



Many Election Violations Against Assyrians in North Iraq

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Baghdad (AINA) -- Speaking to a journalist from [PUK Media](#) in Baghdad, Mr. Yonadam Kanna, a member of the Iraqi parliament and leader of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, said on Saturday his group has filed several complaints about what he described as violations to the election law.

"There were many violations against Assyrians, especially concerning the militia in the Nineveh plain which is affiliated with the Ishtar slate of 513. They used extortion, threats and other kinds of pressures against the voters. The Ishtar slate violated several articles in the election law. We have filed complaints with the Independent electoral commission of Iraq and are hoping they will investigate the matter."

The Ishtar slate is supported by a Kurdish backed group known as "The popular Council for Syriacs Chaldeans Assyrians." Its unofficial leader, Kurdish finance minister Sargis Aghajan, has been missing for several months ([AINA 2-5-2009](#)).



Yonadam Kanna

The violations against Assyrians in this latest election follow a consistent pattern, beginning with municipal elections that were held in 2001, followed by the elections in January and December of 2005.

In a January 28 [article](#) AINA called attention to the potential for election violations:

Fear is growing, however, of a recurrence of previous election scams.¹ In the 2005 national elections, the Nineveh Plain area, the last place in Iraq where minorities constitute the majority of inhabitants, extensive electoral rigging was documented by various independent groups. Many thousands of voters from the Yezidi, Assyrian and Shabak minorities were hindered from casting their votes. The U.S. Department of State's 2005 Human Rights Country Report for Iraq states:

In the January elections, many of the mostly non-Muslim residents on the Nineveh Plain were unable to vote. Some polling places did not open, ballot boxes were not delivered, and incidents of voter fraud and intimidation occurred. These problems resulted from administrative breakdowns on voting day and the refusal of Kurdish security forces to allow ballot boxes to pass to predominantly Christian villages.²

In the run-up to the elections held in December, 2005 Assyrian campaign workers from the Assyrian General Conference were prevented from campaigning in Dohuk, a city in north Iraq with a large Assyrian population. Four campaign workers from the Assyrian Democratic Movement were fired upon as they hung election posters in Mosul ([AINA 12-15-2005](#)).

The January 30, 2005 elections were marred by egregious violations. Some 300,000 Assyrians, Yezidis and Turkmen were denied the opportunity to vote when Kurdish election officials failed to deliver ballot boxes to their districts. Prior to the elections a wave of attacks by Kurdish paramilitary groups against Assyrians was conducted to instill fear in the populace ([AINA 2-10-2005](#), [12-30-2004](#)).

The 2001 municipal elections held in north Iraq were marred by violence ([AINA 7-2-2001](#)).

¹ AINA [12-15-2005](#), [2-10-2005](#), [1-17-2005](#), [12-30-2004](#), [7-2-2001](#)

² [Bureau Of Democracy, Human Rights, And Labor, U.S. Department Of State, Iraq: Country Reports On Human Rights Practices -- 2005 §3 \(2006\)](#), describing voting "irregularities" and problems that occurred during the 2005 elections, including incidents of Kurdish forces' preventing ballot boxes to pass to Christian communities.