
ISDP NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

US Government 2007 Human Rights Report Verifies Targeting of Iraq's ChaldoAssyrians

Washington: March 12, 2008 – The US Department of State's (DoS) 2007 International Human Rights Report verifies the ethno-religious targeting of Iraq's Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriacs and other minorities.

Ethnic-based targeting from Kurdish authorities was acknowledged. The report states that, *“During the year discrimination against ethnic minorities was a problem. There were numerous reports of Kurdish authorities discriminating against minorities in the North, including Turkmen, Arabs, and Christians. According to these reports, authorities denied services to some villages, arrested minorities without due process and took them to undisclosed locations for detention, and pressured minority schools to teach in the Kurdish language.*

“During the year there were allegations that the KRG continued to engage in discriminatory behavior against religious minorities. Members of these groups living in areas north of Mosul, such as Yazidis and Christians, asserted that the KRG encroached on their property and illegally built Kurdish settlements on the confiscated land.”

Religiously-motivated persecution was also recognized, with the report stating that, *“The constitution proclaims Islam as the official religion of the state. While providing for full religious rights for all individuals “such as Christians, Yazidis, and Mandaean Sabeans,” the constitution also stipulates that no law may be enacted that contradicts the established provisions of Islam. While the government generally respected the right of individuals to worship according to thought, conscience, and belief, private conservative and radical Islamic elements continued to exert tremendous pressure on other groups to conform to extremist interpretations of Islam's precepts. [...] Members of the Christian community indicated that they were targeted throughout the year, particularly by Sunni-affiliated terrorists.”*

The US Government continues to perpetuate a myth that there is equality in persecution in today's Iraq. This obscures the deliberate targeting of Iraq's Christian Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriacs. ISDP is working constantly to break down this myth and for the US Government to acknowledge that particular targeting of Iraq's defenseless minorities is very real and requires a focused policy to prevent their annihilation.

ISDP Project Director Michael Youash stated, “This report has gone further than past reports in identifying the types of attacks from Islamists and insurgents on the one hand,

and authoritarian pressures by Kurdish authorities on the other. ISDP will continue to communicate all forms of attacks and human rights violations against defenseless minorities to relevant arms of the US Government. We trust that ISDP's work and that of countless activists and human rights groups is bearing fruit and congratulate everyone working on these issues."

The report is far from perfect, however. It diminishes the responsibility of Iraqi authorities with respect to the targeting of Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac Christians. Additionally, it identifies religious targeting within a broader trend of communal violence including Iraq's Shi'a and Sunni Arabs. "This is unacceptable. Christian ChaldoAssyrians have no militia, no deterrent capacity, and no control of political or geographic territory capable of posing a threat to others. The attacks on this community are purely malicious and it is sad that such targeting is associated with a broader trend, obscuring the ethno-religious cleansing of this indigenous people." said Youash.

ISDP's human rights and governance work (developed with a network of activists and representatives in Iraq) will continue, and increase the number and quality of human rights reports reaching Washington's policy-makers. The ultimate goal is for the US Government to recognize the Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac people's crisis and form a policy to reverse the wounds they and other minorities have suffered since the liberation of Iraq.

Contact: info@iraqdemocracyproject.org

Tel: (202) 378-8082

Fax: 1 (800) 355-7228

Web: www.iraqdemocracyproject.org

The Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project's (ISDP) research and policy analysis maintains that ChaldoAssyrians and Iraq's other, *real* minorities (e.g. Turkmens, Shabaks, Yezidis, Mandaeans and others) are the best variable for leveraging the development of a genuine and sustainable democracy over the long term.

For the United States, Iraq's *real* minorities are also the truest '*moderates*' as defined by the National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terror. As such, they are a key element in the fight against extremism in Iraq and the Middle East as a whole.

ISDP works to ensure that these minorities are factored into policy development accordingly through research and policy analysis for all relevant stakeholders.