



Shlamalokhon

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Because of the 1991 Gulf War, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees found their way to the neighboring countries of Jordan, Syria, Turkey and Iran. I visited Jordan in 1992 and met with some Assyrian refugees and my life was never the same. In the aftermath of the 2003 Gulf War, Syria, Jordan and many European countries witnessed the flooding of 2,000,000 Iraqi refugees. An additional 2,000,000 are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In 2004, Iraq went into chaos that continues to linger today and in the midst of that, a jihad or holy war was declared against the Christians. The Islamists did not discriminate; they murdered infants and elderly, males and

females, clergymen and laypersons, they bombed 40 churches. The mass exodus from Iraq resumed, again. For Assyrians, being a refugee is a repeated theme; it has continued in one shape or another since WWI in Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq.

Today, institutions around the world accuse Pan-Arabist Saddam Hussein for committing acts of genocide since 1968 against Arab Shi'as and Kurds in Iraq. The world is becoming aware of the Armenian genocide and other genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur; however there is another genocide that has been peculiarly overlooked, ignored and/or hidden and that is the genocide against the Assyrians.

It is reasonable to argue that the Assyrian history in the last 150 years has been catastrophic. It is for that reason that I dedicated my third book "Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein", which is available here, to this period.

The Genocide

While Western Christian missionaries, or European intelligent agents disguised as missionaries, were penetrating Assyrian lands in southeast Turkey, tens of thousands of Assyrians were being killed by the Kurdish warlords headed by Bedr Khan Beg between 1842 and 1848. The destruction continued in 1895.

The situation reached a climax during WWI as the Turkish and Kurdish genocidal policy nearly annihilated the Assyrian and Armenian Christians of eastern Turkey and northwestern Iran. This was the first genocide of the 20th century.

What is Genocide?

The word Genocide stands for the Greek "genos", meaning race and Latin "cide", meaning to kill, thus, genocide means "to kill a race."

When speaking of genocide, the name of Dr. Raphael Lemkin jumps out. He coined the term after WWII as:

The coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions of culture, language, national feelings, religion, economic existence, of national groups and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as member of the national group.

Of course, In 1933 Lemkin was deeply disturbed by the massacre of Assyrians in Iraq. His distress was compounded by earlier accounts of the slaughter of Armenians by Turks during WWI. Lemkin and the international jurist began to examine these acts as crimes in an effort to deter and prevent them. The initial efforts failed. Lemkin resolved to carry on his campaign for the establishment of genocide as a crime under international law. His

persistent and persuasive lobbying paid off in 1946 when a resolution in favor of an international convention on the crime of genocide was put before the United Nations. The resolution was approved and Lemkin became an adviser in the writing of an international treaty to that effect. On December 9, 1948, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly.

The modern definition of genocide in article II of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is given as such:

- Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a nation, ethnic, racial or religious groups, including, but not only, as such:*
- (a) killing members of the group;*
 - (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
 - (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;*

The above definition clearly substantiates the argument that Turks and Kurds have subjected Assyrians to genocide since the turn of the 20th century in the Ottoman Empire and in Persia. The genocide against Assyrians continued as the modern Middle Eastern states were created after WWI. In fact, it never stopped.

The details of the genocide against Assyrians are known to many of you and I am not going to discuss them here. My book describes many of those events and circumstances that caused the death of

two-thirds of the Assyrian people and the loss of the majority of the Assyrians' ancestral lands. However, there were some important events during and immediately following WWI that shaped Assyrian history, including:

- a. January 2, 1915, the first Russian withdrawal from Urmia region, northwestern Iran, took place when the Turkish army threatened to control the Turkish-Russian border regions and isolate the Russian army that was in Urmia. The withdrawal was the reason for the exodus of some 25,000 Assyrians with the Russian army. Of course, many Assyrians remained behind, including the Assyrian army, and were able to protect Urmia for the next four months.
- b. The Russians returned to Urmia in May 1915 and remained there until their second withdrawal in early 1918. This second withdrawal was because of the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917. Although the Assyrians protected themselves and Urmia for a few months, they could not face the Turks and Kurds as ammunition and supplies were running low. Thus, on July 18, 1918, between 80,000 to 100,000 Christians, mainly Assyrians, but with many Armenians as well, evacuated their homes in Urmia and headed south towards Hamadan and from there crossed to Iraq where they were kept in Baquba Refugee Camp. It is important to point out that the British army was physically in Central Persia and could have supplied the Assyrians with weapons to defend themselves as WWI was coming to an end. But Great Britain did not do that since her majesty's government had plans to exploit the Assyrians in the future country of Iraq, which the British created in 1921.
- c. The Assyrians of the Hakkari Mountains in southeastern Turkey were driven out of their homes in July 1915 where they joined the Assyrians of northwestern Persia.

- d. Many of the Assyrians of Tur Abdin region of southeastern Turkey that survived the WWI genocide by Kurds and Turks finally faced forced deportation through what became known as the 'death march' through the desert towards Aleppo (northern Syria) in 1924. This was due to the earlier French concessions to Turkey in 1920 as the French gave up on protecting Urfa, Nisibin, Mardin and other Assyrian populated regions in order to control Damascus and face the Arab revolt, which they crushed in the battle of Maysaloon.

Lack of Awareness

Historians tell us that unless one knows where to search for material on Assyrian genocide during WWI, it is very likely that he/she would not be able to find specifically related material. However, one could very easily find plenty of material on the Armenian genocide. It is ironic that both Armenians and Assyrians lived that same fate, but the Armenian genocide is known by the public, historians, and writers while that of the Assyrians is not. Why is that?

One main problem lay with the British perhaps and the other with the Assyrians themselves. Arnold Toynbee assembled material for the British Foreign Office entitled "Arnold Toynbee Papers and Documents on the Treatment of Armenian and Assyrian Christians by the Turks, 1915-1916, in the Ottoman Empire and North-West Persia." However, when James Bryce, the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs published the material in 1916, he omitted Assyrians from the title and his document was published under the title "The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire". However, Bryce did leave the roughly 90-page chapter on the Assyrian genocide intact.

Unlike Armenians, the Assyrians did a dismal job in raising awareness of that genocide. If we exclude the few books published almost immediately after WWI, and few moderately small books written in the Syriac language recently, Assyrian writers, to my knowledge, did not publish anything about the genocide in English for 60 or 70 years.

Many argue that the British did not want to bring significant attention to the Assyrian case. In fact, it was the British who jeopardized the Assyrian case in the League of Nations during the 1920s and 1930s in order to keep the Assyrians vulnerable and under their control and mercy while ruling and exploiting Iraq. Some argue that the U.S. government has been repeating that history since 2003; to a certain degree of course.

The Simele Massacre

The Simele massacre of 1933 was a continuation of the Assyrian genocide of WWI. 3,000 unarmed Assyrians, males and females, young and elderly, were butchered or burned alive.

Two points here:

1. The poorly performed Iraqi government of the Ikha' party was under a lot of pressure from opposition groups and the public. It looked for a scapegoat and it targeted the weakest and most vulnerable, the Assyrians, in order to punish, thus look like heroes in the eyes of the public.
2. Many in the high command of the Iraqi army and government officials were ex-Ottoman Turkish officers or of Kurdish background like Hikmat Sulaiman and Bekir Sidqi. Thus, for them it was a matter of completing the unfinished job of WWI.

Historians might argue that the British did cover the Simele massacre in their media, contrary to what some observers claim. However, the British did it to a certain extent and for a purpose that was to put some pressure on the Iraqi government to accept the British presence in Iraq after Iraq was admitted to the League of Nations in 1932 and force the Iraqi government to fulfill its 1930 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. The fact remains that while the British pilots were taking pictures of the massacre, their commanders allowed the massacre to continue.

Why Should we Consider the Simele Massacre a Genocide?

According to Gregory H. Stanton, founder and president of *Genocide Watch*, genocide develops in eight stages:

1. Classification. People are divided into "us and them."
2. Symbolization. "When combined with hatred, symbols may be forced upon unwilling members of pariah groups."
3. Dehumanization. "Dehumanization overcomes the normal human revulsion against murder."
4. Organization. "Genocide is always organized."
5. Polarization. "Hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda."
6. Identification. "Victims are identified and separated out because of their ethnic or religious identity."
7. Extermination. "It is 'extermination' to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human."
8. Denial. "The perpetrators deny that they committed any crime."

If we study the events that preceded the Simele massacre, how the Iraqi government handled the Assyrian situation; how government-backed press incited the population against the Assyrians, targeted them as the enemy of Iraq; how the Iraqi army attacked the armless Assyrians and allowed Arab and Kurdish tribes to destroy Assyrian

villages and seize belongings, we could justifiably argue that Simele massacre was in fact an act of genocide against the Assyrians.

The Kurdish Connection

One of the most devastating factors in the alarming diminishment of Assyrian presence in northern Mesopotamia has been the Kurds. History tells us that the regions of northern Iraq, Tur Abdin (Turkey), Jazira (Syria) and Urmia (Iran) were Assyrian in essence until the breakout of WWI.

I am not going to address the ambiguity of Kurds in history here today, but their presence in northern Mesopotamia should be analyzed. There are three facts:

- a. The original Kurdish region is the mountainous area that extends from Kermenshah in central Iran to eastern Turkey; they are not indigenous to Mesopotamia.
- b. Later, feeling the threats of Persian Shiaaism, the Ottoman Turks (Sunni Muslims) encouraged the Kurds (mainly Sunni Muslims) to spread in northern Mesopotamia and southern Armenia, armed them, and made them a buffer zone between themselves and the Persians.
- c. The increase of the Kurdish population in northern Iraq has been due to a continuous influx of Kurds from Turkey and Iran, especially after the fall of the Kurdish Mahabad Republic that was declared in northwestern Persia in 1946. This is of course a driver of the continuous exodus of Assyrians from their historic villages to the larger cities like Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Mosul due to the Kurdish attacks, oppression, harassment, murder, rape, abduction, etc. Of course, the Kurdish-Iraqi war that broke out in 1961 played a major role as well.

One should simply study the demographic picture of indicative towns and villages in the regions in question throughout the decades in order to have a better understanding. Let me give you few examples:

1. Sapna valley (between Amadiya and Dohuk), northern Iraq, was almost predominantly Assyrian. However, repeated, devastating raids by Kurds, including those in 1712, 1830, and 1880 forced many Assyrians to flee their villages, never to return.
2. Mosul province, Iraq. In 1932 Mosul had Arabs 80,000 / Kurds 80,000 / Assyrians 111,700 / Yezidis 40,000 / Shabak 16,000 / Jews 9,000 / Armenians 5,000. Of course Dohuk was separated from Mosul and handed to the Kurds in 1970 and Kurds began their kurdification process of almost 200 Assyrian villages in the region. One reason why Kurds in 1993 assassinated Assyrian Democratic Movement member Francis Shabo, who was also a member of the Kurdish Regional parliament, is because he was demanding the restoration of many of these villages to their legal and original Assyrian owners. Today, Kurds want to absorb most of Mosul (Nineveh province) into the Kurdish region.
3. Urmia plain, Iran. Several accounts by European Missionaries and others show that hundreds of Urmia plain villages were predominantly and exclusively Assyrian until WWI. Today, many of those villages are almost empty of Assyrians.
4. Diyar Bakir, Turkey. 19th century travelers estimate the population of Diyar Bakir as 30,000 to 40,000 with one-third Christians. In 1892, the Christian population in Diyar Bakir stood at 20,000. In early 20th century, the Islamic Encyclopedia states that the population of Diyar Bakir was 35,000. Out of these 13,000 were Christians

and only 4,130 were Kurds. Today the city is completely Kurdish.

5. Mardin, Turkey. 19th century travelers estimated the population of Mardin between 30,000 and 50,000. Christians were estimated as one-third to one-half of the population. Today Mardin is a Kurdish town.
6. Midyat, Turkey. The Washington Post in April 5, 2005 reported that the Assyrians who made a majority in the town of Midyat in early 20th century have dwindled to one hundred families.

How did the Kurds become a majority in northern Mesopotamia? It is with the power of the sword, and mostly in the last three centuries. Oppression, terrifying the peaceful Assyrian civilians, murdering individuals, abductions, and rape are common acts of Kurds against the Assyrians. In almost all cases of murder against Assyrians the perpetrators are not brought to justice. This silence by the authorities is in fact a license to kill. Throughout northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran and northeastern Syria the Kurds have systematically Kurdified Assyrian villages and towns through acts of terror and intimidation.

Let us examine these examples:

- a. In 1915, the Kurds attacked Faish-Khabour (Iraq) killing all its male inhabitants as the 600 women fled to Mosul.
- b. In August 1964, Kurds attacked the Assyrian town of Azikh (Turkey) armed with axes, hatchets, hand saws and ropes and began to cut down the town's fruit trees that numbered 400,000. They next harassed the Assyrian population repeatedly with the knowledge of the local police. This continued and by 1965 the exodus began. By 1984 Azikh was completely Kurdified.
- c. In the 1930 'Aamooda (Syria) had a population of 7,000 Assyrians. In 1937, Kurds attacked the town, many Assyrians

- were killed and stores were set on fire. The Kurdish raids continued on several occasions. Today 'Aamooda is Kurdified.
- d. Until 1960s, many regions in northern Iraq were heavily populated by Assyrians. The British Admiralty's *Handbook of Iraq and the Persian Gulf* contains a map, which shows the entire area of northern Iraq now claimed as the Kurdish homeland to have been made of a compact Aramaic-speaking Christians as late as 1944.

The Western media opts to turn a blind eye about this planned genocide by the Kurdish leadership.

Revising History

The most outrageous claim by Kurds continues to be that after WWI the victorious Allies divided the so-called Kurdistan into four regions: northern, western, eastern, and southern Kurdistan. One wonders, how is it possible to divide something that did not exist in the first place? Was there an official state, country, kingdom, or empire named Kurdistan any time before, during, or even after WWI for the Allies to divide? The answer is an absolute no. In fact, a country, state, or region by the name of Kurdistan with an administrative system NEVER existed in history. What the Allies partitioned after WWI was the Ottoman Empire. The same exact thing happened to the Assyrians as they were divided between Turkey, Persia, Syria, and Iraq when there were no borders earlier between the Assyrians of Mosul, Tur Abdin, Hakkari.

Furthermore, the Kurds continue in their historical revisionism as they change city and village names, including: Arbil (Arba'Eilo) to Hawlair, Aina d Noone to Kani Masa, Nohadra to Dohuk, Sleewana Plain in northwest Nohadra to Slefani.

The Kurds are committing “a soft genocide” against the Assyrians for a good reason and that is because the Assyrians represent the most serious threat to Kurdish claims of "rights to land" and thus statehood, since the Kurds are "new comers" to the region. All artifacts, monuments, cuneiform records and other historical documents in northern Mesopotamia prove beyond any doubts that northern Iraq belongs to the Assyrians.

Denial

The Republic of Turkey, its defenders and certain scholars reject the notion that the killing of Christians during and after WWI fit the legal definition of genocide. They claim that the word genocide did not exist prior to 1944 and that the crime was not codified into law until 1948 with the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNCG). The fact is that the UNCG recognized genocide when it stated "that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity" and that they merely "confirmed" its criminality irrespective to time periods. Furthermore, massacring civilians had been recognized as a war crime for centuries and by 1910, international treaty law specifically prohibited wartime violations against "the lives of persons," "family honor and rights," and "private property as well as religious convictions and practices." Violations of this treaty, known as the "Hague Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land", were recognized as crimes from 1907 onwards.

On the other hand, the Kurdish leadership follows a parallel path. Instead of admitting to what Kurds have committed against the Assyrians, Kurdish leadership honor those Kurds that committed those crimes and present them as Kurdish heroes whether in education curricula or through public art displays.

The Genocide Continues

Assyrians face a continuous genocide since WWI and Simele massacre. This genocide was exemplified by the policies of the Ba'ath regime in Baghdad and by Kurdish leadership in northern Iraq. Let us consider the followings:

- a. Denying Assyrian identity during the official Iraqi 1977 and 1987 national census and forcing Assyrians to register as Arabs or Kurds. Meanwhile, in most official statements referring to them as “others”.
- b. Assyrian leaders were targeted, imprisoned and executed.
- c. 200 Assyrian villages were bombed and destroyed during the Anfal operations of 1988. Many Assyrians were displaced. However, the media associates the Anfal operations to Kurds only. Does that ring a bell?
- d. Attempts to force Assyrian students to study the Koran.
- e. Nationalization of Assyrian schools and civic, cultural, and sport clubs and institutions in the 1980s.
- f. Rewriting Iraq’s history and denying Assyrians their place in that history through state sponsored writers such as al-Husari and Ahmad Sousa and recently by many Kurdish writers and politicians.
- g. Indoctrination of Assyrian students and Islamizing and Arabizing or Kurdifying the history of Iraq and Northern Iraq respectively.
- h. Harassing and even punishing parents who gave their newborn babies Assyrian names.
- i. Treating the Assyrians as second-class citizens and humiliating them when trying to complete a simple application in government agencies.
- j. In northern Iraq, Kurdish officials, through their operatives, prevent Assyrian small businesses from displaying signs in their Syriac language. Assyrians are denied opening

- businesses unless a Kurd is a partner in that business. Assyrians are harassed if they raised the Assyrian flag on their homes. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) interferes in the internal political affairs of the Assyrians.
- k. In southeastern Turkey, Assyrians continued to flee their homes throughout the second half of the 20th century because of the Kurdish armed revolt and persecution. Assyrian town names were changed to Turkish. The Syriac language was forbidden. The return of some families lately is an exception, which takes us to the complicated issue of Turkey and the European Union.
 - l. In Iran, Assyrians continue to leave the country because of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the institution of the Shari'aa Islamic Law as the law of the land. There were 50,000 Assyrians in Iran prior to the 1979 revolution; today there are less than 10,000 left.

The 1991 Gulf War

Over one million Iraqi refugees found refuge in Jordan, Syria, Turkey and Iran due to the 1991 Gulf War. Once again, we witnessed the media covering mainly the Kurdish refugees and their camps in Turkey and ignored tens of thousands of Assyrian refugees in Turkey, Syria and Jordan. The harsh embargo that ensued, forced tens of thousands of additional Assyrians to leave Iraq. Some of those refugees are still struggling daily for their survival in Jordan.

And Since the 2003 Gulf War

1. United States' Government inaction in northern Iraq indicates that the United States respects the will of the Kurdish political groups and leadership, but not the will of persecuted, vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities who seek to

- exercise their right to political, social and economic freedoms.
2. In the January 2005 Iraqi parliamentary elections, the Nineveh Plains area, a region with the highest concentration of minorities such as ChaldoAssyrians, Shabaks, and Yezidis, was disenfranchised. A Major of the United States Army confirmed that the Peshmerga (irregular Kurdish forces) denied the Nineveh Plains ballot boxes and in Ba'sheqa, the one area where the US army could get ballot boxes, the Peshmerga entered the town, confiscated the boxes and returned them full. This was a formative experience for Iraq's Christians, particularly those of the Nineveh Plains. The denial of such a fundamental right, which is supposed to be the core of the liberation of Iraq and the bringing of democracy, left the community entirely scarred. Of course, their protests (in Iraq and internationally, including in the US), were dismissed. This unfair and illegal treatment of people in an area tied closely to their ancestral identity, rich in their distinct religious and ethnic history, was a powerful message by Barazani's KDP group and by the US administration.
 3. What happened next is that voter fraud and intimidation took place again during the October 2005 referendum, and the December 2005 second Iraqi parliamentary elections.
 4. The Nineveh Plains and areas within the Kurdish Regional Government's jurisdiction are also suffering from economic discrimination and suffocation in terms of reconstruction and development, which further fuels soft ethnic cleansing. The funding that does arrive to ChaldoAssyrian towns and villages comes with political conditions. The clearest condition is that beneficiaries must become supporters of the ruling-KDP party. Indeed, even gainful employment comes with the precondition that one must become a KDP member or supporter.

5. Discrimination by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) authorities is one factor, but sadly, this is matched by USG discrimination in the use of funding. Reports from civil society and human rights groups assert the lack of any real USG spending in minority communities, particularly the ChaldoAssyrian areas of the Nineveh Plains.
6. The Nineveh Plains requires a legitimate, formal local police force, drawn from the local community. It is essential for providing the necessary security for vulnerable minorities such as Christian ChaldoAssyrians, Shabaks and Yezidis. It is also entirely in step with US strategic interests in that area of Iraq, particularly in relation to the expanding threat of radicalism from Mosul and the destabilizing pressures of the KRG from the north. But, the KDP blocked the formation of that local police force repeatedly, despite the fact that hiring over 700 police was approved by the Iraqi government. After persistent pressure from the Diaspora Assyrians and the Assyrian Democratic Movement, 300 police were finally hired.
7. KDP interests are outlined in a simple article of the KRG's Constitution, Art. 2 that says the Nineveh Plains shall be absorbed into the Kurdish Region in Iraq. The Nineveh Plains towns and villages are part of Nineveh Governorate and should be treated as a special administrative region. This region is special due to its multinational and religious nature and that under Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution such administrative region for the ChaldoAssyrians is granted.
8. ChaldoAssyrians are "particularly targeted" according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Shabaks, Yezidis, Armenians, Turkmens, and Mandaean face similar conditions. Christian Iraqis constitute a vastly disproportionate amount of Iraq's refugee and IDPs crisis. As early as mid-2005, UNHCR began reporting that Christians constitute 36 percent of registered refugees. The figure declined to roughly 20 percent, still far exceeding their

proportion of the population. Some areas are catastrophic. In Dohuk Governorate, for example, UNHCR report that out of the 12,905 IDPs families, 85 percent are Christians.

9. On July 22, 2008, an Iraqi Provincial Elections Law passed in parliament. The ChaldoAssyrians were marginalized again. Article 24, section 2 names Arabs, Kurds and Turkomans as the only ethnic people of Kirkuk, while referring to the ethnic ChaldoAssyrians as "Christians."

While there is a genuine suffering by Iraqis in general; however, a silent and targeted genocide against the Assyrian Christians is being committed in the center of this larger picture of distress.

The Future

Due to the continuous policy of undermining Assyrian existence and soft ethnic cleansing by Kurds and Arabs and other serious problems, Assyrian advocacy groups, intellectuals, and civic and political organizations have presented specific demands. These include, among others:

1. The U.S. administration should reach out to the legitimate representatives of the Assyrian community in order to understand the real volatile situation of the Christians in Iraq. The U.S. Government must press the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government in a sustained and determined manner to end practices that are marginalizing the ChaldoAssyrian people and discriminate against them and against other minorities.
2. International and human rights organizations must monitor the upcoming census and elections in Iraq in order to safeguard the rights of the Assyrian people. We do not want interference by the Kurds such as that during the 2005 Iraqi parliamentary elections, where the Kurds rigged the votes.

3. Funds for Assyrian regions should concentrate on infrastructure projects such as domestic water networks, developing road, electrical power supplies, sewage and water infrastructure, irrigation channels, health care and medicines, cultural centers and not only churches.
4. Allow the Assyrian schools to advance and allow Assyrians to print their own material and not force them to study a twisted version of history that they impose on the students. Allocate more money to build more schools of various levels, provide more buses, dorms, student assistance, etc.
5. Governing authorities should exemplify the desire of separating Church/Mosque and State by directing funding for local governments services through legitimate civic and political bodies instead of clergymen or councils formed under the auspices of clergymen.
6. When referring to Iraqi ethnic groups, there should not be a classification of some being major while others being minor. All ethnic groups, and religious groups as well for that matter, should be mentioned equally and none should be marginalized at the expense of the other in both Iraqi federal and Kurdish regional constitutions.
7. Assyrians must be recognized as the indigenous people of Iraq and the UN special laws in that respect must apply to them.
8. If the Iraqi constitution is to state that no law should interfere with the Islamic Law of Shari'aa, then a safeguard provision must be added that no law must interfere with all the other religions in Iraq as well. The Islamic Law does not speak about rights; it is rather a system of orders and prohibitions. There is no democracy in Islam. Therefore, the U.S. government and the international community should invoke universal human rights standards as the basis for a model constitution.
9. End all traces of Arabization and Kurdification policies. This should include the revision of the current twisted Iraqi and

- Kurdish history curriculum, which should be developed and approved by an unbiased committee of scholars and historians.
10. Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution must not only be interpreted as normalization of conditions of Kurdish towns and villages that have been Arabized, but it must normalize the situation of Assyrian regions that have been Arabized and most importantly been Kurdified, including lands and villages in Dohuk Governorate. The KDP publicize that 10,000s of Christians are being welcomed in the safety of the Kurdish region in the north, however, the Kurds hide the fact that multiples of those are leaving the country all together due to the policies of illegal land seizures.
 11. Guarantee the ChaldoAssyrians the right of self-administration on their historic ancestral lands in the Nineveh Plains of Telkaif, Hamdaniya and Shikhan districts has been proposed and this region should continue to be linked to Iraq's central government. This right is granted by Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution. The Nineveh Plains Administrative Unit policy is necessary to avert the ChaldoAssyrians total cleansing from their indigenous homeland.
 12. The U.S. Government must stop the effort by the KRG to expand its existing borders to include the Nineveh Plains, because the Kurdish plans would deny the ChaldoAssyrians the chance to determine their own future. Such a fundamental right cannot be denied.
 13. The US Government must begin acknowledging the escalating minority crisis in Iraq. 1 in 3 Christian ChaldoAssyrians is a refugee and an even greater percentage are IDPs. By September 2006, the ChaldoAssyrian NGOs lost track of the number of the IDPs in the Nineveh Plains when the number exceeded 10,000 families. By every definition, an ethno-religious cleansing is taking place in Iraq. Mass resettlement is one option, while the other is

providing meaningful opportunities through local development of the Nineveh Plains for the ChaldoAssyrians and for the Shabaks and Yezidis as well. Material support for the tens of thousands of internally displaced families, who fled to the Nineveh Plains and surrounding areas in the north is vital. A major step was taken in this respect in the House of Representatives on June 12, 2007. \$10 million dollars has been requested for getting essential aid to religious minority IDPs fleeing to the Nineveh Plains. This must be cleared and distributed. It must be followed by other similar allocations in funding in meeting the ever-increasing number of IDPs arriving to the Nineveh Plains.

Final thoughts

When it comes to the Assyrian genocide, each one of us has a story; a story he/she heard from his/her father, mother, uncle, aunt, grandfather or grandmother. I beg you to tell and document your stories, because when we do not, we are allowing the Assyrian tragedy and genocide to continue.

Assyrians are the indigenous people of Iraq. The Arabs, Kurds, and every other group in Iraq arrived over millennia later. The Assyrians continue to practice linguistic and cultural attributes of their pre-Christian heritage. The Assyrians have been suffering genocide and massacre on two ends: first for being a Christian minority in a Moslem world and secondly for being ethnically Assyrian in a dominant Arab/Kurdish/Turkish region. For Iraq to become a model state in the Middle East, the fundamentals of democracy must apply equally to all Iraqis. Arabs and Kurds alone must not dictate the wording of the constitution or dominate the policy making just because they make a majority and have military power through their militias. If Shari'a or the Islamic Law is adopted as the main source of legislation, it will set back America's

long-term strategy of strengthening moderate Muslim voices and signal a devastating defeat for U.S. goals of fostering freedom and democracy in the Muslim world. We should learn from the Iranian example.

On February 26, 2003, President George Bush said:

“The United States has no intention of determining the precise form of Iraq’s new government. That choice belongs to the Iraqi people. Yet, we will ensure that one brutal dictator is not replaced by another. All Iraqis must have a voice in the new government, and all citizens must have their rights protected.”

For a majority of Assyrians, this is an impressive statement, but it does not go beyond that, i.e., being a statement, ink on paper.

Democracy, in its basic form, becomes another form of autocracy if it stops at the limited definition of majority rules. While in a democratic society a majority may rule, it can only do so legitimately when minorities are respected and protected. The fact is that none of the powerful Arab (whether Shi'aa or Sunni), and Kurdish groups is ready to be part of a true democratic society or practice democracy with the presence of a reliable system of checks and balances. If the Iraqi constitution is to be based solely on the Shi'aa and Kurdish aspirations and ideologies, the Assyrians, the native people of Iraq, will inevitably continue their mass exodus until extinction. The disappearance of the Assyrian Christians from Iraq will be the greatest loss to Iraq's rich history.

Before I conclude, allow me to state that some 90 years ago, our forefathers tried hard to secure a national home for us, but they failed because they worked separately while trying to accomplish whatever it was on their individual minds. Thus, our adversaries

took advantage of that and undermined their efforts one by one and by using one leader against the other.

Today, history seems to be repeating itself; therefore, we all must work hard to prevent that past from repeating itself.

If there are a few words of wisdom that we must remind ourselves of all the time, allow me to end by saying:

"United we stand ... divided we fall."

Blessed be the souls of our martyrs.

Thank you



Mr. Ishmael Younan, Mr. Frederick Aprim, Mr. Ishmail Daniel (ADM representative in Canada), and Dr. Goliat Neesan Ph.D.



Frederick Aprim (left) and Fil Isaac at the Assyrian Genocide Awareness Day (August 7th) in Toronto, Canada, on August 10, 2008.