

## His Grace Bishop Sarhad Jammo's Lecture in San Diego

By Fred Aprim  
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His Grace Bishop Sarhad Jammo made a presentation in San Diego on Thursday, February 24, 2005. In his presentation, his Grace talked about the latest Iraqi elections and the reasons why the Suraye (Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Suryaye or Suryan) failed in that experience. He presented his ideas to remedy the situation for the upcoming elections.

Mar Sarhad Jammo began by stating that this is a period where history is in the making. Within ten months, a new Iraq will emerge with a new constitution. This is the Suraye's last chance to secure a place in the new Iraq. His Grace stated that couple of years earlier, he made a presentation when the Ba'ath regime was still in power. He had a vision that this was coming. He said: I felt the urgency at the time to awaken my people because if I did not do that then who will. His Grace added: If I did not have the heart to say wake up who will then say it. He continued to add that some say that the Chaldeans were lagging in the national field. There is a reason for that and that is because they were concentrating on succeeding in business. We see our Assyrian brothers more into the national field, but everyone has his own circumstances.

In Iraq, he said, Chaldeans did not leave ... they remained, and when one remains and is under pressure, he must adapt with his environment. The Chaldeans adapted with the Iraqi people. The Chaldeans were smart; they waited for the right moment to present their case. He asserted that 70 – 75% of Suraye in Iraq are Chaldeans, which proves the point. It is easy for someone abroad to speak his mind; however, inside Iraq it was not the right time for Chaldeans to pursue national agenda. Might and glory is to stay in Iraq and not escape ... it is not building empires abroad. The Chaldeans who left Iraq did not escape; they were looking for better opportunities and life.

His Grace added that if we let the train pass us by today, we would be hurting our people in Iraq. The Chaldeans strength in Iraq gives strength to all Suraye and the weakness of Chaldeans in Iraq results in the weakness of all Suraye. Let this be the rule to remember by all nationalists.

What did we learn from the elections, asked Mar Jammo. Well, you know a tree from its fruits. What were the results, which is the bottom line? The elections selected 275 members for the Iraqi National Assembly. Six Suraye are in Iraqi parliament, i.e. 2% of the seats. The six seats were as follows: One through Allawi's slate, four through the Kurdish slate, and only one through the Rafidayn slate # 204. This means that the Suraye won only one seat with a purely Suraye slate. The other four in the Kurdish slate did not win because of the Suraye vote, rather because of the Kurdish power. This Suraye seat of Yonadam Kanna was won because of the votes of around 18,000 in Iraq and 18,000 in the Diaspora who voted for slate # 204. Kurds make 18% of Iraqi population but they threw themselves into the elections passionately and won 25% of the Iraqi parliament seats. We know that 8,500,000 Iraqis voted out of the Iraqi population of around 26,000,000 to 27,000,000. This means that about one-third of the Iraqis voted. If we are 800,000 in Iraq and 400,000 in the Diaspora for a total of 1,200,000 (or even as low as 1,100,000) then one-third of that is 400,000 or 350,000 Suraye should have voted. However, only 36,000 Suraye voted (and that is 10% of the eligible voters).

This was a disaster, said Bishop Jammo. We should have had 12 to 15 seats but got one. Of course, we have five more but those were not won through our own power.

"Something is wrong ... big time wrong," said the bishop. His Grace added: "I am first to blame ... I did not vote." He asked: "Why is that"? He answered: Because there was not available any slate that attracted or convinced me. He continued, I think that is why most of Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Suryaye did not vote.

His Grace asked: why did we have only 7,000 votes in Baghdad? We have at least 200,000 Chaldeans alone in Baghdad. Even if we say that we have 100,000 Chaldean voters in Baghdad, on top of Assyrians and Suryaye of course. Why did we have only 7,000 votes in Baghdad? This means that they were completely not convinced or attracted by any slate. We did not have a campaign for a convincing slate. We were negligent ... all of us, starting from myself. The same applies here in America. There are 150,000

Chaldeans and say 50,000 Assyrians for a total of 200,000 Suraye, he added. However, only 3,700 voted out of all these. Yes, we have problems in Nineveh Plain and other problems but how many seats would those specific problems have added? Another single seat perhaps. Bishop Jammo stated that mentioning all these issues does not give us the complete picture of the problem. How do we explain the results in Baghdad or Michigan, he asked.

You see, explained Bishop Jammo, this problem is not today's or yesterday's. It is a rooted one. We have not worked on the main problem and if we did not today, the train will by pass us. If we did not do it right, we will not be able to make decisions in Iraq. Others will make those decisions for us and in fact force them on us. Why, he asked. Because we did not bother to vote, he answered. It was curtailment and neglect on our part, beginning from myself, and including our organizations, intellectuals, writers, etc. We have 10 months to do something.

We have 800,000 Suraye in Iraq and 400,000 outside Iraq and we must win 10 seats at least if not 12 to 15 seats. His Grace asked: how are we going to do that? We must not fool ourselves because if we did, we cannot get anywhere. We see many who state our Chaldean Assyrian Syriac people, our ChaldoAssyrian Syriac people ... the intentions in such names are good as they reflect love for each other and signs of unity; however, it did not work in the elections. If we are one nation, Bishop Jammo asked, where is it? How much did this kind of talk convince us? Out of 1,200,000 only 36,000 voted. Is that all?

Next in his presentation, His Grace Bishop Jammo tackled next the issue of what the various names mean, the issue of unity, and the oneness of our people. He stated that this talk about being one nation or one people did not work because something is wrong. If we did not weight our situation correctly, our people will not trust us; they could not be fooled. One can fool another once but not twice, we must face the problem and set it straight for the benefit of all of us and not only one group. He added that Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Suryaye are all Suraye, meaning Christians. Suraya is not the name of people (nation); it is a religious term, he stressed. Let us not mix up between Suraya and Suryaya. We say "Ishana d Sureth" (Syriac language), which means the language of the Christian people.

Suryan or Suryaya comes from Syria, period. Therefore, Suryaya cannot be a name of our nation. Bishop Jamma continued to state: "I cannot say Suryaya or Suryani to reflect an ethnic group in Iraq."

The name Chaldean cannot be treated on equal footing with the name Suryaya or Suryani. The center of the Suryani people is Syria; therefore, there is a conflict when we try to equate Suryaya or Suryani with Chaldean, he explained.

We say we are one people; however, we must be careful of what we are saying. The Suryani people in Iraq are the people of Iraq; however, this name does not reflect any ethnic Iraqi group. The language does not prove anything. The Americans speak English language; however, they kicked the British out. Language alone does not make a nation. His Grace continued to state: "Suryaya does not express Iraqi identity." We cannot create a block of people and say that Suryan and Chaldean are one nation ... No ... we cannot do that.

Now, let us come to the name Athuraya (Assyrian), the bishop continued. Athur is Iraq ... Athur is our ancestors ... our heritage ... our pride. That is Athur ... Ashur ... yes. However, an Iranian is not an Iraqi and an Iraqi is not an Iranian. An Assyrian association with Assyrian people from Iran, with an Assyrian voice of Iran, or with an Assyrian thought from Iran cannot impose itself on me, with my respect to the Iranian people. They cannot say we are one nation because we are not. Bishop Jammo continued to state: "I have no right to impose my philosophy on an Iranian and he does not have the right to impose his philosophy on me ... I respect you and you respect me." Bishop Jammo continued to state that one who is from Urmia has a continuous heritage of Iran; it is not related to Bet Nahrain (Mesopotamia). If we examine the Suraye in Iraq, whether the mountaineers or plain people, we see that they understand each other's dialect. The grammar is the same. Meanwhile, in Urmia they have different grammar. When a Suraya speaks the Urmia dialect, the Suraya of Nineveh plain does not understand anything, and the opposite is true as well, meaning, when a Suraya of Nineveh plain speaks his dialect, the Suraya of Urmia does not understand. Therefore, we cannot say that we are all one umtha (nation), asserted His Grace.

Bishop Jammo continued to state that we have Suraye living in Telkepe, Alqosh, Karamlesh, Batnaya and these villages are next to Nineveh in the heart of Assyria. Why do they call themselves Chaldeans? The

Chaldeans living in Nineveh Plain would travel to Mosul and pass by Nineveh and Ashurbanipal palace; however, when you ask them what they are, they say that they are Chaldeans. Why, because they return to their origin, to their center that was Babylon and the last dynasty of Chaldeans. The Chaldeans do not have but the center of Babylon, Iraq ... Baghdad. That is why the Chaldeans were part of Iraqi government and Iraqi people. Their hearts and history was in Iraq and did not leave it. Therefore, the foundation is Chaldean ... if there is no Chaldean, there is no chance for Suraye in Iraq, emphasized Bishop Jammo.

Bishop Jammo continued to explain the various terms used and stated, then there is the term ChaldoAssyrians. This is great ... we want unity. However, how do we achieve it? If the foundation of one thing is not solid, it is not going to work. One cannot build a bridge without building its columns first. Therefore, Bishop Jammo added, I have to build Chaldeanism first. We have to build the column of Chaldo. The column of Chaldo must be in the center of the bridge and from one side of this should be the column of Assyrian of Iraq and from the other side the column of Suryaya of Iraq. This is the kind of bridge that we want. We cannot include the Suryaya of Syria because they do not have an Iraqi agenda ... they have a different agenda, he explained.

His Grace Bishop Jammo concluded his speech by stating that we must build the bridge of Surayootha. However, the enthusiasm of Assyrianism cannot attract Chaldeans; it attracts Assyrians. Chaldeanism must draw Chaldeans and then join forces with the Assyrians on equal footings. Thus, for this to work Chaldeans must build Chaldean column; Assyrians must build Assyrian column; and Suryaye must build Suryaya column and then work together and form a coalition that is balanced and accepted to all. Chaldeans must establish political organizations, like the Chaldeans National Congress, the Chaldean Democratic Union Party of Abd al-Ahad Afram, and the Chaldean Forum. These organizations cooperate with Assyrian and Suryaye organizations to reach an understanding and create a united slate that represent all Suraye in Iraq for the upcoming elections ... such slate will be supported by all of us.