

## July 17, 2007: USCIRF Hearing: Threats to Iraq's Communities of Antiquity

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 17, 2007

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EVENT ADVISORY When: Wednesday, July 25, 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Where: Russell Senate Office Building, Room 485 RSVP: [communications@uscirf.gov](mailto:communications@uscirf.gov) or (202) 523-3240 x 135 Iraq's communities of antiquity-including Chaldo-Assyrian Christians, Sabaeen Mandaeans, Yazidis and others-face grave violence and targeted persecution that threatens their continued existence on the territory they have inhabited for millennia. Amid the current debate over U.S. policy, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom is convening a hearing to gather expert testimony from representatives of those ancient communities.

The hearing is the first of two. The second will examine the status and treatment of Iraqi refugees-both Muslim and non-Muslim-who have fled sectarian violence and religious persecution.

The July 25 hearing will open with testimony by The Rev. Canon Andrew White, Vicar of St. George's Anglican Church, Baghdad, and President and CEO, Foundation for Reconciliation in the Middle East. The Rev. Canon White has served as the Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Representative to the Middle East, and negotiated in many conflicts. He is author of the book *Iraq: Searching for Hope*. Other witnesses invited to testify at the July 25 hearing include:

\* Ms. Pascale Warda, President, Iraqi Women's Center for Development, former Iraqi Minister of Migration and Displacement

\* Dr. Donny George, Professor, State University of New York, Stony Brook, former Chairman, Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and former Director General, Iraqi National Museum

\* Mr. Michael Youash, Iraq Sustainable Development Project

\* Dr. Suhaib Nashi, General Secretary, Mandaean Associations Union

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) to monitor violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in IRFA and set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress. It is the first government commission in the world with the sole mission of reviewing and making policy recommendations on the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom globally. Michael Cromartie, Chair • Preeta D. Bansal, Vice Chair • Richard D. Land, Vice Chair • Don Argue • Imam Talal Y. Eid • Felice D. Gaer • Leonard A. Leo • Elizabeth H. Prodromou • Nina Shea • Ambassador John V. Hanford III, Ex-Officio