



## Chaldean Federation Discusses Chaldean Refugees with US State Department and UNHCR

On September 20, 2002 a delegation from the Chaldean Federation of America (CFA) visited Washington, DC and met with officials from the United States State Department, Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration as well as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Washington D.C. Regional Office. The meeting was organized to discuss the problem of Chaldean refugees stranded in Middle Eastern and European countries and ways of reuniting them with their relatives in the US. The delegation was headed by Mr. Saad Marouf, Chairman of the Federation, and each of Mr. Joseph Kassab, Chairman of CFA Immigration and Refugee Affairs Committee and Attorney Steve Garmo, Esq. CFA Counselor. The delegation submitted a research paper authored by Mr. Kassab on the plight of Iraqi Christian Refugees (ICR) entitled: Iraqi Christian Refugees: the ongoing challenges. The delegation discussed the following points:

**A.** There is more than 50,000 ICR need to be protected and resettled. All of the refugee numbers given were from the submitted research paper and some of the reliable sources. Those who need the most attention are stranded in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, and Europe. A request was made by the members of CFA delegation to provide durable solutions for the ICR problem.

**B.** The point of why there is massive exodus of ICR and the type of harsh conditions and persecutions our people were enduring in their homeland was argued thoroughly. Being ethnic minority in addition to their Christian beliefs are few of the reasons made ICR to flee Iraq and to seek freedom.

**C.** The fact that present Iraq is not politically and socially stable made many of our people to seek safe haven outside their country.

**D.** The U.S. officials suggested that CFA should submit to them any written or hard evidence of persecution or ethnic intimidations that our people are suffering inside Iraq in order to strengthen their claim as refugees.

**E.** It was agreed that the U.S. officials will look into the cases of registered ICR in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. In addition, it was concluded that ICR in Europe must register first as refugees with the NGOs servicing INS in the countries of refuge.

**F.** UNHCR promised that it will not return (repatriate) any refugee as long as they are registered by UNHCR. It takes at least six months to resettle those who are granted refugee status by UNHCR. The host country will be decided by UNHCR not by the refugees, therefore it is recommended not to go through UNHCR if the country of desire is the United States.

**G.** It was concluded that P2 Visa criteria is the only solution to resettle ICR. This is a group visa able to admit a group of people of same ethnic or religious background. It is issued by U.S. Department of State to the refugees of humanitarian concern to the U.S. government. To obtain this type of visa for ICR, the following must be pursued:

1. Strong refugee case advocating with the U.S. Senates, Congressmen, U.S. Senate subcommittee on Immigration and Refugees, UNHCR, Faith-based NGOs such as U.S.C.C., and Department of State.
2. Accurate identification of ICR in need. This can be done by writing to UNHCR to verify ICR status in the countries of refuge and by site visits.
3. Provide reliable numbers of ICR and their geographical distribution
4. Provide evidence and documented verifications of persecution and discrimination
5. Prepare a coherent proposal for their practical processing
6. Follow the steps of other groups who succeeded in obtaining a similar group P2 Visa for their refugees.

## Report on the Conference of Iraqi Women - October 04, 2002

**Statement By Dr Katrin Michael**  
**National Press Club, Washington DC**

Dr Katrine Michael is an Iraqi Chaldean and a Christian. She joined the Kurdish resistance forces called Peshmerga in 1982. She was victim of chemical weapons in 1988. She fled to Turkey with thousand of Kurdish families as a result of chemical bombardments where she stayed for one year at a refugee camp. She arrived to United States in 1997.

Our society is a traditional society, where social habits and costumes play a major role in the behavior of the people and their relationships. At the same time, the law has been written with these customs in the minds of our people. Women are subjected in our society to a variety of different insults in Iraq. The problems that women face are the following:

1- Women in our society have not been given opportunities outside the home in the same way as men.

2- Women have not secured their rights in education in the proper way. An approximate view shows that more than 60% of our women are at a low education level.

3- Many obstacles to completing their study have been placed in their way. The First is financial situation of the family.

4- 80% of our women are poor because of their dependence on men.

5- Most girls feel that there is discrimination between them and the boys in the family. This puts

Women in a psychologically disadvantaged position.

6- Most divorced women confirm that social customs played a role in their marriages. Mostly negative.

### **The Law and Constitution:**

According to article 19 of the 1970 interim Iraqi constitution, all citizens are equal before the law, with no distinction in gender, race, language and social and religious background. Nevertheless, much legislation was issued since then that contradicts the constitution. The following are a few examples:

1- Women are prohibited from traveling abroad, unless accompanied by a mahram (a close male relative. This law came into effect in 1953. It is considered one of the first Arab civil laws where Islamic 'fih' Law and western laws came together in quality. This did not prevent it from including several articles that violated the rights of women.

2- Only male and not female children carry the lineage of the family and name.

3- Article 102 of the law states that the guardian of the minor is first the father, and then a relative of the father, then the paternal grandfather, then the guardian identified by the court. The mother's role is neglected, as the father's relative and the grandfather's come before her, even if she was identified by court as the guardian.

4- The minors care law needs amendment as follows:

Violation of women's rights in the Iraqi personal status law:

This law is from 1959. Several amendments took place, but women's rights still need to be addressed.

Here are violations of women's rights in the Iraqi penal law

number 111 of 1969

Legalization of death sentence: because of infidelity and honor killing and the different punishments for men and women for adultery.

### **Women and Work:**

If we look at our community, we can't find women in big business, because of the following reasons:

1. They don't have good skills in business.

2. Women always are busy in the kitchen and with housework.

Our women are used to taking care of all the members of the family.

3. Men always are looking to make more money; they change their jobs often to better jobs. Women very rarely change their jobs. Because they feel insecure.

4. Women don't participate in meetings very actively. They feel this is a waste of time. Second they don't trust their skills because nobody in the family encourages them to improve their skills or allow them to work.

5. If our women want to enter big business, mostly they are in older than 50. They need to have a good record in the community; otherwise the community is not going to be helpful for their business. This comes from the traditional community that we have.

Women have seven responsibilities in their lives. These are the following:

1- Childcare. 2- Being a wife. 3- Housework. 4- relatives. 5- Job.

6- Community service. 7- Care of herself.

These responsibilities take women away from other fields of life. As they are mothers they can't be active in business. Because they are responsible for the house, they can't travel the same way as men travel. Mostly they try to be home at certain times, because they know other members of the family are going to need their attention or their presence in the home. Because of the modern life or because of financial issue, the new family tries to plan for the number of children. If we want to build the civil society in future Iraq, we should complete the following:

1- Woman should have equality in the Rights and duties in the constitution and civil law.

2- The work right by equal wages with the man

3- The body protection right from any violence treatment, rape crimes and circumcision.

4- The right of husband selection.

5- Protection from polygamy.

6- The kindergarten Right.

7- Protection from honor killing.

8- The right of traveling with out Muharam.

9- Protection Right from coercion on the marriage, and the Right of non-marriage before the maturity.

10- We need the law legislation to prevent sexual harassment.

11- Woman should hold leadership position.