

Parliamentary questions

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1029/04

by Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(24 March 2004)

Subject: Ethnic discrimination in funding and administration of reconstruction in Iraq

In the past decade, the Chaldo-Assyrian community in Northern Iraq did not benefit from the UNDP activities under the oil-for-food programme (UN Resolution 986), which was administered through the local government. In 2001, funds were refused specifically in the case of Chakalla in the Dohuk governorate. For that reason, there has been a limited reconstruction of Chaldo-Assyrian villages in Northern Iraq, and the funding has had to be supplied from donations collected by the Chaldo-Assyrian diaspora in Europe, Australia and the US.

The diaspora has had to provide funding for school construction and maintenance as well as for curriculum development to preserve the Aramaic (Syriac) language. Without help for education in areas with concentrations of Chaldo-Assyrians, we may well witness the extinction of this ancient language.

In the same manner, the diaspora has had to supply funds for women's organisations, childcare facilities, and computer training in Northern Iraq.

Diaspora help is limited. Thus it is essential for international funds to be allocated equitably to this oldest of indigenous ethnic groups in Iraq.

The European Union is indirectly involved through the United Nations and directly through its own efforts in the general reconstruction of Iraq. Currently the EC Paper on Medium-Term Strategy on Iraq is being prepared.

1. What mechanisms are in place to ensure that the funding and administration of projects in the future avoid ethnic and religious discrimination?
2. Can the Commission take measures to scrutinise funding allocation in Iraq, and guarantee that out of the generally allocated funds, an equitable amount reaches all ethnic communities, and that in the North there is no compensation for past discrimination?
3. Can the Commission take measures to have Chaldo-Assyrian personnel included on the local fund-administration staff throughout the parts of Iraq where Chaldo-Assyrians reside, in order to prevent future discrimination in the distribution of aid?