

H.G. Mar Gewargis Sliwa  
Metropolitan of Iraq  
Assyrian Church of the East

4/6/2004

Your Grace,

Greeting in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It came to my attention that some individuals have spread a rumor amongst the Assyrian and Chaldean communities in Iraq, that the Australian and New Zealand Governments have arranged a program to accept Iraqi immigrants to both countries.

I am very sad and disturbed by this, knowing that families in Baghdad and elsewhere have fallen victim to this rumor, and now are selling their belongings and preparing to leave Iraq to Syria and Jordan. This unfortunate thing will result in them being stranded in Syria and Jordan for 15 years or more, or even for ever.

I need to emphasize that there is now NO open door migration to Australia and New Zealand, it is becoming extremely difficult for people to settle in Australia and NZ. Both governments are taking hard line policies to immigration on basis of refugee from the Middle East and especially Iraq. I strongly ask you and all priests and responsible people in both communities to inform your members that their departure out of Iraq will result in more suffering and financial struggle, even unemployment, health problem, no education for their children, stress, and lack of medical attention. We already have in Jordan people who left Iraq 14 years ago and they are still waiting with no hope in Amman and Syria.

They depend on the financial support of their relatives in Australia. This adds a huge burden on our community here who are struggling to support their own families in Sydney and elsewhere.

Please, ask them not to base their future on false hope of reaching Australia. I have to admit that few families, who were stranded in Amman for 14 years have been accepted to settle in Australia, but very few, again very few about 1 in every 400.

Therefore, I personally will have no responsibility for any person leaving Iraq and seeking my assistance or influence to settle here, due to the fact that there is no set program to accept refugees from Iraq.

It is a fact here, and this is what the Australian government thinks, that Iraq will, with the grace of God, be a safe and prosperous country soon.

Again, I emphasize to all Assyrians and Chaldeans, not to leave their country and travel in the hope of settling in Australia and NZ, because the doors are not wide open. And those who venture, are responsible for their action not us.

May the grace of our Lord be with you,

Mar Meelis Zaia