



## Chaldean Federation of America Presses the Issue of Chaldean Refugees

The Chaldean Federation of America (CFA) is planning to send a delegation to the US State Department in Washington, DC during the last week of August 2002 to discuss issues concerning Chaldean refugees around the world in the hope of re-uniting them with their families in the United States. The CFA delegation will be headed by Mr. Saad Marouf, Chairman of the Federation, and each of Mr. Joseph Kassab, Chairman of CFA Refugees' Committee, and the renowned Chaldean Immigration lawyer, Mr. Steve Garmo.

Towards that end, Mr. Marouf sent a letter to Mr. Collin Powell, US Secretary of State explaining the plight of those Chaldean refugees and requesting his assistance and that of the Staff of the State department. Due to its importance, the "Chaldean Nation" is printing the complete letter:

Honorable Colin Powell  
 U.S Secretary of State  
 Washington D.C. 20536

April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2002

Dear Mr. Secretary

The American Chaldeans who are Christian Catholics in the USA and more than million globally, would like to bring to your attention the plight of thousands of Chaldean families and children scattered all over the world as the result of the Gulf War. The Chaldean Federation of America representing all Chaldeans, is an umbrella association of Chaldean Organizations in the USA, is pleading for your assistance outlined as follows:

- 1- Chaldeans are descendents of all native people of Mesopotamia. They are a living 7000 years old nation and have contributed tremendously to the civilization of mankind. The homeland of this ancient Christian Nation that speaks the very same language Christ spoken is spread between Arab and non-Arab countries. Chaldean could be found mainly in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.
- 2- There are more than 200,000 Chaldean Americans in the U.S. Their contribution to this country is enormous measured by the success of many of its business entrepreneurs, elected officials, judges, doctors, layers, engineers, economists, intellectuals and volunteering organizations.
- 3- Presently more than 55.000 Chaldeans refugees are free of the severely harsh conditions in Iraq seeking resettlement. Most of these Chaldean refugees are either stranded in transition countries especially in Jordan and Turkey and many other European countries, or detained in INS detention centers here in the U.S (more than 200 asylum applicants)
- 4- Many of these Stranded Chaldean refugees are scholars, specialists and college graduates seeking better future and eager to share their area of specialty and education with others such us the people of the United States and in the mean time to REUNITE with their Chaldean American family members.
- 5- Mr. Secretary, we kindly ask you to allow a Special Chaldean Federation delegation to meet with your staff at the Department of State in order for us to understand and to explore all the possibilities of assisting these helpless Chaldean people. Arrangements of meetings with head of Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration and the head of Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and their staff will be very helpful.

The Chaldean Federation of America stands ready to assist you. Please contact us at (248)- 557-2362.

Very Truly yours,

Saad Marouf  
 Chairman  
 Chaldean Federation of America

## Activities of Mar Toma Council of Knights of Columbus in San Diego, CA

Mar Toma Council of Knights of Columbus is considered the most active Chaldean organization in San Diego, California with activities that range from involvement in church activities to social and cultural ones. Actually, to it goes the major credit in helping out the Chaldean refugees that were stranded and then imprisoned on the Mexican border with the United States. Its members supported those refugees not only financially but worked tirelessly with US and Mexican officials to secure their release and then reuniting them with their families in the Detroit and San Diego. Mr. Noori Barka, President of the Council traveled to the Mexican capital, Mexico City, three times to negotiate with the Mexican Foreign Minister and Mexican Immigration Director as well as with US Ambassador to Mexico on ways of securing the release of those refugees, which finally took place in three phases with the last one in May, 2002.

Majority of Mar Toma Council's activities are supported by the Chaldean Youth Foundation which is a group of young Chaldeans that define their mission as "...Chaldean Youth Foundation is established with leadership and dedication to unite the Chaldean youth in our community. Our passion to serve the community has always been our top priority. Our purpose is to encourage the youth to pursue their dreams and to grow closer to Christ..."



Among the new activities of Mar Toma Council in coordination with the Chaldean Youth Foundation are:

1. Establishment of the first Chaldean TV program in San Diego area. This weekly program will start broadcasting in Chaldean language in August 2002 with one hour per week.
2. Started preparation for the first Chaldean radio program in San Diego area, which should complete in a month or two.
3. Establishment of a Chaldean Refugee Service as a subdivision of Knights of Columbus Mar Toma Council to help Chaldean refugees.
4. A seminar by Fr. Yousif Attisha On July 18; entitled: "The Christian Family."
5. A seminar by Bishop Jack Issaq: July 30: entitled "Babylon College for Liturgy & Theology in Baghdad Today and Future."
6. A seminar by Jason Evert & Crystalina Padilla. August 1<sup>st</sup> entitled "What if we really love each other?"
7. A seminar by Daniel Ali. September 16 & 17; A former Islamic Scholar who embraced Christianity.

## Chaldean Students and English Proficiency in California

According to a report published in September 2000 and was recently acquired by the staff of "Chaldean Nation" newspaper, the number of Chaldean students who are enrolled in kindergarten to grade-12 and are classified as "limited in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing English" is 532 students out of the total of 678 enrolled Chaldean students. That is, 78% of all Chaldean students are in need of improving their English language skills.

The report entitled "New Comers in California Classrooms", and authored by Mr. David P. Dolson, Coordinator of the Emergency Immigrant Education Program, California Department of Education, put the percentage of Chaldean students as the sixth highest minority students in need of English language improvement, after Mexicans, Lahu, Kurds, Hmong, and Ukrainians.

This is attributed to the fact that most of the Chaldeans in California are recent immigrants or refugees from Iraq. Actually, according to the immigration statistics published in 1998, Iraq ranks as the seventh highest place from which refugees fled and were resettled in the US. That is after Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Soviet Union, Vietnam, Somalia, Iran, Cuba, and Liberia.

The figures in year 2000, marks an 11% increase in number of Chaldean students enrolled in California kindergarten to grade-12 schools compared to year 1999 when only 481 students were counted. In comparison, the total number of Assyrian Chaldean students classified as in need of English language improvement was only 685 out of a total of 1,814 students enrolled i.e. 38% of the total.