

## The Dohuk Assyrian Archaeological Park

Fred Aprim  
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The authorities in the Kurdish controlled region in northern Iraq (Historic Assyria) are planning to open a large archaeological park in Dohuk governorate. The park will include five archaeological sites that date back to the ancient Assyrian Empire. The sites are in Khannis, Faida, Bendwaya and Gerewana.

Last year, Dr. Bekas Brifkani, Director of Antiquity and Heritage in Dohuk Governorate, announced that the first phase of the park was opened in Khannis. It was uncovered through the collaboration of an Italian archaeologists group from the University of Udinein.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup><https://www.basnews.com/en/babat/778952>

The first inaugurated site is 2700 years old from the Neo-Assyrian period and consists of a 10 kilometers (about 6 miles) long irrigation canal. The canal includes 13 sculptures engraved on its walls. The carvings at the site were discovered during several stages of excavations.



According to Dr. Brifkani, the authorities are planning to use the expanded park to promote tourism in northern Iraq. Assyrians wonder how the Kurdish authorities will use these additional inflow of funds.

The US has led in efforts to preserve cultural heritage of the oppressed ethnic and religious groups in Iraq.<sup>2</sup> The Assyrian archaeological remains self-define the indigenous Assyrian people of Iraq, specially those in the northern region. The US and its European allies must take the necessary steps to ensure that Assyrians are not only involved in preserving their oral traditions, tombs, churches, libraries or digitizing heritage artifacts and activities assisted through the US Aid, but also be physically involved with the archaeological sites. As the authorities inaugurated the first phase of the archaeological park aforementioned in Dohuk, Assyrians must be allowed to take an integral part in the larger park project.

Also, as heirs of the Assyrian civilization and indigenous to northern Iraq, the Assyrians have the right to share the tourism proceeds from these archaeological sites. A reasonable part of these proceeds could be used to open new libraries in the Assyrian regions of Sapna, Barwari Bala, Nahla and the Nineveh Plain, enhance and improve the current Assyrian teaching schools in northern Iraq that are run by the Assyrian Aid Society (AAS), and include Assyrian administrators to assist in running the park. The US and the Europeans partners involved in these projects must ensure that the parks and the other ongoing projects are named properly and displayed accurately as being Assyrian unlike few site names that are mislabeled and wrongfully presented by the Kurdish authorities.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.usaid.gov/iraq/fact-sheets/preserving-cultural-heritage-minority-communities-iraq?fbclid=IwAR2wUm02MTjVjPcOpErVpYoa\\_N\\_E\\_RdantL2gAF6LXJI1wET2vsw0UR0NsM](https://www.usaid.gov/iraq/fact-sheets/preserving-cultural-heritage-minority-communities-iraq?fbclid=IwAR2wUm02MTjVjPcOpErVpYoa_N_E_RdantL2gAF6LXJI1wET2vsw0UR0NsM)