

Restructuring the Assyrian Centers of Power in Northern Iraq

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There is a reason why Patriarch Mar Dinkha took David Rowil (Royel) under his wings and was personally behind every single ordination from sub-deacon (1991) to David's consecration as bishop of the Diocese of California (2008).

Born on July 4, 1975 to his parents Koresh and Flourence Royel, Chicago, Illinois.

Ordained sub-deacon in October of 1991 and ordained deacon by His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch on January 19, 1992. Mar Gewargis Cathedral, Chicago, Illinois.

Ordained priest by His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch on May 23, 1999. Mar Gewargis Cathedral, Chicago, Illinois.

Ordained cor-bishop by His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch on July 15, 2006. Mar Gewargis Cathedral, Chicago, Illinois

Ordained archdeacon by His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch on November 23, 2008. Mar Yosip Khnanisho Church, San Jose, California

Consecrated bishop for the Diocese of California by His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch on November 30, 2008. Mar Zaia Cathedral, Modesto, California.

The above information was part of a pamphlet distributed at the Mar Zaia Cathedral on November 30, 2008 for Mar Awa's consecration as bishop

The question is, why David Royel?

The tribal Assyrians of the Harir region, represented in the late Franso Hariri (long-standing Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP] official, head of the KDP block of the Kurdistan Region Parliament and earlier an official in the Kurdish Peshmerga) and his son Fawzi today, the ever presence of empowered Kristo, Ninos Nimrod (media director of KDP), Ameel Mansour Hariri, Khaleed Albert (KDP member and Director of the Christian Endowment Dept.) and others that are heavily supported by the Barzani regime. Assyrian analysts suggest that Mar Dinkha had directions from several Assyrian families, including the Harir region families and others in the US to ensure David's (later Mar Awa) ascension to the church leadership.

The question is, Why.

We must consider the fact that the late Patriarch Mar Dinkha (with his tribal affiliation to the Harir region in Erbil) was a strong supporter of the Barzani family since 1992's creation of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). In fact, since the early 1970s, Mar Dinkha repeatedly met with the brothers Masoud (Masroor's father) and Idris (Nechervan's father) during his time as bishop of Iran.¹ Additionally, a report indicates that Mar Dinkha, who was close to the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA), left his diocese in Tehran, traveled to Galala² in northern Iraq and met with Mustafa Barzani during the Kurdish uprising. The report indicates also that Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun after hearing of the visit reprimanded Mar Dinkha and forbade him from ever leaving his diocese and making such connections in the future.

We must also consider the fact that certain members, (not as an institution) of the AUA, strongly pushed for the consecration of Mar Dinkha as patriarch (1976).³ Those same members of the AUA and/or many members of their families had strong relations in Stanislaus County with then Bishop Mar Awa of California as they pushed for his selection as patriarch.

With the support of the powerful Hariri Assyrian families, the Nochiya tribe, the backing of the Assyrian Church of the East patriarch, and the creation of a pseudo Chaldean Democratic Party, after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq under Abd al-Ahad Afram Sawa, which was part of the Democratic Alliance of Kurdistan, and finally the creation of the al-Majlis al-Sha'bi (People's Council) under Sarkis Aghajan, the Kurds secured the control of the political and religious aspects of the Assyrian affairs within the KRI.

This was not all. The Kurds and their Assyrian alliances were planning ahead. They needed the future patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East to follow in the footsteps of their ideal friend Mar Dinkha. We witnessed how David was ordained Archdeacon in Nov. 23 and soon after consecrated bishop only a week later on Nov. 30, 2008. The powerful Harir Assyrians and few wealthy families in the US did not want to leave this consecration in the hands of whoever succeeded the aging and ailing Mar Dinkha while David was not ready yet for the church leadership.

Israel, Kurds and Assyrians

We also know that Israel is a strong supporter of the Barzanis and the Kurds. Are Mar Awa's 2 unannounced visits to Israel (2011 & 2016) interesting to explore? The available reports describe the visits as a devotional church pilgrimages focused on spiritual sites and the study of certain Syriac manuscripts without any mention of formal meetings. However, it is worth mentioning that according to jns.org, after Mar Awa's 2016 visit to Israel, he "proclaimed that he wished to see a free Assyria become a strong ally with Israel. According to the bishop, Israel would serve as a successful model of statehood for Assyria, while the Jewish state would gain a

¹ Personal communication with an Assyrian who was living in Tehran at the time.

² Galala was the headquarters of Mustafa Barzani during the uprising.

³ 1975: From The Public Records of The Trial Proceedings of The Assassination of His Holiness, [Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII](https://www.atour.com/history/1900/20000717a.html). Accessed September 17, 2025 <https://www.atour.com/history/1900/20000717a.html>

strong ally in an increasingly tumultuous region.”⁴ Is this related to the Israel visit by certain Australia members of the AUA that caused a division in that organization?

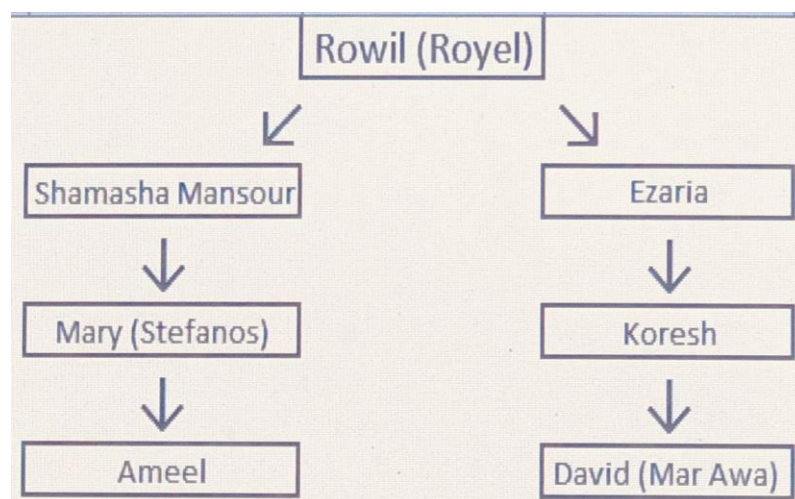
Important Hariri Family connections

David Royel (later Patriarch Mar Awa) is the son of Koresh. Koresh is the son of Ezaria. And Ezaria is Royel’s son. Ezaria had a brother, Shamasha Mansour.

Shamasha Mansour was a learned Assyrian, an author, well known among the members of the Assyrian Cultural Club of Baghdad. He studied in a Catholic seminary (school).

Shamasha Mansour had 7 children, including Mary who married Stefanos (Estefanos) Malham of Harir. Mary and Stefanos had 4 children, including Ameal Hariri, an advisor for the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Ameal’s directions as a powerful advisor in the said ministry dictate finances and budgets related to Christian affairs, including churches, clergy, etc.

Meaning, Mar Awa and Ameal Hariri are real cousins.



The Barzani’s agenda has been to support the Syriac-speaking churches, their leaders and those whom the churches promote. This keeps the Western Christian groups content, but does the Barzani genuinely wish to deal with the Assyrians beyond a Christian minority?⁵ The Barzani

⁴ Martin, Bradley. “Israel as a model for Christian statehood in the Middle East”. Published December 23, 2016. Accessed September 17, 2025. <https://www.jns.org/israel-as-a-model-for-christian-statehood-in-the-middle-east/>

⁵ Rubin, Michael. “Stop giving Iraqi Kurds a free pass on religious freedom”. January 24, 2023. Accessed September 18, 2025. <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/2568944/stop-giving-iraqi-kurds-a-free-pass-on-religious-freedom/>

never wished or desired to deal with the politically independent Assyrian leaders, thinkers, and nationalists. Have we forgotten the Peshmerga's betrayal of the Assyrians and Yezidis during ISIS's invasion of Iraq?⁶ What is the Barzani doing to deal with the Kurdish Neo-Nazi group that is threatening to exterminate the Assyrians?⁷

Why do you think that the Barzani made all the arrangements for Sam Darmo to travel to northern Iraq at this critical time and be entertained by the Kurdish leaders and appear to be making things get facilitated and accomplished?

1. Mr. Darmo is a man steered by Mar Awa Royel, Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East.
2. The Simele memorial has been demanded and/or requested by many individuals and groups, including the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) since 1992, later by Sarkis Aghajan, Clara Odisho, member of the Previous session of Kurdish Regional Parliament and more recently by Dr. James Hassado Haido. Interestingly, Dr. Hassado's request for land and monument was agreed upon in principle a few months ago, but the official KRG approval was delayed until the arrival of Darmo. Do you wonder why. By the way, the KDP forced Dr. Hassado to run against Mr. William (Khlapel) Bnyameen for the Dohuk seat in the previous KRI elections and many Kurds voted for Hassado per directions from the Barzani officials, which secured his victory.
3. The November 11, 2025 Iraqi elections are approaching and the Barzani is trying to score additional points with this political stunt and marginalize the independent Assyrian groups.
4. In 2022, Mr. William Bnyameen received a formal invitation to visit Washington DC. He met with several US congressional personnel and presented the Assyrian case of land grabbing and other issues to members of US Congress. He was asked to meet with Bayan Abdul Rahman (KRG representative in Washington at the time) and Desko Sherwani (who accompanied Darmo during his visit to northern Iraq). Mr. Bnyameen presented a file that included all the land grabbing documents to the two Kurdish officials. He was promised by the two officials to look into those cases and resolve them. We are still waiting for a resolution. How many promises have various Assyrian personnel and groups gotten from the Kurdish officials?
5. Most critically, is Hassado's 0.5 donem versus Darmo's 1.5 donem land size approval for a monument in remembrance of Simele massacre what the Assyrian national struggle is about? Northern Iraq is historic Assyria. Most of this land has been confiscated and controlled by the Kurds illegally with the silence and support of the authorities. The Kurds are not proving anything by returning (if that happens in actuality) a mere 1.5 donems out from the hundreds of villages and more than half of the KRI region that they

⁶ Aprim, Fred. "Kurdish TV Series The Night of Fallen or the Night of the Fall (ليلة السقوط)". Published October 29, 2023. Accessed September 17, 2025. <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2023/The%20Night%20of%20Fall.pdf>

⁷ Aprim, Fred. "Neo-Nazi Kurdish Hawpa Group Threatens to Exterminate Assyrians". Published November 2023. Accessed September 18, 2025. <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2023/Hawpa.pdf>

stole from the Assyrians since the creation of the Iraq Republic in 1921. In fact, according to Mr. Bnyameen, the court cases that have been ruled in favor of the Assyrian owners and provided in the link below are less than 1% of the actual Assyrian lands that have been confiscated by the Kurdish authorities, tribes and powerful personnel with connections to KRG officials.

A message to the US State Dept. and Mr. Masoud Barzani

Diversity, coexistence and true democracy are not only based on symbolic representation, on a few seats in parliament allocated to “Christians” or on the parade of a few comedians in the Kurdish presidential palaces. Coexistence and fraternity is not about building huge empty churches while people suffer economic hardship. Coexistence means real participation in the administrative, political, economic, cultural and social aspects of the governmental system and society. Coexistence means implementing measures that ensure not only the survival but also the prosperity of all people, and yes, including the indigenous Assyrians in their ancestral lands in northern Mesopotamia (including northern Iraq). Brotherhood does not mean favoring a few Assyrian individuals and families over others.

Kurdish leaders have known for years about all the grievances Assyrians have faced and continue to face today when it comes to Assyrian land grabs. Why do we only ever hear promises of justice? ^{8 9} Most importantly, isn't it appropriate to recognize the 1933 Simele Massacre first before approving the appropriation of a land for a monument.

Finally, many Kurdish leaders in their verbal communications keep declaring that Assyrians are the indigenous people of Iraq. If Assyrians and Kurds are really brothers, as many keep claiming, then the prime minister of the KRG and the president of the KRI should officially declare Assyrians as the indigenous people of northern Iraq and open the doors for the Iraqi government to do the same.¹⁰

⁸ https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-10/aasi_upr34_irq_e_main.pdf

⁹ https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-10/aasi_upr34_irq_e_annexe1.pdf

¹⁰ Aprim, Fred. “Iraq Must Recognize Assyrians as its Indigenous People”. Published August 10, 2022. Accessed September 16, 2025.

<https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2022/Assyrians%20are%20Indigenous%20to%20Iraq2.pdf>