

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 19, 2007



Contact: info@casca.us

**CASCA Advocacy Successful in Shining Light on Plight of Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac People
And Securing U.S. Government Aid**

*\$10 million appropriation in the recently passed Congressional Appropriations bill a boost to efforts
Bill headed to the President's desk*

(Washington, DC) – Today the U.S. Congress completed action on the Fiscal Year 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Act, sending the bill to the President's desk for his signature. For the first time, the bill contained money and policy direction for administering U.S. Government aid to address the suffering of the Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac people of Iraq.

Specifically, the bill includes the following language:

“The Appropriations Committees support the use of prior year funds, as proposed by the House, to assist religious minorities in the Nineveh Plain region of Iraq, and direct that prior to the obligation of funds, the Department of State consult with ethno-religious minorities and locally-elected representatives to identify Iraq-based non-governmental organizations to implement these programs.

The Appropriations Committees are concerned about the threat to the existence of Iraq's most vulnerable minorities, particularly the Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac Christians, who are confronting ethno-religious cleansing in Iraq. The Appropriations Committees expect the Department of State and USAID to designate a point person within the Department to focus, coordinate, and improve U.S. Government efforts to provide for these minorities' humanitarian, security, and development needs.”

The language is a tremendous victory for the advocacy efforts of the newly formed Chaldean Assyrian Syriac Council of America (CASCA).

Jackie Bejan, the Executive Director of CASCA hailed the Congressional action, “The struggles of our people in Iraq are finally coming to light and Congress is stepping up to address the real challenges of the less recognized ethno-religious minorities in a meaningful way.”

Martin Manna, another director from CASCA added, “Before this year, we had very little luck in getting the needs of the Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac people recognized, much less addressed. By coming together, we achieved a major milestone for our people.”

Ms. Bejan added, “There were several members of Congress who we worked with that understood the importance of making progress on this critical issue. I want to especially thank Representatives Eshoo, Kirk, Wolf, and Knollenberg for their leadership on this issue. I also want to recognize the openness and assistance of Representative Lowey and Senator Levin in this endeavor. Without the assistance of every one of these thoughtful leaders we would not be able to have achieved this outcome.”

CASCA was formed in 2007 to educate U.S. policymakers on the plight of Iraq's Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac Christian minorities and to advocate for policies that will support stability, security, aid, and reconstruction relief within Iraq and assistance and resettlement of the most vulnerable refugees of this fragile population outside Iraq. CASCA was formed from the following 4 organizations: The Assyrian American National Federation, The Assyrian National Council of Illinois, The Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce, and The Chaldean Federation of America.

Iraq's true minorities are being driven from their homes and communities all across Iraq. Many have returned to their ancestral homeland in Nineveh, and many more have fled the country. The violence, economic and social displacement that drove them from their homes in Baghdad and other, once-integrated Iraqi cities has followed them to Nineveh. Today, violence permeates their existence and threatens to erase the presence of these people of antiquity from their ancestral homeland in Iraq altogether.

###