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Kurdish Militia, Iraqi Police Terrorizing Assyrians in North Iraq

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(AINA) -- Attacks against Assyrian Christian civilians (also known as Syriacs and Chaldeans) residing in the [Nineveh Plain](#), north Iraq, have recently escalated at the hands of local Iraqi police as well as Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) paramilitary security squads. On June 30, 2006 three Iraqi Police loyal to the KDP Police Chief in the Hamdaniya District of the Nineveh governorate began assaulting civilian passers by with anti-Christian and racist slurs. The policemen had just come off duty but were still carrying their automatic weapons. As the Iraqi police continued their tirade against Christians in the overwhelmingly Assyrian Christian town, Steven Basim, a young man, left his car to plead with the police to refrain from their insults and threats.



The police officers approached the man and one immediately started to strike him squarely on the side of his head with his weapon. As the young man fell to the ground bleeding, the other two policemen then also joined in the beating. Two other Assyrian men attempted to intervene and were also beaten.

As a group of onlookers began to approach and question the police regarding the slurs and beating, the police began firing into the crowd. Fearing they could not control the angry crowd, the police called for reinforcements.

At 6:30 pm, the police dragged their bleeding, half conscious victim to the police station. Fearing for his life, a group of young Assyrian Christian locals decided to rescue the man from his kidnappers. The local priest, Fr. Loius Kassab, who has enjoyed considerable financial support and favor from the KDP occupying forces asked the group of Assyrians to allow him to intervene to secure the release. As time dragged on, the group of Assyrians became increasingly concerned that the badly beaten man may die in custody. Finally, the group stormed the holding station and rescued the man and immediately transported him to obtain medical care

Increasingly, especially over the past week, Kurdish forces as well as Iraqi police have begun a policy of harassment and intimidation of local civilians. Referring to the Arab and KDP police, one local Assyrian noted "they share one thing in common: they don't live here. They don't belong here." Another bitterly complained that "they don't come to provide security; they come to terrorize Christians and extract profits from the area for their personal gains."

The issue of local residents policing in the towns and villages of the Nineveh Plain has become a thorny issue. Local Assyrians, Shabaks, and Yezidis have formally submitted the names of 800 local police to join the Iraqi Police force in order to provide local police and security for the Nineveh Plain. The request has been formally granted and approved by the Iraqi government in Baghdad. However, the KDP Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Khisro Goran, has repeatedly blocked implementation of the proposal. ([AINA 6-24-2006](#))

The role of non-local police in aggravating sectarian tensions rather than providing security played out on July 1 when KDP paramilitaries attempted to wrest control of the Central fuel distribution center for the Hamdaniya District of Nineveh. The armed KDP group was met by resistance from the Iraqi Police whom themselves had monopolized control of the distribution center and were, likewise, nonresidents of the Nineveh Plain. A fight ensued and, after additional KDP militants were called in, two police were wounded.

The conflict has left the Gasoline distribution center closed, thereby depriving tens of thousands of locals of badly needed fuel for transportation and electricity generation. Local Assyrians have bitterly complained that both the Police as well as the KDP were simply opportunists attempting to control the lucrative fuel black market. Gas stations have come under the control of armed groups tied to the police or KDP who regularly siphon off a portion of gasoline. The conflict over which non local group controls the gasoline black market has left local residents particularly vulnerable at a time when electricity has dropped from an average 12 hours per day to 2 hours per day during one of the hottest months of the year. Gasoline is critical for the running of generators.

Residents have also complained about the lack of real security provided by the KDP occupying forces. On June 25, a suicide bomber detonated a truck packed with explosives in front of the minority Shabak headquarters of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) killing two people and injuring thirteen.

Assyrian Christians and other minorities from the Nineveh Plain such as Shabak and Yezidis point to recent violence as further

evidence of the deliberate suffocation of their area by the KDP and the police force it increasingly controls. Assyrian Christians further believe that local administration and policing by residents of the Nineveh Plain is the only way to reverse an increasingly tense and intolerable security situation. From the KDP perspective, though, total control of security is essential to continued Assyrian Christian subjugation as well as the furthering of the KDP dream to annex the Nineveh Plain into a greater KDP occupied region.

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