



**ASSYRIAN
CONFEDERATION
OF EUROPE**



**ASSYRIAN
POLICY
INSTITUTE**

July 16, 2018

His Excellency Dr. Haider al-Abadi
Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq
Baghdad, Iraq

Your Excellency:

We, the undersigned, write to echo calls by Iraqi Assyrian representatives for formal recognition of the Simele Massacre of 1933. This August will mark the 85th anniversary of Iraq's genocidal campaign targeting its Assyrian citizens. As many as 6,000 Assyrian civilians were systematically targeted and massacred on the orders of the Iraqi Army and tens of thousands of Assyrians were externally-displaced. Historical injustices against the Assyrian people in Iraq have lasting consequences that threaten their future. The Simele Massacre stands as an important reminder that crimes against humanity must not go without recognition, condemnation, and resolution.

Tragically, the anniversary of the Simele Massacre now coincides with the anniversary of the Yazidi Genocide of 2014 at the hands of the Islamic State (IS), which claimed the lives of thousands of innocent Yazidis. The Yazidi people were subject to unspeakable crimes, including mass executions and sexual enslavement, and many of those who survived were forcibly displaced. While the IS campaign against Yazidis, Assyrians, Shabaks, and other minorities was recognized as genocide by the Iraqi Council of Representatives in November 2014, the affected communities are still reeling in the damages.

The preamble of Iraq's Constitution currently recognizes crimes committed against Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen, but makes no mention of the historical suffering of Assyrians and Yazidis within Iraq's borders. The exclusion of crimes committed against Assyrians and Yazidis absolves the perpetrators and erases this part of Iraq's history. Lack of proper recognition within the Iraqi Constitution trivializes the suffering of these communities, contributes to the erasure of their history, and debases and diminishes their importance in society.

When Raphael Lemkin coined the term genocide in 1944, he cited the Iraqi campaign against Assyrians in 1933 as one of the defining examples of what he meant by genocide. Stopping the cycle of genocide begins by confronting the past and speaking truthfully about past crimes and genocides. Proper recognition of these atrocities committed against Assyrians and Yazidis will help advance reform in Iraq and promote its transition into a pluralist and tolerant society.

We ask that you make a motion to amend the Iraqi Constitution to recognize the historical suffering of the Assyrians, including the Simele Massacre of 1933 and the Soriya Massacre of 1969, as well as the Yazidi Genocide of 2014—the last of which is ongoing, with Yazidi victims still destitute having seen little justice let alone reparation.

By formally recognizing the Simele Massacre of 1933 and the Yazidi Genocide of 2014 in its constitution, the Iraqi Government can pay tribute to the perseverance and determination of those who survived, as well as its citizens of Assyrian and Yazidi descent who form an integral part of Iraq's social fabric today. By commemorating and condemning these crimes, the Iraqi Government will renew its commitment to these vulnerable indigenous communities and acknowledge its responsibility to prevent future atrocities against all components of the Iraqi people.

We urge Iraq to confront its past and accept sole responsibility for the Simele Massacre of 1933 and offer appropriate compensation for the victims and their families, including those externally-displaced. We call for the restoration of citizenship of Assyrians who were citizens of Iraq by birth or by descent who lost Iraqi citizenship as a result of the August 1933 Simele Massacre.

We also call for the establishment of an impartial historical commission that includes Assyrian scholars to investigate the archives related to the Simele Massacre of 1933, and ask that you address biased educational curricula related to Assyrians which omit historical injustices, consequently demeaning their position in Iraqi society and denying their rightful status as an indigenous component in Iraq.

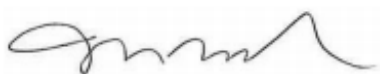
Finally, we ask the Iraqi Government to allocate funds for a permanent memorial honoring the victims of the Simele Massacre of 1933 at the massacre site in Simele, whilst offering a dignified reburial of the human remains which continue to lie in open view. This memorial should be designed and built by Iraqi citizens of Assyrian origin selected by the community.

The denial of historical injustices threaten the democratization of the Iraqi state and prolong strained relations between different ethnic and religious groups. Recognition acknowledges the gravity of the offenses perpetrated against these communities and initiates the healing process.

We, the undersigned, are membership organizations which represent tens of thousands people across the world in diaspora who have been deeply affected by these tragedies and organizations which work to address the current inadequate treatment these issues are given by both the Iraqi government and international actors.

In the spirit of honoring the innocent victims and working towards a tolerant society for all peoples of Iraq, we hope that you appropriately commemorate the Simele Massacre and the Yazidi Genocide. We thank you for taking our views into consideration.

Signed,



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