
ISDP NEWS RELEASE

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House Committee Approves a Minimum of \$20 Million for Iraqi Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac Christians and Other Vulnerable Minorities

(Washington, DC – June 30 2009): The United States Congress' Sub-Committee on State and Foreign Operations is targeting "not less than \$20 million" for vulnerable Iraqi minorities in the Financial Year 2010 State and Foreign Operations Appropriation. On Tuesday, June 23rd, 2009, the Full Appropriations Committee confirmed the decision and the Bill is now moving into the final stages of the legislative process.

Michael Youash, Project Director of the Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project, stated, "ISDP and its partners have been working for months to have targeted assistance focus on ethno-religious minorities, and we are so pleased that the U.S. Congress is well on its way to reaffirming its commitment to protecting ethno-religious minorities such as the Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac Christians."

The proposal to the Appropriations Sub-Committee was championed by Congressman Mark Kirk (R-IL), knowing the full extent of the crisis Iraqi minorities face and the centrality of the Nineveh Plain to the solution. It is clear that Congressman Kirk fought against enormous obstacles in this tight fiscal climate to have some targeted funding included in the Bill. ISDP's research and advocacy work in Washington, DC, developed with its partners in Iraq, the Assyrian Aid Society and the Nineveh Center for Research and Development, ensured that robust research informed the Sub-Committee and produced this outcome.

"Our primary goal is to now improve the effectiveness of the language around the funding by returning the original emphasis to the Nineveh Plain and to include the ethnic dimension to the minorities' plight in Iraq. Additionally, we are seeking to have Congress' intentions for the usage of funding returned, including the focus on higher education, improved health care, economic development in the Nineveh Plain and finally implementation of constitutional articles vital for minorities." said Michael Youash.

The Appropriations Sub-Committee on State and Foreign Operations under the leadership of Chairperson Nita Lowey (D-NY) distinguished itself again for targeting a minimum of \$20 million when so many other programs are being cut. ISDP's advocacy work, supported by the voices of the Assyrian American National Coalition, the Assyrian National Council of Illinois, Assyrian Aid Society, along with several other Assyrian American organizations throughout the U.S. and numerous individuals working together in a genuine grassroots effort, brought about this important step.

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The Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project's (ISDP) research and policy analysis maintains that the Assyrian (also known as Chaldean and/or Syriac) people and Iraq's other, *real* minorities (e.g. Turkmens, Shabaks, Yezidis, Mandaeans and others) are the best variable for leveraging the formation of a genuine and sustainable democracy over the long term. For the United States, Iraq's *real* minorities are also the truest '*moderates*' as defined by the National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terror. As such, they are a key element in the fight against extremism in Iraq and the Middle East as a whole. ISDP works to ensure that these minorities are factored into policy development accordingly through research, policy analysis and advocacy for all relevant stakeholders.