

Prime Minister of Iraqi Kurdistan
Nechirvan Barzani

gesellschaft für bedrohte völker

(GfbV)

Göttingen, October 04, 2018

Dear Mr. Barzani,

ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) supported the struggle of the Kurds and other minorities in Iraqi Kurdistan for autonomy and self-determination as early as the end of the 1960s. As Mr. Masud Barzani writes in a letter to the STP, "the STP was the human rights organization that stood by the Kurds in the most difficult period of their history and brought the human rights violations against Kurds to light." We supported and support the efforts of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) to peacefully implement Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution.

Since the founding of the STP we have tried to remain true to our ideals. Our motto was and remains "Every civilization, every state, every organization has to be measured by how it deals with minorities". In this sense, we thank the KRG for hosting millions of refugees from Southern and Central Iraq, Syria and Iran. We are also grateful that your government is striving to treat the Christian Assyrians/Chaldeans/Aramaens, Yezidi, Shabak, Armenians, Turkmen and other minorities equally.

Today we, the STP and the Central Association of Assyrian Organizations in Germany and European Sections (ZAVD), want to draw your attention to some points:

1. The Christian Assyrians/Chaldeans/Aramaens and other minorities shall be involved in the decision-making processes for the future of Kurdistan.
2. We welcome the quota system for Assyrians/Chaldeans/Aramaens and other minorities for the filling of the regional parliament. This quota system should be extended to other authorities. Christians should be represented everywhere.

Society for
Threatened Peoples

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Eingetragen im Vereinsregister des Amtsgerichts Göttingen • Vereinsregister Nr. 1804

3. Again and again, we receive reports from the region that the KRG has blocked access from Dohuk and Arbil to the villages in the so-called Nineveh Plains in the north and east of Mossul. As a result of this measure, many people living in the Nineveh Plains cannot get to Dohuk or Arbil. The road connection between the towns in the Nineveh Plains and in the areas under the control of the KRG are vital for the people. Many people work or seek medical help in Kurdistan. We ask your government to do its utmost to ensure that people can travel freely between the KRG area and the Nineveh Plains.

4. More financial support is needed to promote the language, culture and traditions of the Assyrian/Chaldean/Aramaic people.

5. In order to promote a peaceful and equal coexistence, streets or public squares should preferably be named after personalities from the history, literature and culture of the Assyrian/Chaldean/Aramaic people.

6. The property disputes among Christians and Muslims in the villages and cities, as for example in Ankawa, must be solved peacefully and fairly. The Christian population must not be disadvantaged.

7. There can be no concessions to the radical Sunni and Shiite groups in reforming laws or the constitution.

8. We request full equality between Christians and other minorities in the courts.

9. Incitement against Christians, Yezidis and other believers by radical mullahs in the mosques is to be stopped and to be punished judicially.

10. Cultural autonomy for Christians and other minorities has to be ensured.

11. In order to promote and strengthen the dialogue, it would be prudent to establish regular meetings between representatives of the Kurds and the Assyrians/Chaldeans/Aramaeans in the diaspora.

Repeatedly, the KRG has petitioned the central Iraqi government and the federal Iraqi parliament for equal rights for all ethnic groups. We ask your government and all Kurdish factions to continue standing up for the rights of the Assyrian/Chaldean/Aramaeans, Yezidi, Mandaic and other minorities in Baghdad.

Christians and other minorities in Iraq need the support of the KRG and the Kurds as a whole. This support towards the Kurdish cause and your government will make people more sympathetic in the West. The improvement of human and minority rights in Kurdistan also brings more development aid to their region, which has been suffering for years from war and genocide. Promoting the Nineveh Plains, perhaps through a kind of political self-government, could also benefit all sides.

It is important that in Kurdistan and throughout Iraq one does not get the impression that the Christian minorities of the Assyrians/Aramaeans/Chaldeans, Armenians and others are not welcome. For millennia, the region has also been home to the Christian Assyrians/Aramaeans/Chaldeans. Rather, all Kurdish parties and Christian organizations must concentrate on the common enemy – Islamist and other radical groups supported by the neighboring countries. Because they threaten the peace and the life of all ethnic groups in Iraq.

So far, the Kurds have successfully fought against the "Islamic State" (IS) and other radical Islamist groups together with the Assyrians/Chaldeans/Aramaeans and other ethnic groups. The deployment of the Peshmerga was internationally recognized.

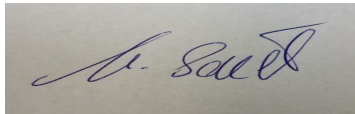
We thank you for your efforts.

Kind regards,

Ulrich Delius, Director of STP

Handwritten signature of Ulrich Delius in black ink.

Aziz Said, Chairman of ZAVD

Handwritten signature of Aziz Said in blue ink, enclosed in a grey rectangular box.

Dr. Kamal Sido, Head of Department Middle East STP

Handwritten signature of Kamal Sido in blue ink.