

ASSYRIAN UNIVERSAL ALLIANCE

AUSTRALIA CHAPTER

Member: Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (UNPO)

PRESS RELEASE

Sydney - 19 December 2008

AUSTRALIA ASSISTS VICTIMS OF SECTARIAN VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRAQ

On Friday, 19 December 2008, The Hon. Stephen Smith MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs issued a media release announcing Australia's contribution of \$1 million in humanitarian assistance that will be provided through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Medical Corps (IMC).

This contribution will fund emergency provisions, medical support, reconstruction efforts and the tracking of families who have fled into neighbouring countries. It brings the total humanitarian assistance provided by the government of Australia to Ninewa Province to \$3 million. Funding for assistance to Ninewa Province is part of the Australian government's programme of humanitarian assistance and reconstruction in Iraq, and was announced in its 2008-2009 budget which totals \$140 million over three years. Australia is already providing \$2 million through the IMC to assist Iraqis in Ninewa Province who have suffered from violence. This funding is going toward emergency medical training, women's centres and mental health services for primary school-age children.

For the past six years, the Australia Chapter of the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) has communicated closely with high officials of the Australian government Authorities regarding the violent attacks in Iraq targeting religious places of worship, holy sites, and individual members of our indigenous Assyrian citizens of the country. In this connection, the AUA delegation met with The Hon. Stephen Smith MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs on Tuesday, 13 May 2008, presented the Minister with a detailed letter about the current situation in Iraq, requested support from the Australian government for a number of issues including immediate economic assistance to address the very basis of the acute humanitarian needs of the Assyrian refugee population – particularly assistance in establishing educational and medical care for the safety of children, elderly, orphans, disabled and severely impoverished families and individuals. We are pleased that our plea was given serious consideration and action has been taken to help the displaced Assyrians. Australia's endorsement is a sign of solidarity with the Christians of Iraq, and is appreciated by our Assyrian community.

On behalf of the Assyrian Universal Alliance-Australia Chapter and the Assyrian Australian community we thank The Hon. Stephen Smith MP for sincerity and effort to support the indigenous Assyrian rights in Iraq. We also extend our appreciation to The Hon. Chris Bowen MP, Assistant Treasurer, and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs, for organising this significant meeting and for his outstanding efforts over the years in raising the Assyrian issue with the Australian Government.

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For more information about the AUA meeting with the Foreign Minister please click here:
[AUA Australia meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs](#)