



US House Approves \$10 Million in Aid for Iraq's Christians

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Washington -- The House of Representatives has shown its support for the plight of the Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac people of Iraq by including \$10 million in the House version of the Supplemental Appropriations Bill of 2008. This funding is in addition to the \$10 million included in the Fiscal Year 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Act. With the House passage of this legislation, Iraq's ethno-religious minorities are one step closer to benefiting from economic development programs and projects that are key to helping them stay and rebuild their future in Iraq.

Specifically, the Explanatory Statement accompanying the bill included the following language:

Provincial Economic Growth. The amended bill includes \$40,000,000 for provincial economic growth activities, of which \$10,000,000 should be available for programs to assist vulnerable Iraqi minority groups, including Christians. The Secretary of State should designate staff at United States Embassy Baghdad to oversee and coordinate such assistance.

This is a tremendous victory for the advocacy efforts of the newly formed Chaldean Assyrian Syriac Council of America (CASCA). CASCA is grateful to the policy's Congressional champions and co-chairs of the House Caucus on Religious Minorities in the Middle East Congresswoman Anna Eshoo and Congressman Frank Wolf along with Caucus Member Congressman Joe Knollenberg.

Representative Anna Eshoo, co-chair of the House Caucus said: "I'm pleased that the amendment contains \$10 million for vulnerable Iraqi minorities. The needs of the Assyrians could not be greater...These families desperately need security, housing, jobs, schools and the chance to live in a sustainable community where they can openly practice their faith."

Representative Joe Knollenberg, Caucus Member and Member of the House Appropriations Committee said: "I am proud to have helped deliver this needed assistance to our friends in Iraq. Together with the Iraqi-American community, we're making an important difference in the lives of Iraqi minorities who need our help."

Jackie Bejan, the Executive Director of CASCA hailed the Congressional action, "Once again the under the leadership of our Congressional representatives, we have shined a light on the struggles of our people in Iraq. Every step taken by Congress is raising awareness of the plight of Iraq's ethno-religious minorities. We are so grateful for the support of these Members and all of our elected officials who continue to fight for the protection of our people."

Martin Manna, another director from CASCA added, "Before this year, we had very little luck in getting the needs of the Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac people recognized, much less addressed. Over the past five months we have spent time raising this plight with key thought leaders in Washington, D.C. and we look forward to working with the Senate to get this language to the President for his signature."

The United States House of Representatives passed the Fiscal Year 2008 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill on May 15, 2008.

Chaldean Assyrian Syriac Council of America

CASCA was formed in 2007 to educate U.S. policymakers on the plight of Iraq's Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac Christian minorities and to advocate for policies that will support stability, security, aid, and reconstruction relief within Iraq and assistance and resettlement of the most vulnerable refugees of this fragile population outside Iraq. CASCA was formed from the following four organizations: The Assyrian American National Federation, The Assyrian National Council of Illinois, The Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce, and The Chaldean Federation of America.