

## Frankfurt Conference and the Endangered Peoples of Iraq

By Fred Aprim  
April 20, 2008

On April 11-12, 2008, a conference titled "A Professional Political Conference to Discuss the Situation of the Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Iraq" convened in Frankfurt, Germany. Selected representatives from Iraq's minorities, including Assyrians, Turkomans, Armenians, Yezidis, Shabaks, Mandeans, and Faili Kurds were invited. The conference was initiated by the Society for Threatened Peoples ([www.gfbv.de](http://www.gfbv.de)) and under the auspices of the German based "Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty".

The Society for Threatened Peoples lacked transparency when preparing and organizing this conference. The society neither notified nor invited true representatives of the Assyrian people; representatives that the people trust or have voted for in Iraqi national or Kurdish regional elections. This proves that the said society is bias and has surrendered to political pressures and has turned into a tool to legalize the pressures and trespassing against the Assyrian people. Therefore, the society has lost its credibility in defending Iraq's endangered peoples and one has to wonder about its real motives.

In its final statement, the Frankfurt Conference asked for the following, among other secondary demands, from the Iraqi Federal and Kurdish regional constitutions:

1. Institute of the principle of the separation of State and Religion,
2. Confirm the political, cultural and administrative rights for the lesser groups and their right for self-rule within the united Federal Iraq.
3. Complete implementation for Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution and the removal of all traces of Arabization.
4. Protect the lesser minorities and guarantee their representation in legislative, administrative and judiciary branches and in all aspects of life.
5. Reconsider the school curriculum in Iraqi schools.

Regarding the Iraqi displaced and refugees, the conference:

- a) Rejected actions by European governments in the deportation of refugees based on the pretext that Iraq was safe after the fall of Saddam,
- b) Asked to assist Iraqi refugees in Iraq's neighboring states,
- c) Asked to support the displaced Iraqis within Iraq economically, civically and health wise,
- d) Asked to assist and support the KRG to overcome its heavy burden for hosting displaced Iraqis from other parts of Iraq.

We want to clarify that certain parts of these demands are already instituted in the Iraqi Constitution. Article 125 states: "*This Constitution shall guarantee the administrative, political, cultural, and educational rights of the various nationalities, such as Turkomen, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and all other constituents, and this shall be regulated by law.*" Additionally, to have representatives in the various legislative, administrative and judiciary branches of government is a general right instituted in both Iraqi Federal and Kurdish regional constitutions. This right, however, would be almost impossible to sustain, because these minorities might have individuals representing them today in those branches of government in order to impress and silence the international observers, but then be dismissed tomorrow as the spotlight over Iraq has faded away. Those individuals might retire as well and not be replaced by members from the same background. Additionally, the conference addressed the Iraqi schools curriculum, however, it failed to address revising the curriculum in the Kurdish region public schools, as the Assyrian history of northern Iraq is completely kurdified. Lastly, but not least, we have addressed the issue of self-rule and explained that such governing system is almost impossible to implement as neither Iraqi nor Kurdish current constitutions have any clauses in them to support such concept, unless revisions are made to the constitutions. However, we explained that a new governorate or region for the lesser minorities (Nineveh Plains and other localities is a good candidate) is possible and guaranteed by Articles 116, 117, 119, and 122 of the Iraqi Constitution.

The conference was a good propaganda for the Kurds, as the Kurdish regional government (KRG) was thanked and appreciated on several occasions in the final statement and in most speeches by the invited guests, including that of Emmanuel Khoshaba, Assistant Secretary General of the Assyrian Patriotic Party (APP), who along with Romeo Hakkari of the Bet Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP) were the two Assyrians invited to the conference representing the Assyrians. Of course, Nimrod Baito Youkhanna, Secretary General of the APP is a Minister in the KRG and Romeo Hakkari is a Member of Kurdish regional parliament who won his seat being on the Kurdish unified slate. Both Nimrod and Romeo have obligations to the KRG and to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). APP's Emmanuel Khoshaba did not mention a single word about the trespassing of Kurds against Assyrian lands and villages or about the Kurdified Assyrian villages in Dohuk or Arbil in northern Iraq. It is interesting to know that Nimrod's brother Rev. Emmanuel Baito Youkhanna was involved in the preparations and invitations of the conference.