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## Iraq

<b>Response to Information Request Number:</b>	IRQ00001.ZLA
<b>Date:</b>	27 June 2000
<b>Subject:</b>	Iraq: Chaldean Christians
<b>From:</b>	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
<b>Keywords:</b>	Iraq / Academic freedom / Access to education / Armed conflicts / Armed forces / Armed resistance movements / Catholic church / Causes of migration / Civilian persons / Churches and human rights / Cultural integration / Denominational schools / Discrimination based on ethnic origin / Discrimination in education / Discrimination in property sales / Ethnic minorities / Forced migration / Freedom of association / Freedom of expression / Freedom of peaceful assembly / Freedom of political opinion / Freedom of religion / Freedom of residence / Freedom of the press / Internal migration / International migration / Minority language education rights / Peace negotiations / Political opposition / Political participation / Political representation / Population transfers / Post-secondary education / Religious education / Religious discrimination / Religious minorities / Religious violence / Right to property / Social inequality / Vulnerable groups

### Query:

1. Brief background on Chaldean and Assyrian Christians in Iraq.
2. What is the general situation for Iraqis in the UN-protected no-fly zone in northern Iraq?
3. How do Chaldean Christians in the UN-protected zone get along with the Kurds?
4. How many Chaldean Christians are there in northern Iraq?
5. Are there Christian churches and schools in northern Iraq?
6. How are Christians politically represented in the UN-protected zone?
7. Is there a Christian political party in the north that is allied with one of the major Kurdish parties?
8. What is the situation for Chaldean Christians in the rest of the country?
9. Are Chaldean Christians forced to join the Ba'ath Party? If so, what are the consequences for not joining?
10. Are Chaldean Christians suspected by Iraqi agents or by the Iraqi government of collusion with Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq?
11. Are Iraqi government agents able to, and do they, persecute Chaldean Christians in northern Iraq?
12. Where are communities of Chaldean Christians found outside of Iraq?

### Response:

#### 1. Brief background on Chaldean and Assyrian Christians in Iraq.

Chaldean and Assyrian Christians have the same ethnic and linguistic background, though as Eastern Rite Catholics, Chaldeans recognize the primacy of the Roman Catholic Pope while Assyrian Christians, who are not Catholic, do not (Journalist 17 May 2000; Minority Rights Group International 1997, 346). The Assyrians and Chaldeans are non-Arab, though the Iraqi government defines them as Arab, purportedly to increase identification of Iraqi Christians with the largely Sunni-Arab regime in Baghdad. The Kurdish government in northern Iraq refers, at least to Assyrians, as Kurdish Christians (USDOS 9 Sept. 1999).

An article in the *RFE/RL Iraq Report* states:

Because of religious differences, the Assyrian community in northern Iraq has been divided into the

Assyrians and the Chaldeans for administrative and census purposes... According to the Assyrian International News Agency [AINA]..., "with Chaldeans belonging to a different Assyrian Christian sect, the communities were always considered distinct by the government." The prevalent mentality in Baghdad, Kurdistan, and among the Assyrians themselves has allowed this situation to continue (25 June 1999).

There is a movement within the Assyrian and Chaldean communities in Iraq to unite, at least for administrative purposes. The idea of including Assyrian and Chaldean Christians under the common name of Assyrian Christians was fuelled by the U.S. Census Bureau's decision of April 1999 to count both groups as such in the U.S. 2000 Census, and "will have a direct impact in northern Iraq" in regard to the electoral census soon to be held by the Kurdish government (AINA 13 June 1999; *RFE/RL Iraq Report* 25 June 1999). Assyrian patriarchs, the Assyrian American National Federation, and the Chaldean Federation of America have endorsed the idea and have stated that Assyrians and Chaldeans are indeed one people (AINA 13 June 1999; *RFE/RL Iraq Report* 25 June 1999).

According to the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA), the Iraqi Kurd and Baghdad governments have perpetuated the administrative division between Assyrian and Chaldean Christians in order to lessen the political power of Christians in all of Iraq, but when Chaldean and Assyrian Christians are counted as one group, it will be "impossible to continue to ignore what will now number as the third largest demographic group in Iraq" (13 June 1999). Likewise, the *RFE/RL Iraq Report* states that "a unification of the Assyrian communities on an ethnic basis is likely to have major political consequences for them" (25 June 1999).

## **2. What is the general situation for Iraqis in the UN-protected no-fly zone in northern Iraq?**

Reports indicate a better human rights situation overall in the Kurdish-controlled areas of northern Iraq (the provinces of Duhok [Dahuk, Dohuk], Arbil [Irbil], and Sulaimaniyya [Suleymaniyyah], and some areas in Kirkuk and Nineveh), than exists elsewhere in the country (AI 2000, 135; U.K. Immigration & Nationality Directorate Sept. 1999; USDOS 25 Feb. 2000). Amnesty International reports that the overall human rights situation in the Kurd-controlled region has improved gradually since the 1997 cease-fire between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) brought an end to hostilities and large-scale human rights abuses (2000, 135). Nevertheless, reports of isolated human rights abuses, including political killings, continued in 1999 (AI 2000, 135).

Open criticism of the Kurdish authorities in the north is tolerated and, in contrast to the extreme control over freedoms of association and assembly exercised by the government in Baghdad over the rest of the country, there are "numerous [political] parties and social and cultural organizations" in the Kurd-controlled north (USDOS 25 Feb. 2000). Also, while freedom of speech, religion, movement, and press are strongly restricted throughout Iraq, these freedoms do exist to a certain extent in parts of the Kurd-controlled area (USDOS 25 Feb. 2000).

Thousands of Iraqi civilians in the north are displaced, however, due to intra-Kurdish fighting and skirmishes between Kurdish rebels and the Turkish army (AI 1999, 204; USDOS 25 Feb. 2000, USDOS Apr. 1999, 1680). Although the two main Kurdish parties in the north, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), have maintained a cease-fire since September 1998, they have not held elections proposed for July 1999, nor have they implemented measures to unify their separate administrations as outlined in the September 1998 Washington Agreement signed by both parties (USDOS 25 Feb. 2000). The fighting between Kurdish rebels -- the Turkey-based Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and Turkish troops continues (*The Guardian* 3 Apr. 2000; *ITAR-Tass* 22 May 2000).

Also, since 1991, the Iraqi government in Baghdad has undertaken an "Arabization" program in which non-Arab families, including Assyrian Christians, are "discriminat[ed] against" and deported from Baghdad-controlled areas, especially oil-rich Kirkuk but also Khanaqin, Sinjar, and other areas, to Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq (United Nations 1999, 4; USDOS 25 Feb. 2000). Kurdish authorities calculate that since 1991, over 92,000 people have been expelled to makeshift camps in northern Iraq where the Kurdish government provides food and blankets to the displaced (AI 1999, 203; USDOS 25 Feb. 2000).

"Political killings and terrorist actions" have also continued in northern Iraq, including a series of bombings in Irbil at Assyrian Christian homes, businesses, and a convent in late 1998 and January and December 1999 (USDOS 25 Feb. 2000). Assyrian groups criticized the Kurdish authorities' investigation of these bombings in which an Assyrian woman, her three-year-old daughter, and a 60-year-old Assyrian shopkeeper were killed (USDOS 25 Feb. 2000). In the aftermath of the May 1999 murder of a 21-year-old Assyrian woman who was a housekeeper in the home of a high-ranking KDP official, the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA) alleged a "well-established pattern" of complicity by Kurdish authorities in attacks against Assyrian Christians in northern Iraq" (USDOS 25 Feb. 2000).

## **3. How do Chaldean Christians in the UN-protected zone get along with the Kurds?**

The September 1998 Washington Agreement, which followed talks in Washington, D.C. between the

Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), provides for protection of the rights of the Turkoman (Turkman/Turkmen), Assyrian, and Chaldean minorities in Kurd-controlled areas in Iraq (UK Immigration & Nationality Directorate Sept. 1999).

According to a country expert, Chaldean Christians "are treated by Kurds as Assyrians -- sometimes well, and sometimes not" (Journalist 17 May 2000). He states that "old antagonisms" are strong in the Kurdish-controlled region and both ruling parties, the KDP and the PUK, "try to take advantage of [Assyrian and Chaldean Christians] for their own interests" (Journalist 17 May 2000).

The US Department of State reports that, according to the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA), KDP forces blockaded eight Assyrian villages in the Nahla area east of Aqra and later entered the villages and beat villagers. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) confirmed that after ICRC intervention with the KDP on behalf of the Assyrians, the KDP left the villages (25 Feb. 2000; 9 Sept. 1999).

The State Department also refers to reports by Assyrian groups of "a series of bombings in December 1998 and January and December 1999" [see section 1) of query response] and "several instances of mob violence by Muslims against Christians in the north in recent years" (25 Feb. 2000; 9 Sept. 1999). Whether the Christian victims of mob violence were Assyrian, Chaldean, or both, and whether the Muslims were necessarily Kurds is not specified. Also, six Assyrians were killed in an attack by the Turkey-based Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) near Dohuk in December 1997 (USDOS 9 Sept. 1999). Possible motives, if any, behind the violence are not mentioned.

The State Department does report that Christians (again, unspecified whether Assyrian, Chaldean, or both) "often feel caught in the middle of intra-Kurdish fighting" in northern Iraq (9 Sept. 1999). In their efforts to deny the PKK access to possible food sources, Iraqi Kurdish forces may be pressuring some Assyrian villagers to relocate from the country to the city (USDOS 9 Sept. 1999). Amnesty International reports that, according to the KDP, investigations into attacks against Christians in Arbil in the Kurd-controlled region continue (2000, 136).

#### **4. How many Chaldean Christians are there in northern Iraq?**

The RIC was unable to locate information on the number of Chaldean Christians living in northern Iraq. News reports cite a "senior KDP source" as stating that the majority of the 38,000 Christians in Kurdish-controlled Iraq are Chaldean as opposed to Assyrian, though according to the US Department of State, most of Iraq's Assyrian Christians live in Kurdish-ruled areas (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* 12 Apr. 2000; USDOS 9 Sept. 1999; *Zinda Magazine* 2 May 2000).

One country expert states that there are many Chaldean Christians in and to the south of Mosul, especially in the Tel Kef area (Professor of Middle East History 6 Apr. 2000). Another expert states that most Chaldean Christians in Iraq live in the central and southern part of the country, and not under Kurdish rule (Journalist 17 May 2000). The UK Immigration & Nationality Directorate reports that Iraq's Chaldean Christians are "scattered throughout" the country (Sept. 1999).

The *World Directory of Minorities* states that there are over 300,000 Chaldean Christians in Iraq and that they live mainly in Baghdad. Until the 1950s, Chaldeans were mostly settled in Mosul -- in 1932, 70 percent of Iraqi Christians (Assyrian and Chaldean) lived there, but by 1957, only 47 percent remained, as they migrated southward due in part to violence and regional and political tensions. It was estimated that about half of Iraq's Christian's lived in Baghdad by 1979, accounting for 14 percent of that city's population (Minority Rights Group International 1997, 347).

1994 figures state that 220,945 of Iraq's Christians are Chaldean, though this number may now be down to 200,000 (UK Immigration & Nationality Directorate Sept. 1999). News sources state that there are anywhere from 500,000 to two million Christians in Iraq, of which Chaldeans reportedly predominate (Associated Press 26 Dec. 1998; *The Economist Intelligence Unit* 10 Feb. 2000; Knight-Ridder Tribune News 18 Feb. 1998). The US Department of State cites "conservative estimates" which place over 95 percent of Iraq's population, estimated at 17,903,000 in 1991, as Muslim, while the remaining less than 5 percent is broken down among Christians, Yazidis, and Jews (9 Sept. 1999).

#### **5. Are there Christian schools and churches in northern Iraq?**

There are Christian schools and churches in Iraq, primarily in the Kurdish-controlled north. Elsewhere in Iraq, however, education in any language other than Arabic and Kurdish is prohibited due to a law passed by the government in Baghdad. Assyrian and Chaldean Christians, who speak and use Syriac in their religious texts, are unable to receive an education in their native language in areas under Baghdad control (Journalist 18 May 2000; USDOS 25 Feb. 2000; USDOS 9 Sept. 1999). According to the UK Immigration & Nationality Directorate, "military forces have destroyed numerous Assyrian churches," though where these churches were located is not indicated (Sept. 1999).

In northern Iraq, instruction in Syriac has been permitted since the 1991 Kurdish uprising against the Iraqi government. The US Department of State quotes Assyrian sources, however, which report that "[b]y October 1998, the first groups of students were ready to begin secondary school in Syriac in the

north..., [but] regional Iraqi Kurdish authorities refused to allow the classes to begin" (25 Feb. 2000). The State Department also reports that specific details on this situation were unavailable, and that the Kurdish government denies obstructing secondary education in Syriac in the north. There were no reports of similar problems in elementary education in Syriac in northern Iraq. The State Department also cites a report by the *Kurdistan Observer* that in November 1999, the government in Baghdad warned the Kurdish government against continuing to allow the Turkmen, Assyrian, and Yazidi communities in northern Iraq to operate their own schools (USDOS 25 Feb. 2000).

**6. How are Christians politically represented in the UN-protected zone?** The September 1998 Washington Agreement states that "seats must be set aside for representatives of all the groups living in the region -- in this case, Kurds, Turkmen and Assyrians" (*RFE/RL Iraq Report* 25 June 1999).

According to a "senior KDP [Kurdistan Democratic Party] source" quoted in news reports, "Chaldean Christians hold three cabinet portfolios in the government of the autonomous region; namely, the finance, industry, and state portfolios, as well as several other senior posts" (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* 12 Apr. 2000; *Zinda Magazine* 2 May 2000). The KDP source further stated that this is representative of "the spirit of tolerance that is characteristic of the DPK [KDP]...[and] an indication of the high degree of tolerance the people of Kurdistan feel toward one another" (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* 12 Apr. 2000). The source also stated that rights of the Turkomen, Assyrian, and Chaldean minorities in Kurd-controlled Iraq "were reasserted once again in...[the KDP] conference held in November 1999" (*Zinda Magazine* 2 May 2000).

The US Department of State reports that, according to the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA), armed KDP members forcibly closed the Assyrian Patriotic Party (APP) headquarters in Dohuk on October 21, 1999, but that the APP was allowed to resume operations four days later (25 Feb. 2000).

For more information on political representation of Christians in the UN-protected zone please see section 1) of this response.

**7. Is there a Christian political party in the north that is allied with one of the major Kurdish parties?**

According to the *World Directory of Minorities*, In 1979, a number of smaller parties combined to form the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), formally joining the Kurdish armed struggle in 1982. ADM was part of the Kurdistan Front, and participated in the 1992 Kurdistan election, five seats being reserved for Assyrian representatives. ADM demands Assyrian recognition in the Iraqi constitution, full cultural rights and equal treatment [for Assyrians] (Minority Rights Group International 1997, 346).

The RIC was unable to find information on any other Christian political parties that may be allied with one of the major Kurdish parties in northern Iraq.

**8. What is the situation for Chaldean Christians in the rest of the country?**

Although human rights reporting and country conditions experts on Iraq cite a wide range of problems for Christians, and non-Arabs in general, in Iraq, the occasional news report presents a dramatically different view. One article cites the Chaldean pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Baghdad as stating that "[t]here is no tension here in Iraq...; [u]nder this regime, this government, also this president, there is no discrimination" (*The Seattle Times* 24 Dec. 1998). The article also notes that construction of new churches in Iraq is a suggestion that "the Christian community is vital" though it states that because proselytizing of Muslims is prohibited, the Christian population must "rely on its youth to increase the fold" (*The Seattle Times* 24 Dec. 1998). Another article cites "Christians in Baghdad [who] say their friends and family are leaving for a variety of [economic] reasons but insist Christians are not discriminated against in Iraq" (Knight-Ridder Tribune News 18 Feb. 1998).

According to one country expert:

...it has become very politically correct to blame the emigration from Iraq [on] the sanctions [imposed on Iraq by the international community after the Persian Gulf War]. But millions were leaving before this became PC... I think economic hardship plays a very small role in this mass movement, but it cannot be discounted. It [the emigration], however, is largely a result of the callous disregard held by the current Baghdad administration for its own citizenry (Journalist 17 May 2000).

The same country expert states that Assyrian and Chaldean Christians endure "similar discrimination" in areas of Iraq controlled by Baghdad, though the level of discrimination is "somewhat less" for Chaldeans (Journalist 17 May 2000). He attributes this in part to the Chaldean Patriarch Raphael II Bedawid's proximity to Saddam Hussein's "inner circle" and to Bedawid's role as a "Baghdad-controlled puppet at international religious councils and in Rome" (Journalist 17 May 2000). He further states that "Ba'ath Party ideologists look down on all non-Muslims; ...Christians, Yazidis, [Yazidis] etc. as second-class if they refuse to change their nationality and are not Muslim" (Journalist 17 May 2000).

Another expert states that Chaldeans, as opposed to Assyrians, are "generally speaking...treated well

by the [Baghdad] regime" (Professor of Middle East History 7 Apr. 2000).

A third expert states:

Chaldeans are generally speaking treated as well as any other group or individuals, Christian, Muslim, whatever, who show loyalty to the regime and Saddam and stay away from "troublemakers"-- that is coup plotters, questionable Kurds, Shia, and Arabs suspected of harboring anti-regime or anti-Saddam sentiments. Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz is a Chaldean Christian who joined the Ba'ath Party in the very early days and is fiercely loyal to Saddam (INSS Senior Fellow 20 Apr. 2000).

The UK Immigration & Nationality Directorate reports that despite Tariq Aziz's lofty position in the Baghdad regime, Christians have little political influence in the Ba'ath government (Sept. 1999).

The *World Directory of Minorities* states that unlike Assyrian Christians, Chaldeans have "tended to assimilate into Arab identity" (Minority Rights Groups International 1997, 347). Besides Tariq Aziz, there are Chaldeans in "high command within the Ba'ath and the army, while others serve in the presidential palace" (Minority Rights Group International 1997, 347). The *Directory* further states that the Baghdad regime, in an effort to bolster its support among Christians, "consciously exploits the Chaldean sense of vulnerability" (Minority Rights Group International 1997, 347).

One news report states that Christians, who comprise only about 5 percent of Iraq's overwhelmingly Muslim population of 22 million, "feel alienated" within Iraqi society (Associated Press 26 Dec. 1998). According to the US Department of State, the Iraqi government in Baghdad has long "sought to undermine the identity of minority Christian (Assyrian and Chaldean)...groups" (25 Feb. 2000). The State Department also reports that "non-Arabs are denied equal access to employment, education, and physical security, [and they] are not permitted to sell their homes except to Arabs, nor to register or inherit property" (25 Feb. 2000).

The US Department of State cites the UN "Special Rapporteur and others" as stating that, "the [Baghdad] Government has engaged in various abuses against the country's 350,000 Assyrian and Chaldean Christians, especially in terms of forced movement from northern areas...and repression of political rights" (USDOS 25 Feb. 2000).

An article in the *RFE/RL Iraq Report* states that, as of April 2000, the Iraqi government in Baghdad would soon announce the formation of three "alternative" (to Ba'ath) political parties, including a Christian party (14 April 2000). It is reported that the Ba'ath party has agreed to the formation of these parties which will be headed up by "known commodities in the Iraqi political scene" (*RFE/RL Iraq Report* 14 April 2000). The article also cites Iraqi sources who have said that these parties will be a "sham," "weak," and non-players in the Iraqi political scene (14 April 2000).

### **9. Chaldean Christians forced to join the Ba'ath Party? If so, what are the consequences for not joining?**

About 8 percent of Iraq's population are Ba'ath Party members and only Ba'ath members may participate fully in Iraqi political life at the national level (UK Immigration & Nationality Directorate Sept. 1999).

One country expert states that he is unaware of any policy or practice by which Chaldean Christians are forced to join the Ba'ath Party (Professor of Middle East History 7 Apr. 2000). Another expert states that Chaldeans are not forced to join the party "unless some over zealous local party chief tries to insist" (INSS Senior Fellow 20 Apr. 2000). Both experts point out that privileges such as university admission will be denied if one does not join the Ba'ath Party, yet state that there are no direct punishments for failure or refusal to join (INSS Senior Fellow 20 Apr. 2000; Professor of Middle East History 7 Apr. 2000).

### **10. Are Chaldean Christians suspected by Iraqi agents or the Iraqi government of collusion with Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq?**

The *World Directory of Minorities* states that there has been some support among Chaldeans in the north for the Kurdish national movement (Minority Rights Group International 1997, 347). Other sources available to the RIC, however, do not indicate that Iraqi agents or the Iraqi government [in Baghdad] generally suspect, mistakenly or otherwise, Chaldean Christians of colluding with Iraqi Kurds (AI 1999; UK Immigration & Nationality Directorate Sept. 1999; USDOS 25 Feb. 2000).

Reports do state that Assyrian Christians are often suspected of and punished for suspected collusion with the Kurds (UK Immigration & Nationality Directorate Sept. 1999; U.S Department of State 25 Feb. 2000). According to the UK Immigration & Nationality Directorate, "[t]he [UN] Special Rapporteur and others report that the government has engaged various [sic] abuses against the Assyrian Christians, and has often suspected them of 'collaborating' with Kurds" (Sept. 1999). The report also refers to the destruction of "numerous Assyrian churches" by Iraqi government forces (UK Immigration & Nationality Directorate Sept. 1999). The *World Directory of Minorities* states: "Assyrians were unable to avoid the Kurdish conflict. As with the Kurds, some supported the government, others allied themselves with the Kurdish nationalist movement" (Minority Rights Group International 1997, 346).

### **11. Are Iraqi government agents able to, and do they, persecute Chaldean Christians in northern Iraq?**

According to one country expert, Iraqi agents have clear access to the Kurdish-controlled regions. And Baghdad is only a phone call away, [s]o they can threaten people anywhere and report on their movements to Baghdad whenever they want (Journalist 19 May 2000).

This expert also referred to an entity called "Group 99," and stated that they are "capable of threatening/assassinating anyone anywhere in the world" (Journalist 18 May 2000).

The UN Special Rapporteur reported in 1997 that despite withdrawal of Iraqi military forces from northern Iraq, there were reports of political killings in the area by these forces, and "reports and allegations received allege that the Iraqi security services and their agents remain active in the region" (21 Feb. 1997, 3).

While not specifically differentiating between Kurdish and Baghdad-ruled areas in Iraq, the US Department of State reports that the Iraqi government (in Baghdad) often does not honor the constitutional rights of Iraqi citizens to privacy, especially in cases of suspected, and often very broadly defined, breaches of national security and opposition to the regime. The State Department also reports that "the [Iraqi] security services and the Ba'ath Party maintain pervasive networks of informers to deter dissident activity and instill fear in the public" (25 Feb. 2000).

### **12. Where are communities of Chaldean Christians found outside of Iraq?**

Due in part to the imposition of international sanctions against Iraq in the early 1990s, and also to joblessness among Christians that followed an Iraq-wide alcohol ban after the Persian Gulf War, about a third of Iraq's Christians have left the country for destinations such as the US, Jordan, Sweden, France, Turkey, Australia, Canada, and elsewhere, leaving some "traditionally Christian villages" in the Kurd-controlled north "virtually abandoned" (Associated Press 26 Dec. 1998; Knight-Ridder Tribune News 18 Feb. 1998; *The Seattle Times* 24 Dec. 1998).

Most Iraqis living in the US are Christian; Chaldean Christians in the US are concentrated in Detroit -- 65-125,000; San Diego -- 35,000; and Chicago -- no figures (*The Detroit News* 17 Dec. 1997; IGC Spring 2000; Information Access Company 1 Nov. 1999; Knight-Ridder Tribune News 18 Feb. 1998; *The San Diego Union-Tribune* 17 Dec. 1998; *USA Today* 17 Feb. 1998).

Chaldean Christians in Europe generally hail from either Turkey or Iraq, with the first mass migration of mostly Turkish Chaldeans occurring after WWI. There is little mixing between Turkish and Iraqi Chaldeans due to their social differences. For instance, the Iraqi Chaldeans are as a whole urban and better educated than the Turkish Chaldeans, who mostly came from rural areas (IGC Spring 2000).

There are about 15,000 Chaldean Christians living in France, mostly around Paris, but also in other parts of the country (Billioud 1997; IGC Spring 2000). In the Netherlands, there are 5,000 (in the eastern part of the country); in Belgium, 8,000 (in Brussels, Mechelen, and Antwerp); in Greece, 8,000 (mainly in Athens); in Great Britain, 3,000 (in London), and in Germany and Sweden there are Chaldean communities yet there is no count for these countries, though in Germany there are believed to be less than 10,000 (IGC 2000).

There is a small community of about 8,000 Chaldean Christians in eastern Syria, and Lebanon is also home to Chaldeans (*The Economist Intelligence Unit* 22 Mar. 2000; Levinson 1998, 250; Minority Rights Group International 1997, 376). According to one news report, most Iraqi refugees flooding into Lebanon in 1998 were Chaldean, and Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the Scandinavian countries were reportedly the most likely countries to accept these refugees for resettlement (Agence France Presse 16 Mar. 1998).

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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