. Therefore, we are exposed and subject to different political, legal and cultural atmospheres within each country that we reside. Our adopted countries identify our citizenship, our rights and obligations. In view of that, we are Iraqi Assyrians, Turkish Assyrians, Iranian Assyrians, Russian Assyrians, American Assyrians, Swedish Assyrians, Australian Assyrians and so on. In case of taking into account the extreme differences between the states in the Diaspora and those of the Middle East we will soon discover that the mentality of the Assyrian communities are clearly affected and shaped accordingly.

Such mentality is capable to migrate with the Assyrian immigrants to the West and will control and guide, positively or negatively, their behavior and form a panoramic focus for all aspects of their lives in the Diaspora. Sometimes such behavior is embodied through settling down in a region or a city or establishing a club or organization and even a political party. In short, there are several Assyrian societies in a certain country in the Diaspora. For instance, in the United States where the largest community of Assyrians in the Diaspora reside, they are legally framed by a single citizenship and equal rights and commitments, but have societies based on different cultural mentalities, memories, emotions and even life styles. These variations originate from the difference brought from their prospective homeland.

These are Assyrian by ethnicity, American by citizenship and Iraqis, Iranians, Syrians or Turkish by origin. They have a common ethnicity and citizenship, but are different by country of origin. We can assimilate Assyrian societies as the case of many brothers and cousins with different forenames, but with one surname and same father or grandfather, each has his own family and properties. This is very normal with human being and as well as with the Assyrian nation in the present time.

Our idealism in nationalism is unfortunately misleading us towards ignoring the fact of regionalism and consequently we are missing the possibility of using it as a tactic in our national and political performance. The dissimilarity or diversity of Assyrians with regard to the country of origin, whether we agree with or not, presently is a fact of our historic homeland (Assyria) and the core subject of our national claim. It is still the crucial factor of bracing the Assyrian identity in the Diaspora. It is a living and the only existing channel of communication with the national roots and the main feeder of our national identity.

The fathers of the AUA were well aware of this fact that Assyrians as a nation are divided by tribal and denominational considerations. This status led them to adopt the famous four unionist slogans and concluded in the constitution. However, I doubt that they were aware of the effectiveness of regionalism, which is dividing Assyrians by political borders of the Middle Eastern countries and those of the Diaspora. The absolute idealism of the AUA in nationalism resulted in failure of achieving any of its unionist objectives. The current situation is confirming that such accomplishment is far from reach even during the near future. Ignoring regionalism or regional politics has resulted in the failure of adopting an appropriate tactical policy to implement a strategy towards Assyrians of a certain country and eventually all Assyrians.

From day one, the instability of Iraq and the extreme suffering of Iraqi Assyrians were the main topic on AUA's agenda. Many policies, stances and actions have been taken in order to tackle this problem but without success. Reading the history of the AUA will show that the major reason for such failure was the destitution in Iraqi affairs; political system, dominating powers, ruling classes, their attitudes, Iraqi mentality with regard to politics and dealing with question of religious and national minorities.

Moreover, none of the AUA founders or key members and the Secretaries General, in the past or present, have enough experience with Iraqi government or lived with Assyrian sufferance in Iraq. As such that some members of the AUA's delegation to Iraq in the early 1970s were easily trapped in swamp of corruptions, bribes and deceptions, set up by the Iraqi fascist regime and eventually damaged AUA's reputation and aroused many questions among Assyrians on this organization's credibility. It is needless to mention in detail the naivety of the AUA executive committee when invited Iraqi Assyrians, who were all of them Ba'ath party members or agents for Iraqi regime, to participate in AUA conference in Sydney in 1978, and the dramatic plot of poisoning the other Assyrian delegates.

Today, the issue of Iraq and shaping its political future is boiling. The destiny of Iraqi Assyrians is concerning all Assyrians around the world, specifically their political parties, and the AUA stands at the front. AUA's vigor with regard to this issue is

obvious in the shuttle movements of the present Secretary General Senator John Nimrod between State Department of the USA and the Iraqi opposition groups, struggling to be the single voice for Iraqi Assyrians and representing them at the Iraqi, regional and international levels. Everyone is aware of the complexity of the current situation, the harshest circumstances and serious physical, political and national threats facing Assyrians in Iraq. Yet, as is usually the case in Assyrian politics, AUA has not learned from past experiences. The Secretary General as a non-Iraqi Assyrian has none or little knowledge and experience with this fateful issue. Moreover, he never had been to Iraq or even to Garbia (North Iraq), where there is a marginal freedom of movement, which allows our people to practice politics.

Then how we can expect that the Iraqi opposition groups will deal positively and seriously with the Secretary General who claims that he or his organization are representative of the Iraqi Assyrians? How will the State Department, other governmental offices and non- governmental & international organizations listen to him or rely on someone who is actually not a part of the question? For that reason all his efforts for the Assyrian case in Iraq will be rendered futile, and the Assyrian representation with the Iraqi opposition groups and the State Department will remain uncertain. This would seem as if Assyrian are aliens from another planet, not the indigenous people of Iraq, or at the best they are anonymous and referred to as “others”.

AUA is wedging herself among other Assyrian political groups in order to gain a role on the Iraqi political theater or to find a link with the Iraqi Assyrians question. This action has diverted AUA from its main principle of being a national umbrella for all Assyrian organizations. AUA is not a political faction similar to the other typical Assyrian political groups, competing with some and gathering with others under an umbrella of the “Assyrian National Coalition”. Ironically, it seems that the AUA’s umbrella has been blown away by the current windstorm and compelled to shelter under another one.

However, these critiques should never reduce our basic and firm faith in the importance of the AUA and her crucial role for the Assyrians. With regard to the current Secretary General, I highly respect Senator John Nimrod and truly, I admire his manners and attitudes, in particular his wide spirit in accepting criticism and trying to understand the differences with others. Personally, I had perceived his great and endless love for his nation, his tireless efforts to serve Assyrians regardless of his health and age. Therefore, I can decorate him with honorable medal by saying that he is the eldest Assyrian nationalists involved in such wide rang of national politics, and as such he deserves respect of all Assyrians round the world.

Nevertheless, it is regrettable to say that he is not the right Secretary General for AUA to deal with the current issue on hand. Therefore, the urgency of the current situation demands a new tactical policy to be adopted through the election of a new Secretary General.

Without introductions and equivocation I straightforwardly recommend Dr. Emanuel Kamber for the post of Secretary General. Someone could allege and accuse me by favoritism because he is a friend of mine. It is true that I know him for a long time; otherwise, I would not recommend him. I know him not as a normal friend or relative or sharing the same kinship or tribe or denomination but as a true and energetic nationalist. He has been a comrade for our national struggle during the hardest times and most despotic circumstances in Iraq. These were the times when involvement in politics was a serious threat to life and not easy and comfortable as it is in the free and democratic West. Allow me to elaborate:

1- Dr. Kamber is an Iraqi Assyrian by birth, originated from the northern part of Iraq, the heart of Assyria. His roots, memories, friends and family still exist there, which objectively makes his concerns for the Iraqi Assyrians and nationalist claims more credible. He is also an Iraqi Assyrian by experience, which actually and practically extend beyond university graduation to a period of teaching in university. Such attributes are extremely in demand for the current issue.

2- He is very well experienced in the Iraqi politics. In addition to his perfect capability in speaking and writing Arabic language, he is highly conscious of Iraqi mentality, political issues, attitudes of the regime & ruling Ba’ath party, opposition groups and all other aspects of social life in Iraq.

3- He has been involved in the Assyrian nationalism despite of the dictatorial environment in Iraq. As a university student, he was one of the most activist among Assyrian students, organized, and participated nearly in all activities; he confronted many outrages and annoyances by the Ba’ath party’s apparatus in university. In the Assyrian Cultural Club, the pivotal center of the Assyrian intellectuals in Baghdad of the 1970s, he was one of the earliest and very active members on many levels; including the social and cultural committees, library being in-charge and the management of the Assyrian Intellectual magazine (Mordinna Atoraya). He was active as an executive member of the Club until the day of his departure from Iraq. Personally, I had witnessed his love and sacrifices for his nation in Iraq. Together we have been “honored with abuses and insults from the security police of

the Iraqi dictatorial regime” because we rejected to comply with the Ba’ath fascist policies. These included placing pictures of the dictatorial ruler & Ba’ath’s slogans in the Club and allowing the songs of praise for the dictator instead of the Assyrians anthem “Roosh Jwankka”.

4- In the Diaspora, Dr. Kamber’s nationalistic activities begun in the United Kingdom in the early 1980’s with the Assyrian Club in London, where with its Chairman Mr. Emanuel Kelatia they successfully cleared the Club from the Iraqi embassy influences and put it on the right nationalistic track. As a result, there were remarkable changes and progress including re-publishing of “The Assyrian”- a quarterly magazine in Assyrian, English and Arabic languages, in which Dr. Emanuel wrote many article on Assyrian history and nationalism

5- While in London, although he had faced difficulties and harsh circumstances during his studies and providing living for his family, he was able to dedicate his time for the nationalistic tasks on hand, in particular when he joined the AUA and became one of its most active members in Europe. In the USA, he continued his activities on a larger scale until he became an executive member of the AUA and the Secretary for USA & Canada.

6- Dr. Kamber has an extensive relationship & contact with the Iraqi opposition groups in Europe and USA and he has participated in most of their gatherings and conferences. He, and Mr. Bahram Zaia, the ex-AUA key member in London were the first to initiate such a communication and made others to be aware of the AUA and the Assyrian political activities. With or without AUA or other Assyrian political groups, he is still active on the Iraqi affairs and human & minority rights issues.

7- He has played a key role in establishing the Assyrian National Coalition, which at early stage was comprised of the Political Arm of the AUA, Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), Assyrian Democratic Organization (ADO) and Bet Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP) – Iraq. Although he had formally quit from the AUA’s Executive Committee he stayed very close to the current Secretary General, worked together, and retained his faithfulness to the AUA principles and objectives. As uncommitted to any particular Assyrian organization, he continued his nationalistic activities on several levels and participated with Assyrian political parties and other non-Assyrian organizations in many meeting concerning Iraqi Assyrians.

8- He has a unique, agreeable and respectable relationship with nearly all Assyrian political parties, in particular the major ones; BNDP, ADM, ADO and AUA. On few occasions, I had personally witnessed the crucial role he had played in bringing their differences closer and in reaching the conclusions, which eventually reflected in nominating him as an Assyrian representative. Consequently, he was recently elected for the supreme council of the Iraqi opposition groups. Moreover, he is one of a very few Assyrian politicians, to my knowledge the only one, who has a good working contact and friendly relationship with the two rivals Assyrian blocs, namely the Assyrian National Coalition and the Assyrian National Congress.

9- On the cultural level, he is very active and has participated in many cultural and national events, seminars, interviews and has delivered lectures on several occasions in the United States and Europe. Professionally, he is a Professor of Atomic Physics at a very reputable university in Michigan and has an excellent and respectable name among all Assyrians in America and around the world, particularly among the intellectuals and academics.

10- Dr. Kamber is an American citizen, lives and works there. This quality presently is very important for any Secretary General of the AUA, based on the following facts: First, the Assyrian community in the USA is the largest in the Diaspora; economically & educationally is well established and enjoys high standards of democracy and human & minority protection and support. Second, USA is the only super power concerned with and involved in the Iraqi issue and it is the key actor in shaping its future. This will provide Secretary General with a wide range of freedom for movement, activating and lobbying in order to promote the Assyrian case. Third: The main AUA organizational units, headquarter and most of her executive committee members are in the United States. This is very important for the Secretary General in order to easily contact them and conduct meetings. When the ex-Secretary General of the AUA and even of BNDP were European citizens living in Europe, they were unable to properly and practically perform their tasks because of the main structural body of their organizations and the majority, or all, executive members were in the USA and the executive leader was far away on the other side of the Atlantic. This could happen with any Assyrian or non-Assyrian organization when the head is separated from the body.

Assyrians during the last century lost many golden opportunities to determine their national destiny. We turned away our eyes from the sins, committed by our leaders and we started accusing Great Britain and condemning her of the betrayal of the Assyrian

case. It is time to learn from the past, to recognize that politics is a struggle for national interests. Human rights or minority protection principles are actually meaningless and nonsensical for a certain state if they are in clash with a people's national interests. Today, USA is the only Great Power and her national interests have already expanded into all corners of the globe including Iraq and the Garbia. The keys of our national destiny may be in her hands. Now it seems there is another golden opportunity approaching Assyrians. To make use of it, it is very important to be aware that we should not expect any real support from USA or any state unless our case is at the crossroad of her policies and it is not in clash with her national interests. Therefore, in this time of globalization we need a strong and well-structured national organization with international bases as is the Assyrian Universal Alliance. This global organization must also be headed by an individual characterized by the triple combination of Assyrian/American/Iraqi identity as is Dr. Emanuel Kamber.

Aprim Shapera  
London

## **THE PROPOSED KURDISH CONSTITUTION**

### **Some Personal Remarks**

The proposed modifications to the constitution of the Federal Republic of Iraq and the regional northern Iraq by the Kurdish groups needs to be carefully studied and analyzed. Moreover, an alternate solutions to anything that is in conflict with Assyrians' national aspirations must be presented and disputed. The Kurdish Proposal comes short in many aspects; a few points brought up by the Kurds are touched upon below. There are more issues that need to be addressed later:

### **I. The Proposed Kurdish Modifications to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Iraq.**

A. In the Introduction, the Proposal states that Iraq consists of mainly Arabs and Kurds and "other" minorities! It should be stressed that the word mainly be removed and the sentence to read as "Iraq comprises many ethnic and religious groups including, Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Turkomen, Yezidis, Mandaeans, Armenians, and others."

B. In the section titled the Principles of the Federal System of Iraq, Article 1 states that Iraq is to be divided in two regions; the Arab region and the region of Kurdistan. The historical region of north Iraq was always Assyria and to refer to northern Iraq, as Kurdistan is a historical fallacy, since Kurdistan is the region in the Zagros Mountains in northwestern Iran. We are not suggesting an infringement on the Kurdish rights in north of Iraq, but this should not be at the expense of the Assyrians -- the indigenous people of the region. Therefore, the region should simply be called the Northern Region and accordingly change all related sections in the proposal where the term Kurdistan is used. The Federal Republic of Iraq should be divided into three regions: Southern, Central and Northern Iraq, and hence change wherever applicable the two regions into three regions.

C. In the section titled The General Principles of the Federal System of Iraq, Article 2, the proposal mentions that the Iraqi people comprise two main ethnic groups, Arabs and Kurds. And that the New Iraqi Constitution must affirm the ethnic rights of the Kurdish nation and its practices in the region of Kurdistan on the basis of Federalism, and also affirm the legal rights of the minorities within the framework of the Federal Republic of Iraq. The article should state that "the Iraqi people comprise many ethnic and religious groups including, Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Turkomen, Yezidis, Mandaeans, Armenians, and other smaller minorities." Additionally, the New Iraqi Constitution must affirm the ethnic rights of all the people and their practices within the framework of the Federal Republic of Iraq.

D. In the section titled The General Principles of the Federal System of Iraq, Article 7, Section 1, Sub-section A, under the Legislative Authority, the proposal suggest that this body would consist of two branches; one of which is the National Union Assembly (The National House of Representative). The representatives will be elected by the Iraqi people in the two regions and by the general, direct, secret ballot and on the basis of the percentage of the population of each of the two regions to the total population of the union and to be organized by a law. The population issue is very unfair to the Assyrians. In 1921 when the Kingdom of Iraq was established, the Assyrian Christian population and its percentage in the northern region was definitely much higher than it is today. The Assyrians have experienced great reduction of population due to various Iraqi government and Kurdish policies of persecution . As a result many Assyrians have been displaced and emigrated from that area. It was the Arab and Kurdish policies that reduced the Assyrian Christians' numbers and hence that needs to be taken into consideration.

Article 3 of the 1922 Treaty of Alliance between Iraq and Great Britain, for example, guaranteed the protection of the minorities and that all Iraqi people as being treated equally regardless of the ethnic origin, religion, or language background. The Treaty gave all religious sects the right to teach their own congregations through their own language. Article 13 obligated Iraq to prevent the spread and to fight all types of diseases. Article 13 is important since the Assyrians later were resettled in a region infested with diseases and many Assyrians died without a serious action taken by the Iraqi government to rectify the situation. This is just one example.

E. In the section titled The General Principles of the Federal System of Iraq, Article 7, Section 1, Sub-section B, under Regional Assembly, it states that this second legislative body consists of the representatives from the Arab and Kurdish regions and an equal representation from both, and it is to be regulated by law. Assyrians need to know how would they be represented here.

F. In the section titled The General Principles of the Federal System of Iraq, Article 8, it states that considerations should be paid to both regions in order that they represent all appointments within the official organizations of the Union and the offices inside and outside the country. This allocation of appointments is to be based on the percentage of any region's population to the total population of the Federal Republic of Iraq. Special consideration should be paid to the Assyrian representation to such offices because of the reasons already explained earlier.

G. In the section titled The General Principles of the Federal System of Iraq, Article 11, Section 1 states that the local Kurdish regional legislative branch will be elected by the people of the region through direct secret ballot where the representation of the minorities from Turkomen, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Armenians, must be considered on the basis of their percentage compared to the total population of the region. This would be regulated by the law. Two points must be emphasized that the Chaldeans are simply Catholic Assyrians; hence there is no reason for breaking the ethnic Assyrians into two titles. Secondly, what is the foundation of the law that controls the election of the legislative members? The repeated persecution of the Assyrians throughout the decades has decreased their numbers. It would be unfair to simply compare their numbers to the Kurds and elect their representative accordingly. Assyrians will have no chance.

H. In the section titled The General Principles of the Federal System of Iraq, Article 11, Section 2 touches on the local Kurdish regional executive branch. Sub-section B, states that the regional Cabinet should consist of the Prime Minister, a Deputy, and a number of ministers, and that the latter should consider the ethnic minorities as part of its body... How would the Cabinet consider the ethnic minorities composition in its structure? Who are the ethnic minorities and why not mention them by name?

## **Section II. The Proposed Constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region**

I. In the Introduction:

A. The proposal states that the Kurds are an ancient nation; a nation that lived in the land of Kurdistan for thousands of years and have acquired the rights that qualifies them to determine their own destiny just like other nations on earth.

We know that the region of north of Iraq is historically known as Assyria. The Assyrians have occupied that region for 5000 years; they are the indigenous people of the region. Kurdistan was always a region in northwestern Iran and not northern Iraq. The Turkish Ottoman Empire had been the main reason for bringing the Kurds to northern Mesopotamia in the middle of the 19th century. Later, both the Ottoman Turks and the Kurds persecuted the Assyrian Christians, massacred them, forced them into either converting to Islam or seek emigration. Hence all Assyrians must be allowed to return to their original homes, farms, and lands and appropriate retributions be paid for those who desire not to claim their original lands for whatever reason or be paid to their extended families when the prior have passed away.

B. It states that the Treaty of Serves (1920) mentioned the Kurds and their case. The Assyrians were mentioned in the Treaty of Serves too. Article 62 is clear regarding the complete guarantees for the protection of the Assyrians in north of Iraq. Articles 141, 145, 147, and 149 of the Treaty of Sevres are very clear in regards to ethnic minorities, not only of the Kurds, but also of all the other ethnic and religious minorities, including logically the Assyrians and the Yezidis.

C. It states that the ending of the British mandate over Iraq and the admittance of Iraq into the League of Nation in 1932 was pre-conditioned with the protection of the rights of the Kurds and that Iraq could not ignore or adjust such conditions. Assyrians were part of those recommendations too. The Permanent Mandate Commission had addressed the Assyrians' homogeneous settlement in north of Iraq in many correspondences, including its report to the League Council. The Assyrian settlement issue of the 1920s must be re-opened and addressed again but fairly and appropriately this time around. The League of Nations Mandate Committee agreed on the Iraqi admission to the League with reservations dealing mainly with the rights of the minorities. The Iraqi government presented its report regarding the minorities to the League, which guaranteed the rights of all Iraqi citizens regardless to their place of birth, race, religion, language or nationality. The report guaranteed that all Iraqis were to be treated equal in the eyes of the law and that there were no restrictions applied against using any language whether in casual conversations, in commerce, religion or the press. In addition the report included that all Iraqis, regardless to their national, ethnic, religious or linguistic affiliation, were to be treated equal and were to be free to establish their own civil, religious and cultural institutions and schools. All Iraqis were to be free in using their own language and practice their own religious beliefs. And in the cities or villages where minorities make a fair population, the government was to ensure financial assistance to help building cultural, religious and other institutions. None of this happened in reality, on the contrary, policies of Arabization intensified in the last (40) years or so.

D. It asks for ending all acts of Arabization of the Kurds. Assyrians in turn ask the Arabs and the Kurds to end all kinds of Arabization and Kurdification and the return of all those who have lost their lands or were forced to leave their homes to return to their lands, farms, and homes and when not possible, an appropriate retribution be assessed. In addition every Assyrian who has emigrated from Iraq in the last 80 years should be given the right to return back to Iraq and be granted suitable means of living, including housing and working opportunities.

2 Section One, Article 4, states that the region of Kurdistan consists of Kurds and ethnic minorities (Turkomen, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Arabs) and that the constitution of Kurdistan affirms the rights of these minorities. The method of breaking the Assyrian people into Assyrians and Chaldeans is deplorable, as the two are one people, known historically as Assyrians (Suraye). Chaldean is a religious denomination of the Assyrian nation. The divide and rule policies of the Iraqi and Kurdish authorities must end immediately and the interferences in Assyrian religious affairs must stop completely. The Arabs and the Kurds must leave the Assyrians to resolve any misunderstandings within their various churches on their own.

3 Section 3, Chapter 1- The Legislative Branch, Article 26, Sub-article 2 states that considerations must be given for fair representation of the ethnic minorities in the Kurdish regional legislative branch. The term minorities should be defined clearly. Assyrians must never be referred to as minorities any longer, rather by name, i.e. Assyrians. Secondly, we need to understand clearly the ways and means by which such representation will be conducted and what FAIR means exactly.

4 Section 3, Chapter 2- The Executive Branch, Article 49 states that the representation of the ethnic minorities (Turkomen, Assyrians, Chaldeans) in the Kurdistan regional Cabinet needs to be considered. The use of "Assyrians and Chaldeans" should be stopped immediately since they are ONE nation and that the title Chaldean is a religious denomination of the Assyrian nation, therefore, the mention of the term Assyrians suffice.

5 Section 4, Management and Municipal Assembly, Article 66, Point 2 states that a fair representation of the ethnic minorities in the Municipal Assemblies should be considered. Again, the article must mention the minorities by name. Secondly, what is FAIR in the eye of the Kurdish authorities? What are the ways and means that such elections will take place?

6. Section 6, Article 74 states that any law, rule, decision, or decree will be nullified if it limits or takes away from the legal ethnic rights of the Kurdish nation and the citizens of Kurdistan region or anything that conflicts with this constitution. The citizens of the Northern Region must be defined by name, i.e. Arabs, Assyrians, Turkomen, Yezidis, and the others as applicable.

## **The Section on "The Formation of the UNION"**

### **Section I**

Article 4 states that the nation of Iraq consists of two main ethnic groups: Arab and Kurdish. This constitution affirms the ethnic

rights of the Kurdish nation and its activities in Kurdistan region on the basis of a Federal system. It also affirms the legal ethnic rights for the minorities within the framework of the Federal Republic of Iraq.

The word minorities should be defined clearly and appropriately, ethnic or religious, and they should be mentioned as Assyrians, Turkomen, Yezidis, Mandaean, Bahaiis, Armenians, and so forth.

Article 6 states that the Federal Republic of Iraq is to have a special flag, emblem, and national anthem, all of which must include the symbol of unity between Arabs and Kurds, and that to be regulated through a law.

This unity is not only between Arabs and Kurds. Assyrians, Turkomen and all others must be part of these symbols since they make the fabric of the Iraqi society.

## **Rights and Primary Duties**

### **Section II**

Article 21 gives the State and the two regions the rights for issuing all matters related to Deeds of Trust and regulate all laws that apply here.

All unresolved matters should be finally resolved and all those who no longer possess the deeds of trust to their lands or homes, whether they were lost or were taken away from them through whatever reasons, be compensated fairly or their properties be returned to them or to their surviving family relatives.

## **Union Authorities**

### **Section III – Chapter I, The House of Representatives (National Assembly)**

Article 29 states that the ways and means of the elections be defined including the percentage of the representation and its dates through a law.

We need to see these ways and means defined clearly.

#### Union Authorities

### **Section III – Chapter II, The Executive Authority of the Union**

Article 47 states that the Cabinet consists of the Prime Minister, deputies, and a number of ministers who represent the two united regions, i.e. Arab and Kurdish regions, and according to the percentage of their populations.

The Assyrians in Iraq have suffered greatly through the continuous policies of persecution by both the Arabs and the Kurds since 1921. Many Assyrians have been forced to evacuate their lands, homes and villages, or their villages were simply destroyed. The figures today do injustice to the the Assyrian Christians; therefore, special accommodations must be applied to the Assyrians and all figures of population must be predated to include the 1921 figures when the Republic of Iraq was established. Interestingly, the British Civil Administration after the occupation of Iraq in 1918 and afterwards by Mandated Iraq showed that the population of the non-Moslems in Iraq, mainly present in north of Iraq and comprising mainly of Christians (Nestorians, Chaldeans, Jacobites, Syrians), Yezidis, and Jews, was 400,000 while the Kurds' population was 800,000.

## **Regions' Constitutional Structure**

### **Section IV**

Article 61 states that the people of any of the two regions will elect their representatives in the Regional Assembly (House of the Representatives of each region) through the direct, free, general, and secret ballot. A special law will define the ways and means, percentage of representations, and the time of such elections.

It is vital to address these matters ahead of time and such guidelines should be defined clearly taking into consideration all the points addressed earlier. The Assyrians must be allowed to elect their own representatives in accordance to their population through separate elections because of what Arabs and Kurds have inflicted upon them throughout the last 80 years. It is obvious that when certain villages were completely and purely Assyrian, today and because of such policies, have turned into Kurdish villages. This is unacceptable since the Assyrians cannot have a fair representation under such circumstances.

Article 66 states that the Cabinet consists of Prime Minister, deputies, and a number of ministers, which is administered under the region's president.

The Article should indicate the representation of Assyrians and Turkomen in the Cabinet.

## **Transitional and Final Rules**

### **Section VI**

Article 79 states that all traces of Arabization and forced immigration, which took place in parts of Kurdistan, must be removed. Those Kurds who were forced to re-locate from Kirkuk, Makhmor, Sinjar, Zammar, Shaikhan, Khanaqin, Mandily and other localities be returned to their former residential areas. In addition, all the Arabs who were brought by the authorities to these areas must be returned to their 1957 former residences.

Simply said, whatever is requested by the Kurds should be applied to the Assyrians also. Tens of thousands of Assyrians have lost their original homes and their villages were destroyed. While the Kurds have faced unfair Iraqi government policies, the Assyrians have faced double tragedies, from both the Iraqi central government and the Kurds. Therefore, all displaced Assyrians must be allowed to return to their original homes and their villages be returned to them in a manner that ensures demographic homogeneity of the Assyrians. The rulings and recommendations of the Sub-Committee of the League of Nations must be respected in this regard.

Finally, the point must be stressed that none of these amendments to the Proposed Constitution are to be made as a favor to the Assyrians of Iraq, as each and every Assyrian member of the greater Iraqi society deserves the equal and just treatment under the law.

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## **UNTIL WHEN? - THE ASSYRIAN ETHNICITY PERSECUTED AND MARGINALIZED IN ITS OWN HOMELAND**

In general, the Iraqi people see that it's time to get rid of Saddam's regime and replace it with another, which will bring Iraq to its prosperity, and deals with all the Iraqi people no matter what their ethnicity or religious creeds may be in accordance with international protocols. As such, intensive meetings of the Iraqi opposition groups were held abroad whereby many ideas were noted on the part of some Iraqi brethren while a question lingered; "Where are the Assyrians in the political agenda of the Iraqi opposition"??

It is important here to remind again of the Assyrian ethnicity whose history stretches for thousands of years and whose descendants lived in their historical, ancestral homeland "Assyria"(today's Iraq). They suffered throughout history of calamities and massacres either because of their religious or ethnic backgrounds. Thus, some peoples got during the twentieth century more than they deserved while the Assyrians paid the highest price in comparison to their number, and didn't claim in the process other than ethnic marginalization and forced migration from their historical homeland, so because of all this a remainder of about 1 million Assyrians live in the homeland forming number wise the third ethnic group. All hopes are turning towards the Assyrians in the homeland to strengthen the Assyrian ethnic existence in Assyria despite the many difficulties surrounding them.

What matters to the Assyrians under the present circumstances is their fate after thousands of years, as a minority rejected to be recognized as an ethnicity by the surrounding currents, because those Assyrians living in Iraq, are divided in between two areas under two different regimes Arab and Kurdish. In what is called "Iraqi Kurdistan", the Assyrians found that they got rid of Baghdad's Arabization to face the "Kurdisation" policy. Also, as the different Islamic Kurdish currents are increasingly active in what's called "Iraqi Kurdistan", and the increase of problems between the islamists and non-islamists as " political Islam" entered Assyria, in addition to the assassination of Assyrian clergy in Baghdad (1), one can't but wonder about the reasons behind all this

and the disaster that may occur following the confusion which will befall Iraq in the event that the demands of any of the Iraqi people remain unaddressed.

It's important to have a simple historical representation before looking into solutions, for the Assyrian Cause has a historical background which makes the Assyrians, and very frankly till today, always cautious of the other ethnicities surrounding them, especially with the continuous persecution, of the "De Facto Powers" which are dominating the homeland, of the Assyrian demands. As an example, the Iraqi regime, treated the Assyrians as second class citizens or foreigners in Iraq in addition to intimidating actions to force their migration, such as destroying their villages and Churches which go back to the first centuries A.D.. Also, the detentions and executions in all Iraqi areas and prohibiting the use of the "Assyrian" name in all domains except at universities where it's mentioned in the subject of an arabized history (for they were not able to omit the Assyrian name from history). They would also detain the families of Assyrian politicians living abroad while torturing them in Baghdad's prisons to force their return to Iraq and giving themselves up. Also the detention in 1978 of more than 500 Assyrians members of the Bible Study Committee.

The Assyrians paid a high price due to Saddam's foreign policy and his war with Iran where the numbers of Assyrian victims reached to about 60000 between those killed, detained, and missing in action. The Assyrian town of Baghdadida (so called Qaraqosh) alone, gave about 6000 martyrs. Because of the regime's internal policy the Assyrians also suffered a great deal during Saddam's war with the Kurds, especially after the Iraqi - Iranian war when Saddam decided to punish the Kurds who supported the Iranians, thus came the famous " Anfal" operation where he destroyed a large number of Assyrian villages causing more than 40000 Assyrians to flee their villages along with the Kurds to neighboring countries. Those who remained were subjected to killings and abductions where hundreds of them are still missing till today with their wives and children (lists of names are available), all that to have revenge because the Assyrians refused to register as "Arabs" or "Kurds" in the 1987 Census... (2)

With every battle the Assyrians are bewildered for they fear the Kurdish anger if they don't stand by their side for they will consider them as " Saddam's collaborators", on the other hand they fear Saddam's wrath if they side by the Kurds for he will consider them as "Kurds' collaborators"... In addition to all this, tens of thousands were left homeless in 1991 after Saddam's strikes against the Kurds. Thus the Assyrian people always pay the price for others' wars on its own land when its fate clings to the struggles of others, while no one in the world would take notice of Assyrian victims, rather they would be either considered Arabs or Kurds, and this was confirmed during a visit of some Assyrians to meet with those who had fled to Turkey in 1991. All this as a result of Baghdad and Kurdish obscuring towards the Assyrian identity.

Following the invasion of Kuwait, the economic, defense ... and other important Iraqi elements were destroyed because of the Iraqi regime's idiocy on one hand and the American-Israeli plan on the other which aims at striking back any forces which may threaten Israel in the Middle East. This is when taking advantage of the weak Iraqi regime, the Kurds announced what seemed to be a sort of independence in the North of Iraq with the help of the allied forces which destroyed Iraq, where this chaotic area of Kurdish rule is known as " Kurdistan Region" and is ruled by Kurds in a tribal manner.

For centuries the Kurdish tribes neighbored the Assyrians. The Kurdish historian; the prince Sharaf Khan al-Badlisi (16th century) mentioned that Kurds came to the area with the Mongol tyrant Tamerlane, and he says that the inhabitants of the area were known as "Asuri" i.e. Assyrian ... Relationships were established between the two peoples during which the Assyrians had already fulfilled the requirements of present day states (Land, authority, and population). Then it was the huge massacre in the middle of the 19th century when tens of thousands of Assyrians fell victims at the hands of the Kurdish leader Bedr Khan followed by WWI massacres which spread from Urmia in the West of Iran to Urfa (Urhai or Edessa) and Maraash in the south-east of Turkey. In these massacres two thirds of the Assyrian population perished and His Holiness Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimmoun was assassinated in a treacherous attempt at the hands of Ismail Simko leader of the Kurdish Shikak tribes ... These events are still very painful to the Assyrians, this in turn has affected the Kurdish movement in present times as it is mentioned by Jalal Talabani the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (3).

Kurdish population can be found today in high density in the Assyrian homeland and they very much believe in their ethnic belonging, they are a rebellious, brave people who were able to impose their existence on neighboring countries and they repeatedly forced hostile regimes to negotiate with them despite the Saad-Abad treaty which was signed between Iraq, Iran and Turkey in 1937 which stipulated the subduing of Kurdish rebellions in those countries. Kurds stood against this treaty and rebelled for decades against the three countries and that drew the attention of the West, which used them as a pressuring card on these countries whenever it was possible. In turn the three countries took advantage of the Kurdish tribes using them as a pressuring card whenever conflicts arose between the three countries, and this is obvious when the Shah of Iran supported Mustafa Barazani against Iraq but suddenly withdrew his support following the Algerian treaty in regards to Shat el-Arab (Persian Gulf) signed between Iraq and Iran in 1975, resulting in Barazani instructing his fighters to give themselves up to the Iraqi authorities because he was bewildered how to deal with the situation, this caused a turn down in his popularity, and the Algerian treaty was amongst

the main reasons for the failure of the Kurdish State project.

In spite of all that the Kurds committed against the Assyrians through history, yet some Assyrians contributed very bravely and sincerely to the 20th century's Kurdish movement under Mustafa Barzani. One of the main reasons for some Assyrians joining foreign currents was that they saw in the Kurdish movement a way to freedom from the Baghdad regime, in the absence of Assyrian Parties during that period on the Iraqi scene and this is considered as a short sightedness on the part of Assyrian organizations abroad because the Assyrians in northern Iraq didn't find any other option to be freed of the Iraqi regime other than joining either the Kurdish movement or Iraqi Communist Party, and the two became as a refuge for Assyrian nationalists where many of them were able to hold the highest ranks within the Iraqi Communist Party, and within the Kurdish movement, which brought perdition to many of them, and in some military divisions Assyrians constituted about 15% (4). And the Assyrians remained sincere to the Kurdish movement well into the seventies of this century when the late Patriarch Mar Ishai Chamoun was invited by the Iraqi president Ahmad Hassan al-Bakir in April 1970, then the Assyrian leader Yakou Malek Ismael (one of the Assyrian National liberation symbols in the 20th century) who was invited in February 1973 and the Iraqi government proposed to both leaders forming an Assyrian force to strike the Kurdish movement in exchange for acknowledging some Assyrian rights, but both leaders refused that proposal. In April 1979 the Assyrian Democratic Movement was established which changed the situation to be somewhat better as to preserving the Assyrian existence in Assyria as much as possible keeping at the same time the good relations with the Kurds to face together the common challenges in a spirit of sincerity and co-operation. However, the Kurdish treatment towards the Assyrians during the last decade wasn't as well as it was expected to be.

The area which is under Kurdish rule has several religious minorities (Christians, Yezids, and Muslims) distributed into several ethnicities (Assyrian, Kurds, Turkman) ... In this mosaic tapestry the Kurds tried to gain trust in the way they ran their region in accordance with international norms in preparation of announcing a Kurdish state whenever circumstances permitted. Thus the Assyrians and Turkmans participated in the Parliament of what's called "Kurdistan" and Assyrian establishments were allowed to build schools in an attempt to gain foreign support and nothing more. The Kurds are well aware that the Assyrian demands are well within the same geographical area which they consider as "Kurdistan", and the Kurds will never accept the founding of another national existence whether be it Assyrian or another in that area, Kurds however look at all the other different parties who live in Assyria, as "Kurdistani citizens" hoping that one day they would turn into "Kurdish citizens". This is obvious to those who are aware of the events taking place due to the following facts:

1. The political Persecution: In regards to this fact, Assyrians are but Christians living within the so-called "Kurdistan", in addition to the Kurdish leadership frankly considering Assyrians as "Christian Kurds". Plus the deliberate attempts of the Kurdish leadership to form Assyrian Parties under religious names in order to weaken the Assyrian front by attempting to politically undermine the popular base of the "Assyrian Democratic Movement" organization, creating divisions in the Assyrian parliamentary representation in what's known as the "Kurdistan Parliament", adding to that the increase in political assassinations of politicians and members of the Assyrian Democratic Movement such as the martyrs Francis Shabo who was a member in the Parliament of the so-called "Kurdistan" and Faris Mirza, Samir Murad and others...

2. Cultural and Ideological Persecution: The educational curriculum at the Region's universities is geared politically, to consider the North of Iraq as a Kurdish land, just like the Baghdad regime forces the Arabization of Assyrians in its universities. The Assyrian students are obliged to study a history that considers Kurdish personalities, which were responsible for massacring their ancestors rendering them homeless away from their homelands, as heroes, or they would fail exams, and many more practices that can't all be mentioned here.

3. Corporal and Psychological Persecution: Reports which show tens of crimes against innocent individuals and families as well as immoral acts whereby volumes are needed to report them. What's amazing is that no one was convicted of any of these crimes but rather they would be attributed to "un-known" perpetrators, even though many of the assailants were either Kurdish figures or party members.

4. Demographic Persecution: Forcibly occupying Assyrian villages and agricultural lands, obliging inhabitants to leave in horror using bombs or arresting them repeatedly for no apparent reasons in order for them to flee even though a large part of land occupied by Kurds is still officially registered to Assyrian owners, who if not abroad, are living as refugees with their relatives in other villages. Also the names of tens of Assyrian villages were changed to Kurdish, misleading future generations, when as a matter of fact all of Iraq's regions carried Assyrian names before the coming of Arabs and Kurds.

5. Religious Persecution: Resorting in many instances to "Islamic Laws" in cases where the victims are Assyrians. Also, kidnapping girls of thirteen and sixteen forcing them to convert to Islam then marrying them to their

kidnappers and the criminals are still free.

Thus the "De Facto Forces" proved again without any doubt, their failure dealing with minorities living under their rule, in accordance with international norms within the political, humanitarian and moral standards, especially that Amnesty International confirms every year the fore mentioned. Thus, we should wonder as to the fate of the Assyrian people under the domination of these forces, and what can be the best solution for the Iraqi people in general and the Assyrian minority in particular.

The forced migration of the Assyrian people from their ancestral homeland reflected a rise in a more advanced national awareness beginning with a recognizable media and cultural movements abroad, which are at a high point now to accompany the present era and support the one third of all Assyrians around the world, living in their ancestral homeland, to help them face the developments which will bring radical changes to Iraq where there's a mix of both domineering and deprived ethnicities.

Like other deprived peoples, the Assyrians notice today that the international political situation after September 11 may provide them with what they've been deprived of for long centuries. Therefore, Assyrian organizations mobilized in a noticeable manner which made many American officials take notice in directing the White House's attention to the Assyrian suffering under the rule of Kurdish tribes. On October 26, 1999 three American congressmen presented a petition to President Bush to take into consideration the situation of the Assyrian ethnic minority in the event of changes in Iraq. And on March 15, 2002, nineteen congressmen followed with yet another letter to President Bush in regards to this matter. On April 25th, 2002, Chairman of the International Relations Committee in the Congress Senator Henry Hyde in a letter addressed to Mr. William Burns [assistant secretary of state for near eastern affairs], explained the persecutions of the Assyrian people in Iraq, and wondered about their rights, then followed that by another letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell on August 18th, 2002 protesting the exclusion of Assyrians from the Iraqi opposition meetings...

In spite of this negligence on the part of the Iraqi opposition, and because the Iraqi people in general are suffering of economical and social problems and as the minorities are suffering of marginalization, persecution, and of harassment to their politicians, taking all this into consideration, the Assyrians still share the Iraqi opposition in their concerns and support their demands because they feel that they are a part of that human fabric which constitutes the Iraqi people - builder of the future Iraq.

The Assyrian national movement is neither an enemy of the Kurds, nor is against Arabs as the Iraqi regimes have misled the people who are hopeless. Also the Assyrian national movement isn't against the State of Iraq having its own specific convocations in its relations whether military or economical co-operation with its region (as a state), but is against the " Arabization" & " Kurdisation" of Assyrians. History has proven that it's impossible to eliminate the national feeling of the Assyrians ... The Assyrians will always call for a democratic and free Iraq where justice would be for all its ethnic and religious groups and it's the duty of the forthcoming Iraqi leadership to work on the following:

- 1- Recognition of the Assyrian minority as an independent, fully defined ethnicity distinctive ethnically from other groups in Iraq.
- 2- Elimination of the reasons which caused a continuous forced migration of Assyrians outside the historical homeland and that can be achieved by establishing the basis of democracy and equality in rights and giving lands and properties back to their rightful owners, then calling upon all Iraqis, Assyrians and others to return and help in the building of the new State of Iraq.
- 3- Reviewing the Iraqi educational curriculum to bring up a well educated generation, one that will be aware of the true history of his country in compliance with what scientists and historians have established and that by correcting the so-called "rewriting of history" which was done by Baghdad's regime in the late seventies through which ancient history was distorted accordingly with the Arabization policy and then changing modern history because of the regime's vindictive feelings and the sensitivity against all that is related to Assyrians without any reason.
- 4- Implementation of the decision dated 25/12/1972 by the Iraqi Revolutionary Council which decreed allowing to Assyrians who participated in the 1933 events [as claims the Iraqi regime] to go back to Iraq, so that those who wish to return to the homeland can do so and reclaim their Iraqi citizenship, considering that Iraq is the national homeland of the Assyrians.

This is some of what the Assyrians want in a unified Iraq, in the event that the present regime changes, it's better for a unified State of Iraq to continue on the basis of a direct central governing, but in the case that any Kurdish entity might be established whether under federalism or political and governmental decentralization in a form of a self governing rule, then with reservation regarding the obscurity which surrounds Turkey's strong opposition towards the Kurdish case, plus the obscurity in both the positions of the American administration and the Iraqi opposition in regards to the future of Iraq, then it's not logically acceptable for Assyrians to live under the mercy of any other group for they deserve to have their own particular entity equal to other ethnicities according to what follows :

1. Deriving from historical rights.
2. Deriving from what the Assyrians have suffered and still do under the rule of "De Facto Forces" and because of these forces' violation to all of the 30 articles mentioned in the International Declaration of Human Rights which is sanctioned by decision 217/A3 of the United Nations General Assembly 1948.
3. The previous declarations of International organizations such as number /69/ of 15/12/1932 by the League Of Nations which stipulates on self- governing area in the north of Iraq, for the Assyrians.
4. In reference to article /73/ of the United Nations Declaration of "Self Governing" law, and as the Assyrians are relied by the elements of nationalism, and particularly in Assyrianism {common language, history, and common traditions as well as the national feeling of belonging} ... and that in a very obvious and distinctive manner of other groups, wherever the Assyrians live.

The Assyrians have to impede any solution that doesn't equalize them along side with the rest of the groups within the Iraqi people; on the other hand every thing remains to be seen under the obscure American plan. And the Turkey's declaration on the 20th of August 2002 that Mosul and Kirkuk are historically Turkish lands arises a question mark around the future of north of Iraq.

What's odd and sad at the same time is the struggle of foreigners and their race for many years to seize the Assyrian land. For the Kurds it's Kurdish, for the Turks it's Turkish, and for the Arabs it's Arab ... While the Assyrians, the real owners of the land, exhausted of the calamities which befell them, await the mercy of the international community. The Assyrians' only ammunition today is their historical and human right, however, justice remains hanging on the Iraqi conscience in particular and the International conscience in general. And as long as there are voices rising after 2614 years of the fall of Nineveh, then there's' no doubt that the Assyrians will continue to demand what is rightfully theirs until they completely obtain it.

Ashor Giwargis  
Lebanon

[This article was first published in the published in Arabic in the "An-Nahar" newspaper - Lebanon, 1 October 2002. Translation from Arabic to English by "Mary.C"]

Notes:

- 1 - Father Philip Hilay was found choked to death in May 2002 and Sister Cecilia Hanna Moshe who was found stabbed several times and beheaded at the Monastery of The Sacred Heart in Baghdad on 15/08/2002, the day of St. Mary's Commemoration.
- 2 -Jonathan C.Randal (an American journalist),"After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?", 1997, Farrar, Straus & Giroux – P:18 (The Arabic Edition, Translated by Fadi Hammoud).
- 3 – Dr.Kamal Ahmed Mazhar (a Kurdish historian) - "Kurdistan During WW1"
- 4 - Shmidt, A. " Journey Among Brave Men" . Boston, 1964, P. 71
- 5 - Haddad, Eva " The Assyrians, The Rod Of My Anger ". Australia, 1996. P. 1

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## GOOD MORNING BET-NAHRAIN

### **THREE MEN ARRESTED IN STABBING DEATH OF ASSYRIAN NUN**

Courtesy of the Associated Press Newswires (23 Sept)

(ZNDA: Baghdad) Iraqi authorities have arrested three people accused of stabbing a Chaldean nun to death last month in a convent in the Iraqi capital.

Ra'ad Hashem Saleh, 23, Mushtaq Shawaqi, 23 and Mazin Nouri Qadir confessed to killing sister Celia Mushi Hanna, 71, on August 15-16, al-Iraq newspaper reported, quoting a statement by the General Security Apparatus.

The three suspects were drunk when they broke into the convent and tied up the nun before stealing some money and electrical equipment, according to the report. They decided to kill her out of fear she might recognize them later, it said. "The three criminals will stand trial in order to receive their deserved punishment," the security statement was quoted as saying.

It wasn't clear when the arrests were made.

In an interview aired by Al-Shabab television, owned by Saddam's eldest son Odai, Bishop Shlemon Wardoni of the Chaldean Church described the killing as an ordinary crime with no religious motive "contrary to false information spread recently." He was referring to rumors the murder was part of a scheme to force Iraqi Christians to leave the country.

"We, Muslims and Christians, want to live peacefully in our country under the leadership of our president, Saddam Hussein," Wardoni said.

Assyrian-Chaldean Christians comprise about 5 percent of Iraq's 23 million population. The country is predominantly Muslim, but officially secular.

### **ASSYRIAN COMMUNITY WANTS MINORITY STATUS IN TURKEY**

Courtesy of Agence France-Presse (Sept 21); article by Burak Akinci

(ZNDA: Mardin) On a hill overlooking the Mesopotamian valley, a small, ancient Christian community hopes Turkey's bid to join the European Union will help it win official minority group status.

The Syrian Orthodox, or Jacobite, community, whose liturgy still uses the Aramaic language spoken by Christ, counts only some 20,000 members throughout the country.

Most are in Istanbul, but 5,000 or so remain on ancestral lands here in southeastern Anatolia -- a region better known for another minority, the Kurds, who waged a bloody battle against central authority for their own recognition.

"We're a minority, but we don't have minority rights," said Ishak Ergun, who teaches Aramaic and guides tourists around Mardin's ancient Deyrulzafraan monastery that dates back to the fifth century.

In 1995, the community petitioned Turkey's prime minister and president to allow it to open a school to keep its culture alive. But Ergun said it never received an answer.

"This sort of thing shouldn't happen in a Turkey, which is looking to joining the European Union," he said.

In August, the government managed to push through a series of democracy reforms, including education and broadcast rights for its large Kurdish minority, to help meet EU norms.

But the Syrian Orthodox community says it continues to be ignored while other communities, such as the Jews, the Greek Orthodox and Armenians, have been given official minority status that allows them certain association and property rights.

"We're a minority, but we're not recognized as such," said Hanna Cilli, a 63-year-old jeweler working in Mardin's bazaar.

He sees the problem as partly one of size -- his tiny Syrian Orthodox community, he said, does not have the clout enjoyed by communities with outside homelands like Greece for the Greek Orthodox or Israel for the Jews.

"We've been living here for 5,000 years and we live in peace," he added.

Since a rebellion by the Turkey's main Kurdish rebel group, the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), petered out two years ago in the wake of the jailing of its leader Abdullah Ocalan, tourists have begun to return to the region. A key site is the monastery, whose name means "saffron" in Arabic and whose ochre color is said to come from adding the spice to building materials at this stop on the old Silk Road trade route.

Jacobite metropolitans had their See in Mardin from 1186 to 1933. And some 7,000 Syrian Orthodox families lived in the region less than a century ago. Many, spurred by economic necessity or fear brought on by Kurdish civil unrest, left for Istanbul, western Europe or the United States.

Though NATO-member Turkey has been pressing the EU to set a date for accession talks at an EU summit in Copenhagen in December, this is far from certain.

Turkey remains the laggard among 13 EU hopefuls, not only over its record on minorities and human rights but also over still-divided Cyprus -- whose northern part was invaded by Turkey in 1974 -- and the role of Turkey's powerful military in national politics.

Though the 15-member bloc hailed the democracy reforms adopted in August, it made it clear it would closely monitor their implementation -- a development that could keep the Syrian Orthodox here waiting a bit longer.

## **AP CALLS MARDIN HOME OF ASSYRIAN CHRISTIANS**

Courtesy of Associated Press (22 September) & Mr. Salim Abraham, AP Reporter in Damascus

(ZNDA: Damascus) Last week the Associated Press reported that a 30-year-old Turkish man was killed in a land mine explosion in Turkey's Tur-Abdin region (southeast), according to the Anatolia news agency. The report specified the location as Mardin where fighting between the Turkish military and Kurdish rebels, who waged a 15-year war for autonomy in the mainly Kurdish southeast. Some 37,000 people have been killed as a result of the fighting.

Turkey announced earlier this year that it had indefinitely banned mines and would sign a global treaty outlawing them.

The significance of this report is the extraordinary citing of the city of Mardin by the Associated Press as "the traditional home of Turkey's Assyrian Christian in an ethnically mixed Kurdish, Turkish, and Arab province."

## **ASSYRIANS JOIN IRAQI-DEMOCRATS-NET**

(ZNDA: Arbil) The Iraq Institute for Democracy hosted human rights and democracy organizations, newspapers and activists at a workshop discussion over the weekend to create "Iraqi-Democrats-Net" so that the Iraqi Democratic reformers inside the country can help and push for democratic change in Iraq, the Institute reported in a press release.

More than 200 people from different regions, ethnic groups including Assyrians, Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans, and Yezidies agreed to set up the "Iraqi-Democrats-Net". The Assyrian group is represented by the Assyrian Women's Union and the Chaldean Cultural Center in North Iraq. The participants decided to create a secretariat for this network, and a national coordinator, Mr. Anwar Adbullah, in Arbil, Northern Iraq and two international coordinators, Sheikh Safia Sheikh Talib Al-Souhail in Washington and Ms. Sonia Cantillon-Sinjari in Brussels.

The secretariat will start contacting Iraqi Human Rights and Democracy organizations in North America, EU countries and elsewhere to create a bridge between Iraqi Democrats inside and outside the country, the Institute said. It stressed, "This should help to develop a popular movement for democratic change in Iraq."

The Institute said this network is for the Iraqi democrats regardless of their ethnic, religious or political backgrounds. "This network will support civil society, minority rights, women's rights, freedom of press and equal rights for all Iraqis," it declared.

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## News Digest

### **CAR ACCIDENT INJURES 16 AT SAN DIEGO'S CHALDEAN CHURCH**

Courtesy of the San Diego Union-Tribune (Sept 23); article by Irene McCormack Jackson

(ZNDA: El Cajon) At least 16 people were injured when a woman driving to church lost control of her car in the parking lot last Sunday morning and careened into a crowd of parishioners gathered for refreshments outside St. Peter Chaldean Catholic Church in El Cajon, California.

Twelve people, four of them children, were taken to hospitals in a half-dozen ambulances, suffering from serious to moderate injuries, James Marugg, a San Miguel Fire District paramedic/ firefighter, said.

"The nightmare for us was finding all of the patients in the crowd," he said. "We had patients all the way from the street to the front of the church."

Paramedics set up a triage area on the church steps to assess patients.

"We had a couple of patients who had injuries to the head," and needed to be seen by trauma doctors, he said. One child suffered a serious break in his lower left leg, which also required specialized medical treatment.

Marugg said none of the injuries appeared to be life- threatening.

The accident was a shock to the Chaldean community, which buried three members of a well-known family who died in a car crash Sept. 13, less than a mile from the church. A memorial service for the Ballo family was scheduled to be held after church services yesterday, said Manal Naoom, a church volunteer.

The accident occurred at 10:45 a.m. just 15 minutes after the 9:30 a.m. Mass ended and 15 minutes before the 11 a.m. Mass.

California Highway Patrol officer Brian Allen said it will take days to figure out what happened and who is at fault because of the number of witnesses investigators will need to interview.

Alcohol or drugs are not suspected in the case. And the driver, described only as a middle-aged woman, was not hurt.

Naoom said the woman seemed to be "out of it" and felt very badly about what happened.

Allen said the driver hit another car while entering the driveway and then hit a pedestrian. Worshipers leaving Mass were walking to their parked cars, he said.

The woman then veered her Ford Escort up the one-way drive and headed for the front of the church.

It plowed into a group of people, hitting at least a dozen and throwing them in every direction before slamming into a steel beam supporting an awning over the front doors.

Sam Marcos, who was just leaving Mass said he yelled for people to get out of the way.

"When I see the car as it was coming over there, I said, 'Watch out, watch out, watch out!' " Marcos said as he watched a tow-truck driver load the battered car onto a flatbed truck.

"I see two or three people as she hit them . . . and they went up in the air," he said. "Then she hit the pole. If not this, she would have kept going."

Marcos said the car just missed him as it drove not more than a foot away from the walls of the church in a path toward the church entrance.

"I see her as she tried to turn her steering wheel. She was close to me and I jumped down the steps to get away."

When the vehicle stopped, pandemonium broke out. Relatives and friends rushed to aid the injured. Several pulled people out from under the car.

Marcos dialed 911 on his cell phone, as many others did.

Other church volunteers tried to direct traffic to keep a path open for the firetrucks and ambulances arriving at the Jamacha Way church.

The priest started Mass shortly after 11 a.m., as paramedics treated the injured outside.

CHP's Allen said the driver was cooperative but not very helpful while being interviewed.

"She said she turned the car to the right. As for a why she did or a how she did, she's just real vague on those details," he said.

### **CHALDEANS MOURN 3 IN FAMILY; 1,000 AT FUNERAL FOR CAR CRASH VICTIMS**

*Courtesy of the San Diego Union-Tribune (Sept 19)*

(ZNDA: El Cajon) Three silver caskets rested side by side at a San Diego cemetery on Sept 18 as members of the Chaldean community mourned members of a well-known family killed on Friday, 13 September in a car crash.

Shamoon Ballo, 63, his wife, Samria, 56, and their 18-year-old daughter, Rita, were remembered as generous people who devoted their lives to their church and their family.

Shamoon and Samria Ballo arrived in San Diego with their three sons in January 1983. Through the years they helped more than 100 others come to the United States to escape oppressive economic and political conditions in their native Iraq.

"They helped every person possible as much as they could," said their son Tommy, 33. "Sometimes they gave more than they could afford to help other people."

Tommy Ballo and members of his family were headed to another relative's house Friday when their Honda Accord was hit by a van at Jamacha and Sundale roads.

Tommy Ballo, the driver and the only person wearing a seat belt, suffered shoulder injuries in the crash. Shamoon, Samria and Rita Ballo were killed instantly. Daughter-in-law Linda Ballo is recovering in a hospital.

The cause of the crash is still under investigation, said Lt. Tim Lepper of the California Highway Patrol.

About 1,000 people filled St. Peter Chaldean Catholic Church on Wednesday morning for a funeral service. It was conducted by Father Michael Bazzi. Family members said the service was the largest ever held in San Diego's Chaldean community.

Caroline Zaya, 18, who taught catechism classes at the church with Rita Ballo, remembered her friend as a beautiful and intelligent person.

"I keep telling myself you're in a better place," Zaya said in a poem she read at the service. "But what I wouldn't give to see your face."

Tommy Ballo said his mother viewed Rita as a gift because she prayed to have a girl after giving birth to three sons in Iraq. Like her parents, Rita was devoted to her faith, he said.

Gabe Barno, a friend of the Ballos, said he helped them come to the United States after he arrived here. The Ballos' home in Spring Valley was a frequent gathering spot for members of the Chaldean community.

"He was a peacemaker," Barno said of Shamoon Ballo. "He never held anything in his heart against anybody. Whenever he heard about fights between families, he tried to correct it."

After the funeral service, several hundred mourners drove to Holy Cross Cemetery for a graveside service.

### **SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISERS IN SAN JOSE**

(ZNDA: San Jose) Over the past weekend three separate fundraisers in the San Francisco Bay Area amassed a total of \$53,000 (fifty three thousand U.S. dollars) for three different Assyrian humanitarian, cultural, and political organizations. On Sunday, Sept 29, through the auctioning of rare Assyrian books and art pieces, \$15,000 were collected for the Nisibin Scholarship Award program of the Assyrian American Association of San Jose. During the following evening's political rally at the Church of the East hall to benefit of the Assyrian Democratic Movement in San Jose, a total of \$7,200 were donated. The main speaker of the rally was the Secretary General of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, Mr. Yonadam Kanna. Earlier that day, Mr. Yonadam Kanna confirmed the collection of nearly \$30,000 through the fundraising efforts of Mr. Narsi David of the Assyrian Aid Society of America for Ms. Lena Nissan's medical treatments. Ms. Nissan is a 16-year-old Assyrian and has been diagnosed with Myeloid Leukemia.

### **PROFESSOR KAMBER HELPING PLAN FOR A POST-SADDAM IRAQ**

Courtesy of the Kalamazoo Gazette (1 Oct); article by Anthony Shadid

(ZNDA: Detroit) Emanuel Kamber (see the Lighthouse) is convinced a U.S. military intervention or outright war against Iraq is the action to take, and now.

Kamber, a professor of physics at Western Michigan University, says he is in a position to know: Born in Iraq, he is part of a coalition of Iraqi exiles working with the U.S. State Department to pave the way for a new government when and if Saddam Hussein is deposed.

"We would like to see a regime change," the 52-year-old Kamber said, sitting in his small office on WMU's campus.

"We want him (Saddam Hussein) to get the message that the people do not like him anymore. He needs to leave to let Iraqis live in peace with people throughout the world."

Kamber is among the scores of Iraqi exiles who are quietly planning the future of their homeland after Saddam Hussein -- planning for everything from war-crimes trials and a transitional ruling council to specific projects like rejuvenating the marshes in the south that are home to a fading, 5,000-year-old culture.

The State Department has funded the exiles' work, which began in the spring and intensified last month amid the flurry of activity signaling Washington's determination to oust Hussein.

U.S. officials acknowledge that the planning is designed in part to avoid past mistakes in places like Afghanistan and the Balkans, where U.S. military preparation outpaced civilian efforts.

Iraqi participants say they are trying to wrap up initial work by the end of October, when a broad meeting of the Iraqi opposition is planned in Europe. Kamber is not sure yet whether he will be attending that meeting.

The effort, which will eventually cost \$5 million, is an attempt to address fears that a post-Hussein aftermath could be messy, and that the administration has done too little to plan for it.

Meetings already have taken place in Washington, D.C., and Surrey, England, and another gathering is set for later this week in Italy.

The State Department believes the six Iraqi working groups can lay the groundwork for everything from humanitarian and environmental issues to potentially explosive questions such as amnesty for members of the current government.

The groups also are working on the legitimacy of a transitional government and the outlines of a decentralized, federal government -- a principle the majority of the Iraqi opposition has already embraced.

More than 80 Iraqis are taking part in the planning. They include academics, physicians, former members of the Iraqi military and leaders of different opposition groups, some of whom could play leadership roles in a future Iraqi government.

Kamber said he is the only person from Kalamazoo on the committee, which includes other Iraqi-exiles, primarily from the Detroit and Chicago areas.

"A large number of Iraqis, they would like to see a democratic system in Iraq that guarantees human rights and equality of all citizens," Kamber said. "A lot of people, when they get the chance to leave Iraq, they join the opposition."

Kamber's work with the committee involves drafting a guideline for what he calls a future "Iraq Bill of Rights," based on the U.S. model.

The bill of rights would provide protection for people from illegal detentions and death sentences without the benefit of a fair trial, and ensure rights for all citizens, particularly those from such minority groups as the Assyrians, to which Kamber belongs.

The Assyrians, also known as Chaldeans and Syriacs, make up about 5 percent of the Iraqi population, which is about 80 percent Arab and around 15 percent Kurd.

Kamber said a large majority of American citizens of Iraqi descent -- about 300,000 people -- are of Assyrian ancestry.

Kamber says it is critical that Hussein follow human-rights guidelines as established by United Nations Resolution 668 after the Persian Gulf War.

The average Iraqi does not want Hussein in power because his regime frequently commits civil rights abuses, he said.

"I think it's very important that the American (public) should learn about this," Kamber said.

He last visited his homeland in 1980. He moved to Europe before coming to the United States in 1985, settling in Kalamazoo four years later.

He lives here with his wife and two children.

Kamber said the group of Iraqi exiles, who have been known to each other for a while, has been working for years to have Hussein removed.

## **SAM ANDREWS, THE CONTRAVERSIAL AUA LEADER, DIES AT 71**

Sam Andrews, a Korean War Veteran, 71, formerly of Chicago, passed away on September 19, in Modesto, California, after a lengthy illness. He is survived by his daughter Diane (Ashur) Joseph, Andy (Stephanie) Andrews, John (Shannon) Andrews and Sargon (Wendy) Andrews; Nellie Erskine and her children Michelle, Robert and Ronald; grandchildren Jonathan, Lauren, Michael, Melanie, Seth, Megan and Katie; a sister Atour (Mary) Odishoo, Dr. Sargon (Wilma) Odishoo and the late Ninos and Joel Andrews.

Mr. Andrews was the Secretary General of the Assyrian Universal Alliance between 1979 and 1982 and the Chairman of Executive Board of the AUA from 1982 until the present. His involvement with this organization during the 1970's was marred with accusations made against him on unofficial transactions made with the government of Iraq. Messrs. Sam Andrews and Zaia Malek Ismail, members of an AUA Mission to Iraq, were accused of receiving illegal money from the Baghdad regime on several occasions.

Mr. William Younan, Secretary General of the A.U.A. in 1975 published a letter in the March-April issue of the Assyrian Star, explaining that such accusations made by another colleague, Mr. Odishoo Gendo, were unfounded.

According to such accusations, Iraqi agents in Paris, France, on 20 February 1973 met with Mr. Andrews and Mr. Ismail where they were given \$4,000 in cash. Mr. Andrews explained that this money was used to cover their expenses to Baghdad.

Mr. Odishoo Gendo also accused Mr. Andrews and Mr. Ismail of receiving 10,000 Iraqi Dinars, (\$30,000) in cash, on 1 April 1973, and a monthly salary from the Iraqi regime in Baghdad. He explained that the two AUA officers were expected to promote pro-Iraqi propaganda in the United States through the Assyrian media.

The accused explained that they received only 6,000 Iraqi Dinars (\$18,000). Ten thousand went to Mr. Ismail, and 7,500 to Mr. Andrews, and they denied receiving any monthly salary.

Mr. Odishoo Gendo also presented a letter written by Zaia Ismail dated 2 November 1973 in which Mr. Ismail requested that the Iraqi government to transfer his monthly salary of \$3,000 to the Iraqi embassy in Ottawa, Canada, and further stated that Sam Andrews be offered the same courtesy. Mr. Ismail admitted to receiving three-month salary forwarded to the Iraqi embassy in Ottawa around 27 November 1973.

When Malik Chikko, chairman of the High Committee of Christian Affairs of Kurdistan, Northern Iraq, visited the United States, Mr. Andrews and Mr. Ismail collected information on him and handed it to the Iraqi United Nations representative in New York, according to similar accusations. The accused admitted collecting data and delivering it to the Iraqi agents in the United Nations.

Mr. Sam Andrews and Mr. Zaia Ismail had also proposed the creation of an Assyrian Military Unit in Iraq, consisting of the Assyrian refugees who had escaped the Kurdo-Iraqi battles in the North. The Assyrian unit was expected to be used in protecting the Assyrian autonomous state in the North.

A Service was held for Mr. Andrews on Thursday, 26 September at 5:00 p.m. at Allen Mortuary in Turlock, California. A memorial service was also held at the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock where Mr. Andrews had served as a financial officer and director of the bingo games for the past few years.

## **NEW CHRISTIAN SATELLITE TV SERVICE TO IRAN**

*Courtesy of BBC Monitoring (25 September)*

(ZNSA: London) For the first time, Iranians can now watch Christian TV in their own country and in their own language. The new service, aimed at Farsi-speaking Christians, is being broadcast by SAT-7. It will also give other viewers in Iran their first opportunity to see and hear what Christians really believe.

Iranian church leaders say almost half the country's practicing Christians have emigrated since the 1979 Islamic revolution, and in the early 1990's many church leaders were killed because of their faith. The number of Christians remaining in the country has

now fallen to around 160,000.

"Many of these, including priests and Christian ministers, are desperately in need of the encouragement and support that such a service can provide," says SAT-7's British-born CEO, Terence Ascott. 'The Christians of Iran have waited a long time for such a service to start.'

SAT-7 exists to strengthen the life and witness of Christians throughout the Middle East and North Africa. As one viewer told SAT-7: "Your broadcasts are the only means available to help us learn more about our faith."

Despite strict censorship of TV and a government ban on satellite dishes, some 20 million Iranians are believed to have access to satellite TV. The new Farsi service can also be picked up beyond Iran, where 25 million understand the language. These include potential viewers in Afghanistan, where sales of satellite dishes are growing fast.

The Farsi service will only transmit programs that are appropriate for the cultural, religious and political climate in Iran. Half the population of the country is under the age of 20, so the service will initially target viewers ages 12-22.

SAT-7 broadcasts in Farsi twice over the Iranian weekend, which is Thursday and Friday. The one hour transmissions beam out at 12.30 and again at 8pm. The service is also available to viewers in Europe at 10am and 5.30pm (CET) [0800 and 1530 gmt] on the same days. As funds become available over the next few years SAT-7 hopes to expand the Farsi service to run on a daily basis.

The Farsi language programs are being broadcast under the separate channel identity of ICB (Iranian Christian Broadcasting). They can be picked up on Eutelsat Hot Bird 3 at 13 degrees East (digital service from 12.379GHz, vertical polarity, 27500 symbol/sec, FEC 3/4).

## **KERALA'S HIGH COURT RESERVES ORDER IN CHURCH CASE**

*Courtesy of The Hindu (20 Sept)*

(ZND: Kochi) A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court in India Thursday, 19 September reserved its verdict on a writ petition filed by Baselios Marthoma Mathews II, Catholicos of the East and Metropolitan, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Christian Church and other Metropolitans seeking police protection for exercising their authority and performing rituals over the disputed nine Syriac churches.

The order was reserved by the Bench comprising the Chief Justice B. N. Srikrishna and Justice C. N. Ramachandran after conclusion of the arguments. It was contended on Friday by the counsel for the Orthodox faction that the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch (referred by the Indian media as Jacobite) had accepted the validity of the revival of the Catholicate and the 1934 constitution.

Besides, the Jacobite faction had given up or abandoned any objection they had on that behalf. The power of the Patriarch to ordain a metropolitan was subject to the 1934 Constitution. The parish churches were bound by the 1934 Constitution since Parish churches were episcopal to the extent provided in the Constitution.

The Constitution governed the affairs of the parishes and also the spiritual, temporal and communal affairs of the Malankara Syrian Church community. The Supreme Court verdict holding that the 1934 constitution shall cast an obligation on the parish churches. The obligation could not be wished away. Even the status of Catholicos had been decided by the Supreme Court.

Counsel for the Jacobite faction contended that the Apex Court judgment was not binding over the parishes owing allegiance to the Jacobite faction.

The Orthodox faction could exercise the option of filing an execution petition to implement the Apex Court judgment. Besides, if the Supreme Court had not adjudicated the issue, suit could be moved before civil courts.

In fact, the petitioners were laying a claim to the property of the parish churches. Such rights could be enforced only after taking evidence before the trial courts. There was no material before the High Court to decide the issue.

The counsel contended that Article 19(1)(c) guaranteed the right to form association. Besides, those who voluntarily joined the association had equal and inherent rights to dissociate from the Association on its own.

The Malankara Association was a voluntary association of parish churches formed in 1876 at the Mulanthuruthy Synod.

## **GERMAN TEAM UNCOVERS 3,400-YEAR-OLD TABLETS IN SYRIA**

Courtesy of Agence France-Presse (26 Sep)

(ZNDA: Berlin) A team of German archeologists working in Syria have found 63 stone tablets inscribed with important historical texts dating from 1400 BC, during the Bronze Age, Tuebingen University said last Thursday.

The tablets, inscribed in cuneiform script, were uncovered during a dig at Qatana, located around 20 kilometres (12 miles) southwest of Damascus, the statement said.

"They are the first political texts found which trace the sequence of events from that turbulent period," it said. The research, which has been under way since 1999, was carried out by Professors Peter Pfaelzner of Germany and Michel Maqdissi of Syria.

Qatana was a major trading centre and the capital of a kingdom between around 1800 and 1400 BC.

Cuneiform was a writing system made up of wedge-shaped elements and used by the ancient Assyrians.



## **Surfs Up!**

Letters From Zinda Magazine Readers

### **I BELIEVE IN THE UNITY OF FAITH AND LOVE**

I read with interest your three-part article on the Assyrian Church of the East. I felt that the article raised some valid points; but at the same time I found certain elements to be distasteful as well as being irrelevant to any serious debate on the current state of our Church and the direction it should be heading in.

Our Church is in a state of transition from one that recently existed in total isolation in the mountains of a region of the world that was centuries behind the times to one that today has to exist in a modern

society. Changes have to be made if our Church is to survive and thrive. This is a perfectly natural process that other Churches have had to go through to keep up with changing times; we will have to go through the same modernization process. As you rightly indicate our Church needs better education and support for the clergy; better systems of administration; more accountability and better communication between clergy. However, these changes are the inevitable result of a successful modernization process and have to be carried out irrespective of how many stories of personal affairs, rumors of scandal or innuendo there are floating around or even in their complete absence. These stories achieve nothing more than feed the less than noble appetites of a segment of our population. The real issue is how to achieve the results we seek; I would like to give you my perspective on this.

As a Christian, the guiding light in my life is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I have faith in the truth and goodness of his teachings. I believe in the power of faith, which is the power of truth, goodness and love, to overcome any evil or disaster in our lives. For faith to have any meaning, though, we must live our lives according to the values taught to us by our Lord. We must care for one another and live in fellowship or, in other words, we must have a unity of faith based on love (communion). This is what Jesus wanted for us: "That they all may be one . . ." (John 17:21).

Unity is a concept we are well aware of in our lives. We know that to be united is to be strong. If we face a stronger force than us the way to overcome it is to unite with others to create a stronger force yet. This was Jesus' message to the Jews who were facing a stronger force (the Romans) that threatened to obliterate them; unite in a faith in Him and practice His teachings to avoid disaster. But the Jews chose hate instead of love, confrontation instead of unity and lost that which was most important to them – the Temple and Jerusalem. Our Lord's message is as valid today as it was in His own time. Our Church and the Assyrian people face their own potential disaster today. In modern society we face a far stronger force than us that threatens to obliterate us. We face political unrest in our homeland that forces us to flee to countries that are politically, socially and religiously more advanced than the countries we come from. Our Church has to adapt to these new societies we find our selves in where individualism is the norm and demands more accountability in such matters as administration, theology and spirituality; and where secularism is the way of life and seeks to define Christianity as a myth. The way for us to avoid disaster is to unite in faith and love with others who believe as we do so that we can be strong enough to hold on to that which is important to us; our Church, our traditions and our cultural identity. The alternative of a new type of self-imposed isolation cannot even be contemplated if we have faith in our Lord and love our fellow man; it could only lead to the exact opposite of what, we who love our Church and people, are trying to achieve.

I believe in the unity of faith and love that Jesus spoke of in which everyone believed in Him and lived in communion. I do not believe that one human should submit to another, or that one Church should be absorbed by another, or that one culture should be dominated by another. I do not believe that our Church should give up its identity, liturgy, theology, spirituality, and canons. I do not believe that we should allow any other Church to have jurisdiction over our affairs.

The work that our Church has carried out in its efforts to establish communion with other Churches has been in the spirit of our Lord's teachings on unity. The first step we have taken has been our effort to get our theology accepted by other Churches. We, the Assyrians of the Church of the East, have been branded as heretic Christians by all other Apostolic Churches for many centuries now. This would obviously be an intolerable situation if it were to persist now that we are no longer living in isolation for not only would it make a relationship with other Churches impossible but it would also condemn us to existing as a sect within Christianity, different from all other Churches. Our Church could never thrive in such circumstances. It is essential that other Churches accept our theology and the heretical label is removed from our Church and people. This is the most pressing issue facing us.

We have reached an accord with the Catholic Church to accept each other's theology. We have agreed with Rome that we believe in the same thing, that we have a unity of faith. We are now considered to be equal Christians by the Catholics. The 1994 agreement that we have reached with the Catholics has been to the betterment of our Church. It has allowed us to establish a relationship with them that has borne very practical benefits that will help us enormously in the journey of change that we have to make; not to mention that our Christianity is now accepted by the majority of

Christians in the world (one billion Catholics).

Agreeing on theology (faith) is the first step but to live in communion with the Catholic Church in the spirit of our Lord's teachings we have to reach an understanding on how we express our faith in worship (Church Sacraments) and how we can care for, and coexist with, each other as fellow Christians (Church Communion). We are continuing our dialogue with the Catholics to achieve this understanding.

We are also trying to reach the same type of accord with our brethren, the Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox and the Greek Orthodox but so far our attempts have been in vain and we are still considered as heretics by their leaders. We will, nevertheless, continue with our efforts to reach communion with these Churches, as it is the wish of our Lord.

We are in unity talks with the Chaldeans. We are the same people as the Chaldeans as we share a common language, history, and faith so, consequently, the desire here is to become one Church again just as we were for most of our history. Our Church will not, however, compromise on its stated intentions, mentioned in the Assyrian-Chaldean Agreement of 1997, of preserving its traditions and self-governance in order to reach an agreement with the Chaldeans. Unity with the Chaldeans will create a stronger people that can better withstand the challenges ahead as well as having the added benefit of restoring our social and cultural unity.

Your help is needed my Assyrian brothers and sisters, if we are to have a Church that is able to fulfill your spiritual needs in the modern world and protect that which is dear to you. The benefits of communion with other Churches are clear as evidenced by the teachings of our Lord, Jesus Christ as well as by our dialogue and agreement with the Roman Catholic Church. Our Lord shows you the way but you must decide and you must act.

Mar Bawai Soro  
Bishop  
Assyrian Church of the East

### **FUNDS WERE NOT MISMANAGED IN SAN JOSE**

I read with interest the three articles about the Church of the East that you recently published in your esteemed magazine. I had mixed feelings about it. My first response was to say, "How dare you?" I was shocked and offended by your criticism, You have touched very sensitive subjects. However, I gradually and logically realized that your bold journalism is aimed to promote the truth as per your knowledge and information. I hope that our Church will realize and accept or respond to some of these subjects. Our culture unfortunately has not prepared us for self-criticism. Any operational strategy has to begin by a clear vision of where we are so that we can plan correctly the strategy to advance and eventually succeed. There are several points that I would like to respond to, however, I will start with an important point of clarifying some facts due to my own personal knowledge and experience.

With this understanding in mind, I would like to respond to one of the items in your first article (August 12, 2002), which contained the description of "funds mismanaging" attributed to His Grace Mar Bawai Soro. This is not the first time that this has been directed at His Grace, that is why, it is only fair to him and to the people who were closely associated with him to clarify the events and the situation during his first 10 years of administration, from 1985 to 1995.

In the early seventies, members of our Church in San Jose used to come to our parish in San Francisco for church services. By the late 1980's, our membership in San Jose increased and it became necessary to build another church in that area. Our members had purchased a piece of land in an industrial area for a planned future Church. Fortunately, in 1988 under the leadership of His Grace Mar Bawai, this was sold and a new property (680 Minnesota Avenue) was purchased and

later renovated for the usage of Mar Yosip Cathedral and social hall in San Jose with a price tag of \$1.6 million (\$800,000 property purchase and \$800,000 renovation and expansion). Same thing happened in Modesto as our Turlock Parish church could not accommodate the vast migration of the members of the Church of the East who settled in Modesto. In 1989 while His Grace Mar Bawai was still studying in Washington, D.C., His Holiness, our Patriarch promised our members in Modesto that if they were able to raise \$100,000 in cash, he would approve building a new church in Modesto.

In the late seventies and early eighties the economy of this country was improving, thus the banks were very liberal to loan money to whoever applied for. Under such circumstances, the diocesan administration could not resist the will of the people and the blessing of the Patriarch but to start building two churches at the same time. The total construction cost was more than two and half million dollars but both parishes had raised some money obviously and paid part of the total cost of each respective project. Ultimately after the construction of the Mar Zaia Church in Modesto and Mar Yosip in San Jose, the Diocese of Western US was in debt nearly \$2 million.

I have to clarify some important facts about bank loans so that everybody would understand the situation. When somebody wants to construct a building on a piece of land, the banks will forward a "construction" loan based primarily on the credibility of the owner, as the value of the land alone will not be sufficient to be a collateral for the loan amount. After the building is constructed and the city has issued a "Certificate of Occupancy" then the owner can apply for a traditional mortgage loan which could be variable or fixed for 15 to 30 years. The difference between the two stated loans is that the "construction loan" is usually for a short period of time and at much higher interest rate due to lack of sufficient collateral.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, during the construction of the two said churches, the economy of the United States turned around. I am sure that many of the readers would remember the collapse of many banks during the Savings and Loans Scandals when even many farmers lost their farmland. At that time the Federal Government came down very hard on the bank institutions and forced them to be very strict in their lending policies. Our Diocese became in a difficult situation as we were burdened with the high interest of both "construction" loans. The banks would not replace our construction loans to a conventional mortgage loan but would only renew our loans at one year at a time forcing us to pay points and interest rates of 13% percent and higher. During those very difficult days, we were still able to acquire some more loans just to finish the construction. His Grace Mar Bawai Soro should really be given the credit and appreciation for his efforts in this regard. I hope that the members of our church would remember how many times he wrote letters encouraging them to help out in lending the church the needed money. But, since the economy was bad for everyone, and our members were burdened with helping family refugees, the bishop got only very few responses. The result of this situation was that all the income was diverted to paying off these loans and their hefty interest charges.

In 1995, Mar Bawai left the Diocese to continue his studies in Rome. Mar Aprim Khamis came to California and found out that the Diocesan bank accounts were burdened by large loan payments. The immediate conclusion was that Mar Bawai has "mismanaged" the church's funds.

The CPA of the Diocese of Western United States at that time was Mr. Homer Bhrad, an Assyrian Chartered Accountant in the Bay Area. I am sure that His Grace Mar Aprim found the truth when he went to Mr. Bhrad's office and spent three days looking into every check and every deposit slip that was issued in the past ten years. Mr. Bhrad's standard accounting procedure is to make notation of the check stubs from every checkbook and the deposits from every deposit book from all of our Parishes and recording the data into his computerized accounting system. He was thus a valid eyewitness to the honesty and integrity of Mar Bawai Soro and those people associated with him. Mr. Bhrad is still available at Alpha B & G Accounting Firm in Sunnyvale (California) and whoever wants to find the truth can check with him.

Let history be fair to the honest and faithful bishops, priests and faithful of our church who have dedicated their life in serving the Lord and his glorious Church.

Shimshon Antar  
Former Director of Finance  
Diocese of Western US

### **IT'S TIME TO SIT DOWN TOGETHER**

How do you expect others (non-Assyrians) to recognize us when we don't recognize who we are? We are calling ourselves Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac/Jacobites/etc. I don't see any Arabs calling themselves Arab/Iraqi/Shiites/ from the tribe of YAHOOOS. This is a wake up call to all these different Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac/YAHOO groups that they should think as one name and one nation. We and they will be nothing unless we sit down together and think about what is good for this nation. Otherwise, we will be nothing. And, that is the exact way the Arabs and the Kurds like.

Also, our so called political leaders need to sit down together and admit that they are human and make mistakes. They need to recognize each other and work together to achieve one common goal and not everyone for himself. They are all duplicating each other's efforts and not getting anywhere. They keep patting themselves on the back for wasted efforts and wasting the resources of our nation.

Albert Warda  
United States

### **WATCH DEFENSIVE TACKLE ASHUR BENJAMIN!**

I like to share this with your beloved readers who are interested in watching University football games about our eldest son Ashur. Ashur is a Sophomore Defensive Tackle for USD (University of San Diego) Private Catholic University. People who live in San Diego are more than welcome to join and watch him play at their hometown. Few of his games will be in different states such as, Indiana, Florida, Connecticut. If you are interested I can send you USD Schedule of Games through Zinda. By the way Ashur's jersey is number 97.



Michael Benjamin  
California



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## Surfers Corner

### **AUA PRESENTATION AT THE RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MINORITIES FORUM IN AUSTRALIA**

The Assyrian Universal Alliance Australian Chapter, attended a forum on "Religious Discrimination Against South and Central Asian Minorities," organised by Amnesty International NSW branch- Religious Network on Friday, 13 September 2002 at the Fairfield Community Centre in Sydney, Australia. There were representative from Fairfield City Council , Immigration Office and the Media.

The document below is the presentation made by Mr. Shmoel Shalalo on behalf of the Assyrians.

**Hermiz Shahen**  
Secretary  
Assyrian Universal Alliance-Australia Chapter

### **SEMINAR ON RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN SOUTHWEST ASIA**

*Organised by Amnesty International - NSW Branch Religious Network*  
*Presented By: Mr Shmouel Shalalo*

*Friday, September 13, 2002 at 6:30 pm*  
*Fairfield Community Centre*  
*Mr/Ms Chairperson*

Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was in Assyria, also known as Mesopotamia or the land between the two rivers Tigris and Euphrates that the first civilization began, and generated a wholesome intellectual concept that helped build a scientific as well as religious basis for all cultures. We Assyrians know that we are the remnants of Assyria, but the world has not accepted this fact. Therefore, it presents us with the problem of recognition, even though our nation has been in existence for the past 6752 years.

If we were to look deeply into the culture of Assyria, we would find that the Assyrians were the first to believe in the 'Oneness' of God, the unseen and the greatest of all gods, but under a different name in every period. We find the Sumerian "Enlil" who killed the dragon of the seas in order to bring about peace to the world. Then we find "Mardukh" in Babylon and "Ashur" in Nineveh. Later the idea was passed to neighbouring peoples like the Phoenicians, where goddess "Anat" the lover of Baal killed the dragon in the Canaanite Epic of Creation, even the Hebrews' "Yahweh or Jehovah" is the hero that killed the dragon in the Torah's legend (Isaiah 27:1 - 51:9) and (Psalms 74:11-13 and 89:11). All the gods that killed the dragon of evil in the legends were to represent the "Greatest" god, which would take on a different name in each period culminating in the word "Alla" at a later time after Christ from the term "El", whose strength would slay the dragon at the hands of St.George.

It is well known in the course of written history, that Christian Assyrians (also known as Syriacs or Chaldeans) were killed, wounded, plundered and oppressed by the nations who intended to establish sovereignty over the Mesopotamian territories in which they were settled. In that region, innumerable incidents occurred. A large number of partial or impartial written works have been documented concerning these incidents. However, in most of these books the inhumane atrocities that Arabs, Kurds and Turks have perpetrated against the Christian nations have either been ignored or discussed superficially. It is a fact that this attitude is closely related with the political interests.

Mesopotamia, which the political Kurdish movement calls by the misnomer "Kurdistan", is essentially a geographic location that

has been adopted as a homeland in the course of the history by the Assyrian people and it is the homeland of these people. Arabs, Kurds, Turks and others came to this area later and settled there. It is also known that an Assyrian Kingdom, the capital of which was the province of Urfa in today's Turkey, existed from 192 BC to 244 AD, or for 436 years. It is also documented in historic sources that in the previous periods, the Assyrians established sovereignty in Mesopotamia and Eastern and Southeast Anatolia. For example, Turkish historian Prof. Dr. Osman Turan states that Syriac people were in majority in Urfa even at the beginning of 13th century:

"When the Muslim Arabs came to the Near East, they met a national church called "Church of the East", which included all the Syriac speaking people except a small minority... The sword of Islam led the conquest of the Muslim Arabs in the Near East ... The Assyrian people who forcibly accepted Islam were losing their national characteristics, using Arabic rather than Syriac and breaking off their relations with the Syriac culture. The Assyrian intellectuals began to be effective again trying to save the Christian faith and culture, by reverting to old Syriac sources. The movement improved and spread with the works of history, politics and religion. The history books and encyclopaedias and populist chronicles were written. Many written works were produced in political and religious fields. This cultural movement affected the whole society and provided it with a great momentum. However, this atmosphere of cultural development would not last long. As a result of the Mongol raids, all the peoples living in the Near East would be massacred in a short while.

As a result of the military campaigns Tamer lane (1336-1405) conducted in the Near East at the end of 14th century and at the beginning of 15th century, the Eastern Assyrian people living in the southern areas of Upper Mesopotamia fled to inaccessible mountains and lived on these mountains until 16th century. The Western Assyrian people experienced much harm by these raids. The people were massacred and the monasteries and churches were destroyed. All the Assyrian people bore sufferings for more than one century. Then a new power emerged in the region: the Ottoman conquest.

The systematic threats, pressures, even the inhumane actions of the local Kurdish rulers and feudal lords perpetrated by the Ottomans reached the level of massacre. Their attitudes that considered the seizure of properties and possessions "permissible" and even "lawful" and "booty" were inviting a catastrophe for the Mesopotamian Christians. Naturally this situation was affecting the whole Christian population as well. This situation continued until the turn of the last century when the big Genocide of Christians took place.

In 1910, about 4.5 million Christians lived in Turkey, whose total population was estimated at around 13 million people consisted mostly of Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians who lived in the West side of Turkey. Today, out of 65 million people living in Turkey, there are only 50,000 Christians. If we take into consideration the same level of birth rate, the number of Christians should be around 34 millions.

Ottoman army, led by the 'Young Turks' in 1914, began its attacks on all the cities that were inhabited by the Armenian, Greek and Assyrian people. This slaughter continued until 2.5 million Christians were killed. The remaining 2 millions fled in masses to the neighbouring countries, even to Russia. A large number was forced to become Muslims.

For the last one hundred and fifty years in the Middle East, we have had opportunities and promises to be recognised as a people and a nation. We failed to gain recognition and be accepted as first class citizens or be identified as a minority or as the indigenous people of Iraq. Instead, friend and foe alike dealt us broken promises, genocides, massacres, and persecution for our loyalty. The countries of Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria recognised us only as a Christian minority or Arab Christians. These governments followed with population transfers of Assyrians to urban areas and continued in their efforts to Arabize the Assyrian Christians, which forced many of them to flee the countries of the Middle East abandoning the homeland, leaving behind treasures of Assyrian culture and heritage. This is very evident when looking at western Turkey in the Mardin and Tur-Abdien region and in Urmia in northwestern Iran and along the Khabour river villages of Syria and the Christian mountain areas of Lebanon. This trend has continued over these many years leaving behind thousands of stateless Assyrians and refugees around the globe.

Such is the case for Assyrians, also called today by names such as Chaldean, Syriac, Jacobite, etc. As a result of keeping our faith and Christian principals, it has caused us to be persecuted for the past hundred or more years by the Middle East rulers and governments. We now find that having kept our faith and language, that these two items are the very vehicles that open the door for we Assyrians to be recognised and emerge as the remnants of Assyria.

No other Christian church gave as many martyrs for Christianity as the Apostolic Mesopotamian Church of the East did throughout its close to 2000 years of existence. For since its establishment at the hands of Saint Thomas the Apostle and St. Thaddeus (one of the 72 Apostles who preached in Mesopotamia between 37-65 AD), and the Church of the East never stopped giving one martyr for the cause of Christianity after another. After the collapse of the Assyrian Empire in about 612 BC, Assyrians remained in their homelands albeit inconspicuously, in order to maintain their survival. However, after the crucifixion of our Lord

Jesus Christ, Assyrians were one of the first nations to convert to Christianity. From the Assyrian city of Edessa, the Assyrians resurged once again, but this time as the most successful Christian missionaries whose religious influences spanned to Syria, China, Mongolia, Japan, Korea, India and the Philippines. Their religious works eventually extended into philosophy, literature, science and medicine. They set up the first University of Nisibis in the fourth century AD, which became the centre of intellectual development in the Middle East. The first Italian University used the Nisibis Statute as its model. In the sixth century AD, the Assyrians established the great medical school of Gundeshapur. However, by 1300 AD, the Christian Assyrians were compelled to either convert to Islam or suffer persecution as well as the inexorably draining tax levied discriminately on Christian Assyrians. Subsequently and more violently, the Assyrians were subjected to the Mongolian Tamerlane destruction, causing many of the survivors to flee to the Hakkari Mountains of the present day Turkey. This massive destruction levelled firstly by the Islamic fundamentalists, and then simultaneously by Tamerlane caused an otherwise vibrant, rich and developed Assyrian culture to dwindle in number and in spirit.

The twentieth century has, however, been the darkest chapter of Assyrian history. When Turkey entered First World War in November 1914, Assyrians were told that the liberation from the Ottoman Empire was near. It was a time of promises for an independent statehood. The Christian Assyrians, by request sided with the Allies, first with the Russians then with the British forces. The hope for freedom and a national home promised to them on the sacred soil of their ancestors was instead met with the genocide of their people perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks, causing the massacre of more than 750,000 indigenous Assyrians (two thirds of their total population in Turkey) and loss of 750 of their villages. In 1915, according to the late Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church, a documented 156 churches and monasteries were destroyed throughout the Assyrian homeland. This figure does not include those belonging to the Church of the East and Syriac and Chaldean Catholic Assyrians. Being at this time at war with Russia, the Turks did not limit themselves to killing their own Assyrian citizens. In the beginning of January 1915 and in mid-1918, Ottoman troops entered the region on the western shore of Lake Urmia, part of the Persian Empire, where they massacred all up nearly 100,000 Assyrians and tens of thousands of Armenians. The remaining Assyrians, left with no other alternative, followed the British troops to Mesopotamia, only to realise by December 1925, that the League of Nations allocated the Province of Mosul (where the capital of Assyrians, Nineveh was located) to the new Arab Kingdom of Iraq. The British mandate was lifted in October 1932 and Iraq became independent.

With no effective guarantees for the protection of their rights, extermination followed. 7 August 1933 was the beginning of a systematic effort of the Iraqi authorities aiming to destroy this nation, be it by massacre, by forceful displacement from their ancient and only remaining homeland, by political assassinations, by genocide of the Assyrian identity, and its cultural and linguistic heritage. After all, Assyrians are the erectors of that great civilization, and the most legitimate claimants for autonomy and land.

To quote just one small account describing the Simile massacre from the book titled "The Assyrian Tragedy":  
"... The inoffensive population was indiscriminately massacred, ... with rifle, revolver and machine gunfire. In one room alone, eighty-one men... were barbarously massacred... priests were tortured and their bodies mutilated. Those who showed their Iraqi Nationality papers were the first to be shot. Girls were raped and women made to march naked before the Arab army commander. Holy Books were used as fuel for burning girls. Children were run over by military cars. Pregnant women were bayoneted. Children were flung to the air and pierced on the points of bayonets. Those that survived in other villages were now exposed to constant raids... Forced conversion of men and women was the next process. Refusal was met with death. Sixty five out of ninety five Assyrian villages and settlements were either sacked, destroyed or burnt to the ground."

The Simile massacre was the price paid for the neglect of the Assyrian question following the genocide of the Assyrians during WWI. The present persecution and forced displacement of Assyrians by the Iraqi regime is the result of the continuing apathy of the international community towards the Assyrian question and the neglect of the genocide of Assyrians. So is the fact that whereas the Assyrian population in Turkey previously numbering millions has now diminished to a mere few thousands.

The saga doesn't end there. In 2000, Father Yusuf Akbulut, a Syriac Orthodox priest, was arrested, jailed and prosecuted on the grounds of treason because he had said to a journalist that the "Armenian genocide" was a reality and that other Christian minorities had been massacred during that genocide. On 4 October 2000, the newspaper "Hurriyet" entitled the interview "A traitor among us". Two days later, Turkish military agents arrested the priest. Turkey is a member of the European Council and NATO, although Christian children are still forced to attend classes maintaining and spreading Islamic faith, without instruction in their own Christian faith.

The country has signed many conventions on human rights, yet many of its "mullahs" with full impunity, call on Muslims in their preaching not to have any contact with Christians who according to them are "not purified" and "non-believers" and do not deserve a human treatment. The Islamic fundamentalists and the Turkish army collaborated against the Christians. Many Assyrians/Syriacs were murdered openly without any attempt to catch the persons who committed the crimes. The Islamic

fundamentalists have plundered the properties and the farms of the Christians systematically, with the army's full awareness. Many Christians were kidnapped and regained their freedom only if they could pay large sums of money. Systematic persecutions are still a part of the daily lives of Assyrians in Turkey.

So is the case in Iraq, both under the regime of Saddam Hussain and in the so-called 'safe-haven' in the north. The Assyrians are not referred to as a people or a nation by the government but only as a Christian minority. The two major Christian Assyrian Churches in Iraq are the Assyrian Holy Apostolic Church of the East and the Chaldean Church of the Roman Catholic denomination. At present, these churches are forbidden by the government from teaching the Assyrian language in the church or in any private or public schools. Assyrians are no longer allowed to name their newborns any Assyrian or Christian names. All churches now belong to the ministry of endowment, which means that it can dictate what language the sermons will be in these churches, and what should and shouldn't be taught in our churches. Any church that doesn't abide by these orders, all of its properties, assets and such will be sold and transferred to the Iraqi government.

In northern Iraq, the 'safe-haven' for the Kurdish people of Iraq, Assyrians are the target of institutionalised and deliberate religious discrimination by officials targeting the indigenous Assyrian Christian community there, so that even after 8 years of this administration, the Ancient Church of the East is still not able to properly minister to its adherents. A local Assyrian resident, who recently fled the area with his family, speaking on condition of anonymity, stated: "Why do you think we left? I pray to God that the day would not come that these gangs are given power in Northern Iraq. Such actions are even worse than that of the dictator Saddam! At least we are allowed to have a bishopric under his rule." Since the Gulf War of 1991, Kurdish paramilitary organizations have taken advantage of their earlier international sympathy as victims of the Iraqi regime to consolidate their occupation of northern Iraq. A deliberate and concerted campaign of assassinations, abductions, torture, land expropriations and religious discrimination has been used to successfully terrorize Assyrians in their ancient homeland. The Kurds have regularly utilized their tribal relationship with the 'Hizballah' as well as other Islamic fundamentalist organizations to raise tensions against the Assyrian Christian community in a bid to further intimidate Assyrians into abandoning their villages.

On 15 August this year, on exactly the 98th anniversary of the establishment of 'the Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus', Sister Cecilia Hanna, a member of that order since 1946, was killed savagely in Baghdad in a disgusting crime where her head was severed from the rest of her body, not because this old and kind human being did something wrong, but because being a Christian in a land roaming with Muslim fanatics is becoming a dangerous venture and a provocative act to those who have twisted the teachings of their religion to that of being blood thirsty thugs. Assyrian Nun Cecilia was 71.

Assyrians in the last few decades have increasingly sought refuge in the west and who today live predominantly in the Diaspora, including about 30,000 in Australia, most of them in New South Wales, the majority residing in Fairfield, Liverpool and Randwick areas. The community has achieved much in the short time since its migration to Australia in the 1970s. They have built churches and a cathedral; they have built local community and sports clubs. They have set up various social, academic and cultural organizations. They have now built the first Assyrian private school in Fairfield, being the first also in the Western world. In less than 35 years, thousands have graduated from universities and colleges. Assyrian businesses employ thousands of workers and professionals. Assyrians appreciate the value of citizenship in Australia and consider themselves even more privileged to be living in what they recognise as being the best city of the world, Sydney.

On the 2nd of August 2002, and for the first time in the modern history of the Assyrian people, a governmental body anywhere in the world, recognised the Assyrian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish Government with the help of its cohorts, some Kurdish tribes, against the Christian Assyrian people, during the years 1914-1919. This was accomplished through a submission made by the Assyrian Universal Alliance, Australian Chapter to the New South Wales Local Government Association, with the full support of Fairfield City Council and his worship Clr. Anwar Khoshaba Mayor of the city.

Most Assyrians only vaguely know of their many compatriots imprisoned in Australian detention centres and kept on neighbouring islands, prevented from entering the country. Most of these asylum seekers have escaped persecution and sanctions in Iraq, in hope of finding a better life here. A few have even left Iran because of discrimination. Despite all this, these Assyrian Christian refugees find themselves in what can only be described as prisons, fenced in by razor wire, for anything from a few months to three whole years.

There are Assyrians in just about all of Australia's detention centres, from Villawood in Sydney, to Maribynong in Melbourne, to Woomera and Cureton in the deserts of South Australia and Port Headland in the wastelands of Western Australia. There were even some Assyrians on 'the Tampa'. These, along with all recent arrivals by boat, are now kept locked up on nearby South Pacific islands like Nauru, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand.

Unfortunately, these refugees even here are faced with some sort of discrimination. Assyrian refugees detained in Immigration

centres are not distinguished from the Arab and Moslem population of those camps, so when the later request 'Halal' food, Assyrians are forced to share that same food even though it may be against their beliefs.

In conclusion, let me finish by quoting the philosopher George Santayana who said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Finally, on behalf of the Assyrian Universal Alliance and the Assyrian community in general, I thank Amnesty International for inviting us to participate in this seminar on religious persecution in southwest Asia. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL has increased world awareness of political imprisonment, torture, political killings and the death penalty. It has played a key role in establishing and improving national and international mechanisms for human rights protection. It has helped to change unjust laws and to outlaw cruel practices.

But ultimately, all its research and campaigning is aimed at affecting the fate of individuals. Every year, prisoners, their lawyers and the families of victims of injustice thank Amnesty International for its efforts on their behalf. As an organisation, it doesn't claim credit when a prisoner is released, when clemency is granted or when a government's human rights record improves. However, former prisoners, torture victims and others who have suffered human rights abuse often insist that international pressure secured their freedom and saved their lives.

Thank you Amnesty International, and thank you all for listening.

## **ORHAY**

### **Association for the Preservation of Assyro-Chaldean, Syriac Art and Literature**

At a meeting convened in Stockholm, Sweden on February 2, 2002, a group of Assyro-Chaldean, Syriac artists and writers founded ORHAY, a new organization whose objective it is to preserve and develop the rich heritage of our nation in the fields of art and literature.

Seventeen members were present at the gathering. Several others who were unable to attend due to scheduling problems, offered their endorsement and their written suggestions.

Following a discussion around the new organization's charter and by-laws, the group elected its officers and board of directors for the next two years of activities:

1. President Adam - Odisho (painter and Fine Arts teacher)
2. Vice-President - Dr. Kaiss Behnam(Ph.D in Design)
3. Treasurer - Hammurabi Barasmar (Writer)
4. Secretary - Moushe Dawoud (Master Design)
5. Member - Oday Bedawood (Bachelor of Arts; Photographer)
6. Director - Andreas Arslan
7. Director - Iskander BeQasha

A web page is currently under construction for the new organization <[www.orhay.org](http://www.orhay.org)>.

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Förbundet för bevarande av Assyro-kaldeisk konst- och litteraturen

Under ett möte, som ägde rum i Stockholm den 2 februari 2002, grundades förbundet URHAY, med dess målsättning att bevara och stärka den assyro-kaldeiska konst- och litteraturen.

Uppemot 20 konstnärer och författare/skribenter var närvarade vid mötet. Andra inbjudna, som av olika anledningar inte kunde närvara, meddelade sitt stöd för bildandet av förbundet och sina förslag för verksamhet, genom brev och mail.

Efter en diskussion kring förbundets verksamhet och aktivitetsområde, enades mötet om att välja ett råd som skall leda förbundet under de nästkommande två verksamhetsåren.

Rådets medlemmar består av följande personer:

1. Ordförande - Adam Odisho (B.Sc. konstnär, konstlärare)
2. Vice Ordförande - Dr. Kaiss Behnam (Ph.D i design)
3. Sekreterare - Moushe Dawoud (M.Sc. i Design)
4. Kassör - Hammurabi Barasmar (skribent)
5. Ledamot - Oday Bedawid (B. A. i konst -foto)
6. Suppleant - Andreas Arsalan (B.Sc, socialarbete)
7. Suppleant - Iskandar Beqasha (B.Sc, IT-tekniker)

En webbsida (hemsida) för organisationen är under konstruktion . <[www.orhay.org](http://www.orhay.org)>

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Nytt assyriskt konstnärsförbund! På lördag den 2 februari kommer ett 30-tal assyriska konstnärer och författare att hålla konferens i Stockholm. Målsättningen är att bilda ett nytt assyriskt konst- och kulturförbund.

Namnet på det nya förbundet ska vara Orhoy/Orhay. Det är förslaget från ett förberedande möte som hölls i Linköping den 27 oktober 2001

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Verbindung für die Bewahrung der Assyro-Assyro-Chaldean, Syriac kunst und der Literatur Bei einer Sitzung kam in Stockholm, Schweden an Februar 2, 2002, eine Gruppe Assyro-Assyro-Chaldean, Syriac Künstler und Verfasser gegründet ORHAY, eine neue Organisation zusammen deren Zielsetzung sie, zu konservieren ist und das reiche Erbe unserer Nation auf den Gebieten der kunst und der Literatur entwickelt. Die siebzehn-Mitglieder waren an der Versammlung anwesend. Einige andere, die nicht imstande waren, sich wegen der festlegenprobleme zu sorgen, ihre Aufschrift und ihre schriftlichen Vorschläge angeboten. Nach einer Diskussion um die neue die organization.s Charter und Verordnungen, wählte die Gruppe seine Offiziere und Direktion für die folgenden zwei Jahre von Tätigkeiten:

1. Präsident - Adam Odisho (Maler und feiner kunstlehrer)
2. Vizepräsident - Dr. Kaiss Behnam (Ph.D im Design)
3. Schatz - Hammurabi Barasmar (Verfasser)
4. Sekretärin - Moushe Dawoud (VorlagencDesign)
5. Mitglied - Oday Bedawood (Junggeselle von künsten; Photograph)
6. Direktor - Andreas Arslan
7. Direktor - Iskander BeQasha

Ein 4web page ist z.Z. im Bau für das neue organization [www.orhay.org](http://www.orhay.org).

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Asociación de ORHAY para la preservación del arte Assyro-Caldeo, de Syriac y de la literatura En una reunión convocó en Estocolmo, Suecia de febrero el 2, 2002, un grupo de artistas Assyro-Caldeos, de Syriac y de ORHAY fundado los escritores, una nueva organización que objetivo es preservar y desarrolla la herencia rica de nuestra nación en los campos del arte y de la literatura. Los miembros de los diecisiete estaban presentes en la reunión. Varios otros que no podían atender a debido a los problemas programar, ofrecido su endoso y sus sugerencias escritas.

Después de una discusión alrededor de la nueva carta y de ordenanzas municipales de organization.s, el grupo eligió a sus oficiales y junta directiva por los dos años próximos de actividades:

- 1 Presidente - Adán Odisho (pintor y profesor fino de los artes)
- 2 Vice presidente - el Dr. Kaiss Behnam (Ph.D en diseño)
- 3 Tesoro - Hammurabi Barasmar (Escritor)
- 4 Secretaria - Moushe Dawoud (Diseño Principal)
5. Miembro - Oday Bedawood (soltero de artes; Fotógrafo)

6. Director - Andreas Arslan
7. Director - Iskander BeQasha

Un Web page está actualmente bajo construcción para el Nuevo organization [www.orhay.org](http://www.orhay.org).

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Association d'ORHAY pour la conservation de l'art Assyro-Chaldéen, de Syriac et de la littérature Lors d'une réunion s'est assemblé à Stockholm, Suède février 2 du, 2002, un groupe d'artistes Assyro-Chaldéens, de Syriac et d'ORHAY fondé par auteurs, une nouvelle organisation dont l'objectif il est de préserver et développe l'héritage riche de notre nation dans les domaines l'art et la littérature. Les membres de dix-sept étaient présents au rassemblement. Plusieurs autres qui ne pouvaient pas s'occuper d'en raison des problèmes d'établissement du programme, offert leur approbation et leurs suggestions écrites.

Après une discussion autour la nouvelle charte d'organization.s et des arrêtés municipaux, du groupe a élu ses officiers et conseil d'administration pendant les deux années à venir des activités:

1. Le Président - Adam Odisho (peintre et bon professeur d'arts)
2. Vice-président - Dr. Kaiss Behnam(Ph.D dans la conception)
3. Trésor - Hammurabi Barasmar (Auteur)
4. Secrétaire - Moushe Dawoud (Conception Principale)
5. Membre - Oday Bedawood (licencié en arts; Photographe)
6. Directeur - Andreas Arslan
7. Directeur - Iskander BeQasha

Un page Web est actuellement en construction pour le nouveau organization [www.orhay.org](http://www.orhay.org)

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Associazione di ORHAY per la conservazione di arte di Syriac e Assyro-assyro-Chaldean e di letteratura Ad una riunione si è riunito a Stoccolma, Svezia febbraio 2, 2002, un su gruppo degli artisti di Syriac e Assyro-assyro-Chaldean e di ORHAY fondato produttori, una nuova organizzazione di cui l'obiettivo è di conservare e sviluppa l'eredità ricca della nostra nazione nei campi dell'arte e della letteratura. I membri di diciassette erano presenti al gathering. Parecchi altri che non possano assistere a dovuto i problemi di programmazione, offerto la loro approvazione ed i loro suggerimenti scritti. A seguito di una discussione intorno alla nuova lettera ed ai decreti di legge di organization.s, il gruppo ha scelto i relativi ufficiali e consiglio d'amministrazione per i due anni successivi delle attività:

1. Presidente - Adam Odisho (pittore ed insegnante fine di arti)
2. Vice - presidente Dott. Kaiss Behnam(Ph.D nel disegno)
3. Tesoro - Hammurabi Barasmar (Produttore)
4. Segretaria - Moushe Dawoud (Disegno Matrice)
5. Membro - Oday Bedawood (bachelor delle arti; Photographer)
6. Direttore - Andreas Arslan
7. Direttore - Iskander BeQasha

Un Web page è attualmente in costruzione per il nuovo organization. [www.orhay.com](http://www.orhay.com)

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## Literatus

**ASSYRIAN FILM PRODUCER WRITES TO PRESIDENT BUSH**

The Assyrian filmmaker, Beni Atoori, producer of the highly-acclaimed "13 Conversations About One Thing" has recently been heard and seen away from his cameras, discussing the plight of the Assyrian people. At the Modesto Junior College film class, and in an interview on KABC Talk Radio on the Steve Malzburg show (Sunday 22 September), Mr. Atoori spoke about the reservoir dam that is being built at the site of the ancient city of Assur by Saddam Hussein that would result in one of the greatest archeological disasters and the political struggle for an Assyrian Homeland. He has also brought to the attention of his listeners the demand for royalty payments to Assyrians from the revenues generated from exhibiting Assyrian artifacts at the museums around the world. Mr. Atoori is currently in India producing his new feature film "Gilgamesh."

Mr. Atoori has taken an active role in his fight against Saddam Hussein's plan for the Assur dam by sharing his knowledge through the media and correspondences to Mr. George Bush, President of the United States and Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations. Below is the full text of Mr. Atoori's letter to President Bush:

\* \* \* \* \*

*September 20, 2002*

*The President of the United States of America  
Mr. George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500*

Dear Mr. President:

Allow me a brief introduction of myself, so you can understand my viewpoint on the issues I wish to bring to your attention. I am a Hollywood film producer and financier, but most essentially, I am an Assyrian Christian. I was born in Iran and immigrated to the United States in my childhood. The Assyrians are native to the region that was historically called Mesopotamia, which is now Iraq. Today, Assyrians live disbursed all over the world. They have no country, state or even a homeland reservation to call their own. Saddam Hussein is a harsh oppressor of the Assyrians and I thank you for your persistent and continued efforts to bring about political change in Iraq. When History recalls your presidency, this will be an integral and celebrated facet of your legacy.

I have been reading with the greatest concern and dismay about the imminent inundation of the fabulous archeological site of Ashur by the Makhoul Dam of the Tigris River, built by the Iraqi government. The Ancient City of Ashur (or "Assur" or "Assour") was a capital of the Assyrian civilization. This area is truly the cradle of human civilization, Assyria being one of the earliest experiments by Man in urban planning, government, organized/divided labor and culture of many artistic pursuits. The very idea of codes of laws and statutes was created by the Assyrian King Hammurabi in the world's first attempt at bringing society into a uniform mode of good conduct. At the zenith of Assyrian power, under such kings as Sargon and Ashurbanipal, their influence stretched from as far South as Egypt, North to Turkey and East to lands now a part of Iran. The prophet Abraham of the Old Testament was ethnically an Assyrian and in his conversion to Judaism commenced the fundamental philosophy of monotheism in human thought. Much later, the Assyrians were the first nation to embrace the teachings of Christ, nearly one hundred and fifty years before the Romans adopted Christianity as the state religion. The language still spoken by Assyrians today is a form of Aramaic, which was the language of Jesus and the Holy Land.

Although I understand Iraq's need to create projects for the management of such a precious commodity as potable water, I was outraged by the callousness with which Saddam wipes world culture from the face of the planet. The world stood still and took no action when the Taliban demolished the titanic Buddhas in Afghanistan. The problem of Makhoul is so much worse in the vastness of destruction. Because the architecture of that ancient period was predominantly brick and earth construction, the site is extremely vulnerable. To dissolve archeological treasures under a flood is not merely a crime— it is a sin!

Even God, after the Biblical flood, recognized that inundation was a drastic measure never to be meted out to humanity ever again. It is so complete and devastating a loss, it leaves no traces behind, just a silent sea. Please understand that Saddam's desire to complete this project has nothing to do with necessity. The engineering science exists to construct other dams in other places. The water shortage is not at issue. The root cause of this plan is the ego of a bloodthirsty dictator. Saddam seeks to erase the past for the specific purpose of resetting the clocks and the calendar to begin anew with his reign. That which happened before Saddam is of no interest to him, no matter how precious the lore and knowledge of the ages might be to countless others.

I would humbly ask that you take this issue to your heart and do whatever your high office enables you to do in order to stop this destruction. In addition, I would ask that the Assyrians be addressed with the same respect and attention being paid to the Kurds

and the Turkomen. Assyrians from all around the globe, like the Jews to Israel, like the Palestinians to Gaza or West Bank and even like the Hopi to Arizona, need a place of their own to which they may go home.

This year, my company will produce a major motion picture entitled "Gilgamesh," based on the Assyrian epic legend of the great warrior king. This story, carved on clay tablets in cuneiform script, is considered the oldest known work of literature and has been included this year on a United Nations listing of the one hundred greatest works of literature of all time. When it is completed, I hope you will enjoy a screening of it at the White House. It is my intention to market this film in concert with our efforts to raise the consciousness of the Assyrian cause throughout the world. If there is any support that I can provide, I would be happy to oblige.

Sincerely,

Beni Atoori  
Los Angeles, California

cc.: Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations  
Mr. Marc Grossman, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, U.S. Department of State

### **OCTOBER ISSUE OF DISCOVER MAGAZINE: TREASURE UNDER SADDAM'S FEET**

As the waters of the Tigris rise and the world awaits war, archaeologists fear for priceless ancient marvels of the first great empire

You are drifting down the sluggish, muddy Tigris River on a reed raft, headed for a prominent spur of rock rising from a broad plain. Upon the rock stand the massive walls of brightly painted temples. Just behind them soars a brilliantly colored temple tower, or ziggurat, nearly 200 feet high, with a pair of smaller ziggurats in the background. Beyond sprawl the roofs of vast royal palaces housing magnificent reception halls and sealed underground tombs.

As the boat docks, sunbaked sailors and stevedores unload goods and tribute, everything from African ivory to Anatolian metals to Afghan lapis lazuli. Traders, donkeys, pilgrims, horses, artisans, priests, and diplomats pass through the dozen gates above. This is bustling Assur, a town of perhaps 30,000, one of the most dazzling sights in Mesopotamia and in the entire ancient world.

Andrew Lawler  
Discover Magazine  
October 2002

**Full text of this article can be found in the current issue of Discover Magazine.**

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## **Bravo**

### **NEW BOOK IN RUSSIAN: NIKOLAI SELEZNYOV'S "THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST"**

*"This book is a concise summary of the problem and in this sense a helpful manual not only for Russian students, who have no similar manual in their language, but even for foreigners, as in Western languages, too, it is difficult to find a clear introduction into the pertinent research."*

Prof. Dr. Ernst Christoph Suttner  
Institut für Theologie und Geschichte des christlichen Ostens



*“En effet, la poursuite du dialogue entre chrétiens ne peut se faire sans une étude préalable, menée de manière rigoureuse mais pleine de sympathie, de la tradition théologique et spirituelle des diverses communautés chrétiennes. C'est la première étape d'une recherche de ce genre, menée à propos de l'Eglise Assyrienne de l'Orient, que me paraît contenir ce travail.”*

Prof. P. Ugo Zanetti  
Université Catholique de Louvain

Seleznyov, Nikolai, The Christology of the Assyrian Church of the East.  
The Main Documents and Development of The Doctrine. (in Russian)  
Moscow: Euroasiatica, 2002, 198 pp. (pp.197-198 -- English summary)  
Paperback. -- ISBN 5-86748-101-8. -- \$20 (postage & insurance included).

The research presented by the book, first of its kind in Russian, is aimed at explaining the Christological conception of the Assyrian Church of the East otherwise known as the East Syrian Church. Like the other Apostolic Churches, the Church of the East developed its Christological confession as a series of antitheses against those propositions that contradicted its tradition. The positive content of the confession, accepted along with the Gospel, can, however, be considered independently. This book represents an attempt to clear up and analyze the non-polemical content of the Christology of the Church of the East.

The author has been fortunate to be in touch with representatives of the Church and to get an idea of the principles of its Christology at first hand.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part is an overview of the studies that have concerned the Church of the East and its theology and it includes an additional chapter dealing with Russian studies in the field. The second and main section contains a series of chapters discussing the Christology of the main authors of the Church of the East, the acts of its synods, the liturgical testimony, the witness of some Western outsiders (Catholics & Anglicans) and, finally, the 'Eastern' documents - the body of the Chinese Christian texts and an Uigur fragment 'The Worship of the Magi', where the doctrine of the Church of the East is reflected as it was presented by its missionaries. The third, final, part is a concluding overview of the Christology of this Church with the main principles considered in comparison with those of the 'Chalcedonian' Churches.

The research follows a chronological order while the concurrent theological movements as well as the consecutive stages of development of the doctrine are considered comparatively.

To order the book e-mail [euroasiatica@yandex.ru](mailto:euroasiatica@yandex.ru)

To contact the author e-mail [silesnius@mtu-net.ru](mailto:silesnius@mtu-net.ru)

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## Calendar of Events

Visit the Zinda Magazine Calendar at <http://www.zindamagazine.com/calendar>

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*Thank You!*

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**Pavel Varda**  
**Christina Villegas**  
(California)

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