

The Assyrian Christians' Dilemma in Iraq: Outlook and Solution

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The United States and the United Nations continue their efforts to establish the foundations for what they envision as a federal, free, democratic, and pluralistic Iraq. However, there are those opinions that realize that the experiences of the last 83 years make it impossible for the various ethnic and religious groups, especially the Assyrian Christians, to live in peace in Iraq. The recent attacks against Christians in Iraq have opened old wounds and reminded the Assyrians (also known as Chaldeans, Nestorians, Jacobites, and Suryan) by certain realities that could not be ignored. Those aware of the history of Iraq have begun to express many concerns, especially after the remarkable rise of the voices of the Islamist groups and the threatening Kurdish influence.

One of the many alarming signs to Assyrian Christians is article 7 - A of the newly approved Law of Administration for the State of Iraq, also known as the Iraqi Fundamental Law, which states:

"Islam is the official religion of the State and is to be considered a source of legislation. No law that contradicts the universally agreed tenets of Islam, the principles of democracy, or the rights cited in Chapter Two of this Law may be enacted during the transitional period. This Law respects the Islamic identity of the majority of the Iraqi people and guarantees the full religious rights of all individuals to freedom of religious belief and practice."

Later I will address in further details the background for these concerns and the impact of religion. Let me say for now that it is because of this article in the Iraqi Fundamental Law and other concerns; the Assyrians feel that only an Assyrian administrative enclave in northern Iraq could stand a chance of guaranteeing their survival.

In 1921 and as the mandated power over Iraq post World War I, Great Britain played a significant role in creating this artificial country called Iraq. Still, it was not until 1926 that Great Britain, Turkey, and Iraq agreed on the present Turkish-Iraqi frontiers. In October 1932, the extraordinary efforts of Great Britain paved the road for Iraq to enter into the League of Nations (Replaced by the United Nations after World War II) as a sovereign and independent state. However, reality on the ground was something completely different. Dodge writes that Iraq was a territory inhabited by a diverse and divided population run by a small clique of mainly Sunni politicians who could not control the country without the help of British airplanes [1]. The British relied on certain tribal leaders and Baghdadi politicians to run Iraq while ignoring the rest of the ethnically and religiously diverse population. Many of the Baghdadi politicians were members of the fallen Ottoman institutions, who were the reason behind the Assyrian massacre few years later.

The British mandatory obligations, writes Dodge, were based on Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant. The article stated that a Mandate could be terminated only when a *"Community shall be able to stand alone without the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by the Mandatory"* [2]. The British failed miserably in establishing a true democratic and stable state before leaving Iraq; therefore, subsequent problems throughout the history of Iraq fall on the shoulders of the British failed policy.

Historians agree that the Assyrian national awakening verged among the Assyrians by the end of nineteenth century [3]. It was during World War I (1914 – 1918) that the Assyrian national movement was at its peak. However, the 1933 Simmel massacre of 3000 unarmed Assyrians, including women, children, and old men in north of Iraq by the Iraqi army and the looting of Assyrian villages by Arab and Kurdish tribes crippled this movement and forced the Assyrians into cultural and political isolation. The massacre was the work of Iraqi army with the approval of Iraq's Minister of Interior [4]. Assyrian nationals realized that the Iraqi authorities would not hesitate to use ruthless force against innocent and unarmed civilians on any pretext just to quench their blood thirst. Some argue that after the Simmel massacre, the acts of oppression and persecution against the Assyrian Christians in Iraq could be considered as isolated. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Iraqi governments used one Assyrian sect against another in order to keep them

politically ineffective. While this was the general policy; however, other acts of oppression and persecution were more in certain times or locations than others, until the coming of the Ba'ath regime in 1968.

After 1968, three events changed the position of the Assyrian Christians:

1. In 1970, the Late Mar Eshai Shimun, exiled Assyrian patriarch since 1933, was invited officially to visit Iraq. Later, a presidential decree restored to the patriarch his Iraqi citizenship that was revoked in 1933. In doing so, the Iraqi government expected to accomplish something in return. It asked the patriarch to establish an Assyrian army to fight the Kurds in northern Iraq. The Iraqi Army, made mainly of Arabs living in plain land and southern marshes, has proven that it was neither capable nor fit to decisively win a long war against the Kurds. The battle zone was north Iraq mountainous region, not familiar to Arabs. However, the patriarch refused. He was assassinated in San Jose in 1975 under very controversial circumstances. Many Assyrians point the fingers at the Iraqi government for plotting the assassination. The Iraqi government did not give up on the idea of using Assyrians to stop the Kurdish revolt. In 1972, the government invited one of the earlier Assyrian freedom movement leaders, malik Yaqub Ismael, who had escaped Iraq since 1933 as well. However, he too refused to take part in such an enterprise. He died suddenly in 1974. Was there any foul play? The government's efforts continued along this course. In the 1980s, the Iraqi army created a special battalion (Malko Force) headed by few government loyalists and tricked many Assyrians to join the force; however, the plan failed and many Assyrians were killed in battles in northern Iraq.
2. When these attempts, meaning pitting Assyrians against Kurds, showed signs of failure, simultaneously the Iraqi government began a carefully planned Arabization policy of the Assyrians. The government continued a zealous policy of dividing the Assyrians along denominational lines, something previous government practiced but to a much lesser degree.
3. The third event was the rise of fundamental Islamic movement in Iraq after the Gulf War, including the Kurdish Ansar al-Islam, and the steps that Saddam began to take to placate Muslim extremists.

The ideology of the Ba'ath regime is manifested from its two most popular mottos: a) Umma 'Arabbiyah wahidah dhat risalah khalidah (One Arab Nation with Eternal Mission), and b) wahhdah, hurriyyah, ishtirakiyyah (Union, Freedom, Socialism). In the Ba'ath ideology, there are only Arabs (whether Moslems or Christians) in the Greater united Arab region that extends from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Arabization policy articulated by the Ba'ath regime included the implementation of policies that were to slowly but surely Arabize the younger Assyrian generations. Some of these policies included, only for example, forcing Assyrian teens into Arab youth groups and into certain Ba'ath youth camps for indoctrination. Other policies included prohibiting parents from giving their newborns Assyrian names and forcing these parents to give these newborns Arab names.

The Iraqi government nationalized private Assyrian schools, where Syriac language was taught, and abolished the rights of teaching the language. Furthermore, the government was tricking youngsters to talk about what their parents discuss at home, a policy that built psychological and communicational barriers between many parents and their young children. Parents became terrified from discussing political matters in front of their children at home; they did not attempt to educate them about the facts and realities of the regime. Last, and quite significantly, the Iraqi government began to force Christian students to attend Islamic religious classes that taught the Koran.

Despite the presence of the freedom of worship that existed during the first twenty years of the Ba'ath rule, the situation changed later. Before I proceed, it is necessary to define the use of the two words: Moslems and Islamists. Few make the mistake of using the two words analogously; however, that is not necessarily the case. A Moslem and a Christian could live side by side, as many argue; however, it is impossible for a Christian to live in peace with an Islamist (fanatic Moslem) because of many fundamental differences and issues, which some of them are addressed in this article.

After the Gulf War and during the embargo, the Ba'ath regime became increasingly isolated, especially after the establishment of the No-Fly Zones in the north and the south. The Ba'ath regime had to find a powerful and effective denominator that will help it to gain much needed support. The Ba'ath government found the answer in the use of Islam through the following methods:

- Modification of the Iraqi flag by adding to it the most venerated expression in the mind and heart of any Moslem: alahu akbar (God is Greatest).
- Turning the government ideology around, temporarily at least, from previously perceived secular one into one that promoted Islamist movements. This gained the regime popularity with many Islamist groups, a few inside Iraq but mostly from neighboring regions, including al-Qa'ida, as certain reports claim.

This way, whereas before the early 1990s the regime had been a threat to the Assyrians as an ethnic group, in its later ten years it turned into a threat for the Assyrians as Christians as well. Thus, the threat was complete, ethnically and religiously. The Saudi Arabian Wahabi money poured into Iraq, especially in the Christian populated northern region. In north of Iraq, many villages that have never have seen mosques before were now a scene of the construction of lavish mosques.

It is a well-known fact that the East has been always a spiritual place with clerics who play a major role in society. If we look around us, whether in Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, India, Pakistan, Philippines, or Indonesia, we could learn many lessons about the Islamists/Christians modern conflicts. In fact, this conflict is wider than many think; it exists in African countries as well, countries like Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, and others. Even Europe could not escape the hatred; one can never forget the atrocities committed by extremists in the Balkans under the name of Islam and Christianity.

The fundamentalists are behind this much hatred, especially when they emphasize on certain verses in the Koran to legitimize their propaganda. The Koran states in the Dinner Table chapter (5:51): *"O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people."* This is popularized despite being told for example that Hind, the daughter of al-Nu'man, expressed her wish to Khalid Ibn al-Walid, a great Moslem army leader during Islamic conquest of Mesopotamia and Syria, that he protects the Christian community. He responded by saying, "This is our obligation, and our Prophet has asked us to do so" [5]. When the Islamists argue that a Christian cannot rule over a Moslem; the essence of democracy is challenged and threatened. If a Christian cannot nominate himself/herself for a high position in the Moslem world, without living the risk of losing his/her life, the fundamentals of democracy are lost. Now that Ansar al-Islam and Bin Laden's al-Qaida are inside Iraq, the future for Christians is gloomier than ever.

Other chapters in the Koran include sayings that are discomfoting to Christians. The Koran, for example, denies the Christian's concept of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. The Koran in the Women chapter (4:171) says: *"O followers of the Book! do not exceed the limits in your religion, and do not speak (lies) against Allah, but (speak) the truth; the Messiah, Isa son of Marium is only an apostle of Allah and His Word which He communicated to Marium and a spirit from Him; believe therefore in Allah and His apostles, and say not, Three. Desist, it is better for you; Allah is only one God; far be It from His glory that He should have a son, whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His, and Allah is sufficient for a Protector."* Of course, by followers of the Book it is a reference to Christians and Jews; Allah is God; Isa is Jesus; and Marium is Mary. The Koran's general position is that Jesus was just another prophet and basically a good man. In fact, the Koran looks at the core of the Christian belief, i.e. the crucifixion of Christ and his glorious rise, as a lie. The Koran (4:157) says: *"And their saying: Surely we have killed the Messiah, Isa son of Marium, the apostle of Allah; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like Isa) and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for sure."*

The Islamists promote feelings that destabilize any society that include diverse ethnic and religious groups. In my opinion, nothing on paper (including a constitution) could stop the oppression and persecution of a Christian in Iraq as long as the Shari'aa is made officially "the source" or "a source" of the constitution. I believe that liberal interpretation of the Shari'aa enjoys far more acceptance among moderate Moslems than

that of the Islamists' dovish interpretations. This becomes extremely crucial when interpretations of certain somehow vague Surah or Surat (chapter in the Koran) or Hadith (narrative relating deeds and utterance of Mohammed and his companions) are left in the hands of fundamentalists to interpret the way they see suitable without strong or loud opposition. There is potential for great danger represented in any cleric who could cause chaos, destruction, and wholesale massacre with one simple fatwa (religious edict).

In Iraq and Afghanistan, the Islamists would not hesitate to cause damage to their own mosques and use propaganda to blame the "Christians" (represented here in the United States) in order to arouse passion and hatred against both the helpless indigenous Christian population and the occupying "Christian Crusaders." The hatred mounts despite the fact that the indigenous Christian population in Iraq is more Iraqi than it is American. Many Iraqis look up to America because of its laws of personal liberty, justice, and freedom that are offered to all its citizens. The April 27, 2001 issue of the Detroit News (www.DetNews.com) reported about the largest and most comprehensive survey of mosques in America that was released at the time. "The Mosque in America: A National Project" had reported that there were 1,209 mosques in America in 2001. Additionally, the Constitution of the United States does not declare Christianity as its official religion. Still, Islamists will refer to the United States as the devil state.

Despite the fact that Article (7-A) of the Iraqi Fundamental Law grants the freedom of religion to non-Moslems; however, that same article declares Islam as the official religion of Iraq. Therefore, the law allows certain rights for Christians to exist, however, they are never equal to the rights of Moslems. Christians therefore will remain as second-class citizens with reduced legal rights that are subject to the Islamic State and the interpretation of certain individuals of the Shari'aa. The loophole in the Iraqi Fundamental Law is in article (7-A), where it states that Islam is "a source" of drafting legislations. It did not need to say that it was "the source," because Islamists could always argue based on certain specific interpretation of the Koran to win their arguments about any unfair issue that could be raised by Christians. This in itself defines the limits of the Christians' religious freedoms very strictly, including for example building of churches; ringing the churches' bells; or as simple matters as related to women's dress. This is possible because article (7-A) is clear that: "*No law that contradicts the universally agreed tenets of Islam ... may be enacted during the transitional period.*" It is obvious that there are fundamental issues in Islam that contradict with Christianity. If that is the case, how can Christians of the Middle East, the Cradle of Christianity, survive under such provisions?

Government's policies in connection with construction of sanctuaries that belong to different religions are unfair in many countries. This includes necessary permits and government grants or assistance to erect mosques and churches. This unfair practice is very old and a simple look at one set of data explains it all. According to Ottoman documents, there were 32 mosques and 13 churches in Mosul's urban area during 1892-1893. By 1894-1895, the mosques have increased by 97 to 129, meanwhile the churches increased by only 4 to 17 [6]. This happened despite the fact that the Christian population in Mosul region was still significant in the latter parts of the 19th century.

We have many warning signs for the rise of Islamists threat in Iraq:

- Many Assyrian Christian families throughout Iraq have received letters ordering their women to wear the Hijab (woman's veil) [7].
- The threatening of many Assyrians who owned liquor stores in southern and central Iraq to close their business [8].
- The killing of Assyrians who own liquor stores in Basrah (southern Iraq) and Ramadi (central Iraq). Hundreds of Catholic Assyrian families have escaped the southern Iraq city of Basra already and returned to the original villages of their forefathers in the Mosul (Nineveh) plain [9].
- The killing of nuns and priests [10].
- Attacks on Assyrian Christians while celebrating their traditional rituals, such as the recent attack on Assyrians celebrating Kaalu Sulaqa in Kirkuk [11].
- Attack and intimidate of Christian communities throughout Iraq [12].
- Attack churches in north of Iraq using machine guns and plant bombs in schools run by churches in Mosul [13].

Many Moslem countries today continue to impose heavy penalties and fines on top of prison terms for proselytizing a Moslem to another religion. In fact, repudiation of Islam is considered a crime worthy of death, whereas the Moslem has the right to proselytize Christians. The Koran states in the Family of the Imran chapter (3:118): *"O you who believe! do not take for intimate friends from among others than your own people; they do not fall short of inflicting loss upon you; they love what distresses you; vehement hatred has already appeared from out of their mouths, and what their breasts conceal is greater still; indeed, We have made the communications clear to you, if you will understand."* This scares many Christians who have to live, or are living, among Moslems (Muslims).

To understand the fears of Christians from living in an official Islamic state, we must understand a very important principle of Islamists, which is Jihad (holy war against non-Moslems). The aim of jihad, writes Ye'or, *is to subjugate the peoples of the world to the law of Allah, decreed by his prophet Muhammad. Mankind is divided into two groups, Muslims and non-Muslims. The former compose the Islamic community, the umma, who own the territories of the dar al-Islam governed by Islamic law. Non-Muslims are harbis, inhabitants of the dar al-harb, the lands of war, so called because they are destined to come under Islamic jurisdiction, either by war (harb), or by the conversion of their inhabitants. According to the jurisconsult Ibn Taimiya (fourteenth century), the property of non-Muslims must revert legitimately to the sole followers of the true religion (Islam) [14].* The message is clear.

Despite the call of the Koran to protect the People of the Book (meaning Christians and Jews), still, there are realities of life in many Middle East and other countries in Asia and Africa. It is almost impossible to change 1300 years laws and practices by simply issuing passive constitutions that sound impressive on paper. The state has to set example by issuing strict and unbiased penal codes in its laws and implement such laws against all those who transgress on the liberties of others. This seldom happens in the Moslem world, as Christians and Moslems are not treated equally in courts of law. Furthermore, the testimony of a Christian is never considered in the same level to that of a Moslem. If a court case came down to the word of a Christian against that of a Moslem, chances are the Christian will lose. Indeed, many countries in the Moslem world promise personal rights, almost a copycat of those granted under the constitution of the United States. However, how many countries prepare the healthy atmosphere to allow people to practice those rights freely and without fear? Words on paper cannot change the mentality of people. Iraq needs time; at least two generations to rehabilitate the society that has been brain washed, if, that is, all conditions on the ground were accommodating. Meanwhile, Assyrian Christians cannot sit idle, an easy prey for the fundamentalists' frame of mind.

During World War I and the ensuing years, Ottoman Turkey massacred some 3,500,000 of its Christian population (1,500,000 Armenians; 750,000 Assyrians; and 300,000 Greeks) and committed the first genocide of twentieth century. The members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in their October 1911 Congress had already defined their policy towards the Assyrians, Armenians, and Greeks. According to renowned historian Arnold Toynbee, the congress declared:

"Sooner or later the complete Ottomanisation of all Turkish subjects must be effected; it is clear, however, that this can never be attained by persuasion, but that we must resort to armed force... The nationalities are a quantité négligeable. They can keep their religion but not their language. The propagation of the Turkish language is one of the sovereign means of confirming the Mohammedan supremacy and assimilating the other elements" [15]. Ottoman Turks did not stop there; they changed the northern Iraq demographic picture as well. Toynbee writes: The Ottoman Government, desiring a barrier against Persia, encouraged the Kurds to spread themselves over Armenia; it welcomed less the Shammar and Anazeh Arabs, who broke over the Euphrates about the year 1700 and turned the last fields of Northern Mesopotamia to desolation; but it was too impotent or indifferent to turn them out [16].

When the Kingdom of Iraq was established in 1921, many of its government officials were of Turkish and Kurdish background. On top of that, many of these officials were previously employed in the Ottoman Turkish civil and military services. These same officials took part in the Christian genocide in Turkey during and after WWI. The massacre of Assyrians in Iraq in 1933 was therefore coming; it was only a matter of time. These officials, and subsequent officials, continued earlier policies by attempting to Arabize the Assyrian population in central Iraq and Kurdify those in northern Iraq. Some world leaders and

international groups envisioned this reality. They lobbied throughout the first quarter of the 20th century for the Assyrian cause and a small Assyrian administrative region: The "Assyrian Triangle" or "Little Assyria" (defined as the triangular region with the following boundaries: the Tigris River to the west; Upper Zab River to the East; and the Iraqi-Turkish borders to the north).

The settlement of Assyrians in a homogenous enclave has been an unresolved issue since the conclusion of World War I; meanwhile the promise itself of the Allied Forces predates the state of Iraq. Nisan writes that in 1918, the Anglo-French Declaration referred to indigenous government for the Assyrians as part of postwar principles of settlement [17]. The official United States government report by the Inter-allied Commission on Mandates in Turkey, American Section, also known as the King-Crane Commission Report, issued August 28, 1919, guaranteed special considerations not only for Kurds but for Assyrians (Nestorians, Chaldeans, and Suryan) [18].

The Assyrians threw in their lot with the Allied Forces during WWI. Later, Great Britain, a significant member of the Allied Forces, represented the mandatory power over Iraq. The Assyrians took this step because they were given guarantees for future safeguarding. One of these assurances is quoted by Sir Henry Dobbs, His Britannic Majesty's Government representative in Iraq or High Commissioner (1923 – 1929) at the time of the Iraqi-Turkish frontier dispute and Assyrian settlement were being negotiated. According to Gertrude Bell, who had great influence in the shaping of present Iraq, Dobbs had stated that in order to assure the Assyrians their future, assurances were to be made by Iraqi government. Dobbs added that these assurances were present as two successive Iraqi cabinets (of Ja'far Pasha and Yasin Pasha) officially pledged to provide lands for Assyrians and to establish a system of administration for them that will ensure their utmost possible freedom from interference [19].

Next was Article 62 of the 1920 Treaty of Sévres that granted protection and safeguarding for the Assyrians (also known as Chaldo-Assyrians or Assyro-Chaldeans) in their ancestral lands. However, Turkey did not ratify the Treaty of Sévres and the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne replaced it.

Still, article 39 of the Treaty of Lausanne states that: *"Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities will enjoy the same civil and political rights as Moslems."* Moreover: *"All the inhabitants of Turkey, without distinction of religion, shall be equal before the law."* Article 40 states: *"Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals."* Article 41 states: *"In towns and districts where there is a considerable proportion of Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities, these minorities shall be assured an equitable share in the enjoyment and application of the sums which may be provided out of public funds under the State, municipal or other budgets for educational, religious, or charitable purposes."* Articles 42, 43, 44, and 45 are all provisions to guard the non-Moslems in future Turkish Republic. However, none of these promises, provisions, or treaties that looked good on paper were honored. In fact, within weeks, thousands of Assyrians of southeastern Turkey were even deported from Turkey towards Syria or killed in 1923. There is precedence here because just after the promises of the Iraqi government, 3000 innocent Assyrians were massacred in northern Iraq few months after the promises of the Iraqi government were issued [20].

Yet later, the League of Nations Frontier Commission that was formed to address the disputed issue of the borders between Iraq and Turkey and the settlement of the Assyrian Christians who lost their lands during WWI, recommended the following in its report:

"Since the disputed territory will in any case be under the sovereignty of a Moslem State, it is essential in order to satisfy the aspirations of the minorities—notably the Christians, but also the Jews and Yezidis—that measures should be taken for their protection.

"It is not within our competence to enumerate all the conditions which would have to be imposed on the Sovereign State for the protection of these minorities. We feel it our duty, however, to point out that the Assyrians should be guaranteed the re-establishment of the ancient privileges which they possessed in practice, if not officially, before the war. Whichever may be the Sovereign State, it ought to grant these Assyrians a certain local autonomy, recognizing their right to appoint their own officials ..." [21]

These recommendations were ignored because Great Britain did not want to disturb its relations with the Arabs and the new Iraq Kingdom. It sacrificed the Assyrian Christians for its own oil interests in Iraq. The Assyrians, meanwhile, and despite betrayal by the British and massacre by the Iraqi Army, remained loyalists to the legitimate Iraqi throne. In April and May 1941 (during World War II), it was the predominantly Assyrian Levy force in Habbaniya (near Ramadi, west of Baghdad) that saved Iraq from falling into the hands of Nazi Germany [22]. History has taught us that no matter how loyal the Assyrian Christians remain towards their obligations as citizens of Iraq, they will always be treated as outsiders. No matter how peaceful and law abiding they behave in their ancestral lands in the Middle East, they will always be oppressed and persecuted simply because they are ethnically and religiously different from those around them.

Therefore, if the United Nations was to be involved in Iraq, it must find the ways and means to protect the helpless and smaller religious and ethnic groups in Iraq, like the Assyrian and Armenian Christians, Yezidis, and Mandeans, until that time when Iraqis prove worthy to rule themselves under a fair and just law. The United States' administration must make sure that the Americans will not leave before securing the future of these non-Moslem indigenous groups and minorities. The United States must not repeat the mistakes of the British in 1932 as they helped Iraq enter the League as a sovereign state and withdrew without securing the future of the already troubled Assyrians. It took only months after Iraq became completely independent and member of the League of Nations when the 1933 Assyrian massacres, wholesale looting, and loss of Assyrian lands and villages took place. It is outrageous to realize today that it was a matter of expenditures and economical pressure on Her Majesty's government that the British sacrificed the fate of the Assyrian race in Iraq. Dodge hopes that Ambassador Paul Bremer would not succumb to the temptations of cutting corners in Iraq while facing congressional worries about expenditure and public concerns about casualties [23].

There are big problems facing the Christians in Iraq. The indigenous Assyrian Christians have no chance to survive in Iraq under a constitution that declares Islam as the official religion of the State and the Shari'aa as a source for its laws. They have no chance to survive in a country ruled with the influence of Islamists, pan-Arabs, and Kurdish separatists' dreams. The Assyrians cannot survive under a constitution that suggests that Iraq is made of two "major" ethnic groups: Arabs and Kurds in addition to other "minor" ethnic groups like Assyrians (Chaldo-Assyrians) and Turkomen. All people of Iraq must be treated equal. The indigenous Assyrian Christians, similar to Kurds, must be granted safe haven within a federal Iraqi state, in which they can administer themselves and live in peace as proud Iraqi citizens. What is more suitable than to live in the Nineveh plain (Mosul region, in north of Iraq), the holy land of their forefathers, Assyria?

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Read also:

- a) http://www.newsandletters.org/Issues/2003/December/Yanar_Dec03.htm
- b) <http://www.occupationwatch.org/article.php?id=3918>

[8] http://www.hrwf.net/html/iraq_2003.html#ChristianFamiliesTargeted

[9] <http://www.keepmedia.com/ShowItemDetails.do?itemID=366687&extID=10032&oliID=213>

Read also:

- a) http://www.hrwf.net/html/iraq_2003.html#Christiansmurdered.
- b) http://www.sotaliraq.com/file/article_2003_12_30_44158y.html
- [10] <http://aina.org/releases/2002/cecilia.htm>
- [11] Attacks in Kirkuk revealed to this author in recent contact with relatives in Kirkuk.
- [12] http://www.hrwf.net/html/iraq_2003.html#ChristiansinNorthern
- [13] <http://www.atour.com/news/assyria/20031119a.pdf> (Read az-Zaman Newspaper, Nov. 19, 2003 issue).
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- [18] First printed as the "King-Crane report on the Near East" in *Editor & publisher*. [New York, Editor & Publisher Co., 1922] v. 55, no. 27, 2d section (Dec. 2).
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