



## Kurdish Land Grabs Leave Assyrians Dependent on Food Aid

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Northern Iraq (AINA) -- In the village of Hamzie in northern Iraq, just a half hour drive south of the Iraqi-Turkish border, 23 Assyrian families line up for a package of food aid delivered by the [Assyrian Aid Society](#). Most of them fled from the ethnic cleansing in Baghdad and Basra.

It's odd to see Assyrians (also known as Chaldeans and Syriacs) line up for food aid in a village which boasts rich agricultural lands and plentiful water. The explanation can be seen just a few meters from the center of the village, where 15 Muslim Kurdish families have built their houses. The Muslim Kurds have forced themselves into the village and have taken control of all the farming land and the water sources belonging to the village. The Kurdish families have also built a mosque. In Muslim tradition, once a mosque is built it may never be destroyed; thus the Kurds have announced to the Assyrians their intention of staying permanently.

The case of the Hamzie village is one of many similar cases in northern Iraq (the ancestral land of the Assyrians), where the original inhabitants of the area, the Christian Assyrians, find themselves pushed out. The extent of the Kurdish land grabs is alarming and the pace indicates it is not a few isolated cases but part of a policy which is methodically carried out.

While Kurds allow the Assyrians to enjoy several rights, such as teaching the Assyrian language, celebrating Assyrian feasts, displaying Assyrian symbols, they silently sanction actions that will ultimately lead to the complete destruction of a 6000 year old civilization. The Kurdish leadership manages to portray itself as democratic while it is in fact pursuing policies that will make it impossible for Assyrians to remain in northern Iraq in the long run.

As reported by several independent reports by human rights organizations, the two main Kurdish political parties, the PUK and KDP, maintain total control of the area using their armed muslim militia, the Peshmerga. The land grabs could therefore not occur on such a scale without the silent approval of these parties.

The Assyrians have no chance against the tide of aggression and land seizure by the Kurdish majority. When the Assyrians try to fight the land seizures they encounter hostility and a Kurdish bureaucracy which is a dead end. Even when Assyrians have been successful and won court cases, there is no will from the Kurdish power holders to enforce the judgments. The court system is only used to stonewall Assyrians when they register complaints.

Most of the Assyrian families in the village of Hamzie fled from killings, kidnappings and rapes in other parts of Iraq only to face oppression by Muslim Kurds and become dependent on food aid for their survival.

