ASSYRIAN UNIVERSAL ALLIANCE
AUSTRALIA CHAPTER

Member: Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (UNPO)

PRESS RELEASE

17 November 2010

On Tuesday, 16 November 2010, a delegation representing the Assyrian Universal Alliance – Australian Chapter (AUA) and the Assyrian Australian National Federation (AANF) headed to Canberra for a full day visit to meet with Australian Federal Parliament to convey the Assyrian community’s anger and concerns about the latest development in Iraq, the waging of sectarian violence and systematic abuses by Islamic extremists against the entire Christian population, the neglect and silence of the western governments including Australia about these crimes against humanity. As a matter of urgency and importance, the delegates called upon the Australian Government to condemn these terrorist attacks and to take some immediate action and lasting measures to address the major humanitarian crisis suffered by the Assyrian.

We are pleased to announce that the delegation managed to meet with Mr. Chris Hayes MP, The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP, The Hon. Senator Marise Payne, and with Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, The Hon Chris Bowen MP.

The delegates included; Mr. Hermiz Shahen, The Regional Secretary of the AUA for Australia and New Zealand, David M. David, Chapter Secretary of AUA Australian Chapter, Mr. Simon Essavian, president of the AANF and Mr. Paul Azzo, Senior Advisor to the AUA.

During the meetings the AUA leaders appealed to the Australian government to consider a resolution supporting the plight of the Assyrians in Iraq by lobbying the Iraqi government to immediately establish an Assyrian autonomous region in the ancestral homeland. The Delegates called upon the Minister for Immigration to provide assistant to the Assyrian refugees, to condemn the latest attacks against the Assyrians of Iraq and to adopt the AUA motion in the Federal Parliament “House of representatives” on the 23 May 2005 calling on the Australian Government to urge the Iraqi Government to create a ‘protected administrative area for the Assyrians’ which was signed by three thousands Assyrians from Sydney and Melbourne. Mr. Chris Bowen MP moved successfully the AUA motion during March 2005 in the Federal Parliament of Australia.

The Assyrian delegation also met with Ms. Karen Bos from Christian Faith and Freedom and thanked her for her hard work and support for the Assyrian struggle in Iraq.

On the same day the Hon. Chris Bowen MP gave the following statement in Parliament:
Mr Bowen (McMahon) (Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (4:09 PM) — It is my honour, Mr Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much. I rise today to condemn in the strongest possible terms recent acts of violence in Iraq against Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs and Christian minorities. I have spoken many times in the House over the years about this issue, moved motions, tabled petitions and organised the «Assyrian» Parliamentary Friendship Group. I am glad my honourable friend the member for Fowler is here. He has also been very vocal and supportive on this issue.

It pains me to report to the House that there have been recent events causing great concern. For example, I am advised that on 31 October, at Our Lady of Salvation church, gunmen took close to 100 hostages. They were stormed by Iraqi antiterrorist forces; 30 hostages and seven security officers were killed.

Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriacs have inhabited Iraq for 2,000 years, and it is appropriate that they be able to continue to do so. This is a matter I have discussed with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the previous Minister for Foreign Affairs and I have taken delegations of Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriacs to see both men. In particular, the previous minister, the member for Perth, allocated a substantial fund of foreign aid to assist minority groups in Iraq. I am glad to have received reports from the «Assyrian» and Chaldean community that that aid is flowing and that they have received updates from AusAID on that work. The current Minister for Foreign Affairs is somebody who has taken a long interest in this matter. When he was shadow minister for foreign affairs, I took delegations of Assyrians and Chaldeans and His Grace Bishop Kassab, the bishop of the Chaldean community in Australia, to see him. As recently as today I discussed with him the recent events in Iraq and the suffering of Christians in Iraq.

The purpose of this speech today is simply to let Christians in Iraq know that they have friends in this House, on both sides of the chamber, who do not fail to acknowledge their suffering and who send their messages of support as they go through this suffering and, more than that, send messages of material aid and comfort. We hope that they continue to live in Iraq peacefully and happily, as they have done for the last 2,000 years.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — I am sure all honourable members would echo the sentiments of the minister.

http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;orderBy=customrank;page=0;query=Chris%20Bowen%20Assyrian;rec=4;resCount=Default
Assyrian delegation meeting with Ms. Karen Bos from Christian Faith and Freedom