



Dutch Government: Aggressive and Inhumane Treatment of Chaldean Refugees

Amsterdam, Holland – 16 April, 2002 In an apparent move that reflects deep changes to Holland's image as a heaven for refugees, the Dutch authorities has started an aggressive campaign to forcefully deport Chaldean (including Assyrian and Syriac) Christian refugees, some of whom have been in the country since 1996.

So far, the Dutch government of Prime Minister Mr. Wim Kok has issued deportation orders to more than 160 Chaldean refugees who have been in the country anywhere between 2 - 6 years. Many have already been forcefully evicted from their homes and thrown literally into the streets in a move to pressure them to return to northern Iraq. An area proclaimed by the Dutch authorities to be a "Safe Heaven" for those Chaldean Christians, hence, the official reason why their applications for asylum were rejected.

The aggressive tactics employed by the police to implement those deportation orders came into the open last week when a Dutch TV cameraman caught a Chaldean mother and her two children being forcefully evicted from their home and thrown into the street. A Dutch policeman gave the reason for this harsh treatment bluntly as "You came from the street and to the street you shall go. Holland will offer you no shelter."

In reaction to this seemingly racist and clearly inhumane treatment by the Dutch authorities, several Chaldean and Dutch Christian groups decided to join efforts towards finding a just and lasting solution for those refugees. Both the Dutch Union for the Christians of the Middle East and Justitia Et Pax – Netherlands branch have written letters to several Dutch officials requesting a reversal of those orders and the issuance of a general amnesty for all Chaldean refugees in Holland. Meetings were also scheduled with Justice Minister Ms. Ella Kalsbeek and other officials to discuss and explain the dangers facing those

A refugee is a person who "owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

Definition of Refugees, Adopted in Geneva Convention in 1951

refugees if deported to what's called the "Safe Heaven" of northern Iraq.

Adding to those activities are efforts by Chaldean priests in Europe as well as members of the Founding Committee for the Chaldean National Congress around the world.

In reaction to the deportation orders of the Dutch authorities (also sent to several Kurds), the representative of the Kurdish Government in Europe wrote a letter stating that the Kurdish authorities would not be able to care for all refugees. That is, especially, those that have neither relatives in the "Safe Heaven" area nor the financial ability to cover their expenses for at least one full year.

The moves by the Dutch authorities seem to follow an increase, during the last few years, of Middle Eastern refugees entering the country illegally. However, what seem to concern humanitarian organizations are the methods employed in solving this problem as well as the official justifications given for forcefully deporting those refugees.

It's a known fact that the so-called "Safe

Heaven" is neither safe nor is a heaven for anybody, not even the Kurds for whom was originally established by the victorious allies during the 1991 Gulf War. Lately, several Kurdish officials were themselves the target of assassination attempts by a Bin Laden's alQaeda funded Kurdish group called "Jund al-Islam" ("Soldiers of Islam"). An extremist group that is applying same Taliban's anti-women rules in the areas under its control. A group also known for its open hostility towards Chaldean Christians who are termed as "kufar" (infidels).

Adding to this insecurity, are the continuous pressures exerted by the Kurds on the Chaldeans of the area. Acts like land confiscation, assassinations of activists, discouraging the teaching of the Chaldean language in Chaldean towns, as well as racist efforts to "Kurdify" those Chaldeans by denying their unique ethnicity and claiming them as "Christian Kurds". Acts that hardly support the claims of a "Safe Heaven" area nor that of the Kurdish authorities as being impartial custodians of all the inhabitants of the area under their control, being Kurds, Chaldeans, or Arabs .

Another problem with the claims of the Dutch authorities is that many of those Chaldean refugees came from parts of Iraq under the control of the Iraqi government of Mr. Saddam Hussein rather than that of the Kurdish authorities.

With the next Dutch general elections scheduled for 15 May, 2002 it's hoped that the government of Prime Minister Wim Kok reconsider its anti-refugees policies and attempt to solve their problem with what guarantees their safety and human rights. It's also hoped that it will heed the calls of humanitarian agencies and issue a general amnesty ruling similar to that issued in the United States couple of years ago and its successful implementation.

Chaldean News Agency

Sweden will recommence deporting Iraqi asylum seekers

04/10/2002 - Asia Intelligence Wire via News Edge Corporation:

The Swedish government will recommence deportations of asylum seekers from Iraq, Migration Minister Jan O. Karlsson said in a Riksdag debate on Wednesday [10 April]. Several thousand Iraqi refugees who have been refused residence in Sweden are waiting to be deported to Iraq. Until now this has not been possible for practical reasons, such as the no-fly Zone over Iraq.

According to Jan O. Karlsson the situation in northern Iraq has stabilized in recent years and it is now possible to return to the protected zone.



US Department of State: Iraq Still Major Violator of Human Rights

".. Assyrians and Chaldeans are considered by many to be a distinct ethnic group, as well as the descendants of some of the earliest Christian communities. These communities speak a different language (Syriac), preserve traditions of Christianity, and have a rich cultural and historical

heritage that they trace back more than 2,000 years. Although these groups do not define themselves as Arabs, the Government, without any historical basis, defines Assyrians and Chaldeans as such, evidently to encourage them to identify with the Sunni-Arab dominated Government.

...The Special Rapporteur and others reported that the Government has engaged in various abuses against the country's 350,000 Assyrian and Chaldean Christians, especially in terms of forced movements from northern areas and repression of political rights .."

Iraq : Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2001

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