

“A Kurdistan For All”, a Kurdish Propaganda Sponsored by the Kurdish Authorities

By Fred Aprim
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Earlier this year, the authorities in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq sponsored a publication titled “A Kurdistan for All – Embracing Faith and Diversity”. The book is intended to be a pure propaganda for the Kurdish region.

The Kurdish region President Nechirvan Barzani contributed to the book with a foreword in which he wrote, “Developed over generations, our culture of coexistence is not new. The seeds of multiculturalism were planted many centuries ago by our forefathers who paved the way for the harmonious society we live in today.”

Mr. Nechirvan has short memory for he has forgotten the separate massacres of hundreds of thousands of Assyrians and Yezidis by Kurdish warlords Bedr Khan Beg and Mohammad Pasha of Rawanduz between 130 and 180 years.

Later, Nechirvan wrote, “Our land is part of ancient Mesopotamia, the oldest cradle of civilization where societies and their religions began and evolved over thousands of years. Since 1991 when the doors to our future opened wider, we have begun to examine our origins from the dawn of history and to value the evolution of our rich cultural heritage.”

Mr. Nechirvan is playing with words, misleading the readers and insinuating that Kurds were part of Mesopotamia from ancient times. Historically, northern Iraq was never a Kurdish land – it is historic Assyria. The Kurds were neither part of this land nor part of the cradle of civilization. The Kurds invaded this land few hundred years ago. Nechirvan like most Kurdish writers, so called historians and scholars have been involved in intensive campaigns to construct and fabricate a new history for the Kurdish people who are nomad Persians and their original land is the Zagros mountains between Turkey and Iran.

Christian leaders from various churches contributed to the Kurdish propaganda.

For example, on page 35, Mar Bashar Matti Warda, Archbishop of the Chaldean Catholic Church, wrote, “Legally, we share same rights and as citizens, are equal before the law. Inclusion and coexistence in the KRI assure Christians that they are safe here. As long as the courts and justice system exist, Christians feel an important degree of safety and security.”

On page 39, Archbishop Mar Abris Youkhanna of the Assyrian Church of the East wrote. “I was born in Erbil and grew up among Muslims, so I had more Muslim friends than Christian ones. When I was going to school, the neighborhood where we lived was like a single family. I don’t recall any sort of discrimination against me or my faith during that time. Our religious identities were not even a topic of discussion. Here, everyone accepts each other as they are and there was mutual understanding between us. Nowadays, we still have this mutual respect between communities. However, there are social elements who are not happy with multi-culturalism in Kurdistan. We need to keep an eye on them, and not allow them to poison our society with their fundamentalist ideas. The Kurdish government is doing everything it can to curb their radicalism, and we do enjoy peaceful coexistence in Kurdistan, ...”

Also on page 44, Mar Nicodemus Daoud Matti Sharaf, Metropolitan Archbishop of Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese of Mosul, Kirkuk, Kurdistan Region, said, “We don't see any security problems for Christians here. If you want to judge a society, you should observe how its minorities are treated.”

Anyone who claims that there is real acceptance of Kurds for other ethnic groups in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq is utterly lying. The Kurdish leaders have been very successful in highlighting the religious freedom issue and have used it as their winning card presented to the world. However, People's identity is not based on their religion. Faith is just one aspect of identifying people. The essence of identification are race and ethnicity, which have been deliberately ignored and concealed. To imply that justice is present and the courts fight equally for all is a lie. Why do the courts in the Kurdish region permit the Islamization of minor children when a Christian father converts to Islam? Lastly but not least, the Assyrians are not a minority in northern Iraq. The Assyrians are the indigenous people of the land and they, as an indigenous people, are severely mistreated by the continuous confiscation of their lands and control of their villages. The demographic change in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq continues even this moment.

Politicians as well were ensured to participate in the propaganda campaign.

On page 53, Fawzi Hariri, Chief of Staff of the Kurdistan Region Presidency, wrote, “The Christian community in the KRI has been here for as long as the Kurdish community. We live together, fight together, and suffer together. Both Kurds and Christians have faced repression throughout Iraq's history.”

Why does Hariri mention the Kurds as ethnic group next to Christians as a religious group? Hariri must either say, Muslims and Christians or say Kurds and Assyrians. Why mix the ethnicity of one group next to the religion of the other?

He later wrote, “The Christian community in the KRI has been here for as long as the Kurdish community. We live together, fight together, and suffer together. Both Kurds and Christians have faced repression throughout Iraq's history. Therefore, the aspirations of Christians are very similar to those of Kurds which is why many Christians joined Kurdistan's political movement. For instance, my late father left his job as a primary school teacher in 1963 and joined the Kurdistan Democratic Party.” He later said, “We are proud of our successes in preserving and strengthening multi-culturalism and religious freedom in Kurdistan.”

There is no need for any further comments on my side here. His words speak loud for themselves.

The propaganda for the Kurdish region continues. Next, Ano Abdoka, a member of the Chaldean Catholic Church and Minister of Transport and Communications in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), writes on page 55, “The diversity and inclusion that defines Kurdistan is unique not only in the Middle East, but in the world. For hundreds of years, there has been peaceful coexistence between different religious and ethnic groups here”. He later wrote on page 57, “In Barzan, according to Sheikh Ahmed's teachings all members of religious and ethnic groups have equal rights, women and men are equal, women cannot not be married without their approval, and animals and nature must be treated with respect.” ... “This movement became the foundation of Barzani's values, which were translated into other languages under the revolutionary leadership of Mullah Mustafa Barzani. But these were not only Kurdish ideals. Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syriacs, Jews, Yezidis, Kakais, and Armenians joined our cause.”

Abdoka intentionally ignores to recall the massacres of hundreds of thousands of Assyrians and Yezidis by Kurdish warlords Mohammad Pasha and Bedr Khan Beg. He ignores to mention that the Kurdish leaders have taken advantage of loopholes in the electoral law which enabled the Kurdistan Democratic

Party (KDP) to exploit the system and steal seats reserved for the Christians as part of the quota system. He ignores to mention that the KDP removed forcefully two Assyrian elected mayors and replaced them with mayors loyal to the KDP. He ignores to mention about the Assyrian lands that Kurds continue to usurp with the silence of the Kurdish authorities. I am not sure which cause he is referring to by saying “our cause”. As a member of the KDP, Abdoka is surely referring to the Kurdish cause.

Many other selected personalities from within the Kurdish region and from around the world took part in this propaganda campaign that concentrated on the topic of religious freedom in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq. The reason is obvious. This never ending propaganda of the so-called Kurdish tolerance of Christians is to gain the world’s admiration and sympathy which with time will gain momentum for the ultimate goal of establishing the illusive Kurdistan on the rooted historic lands of Assyria.

The Book failed to address the universal rights (declared by the UN charters and declarations) of the Assyrians as an ethnic group and indigenous to northern Iraq.

Do your part fellow Assyrians. Respond to Kurdish leaders lies. Stop being passive. Expose the Kurdish politician propaganda.