

ASSYRIAN UNIVERSAL ALLIANCE AUSTRALIA REGION

Member, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)

PRESS RELEASE

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In the first visit by an Iraqi leader to Australia, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki arrived in Canberra on Thursday, 12 March 2009. On Saturday, 14 March 2009, an Assyrian delegation attended a special function hosted by the Australian Iraqi community at the Shangri-la Hotel in Sydney honouring Prime Minister al-Maliki and the Iraqi Ministerial delegation. The attending Assyrian representatives were Mr. Hermiz Shahan, Deputy Secretary General of the Assyrian Universal Alliance and Regional Secretary of Australia and New Zealand, Mr. David M. David, President of the Assyrian Australian National Federation and Executive Member of the Assyrian Universal Alliance, and Mr. Paul Azzo, member of Liberal Party and adviser to the Assyrian Universal Alliance on governmental issues.

Hon. al-Maliki's speech will long be thoughtfully remembered by the attendees representing a mosaic of Iraq's society in Australia. Hon. al-Maliki called on all Iraqi intellectuals and business representatives in Australia to help shape a new future for Iraq, which he said had been devastated by the previous regime of Saddam Hussein and recently by the activities of the Al-Qaeda terrorist group. "We have to resolve all the problems we have inherited from the previous regime and also neighbouring countries," he said, and added, "We have to mend fences with the international community."

During the question and answer period, Mr. Shahan welcomed the Prime Minister and the Iraqi delegation on behalf of the Assyrian Australian community. He pointed out that since the 1930's, Assyrians in Iraq have petitioned the successive governments of Iraq for their national rights and a halt to their systematic persecution, genocide and displacement. He stated that during the tyrannic regime of Saddam Hussein more than 300 Assyrian villages and townships housing historic churches were completely destroyed and their people displaced. Mr. Shahan then asked the Prime Minister, "How long will the Assyrian issue remain pending?" and, "When will the Iraqi government address the Assyrian question and put an end to this tragic fate experienced by the Assyrians?"

The Prime Minister, in a detailed reply, promised that the government of Iraq will be working to put an end to the tragedies suffered by Iraqi ethnic populations. Mr. Shahan then presented the Prime Minister with a formal letter from the leadership of the Assyrian Universal Alliance outlining the Assyrian demands in Iraq.

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Seated in the middle is Mr. Nuri al-Maliki, Prime Minister of Iraq, to his right is Mr. Hoshiyar Zebari, Iraq's foreign Minister, and seated on Mr. Maliki's left is Iraq's Ambassador Mr. Ghanim Al-Shibli. Mr. Fawzi Hariri, Iraq's Minister of industry and Minerals is the second person seated from the right.



Left) After the meeting the Assyrian delegation had an opportunity to follow up on Assyrian situation with members of the Iraqi delegation. Standing from right to left are Mr. Hermiz Shahen, Mr. Hoshiyar Zebari and Mr. Paul Azzo.

Below) Standing from right to left are Mr. Hermiz Shahen, Mr. David M. David, Mr. Fawzi Hariri and Mr. Paul Azzo.

