



ASSYRIAN UNIVERSAL ALLIANCE

ܐܘܪܝܝܢܐ ܘܢܝܘܝܐ ܕܐܠܡܝܢܐ

Member: Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (UNPO)

The Assyrian Universal Alliance and the Iraqi Constitution

Iraq's draft constitution is up for ratification through a national referendum on October 15. The draft guarantees a wide range of individual liberties and rights in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, it lays the foundation for building an Iraq based on the principles of democracy and human rights, and provides for an Iraq governed by the rule of law and independent judiciary. However, the draft does not meet the Assyrians' (also known as Chaldeans and Syriacs) ambitions as the indigenous people of Iraq, makes them into second-class citizens, and will affect the sovereignty of Iraq in the future. The Assyrian Universal Alliance, an international alliance of various establishments of the Assyrian people throughout the world, believes that the draft aborts the democratic process which Assyrians hoped for, and that our national rights are not completely recognized. Therefore, the Assyrian Universal Alliance rejects the draft constitution because several articles in the constitution are viewed negatively and lean toward ethnicity, religious and sectarian tendencies.

We had hoped for a democratic, pluralistic, secular and sovereign Iraq that will be constituted on principles of democracy, rule of law, and guarantee human rights and equality for all citizens irrespective of their ethnic background or religion. But the constitution prohibits the passage of any law that contradicts the undisputed rules of Islam, without specifying these rules in order to avoid any misinterpretation by different judges in the courts of law, and does not mention other religions in Iraq. There is no need to emphasize and signify one religion over the others, even if that religion is that of the vast majority of the Iraqis. We think that human rights should not be linked to Islamic Sharia law at all.

Furthermore, the preamble of the draft ignores the Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian and Babylonian civilizations that reflect the rich history and culture of Iraq, which is known as the cradle of civilization. The draft refers only to the Islamic identity and history of Iraq. Another statement in the preamble reads "*inspired by the suffering of Iraq's martyrs- Sunni and Shiite, Arab, Kurd and Turkomen, and the remaining brethren in all communities,*" the draft again fails to mention or name our martyrs. The Assyrian people have long suffered because of their religious and cultural identity. They have been deprived of their land and have been victim to several massacres and other kinds of oppression over the centuries. We reaffirm our conviction that rebuilding the Iraqi state institutions must be based on citizenship, efficiency, and integrity, and that allegiance should be to the state and not to religion or ethnicity.

The draft also ignores to mention or name all the national groups of Iraq, since the draft guarantees the administrative, political, cultural, and educational rights for various ethnicities and names a few of them only (Turkomen, Assyrians, and others) which still reflects that Iraq consists of mainly Arabs and Kurds and "other" minorities. The draft should stress that Iraqi people comprise many nationalities and recognize the legitimate national rights of all elements of its people and should be all mentioned in the same statement and category. In addition, the draft

divides our people into a variety of names contrary to the historical fact that all these names refer to one people. We are one people regardless of today's different and commonly used names such as Chaldeans, Siryans, Atoureen, and the new constitution must recognize and include us, the people of Assyria, in the new Iraq.

Finally, Federalism should not be for one part of Iraq but not for the rest of the country and it should not be only for the Kurds and Shiite but also for the Assyrians, Sunnis, Turkomen, and other smaller minorities. As a security for the future of Assyrians, the Christian indigenous people of Iraq, we request that the government of Iraq grant to the Assyrians an Assyrian administrative region on the land of their ancestors, Ashur.

In conclusion, we emphasize that the vision of the Assyrian people in a post-dictatorship democratic Iraq among other things includes: equality, human rights, constitutional recognition, representation in a democratic, secular and multiethnic government, the right to return to their homes and to their lands, allowance to practice and preserve their language, culture, and customs, to be free of political and religious persecution, and guarantees of the same national rights of autonomy and self-determination afforded any minority or other group within Iraq.

Executive Committee

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