

# Call for Iraqi Christians to run own region

**Emma Clancy**

**A** meeting chaired by Stephen Pound MP in the House of Commons last week, the UK branch of Iraq's leading Christian political party, the Assyrian Democratic Movement and the Christian human rights organisation, Jubilee Campaign,

called for an self-administrative region for the Chaldo-Assyrian Christians of Iraq. Mr Pound and other speakers at the meeting, which was jointly organised by the Assyrian Democratic Movement (UK branch) and Jubilee Campaign, stressed that the British government should support the creation of an administrative region in the Chaldo-Assyrian

heartland in the Nineveh Plains. The escalating attacks perpetrated against the Chaldo-Assyrians by extremist Islamic groups warrants the creation of such a region, it was said. The meeting also called on the British government to support the return of Chaldo-Assyrian villages in the provinces of Nineveh and

Dohuk, which the Chaldo-Assyrian's Arab and Kurdish neighbours have encroached on. Chaldo-Assyrians, who feel threatened, especially in Mosul and parts of Baghdad, could then move to the regions of Nineveh and Dohuk, rather than flee their ancestral homeland in Iraq. "There is no danger of the Kurdish or Arab community dis-

appearing from Iraq but there is a real risk that one day soon the Chaldo-Assyrian community may largely vanish from that country," said Wilfrid Wong, parliamentary officer for Jubilee Campaign. "Not only are the Chaldo-Assyrians facing the usual risks of violence which all average Iraqis have to currently put up with in their daily lives, they

are also having to deal with the additional violence of being targeted by Islamic fundamentalists. This is simply because they are Christians and intimidation from their Kurdish neighbours because they want to grab Chaldo-Assyrian land for themselves." Mr Pound also said this would be only the start of a process to bring the world's atten-

tion to the terrible suffering in Iraq. "No one in parliament can now say they are unaware of the sufferings of this beleaguered community," he noted. "I'm grateful to the UK branch of the Assyrian Democratic Movement and the Jubilee Campaign for organising this meeting," Mr Pound concluded.