



NINEVEH RECONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE (NRC)

Call for action of the Nineveh Reconstruction Committee upon the national governments and other entities in favor of the return of the Christians of all Churches and rites to their homelands in Iraq

Erbil, 12.12.2018

IN THE NINEVEH PLAINS, the voice and role of the local Church leaders is stronger than in other regions of Iraq. In March 2017, in recognition of the universal right to return of every refugee or exiled person and with the support of Aid to the Church in Need, the three main Christian Churches of the Nineveh Plains region (the Syrian Catholic Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Chaldean Catholic Church) formally established the Nineveh Reconstruction Committee - (NRC) to jointly oversee the reconstruction program and the allocation of the financial resources received. It was very important that the various local Churches work closely together united in diversity. NRC ecumenical cooperation inspired a great solidarity among people.

Instead of being scattered and isolated, thanks to the NRC, Christians regain their community life. However, there is still a lot to do, as out of 13.904 houses registered to be renovated, only less than a half (5.746) are already restored and 84 are currently being renovated. 45.68% of families (9.060) living in the Nineveh Plains prior to 2014 returned. Another 2.000 families are eager to return, but have no means to do so. People think that the Church can handle it all easily enough, so the pressure is enormous, it is why we still need a lot of help.

NOW, THEREFORE, the undersigned authorized leaders united in the hereby Nineveh Reconstruction Committee (NRC) call upon the national governments and other entities:

1. to facilitate the return of Christians to their respective ancestral communities from which they were expelled during the ISIS invasion of 2014-17.

The yearning of Christians to return to the land of their fathers remains unbroken, despite the hardships involved. The reconstruction program is not simply to give people back their homes but rather a more integral project, through which the large number of Christians is cooperating not just to rebuild their homes, towns and villages but also to restore their sense of human dignity. The return of Christians to their homes was and is a matter of great urgency, since the window of time for returning safely is closing. If they do not return now to repossess their homes, others will occupy them. Moreover, the Iraqi government is not inclined to protect empty houses.



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2. to secure the presence of a permanent of Christians through all efforts aiming at legal protection of Christians and other minorities, their fundamental human rights, especially equal citizenship.

3. to secure the thriving of the Christian minority through funding and support of:
a) education

After the military assaults many schools need to be repaired and equipped. In addition, since Arabic and Kurdish were established as official state languages, Christians typically speaking Syriac, face difficulties to educate children in their own language. Additional resources must be made available to address the critical situation of trauma, to the students, which resulted from the years of war and displacement.

b) development: small business/self-employment micro-projects

Even if the houses were reconstructed, Christians need the opportunity to regain their economic stability and dignity, therefore it is of utmost importance to boost small business through development micro-projects and loans. Current economic situation has a detrimental impact on Christians, it contributes to their pauperization and emigration.

c) coordination of lobbying efforts. Coordinated securing of financial aid from states and other entities throughout the world is absolutely necessary. This should be done in favour of all Churches and rites present in the Nineveh Plains. Please do not be a silent bystander to our drama. We call upon you to support Christians of Iraq in their specific vocation and to be artisans of peace, reconciliation and development, as H. Em. Pietro Cardinal Parolin stated. **Please help Christians in the Nineveh Plains while there is still time for it.** Specific proposals containing detailed needs for each town will be provided separately.

Bishops:

His Excellency, Mikha Pola Maqdassi
Bishop of the Chaldean Catholic Church of Al Qosh

His Excellency, Yohanna Petros Mouche
Archbishop of the Syrian Catholic Church of Mosul, Kirkuk and Kurdistan

His Excellency, Nicodemus Daoud Sharaf
Archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Mosul, Kirkuk and Kurdistan

His Excellency, Moussa Ablhad Al Shamani
Archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Mar Mattei

Members of the Nineveh Reconstruction Committee:

Fr. Andrzej Halemba: Acting Chairman

Mr. Aimery de Vérac: Committee Finance Adviser

Mr. Stephen Rasche: Legal Counsel

Mr. Emad Al-Dalakta: Syriac Orthodox Church

Mr. Zaid Al Niser: Syriac Orthodox Church



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Fr. Salar Kajo: Chaldean Catholic Church
Mrs. Ann Razoky: Chaldean Catholic Church
Fr. Georges Jahola: Syriac Catholic Church
Fr. Behnam Benoka: Syriac Catholic Church
Fr. Thabet Habeb Mansur: Chaldean Catholic Church

Ann Razoky

Fr. Anwar

Georges Jahola

Rev. Fr. Behnam Benoka

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