



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

---

*Delegation for Relations with Iraq*

---

**D-IQ\_PV(2013) 0917\_1**

**MINUTES**

of the meeting of 17 September 2013, from 11.30 to 12.30  
Brussels

The meeting opened at 11.35 on Tuesday, 17 September 2013, with Struan Stevenson (Chair) in the chair.

**1. Adoption of draft agenda (PE 514024)**

Draft agenda was adopted.

**2. Approval of minutes of the meetings of 20 June 2013 (PE 514021)**

Minutes were approved.

**3. Chair's announcements**

Mr Stevenson welcomed the guest speakers and once again strongly condemned the continuous terrorist attacks in Iraq, expressing condolences to the families of the victims.

He made the following shorter historical digression:

The Christians of Iraq are considered to be one of the oldest surviving continuous Christian communities in the world. At the present time, most Iraqi Christians are Chaldeans, Eastern-rite Catholics who are autonomous from Rome but who recognise the Pope's authority. Chaldeans are an ancient population, some of whom still speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus.

The other significant community is made up of Assyrians, the descendants of the ancient empires of Assyria and Babylonia. After their empires collapsed in the 6th and 7th Centuries

BC, the Assyrians scattered across the Middle East. Later on, they embraced Christianity (in the 1st Century), with their Ancient Church of the East believed to be the oldest in Iraq.

Other ancient Churches include Syriac Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Armenian Catholic Christians, who fled from massacres in Turkey in the early 20th Century.

There are also small Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic communities, as well as Anglicans and Evangelicals.

This rich mosaic of ancient Christian confessions numbered over 1.4 million people in 1987, or 8% of the population; in 2003, after more than a decade of international sanctions on Iraq, the Christian presence has dropped to 5% of the Iraqi population. Nowadays, Christians in Iraq are less than 500,000 (some people say as few as 250,000) - corresponding to around only 1.5% of the total population of the country. If this trend continues, there will soon be no Christians in Iraq anymore. Continuous harassment, violence, threats, killings, rapes, psychological and physical terror and every-day targeted deadly bomb attacks by groups of especially Sunni extremists linked to Al-Qaida have caused this drastic decrease of Christian peoples.

Many Christians left the country, while an estimated 65,000 of them fled to the safer Iraqi Kurdistan or to the Ninewa plain.

Mr Stevenson continued by asking the guests about how to determine the quickest and most efficient ways to stop and reverse this trend of violence against Christians and other minorities in many parts of Iraq today - and what they expect Europe and the European Parliament in particular could contribute to that end.

Subsequently, the Chair passed the floor to the keys speakers, starting with Dr Hamoudi.

#### **4. Debate on "*Situation of minorities in Iraq, with focus on Christian religious groups*"**

**Dr Hamoudi** started by thanking the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs (for a previous invitation). He also thanked the EP Delegation for Relations with Iraq for the opportunity to discuss about the component parts of Iraq, some of which might indeed be considered minorities.

He believes Iraq is the land of the profits. Many religions were born there. Adam and Noah are both buried in Iraq, while Abraham was born and lived there before he emigrated. All component parts of Iraq are sacred. They have coexisted and cooperated for generations. Historically, there has never been any division along the lines of religion. The society was interconnected with personal (mixed marriages), commercial, social and any kind of other ties.

Afterwards, there was a period of nationalism, which caused, for the first time in the Iraqi history, some divisions of the Iraqi society along religious lines, and even prohibition of some cults.

The new government tried to transcend this and to give equal rights to every Iraqi citizen. As a matter of fact, Article II of the Iraqi Constitution stipulates that all Iraqis have full religious

rights, including freedom of religious practice, of denomination, etc. Iraq is, and wants to remain, a multi-confessional and multi-religious country. Article IV speaks about languages, and enshrines the principle of majority language, which means that if a language of a component is predominant in a province, that language will become an official language for that province and will be taught at school and used in the Public Administration and judiciary branch, if the people of the concerned province decide so in a referendum. For the time being, Arab and Kurdish are the two official languages of Iraq. The right of Iraqis to educate their children in their mother tongue, such as Turkmen, Syriac and Armenian is guaranteed.

Moreover, Art. XLI guarantees the right of Iraqis to live their personal lives according to the religion they practice.

For example, the President of the Republic is not obliged to be a Muslim, which is a unique situation among Arab states. Also all the other Public Administration posts are open to all citizens, therefore Christians are living in a golden age. If they leave Iraq they will lose this opportunity.

Dr Hamoudi continued by saying that Iraq is crossing a transitional period: there are ancient costumes, sometimes difficult to overcome. But efforts have been made to make the new, more inclusive and democratic order to prevail.

With regard to religious property, Dr Hamoudi pointed out that the religious sites are under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister. Some income from oil extraction is allocated for construction of religious sites for all confessions. Indeed, Iraqi budget has budget lines for constructing worship places for other religions.

Dr Hamoudi concluded that all Iraqi people have been victims of terrorist attacks, not just the Christian component. The Shia component was the one which suffered the most, but also the other components suffered. He strongly underlined that it would be a pity if Christians leave Iraq, since they are considered like brothers and they could be the Iraqi bridgehead towards the West.

**Mr Matti Hadaya** started by saying that under the former regime, Christians were for many aspects in a better position than now, and more involved in public affairs. They lived in their ancestral villages and towns, they were not forced to emigrate, not intimidated by Governments or Ministers, and that there was no discrimination.

Today, the rights of Christians are guaranteed by the Constitution, but unfortunately the real situation on the ground is very different, the law is not being applied at all. Moreover, the overall security situation is getting worse. Therefore, many articles of the Constitution cannot be applied.

The situation for Christians is especially critical in the Ninawa Valley, continued Mr Hadaya, where there is a strong tendency towards a forced demographic change. As a matter of fact, Shabaki population has been forced to relocate to the traditionally Assyrian areas, but in this way the Christian population there is obliged to sell their lands, their properties and to go elsewhere, often out of the country. Some Christians are even happy with that situation, because they esteem their chances of living peacefully are better abroad. But in this way the demography of the region, with all its historical value, will be changed forever. This kind of process is especially visible in the village of Bartalla.

Finally, Mr Hadaya called to hold a broad Conference on the situation of Eastern Christians.

**Mr Khalis Isho** started by bringing greetings from the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian people in Iraq.

He continued by explaining that Christians have always served honourably their country. Despite this, during the former regime they were victims of passive policies and demographic change, which were implemented in order to hide cultural specificities within Iraq.

When freedom finally dawned there was hope for Christians. However, kidnappings, murders, and in general widespread violence soon killed these hopes. Nowadays, more than 60% of Christians live outside Iraq, while some people want to seize Christian-owned land and properties left in the Valley of Nineveh, even if Art. XXIII of the Iraqi Constitution clearly forbids demographic change. There had been a very enlightened judgement by the Federal Supreme Court, stating that land cannot be seized: it is a revolutionary sentence, compared to former regime practices. But this judgement will not be effective if not executed...

Mr Isho consequently asked for the EP, EU and wider international community support in the following issues:

1. Establishment of a Governorship in the Valley of Nineveh on geographic and administrative basis, which would preserve Christian peculiarities and allow Christians to better serve Iraq;
2. Call for Christian right to self-determination in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan;
3. Stopping of the policy of demographic change, on the basis of the above mentioned judgement by the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court;
4. A civil registry for Christians should be established;
5. Iraqi Government should revise curricula for Iraqi schools in order to promote differences. Iraqi children are still not taught to be tolerant;
6. Systematic and radical fight against terrorism;
7. Clear support to the Christian people of Iraq by promoting employment perspectives and well-being of the community on the spot, thus encouraging Christians not to emigrate from the country;

**Mr Vidal Quadras** asked Mr Isho if violence against Christians is not a specific problem, but part of a general violence atmosphere, which unfortunately reigns in the country, or instead if it is true that Christians are particularly vulnerable in this situation?

**Mr Isho** agreed entirely with Dr Hamoudi that everybody in Iraq is in a difficult situation today, but he disagreed about the level of persecution of Christians: according to him it is greater than the average, and this is demonstrated by the fact that there is more Christian emigration from the country: 60% of them are now abroad. Attacks and murders are everyday attempts to eradicate Christians, and their reaction is to emigrate. This, in turn, nurtures the actions of extremists. Mr Isho foresaw that in 10 years there would be no Christians in Iraq at all anymore. Therefore, he suggested that the Iraqi Government should demand assistance to the West in order to ensure the Rule of Law and get rid of the extremists. Iraqi Constitution must be applied effectively.

**Dr Hamoudi** commented on the current situation in the area of Bartalla and Ninawa Valley. He said Shabaki community relocated to Bartalla because the previous Christian inhabitants

had left that rich, services-endowed area; this has been seen by the Christian community as a demographic change process.

He concluded by saying that it is important to recognize the importance of all the components of Iraqi society; he repeated, agreeing in this point with the other speakers, that it would be a pity if Christians go away. He exhorted not to encourage Iraqi Christians to do so.

## 5. Any other business

**Mr Stevenson** mentioned that the Delegation for Relations with Iraq asked authorization to the Conference of Presidents to travel to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in late November in order to participate, among other things, to a Conference on Christian minority in Iraq.

Moreover, D IQ Chair received a symbolic gift from Dr Hamoudi, an art work representing a bird flying through the Valley of Ninawa.

## 6. Date and place of next meeting

D IQ will tentatively host the 5th Interparliamentary meeting EP - Iraqi CoR, on 7th November 2013 in Brussels. In alternative, a normal Delegation meeting will take place on the same date.

ΠΙΣΤΩΤΗΡΙΟ ΛΗΨΤ/Lista de Asistencia/Prezenční listina/Deltagerliste/  
Anwesenheitsliste/Kohalolijate Nimekiri/KATAΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/  
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRS/DALYVIŲ SĄRAŠAS/JELENLÉTI ÍV/  
REGISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŚCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/LISTĂ DE PREZENȚĂ/  
PREZENČNÁ LISTINA/SEZNAM NAVZOČÍH/LÄSNÄOLOLISTA/DELTAGARLISTA

Бюро/Мesa/Předsednictvo/Formandskabet/Vorstand/Juhatus/Προεδρείο/Bureau/Ufficio di presidenza/Prezidijs/Biuras/Elnökség/ Prezydium/Birou/Predsednictvo/Predsedstvo/Puheenjohtajisto/Presidiet (*)
Struan STEVENSON (P)
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Μέλη/Members/Députés/Deputati/Deputāti/Nariai/Képviselek/ Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputați/Jäsenet/Ledamöter
Alexandra THEIN, Alejo VIDAL-QUADRAS
Заместници/Suplentes/Náhradníci/Stedfortrædere/Stellvertreter/Asendusliikmed/Αναπληρωτές/Substitutes/Suppléants/Supplenti/ Aizstājēji/Pavaduojantys nariai/Póttagok/Sostituti/Plaatsvervangers/Zastępcy/Membros suplentes/Supleanți/Náhradníci/Namestniki/ Varajäsenet/Suppleanter
Francesco Enrico SPERONI

187 (2)	
193 (3)	
49 (6) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/Päevakorral punkt/Ημερήσια Διάταξη Σημείο/Agenda item/Point OJ/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkes punktas/Napirendi pont/Punt fuq l-aġenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/Točka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)	
	##

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatelé/Observatører/Beobachter/Vaatlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Osservatori/Novērotāji/Stebėtojai/Megfigyelők/Osservatori/Waarnemers/Obserwatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opazovalci/Tarkkailijat/Obsevatorer

По покана на председателя/Por invitación del presidente/Na pozvání předsedy/Efter indbydelse fra formanden/Auf Einladung des Vorsitzenden/Esimehe kutsel/Με πρόσκληση του Προέδρου/At the invitation of the Chair(wo)man/Sur l'invitation du président/Su invito del presidente/Pēc priekšsēdētāja uzaicinājuma/Pirmininkui pakvietus/Az elnök meghívására/Fuq stedina tal-President/Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/Na zaproszenie Przewodniczącego/A convite do Presidente/La invitația președintelui/Na pozwanie predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan
Mr Humam Hamoudi, Chair of the Iraqi Council of Representatives' Foreign Relations Committee; Mr Anwar Matti Hadaya, Chairman of the Independent Syriac Assembly Movement; Mr Khalis Isho, Member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives and Chairman of the Syriac Assyrian Chaldean People's Council;

Съвет/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Nõukogu/Συμβούλιο/Council/Conseil/Consiglio/Padome/Taryba/Tanács/Kunsill/Raad/Conselho/Consiliu/Svet/Neuvosto/Rådet (*)
Комисия/Comisión/Komise/Kommissionen/Kommission/Euroopa Komisjon/Επιτροπή/Commission/Commissione/Komisija/Bizottság/Kummissjoni/Commissie/Komisja/Comissão/Comisie/Komisia/Komissio/Kommissionen (*)
Thisvi EKMEKTZOGLOU-NEWSON, Nicolas LEVINE
Европейска служба за външна дейност/Enropská služba pro vnější činnost/EU-Udenrigstjenesten/Europäischer Auswärtiger Dienst/Euroopa välisteenistus/Ευρωπαϊκή Υπηρεσία Εξωτερικής Δράσης/European External Action service/Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior/Service européen pour l'action extérieure/Servizio europeo per l'azione esterna/Eiropas Ārējās darbības dienests/Europos išorės veiksmų tarnyba/Európai Külügyi Szolgálat/Servizz Ewropew għall-Azzjoni Esterna/Europese dienst voor extern optreden/Europejska Służba Działań Zewnętrznych/Serviço Europeu para a Acção Externa/Serviciul european pentru acțiune externă/Európska služba pre vonkajšiu činnosť/Evropska služba za zunanje delovanje/Euroopan ulkosuhdehallinto/Europeiska avdelningen för yttre åtgärd (*)

Други институции/Otras instituciones/Ostatní orgány a instituce/Andre institutioner/Andere Organe/Muud institutsioonid/ Άλλα θεσμικά όργανα/Other institutions/Autres institutions/Altre istituzioni/Citas iestādes/Kitos institucijos/Más intézmények/Istituzzjonijiet oħra/Andere instellingen/Inne instytucje/Outras Instituições/Alte instituții/Iné inštitúcie/Druge institucije/Muut toimielimet/Andra institutioner/organ	

Други учасници/Otros participantes/Ostatní účastníci/Endvidere deltog/Andere Teilnehmer/Muud osalejad/Επίσης Παρόντες/Other participants/Autres participants/Altri partecipanti/Citi klātesošie/Kiti dalyviai/Más résztvevők/Parteicipanti oħra/Andere aanwezigen/Inni uczestnicy/Outros participantes/Alți participanți/Ini účastníci/Dруги udeleženci/Muut osallistujat/Övriga deltagare	
HE Mr Mohammed Abdullah Al-Humaimidi - Iraqi Ambassador, Wakas Saad Alhayani - Iraqi Embassy, Jwan Khioka-Iraqi Embassy, Yesar Al-Hakim - Iraqi Embassy, Maythaw Alrikabi - Iraqi Embassy, Zana Kurda - KRG-EU Mission, Delavar Ajgeiy - KRG, Merry Nelly M. Fitzgerald, EU- Turkmen friendship, Hassan Tawfiq-Walli Aydinli-Iraqi-Turkmen front	

Секретариат на политическите групи/Secretaría de los Grupos políticos/Sekretariát politických skupin/Gruppernes sekretariat/Sekretariat der Fraktionen/Fraktsioonide sekretariaat/Γραμματεία των Πολιτικών Ομάδων/Secretariats of political groups/Secrétariat des groupes politiques/Segreteria gruppi politici/Politisko grupu sekretariāts/Frakciju sekretoriai/Képviselőcsoportok titkársága/Sekretarjat gruppi političi/Fractiesecretariaten/Sekretariat Grup Politycznych/Secr. dos grupos políticos/Secretariate grupuri politice/Sekretariát politických skupin/Sekretariat političnih skupin/Poliittisten ryhmien sihteeristöt/Gruppernas sekretariat	
PPE S&D ALDE ECR Verts/ALE GUE/NGL EFD NI	GUIRAO GALDON Maria Soledad MEIER Airis

Кабинет на председателя/Gabinete del Presidente/Kancelář předsedy/Formandens Kabinet/Kabinett des Präsidenten/Presidendi kantselei/Γραφείο Προέδρου/President's Office/Cabinet du Président/Gabinetto del Presidente/Priekšsēdētāja kabinets/Pirmininko kabinetas/Elnöki hivatal/Kabinett tal-President/Kabinet van de Voorzitter/Gabinet Przewodniczącego/Gabinete do Presidente/Cabinet Președinte/Kancelária predsedu/Urad predsednika/Puhemiehen kabinetti/Talmannens kansli	
Кабинет на генералния секретар/Gabinete del Secretario General/Kancelář generálního tajemníka/Generalsekretærens Kabinet/Kabinett des Generalsekretärs/Peasekretäri büroo/Γραφείο Γενικού Γραμματέα/Secretary-General's Office/Cabinet du Secrétaire général/Gabinetto del Segretario generale/Generalsekretāra kabinets/Generalinio sekretoriaus kabinetas/Főtitkári hivatal/Kabinett tas-Segretarju Ġenerali/Kabinet van de secretaris-generaal/Gabinet Sekretarza Generalnego/Gabinete do Secretário-Geral/Cabinet Secretar General/Kancelária generálneho tajomníka/Urad generalnega sekretarja/Pääsihteerin kabinetti/Generalsekreterarens kansli	

Генерална дирекция/Dirección General/Generální ředitelství/Generaldirektorat/Generaldirektion/Peardirektoraat/Γενική Διεύθυνση/Directorate-General/Direction générale/Direzione generale/Ģenerāldirektorāts/Generalini s direktoratas/Főigazgatóság/Direttorat Ġenerali/Direktoraten-generaal/Dyrekcja Generalna/Direcção-Geral/Direcții Generale/Generálne riaditeľstvo/Generalni direktorat/Pääosasto/Generaldirektorat	
DG PRES DG IPOL DG EXPO DG COMM DG PERS DG INLO DG TRAD DG INTE DG FINS DG ITEC	REINPRECHT Michael, Marc BENTINICK
Правна служба/Servicio Jurídico/Právní služba/Juridisk Tjeneste/Juristischer Dienst/Öigusteenistus/Νομική Υπηρεσία/Legal Service/Service juridique/Servizio giuridico/Juridiskais dienests/Teisės tarnyba/Jogi szolgálat/Servizz legali/Juridische Dienst/Wydział prawny/Serviço Jurídico/Serviciu Juridic/Právny servis/Pravna služba/Oikeudellinen yksikkö/Rättstjänsten	
Секретариат на комисията/Secretaría de la comisión/Sekretariát výboru/Udvalgssekretariatet/Ausschussesekretariat/Komisjoni sekretariaat/Γραμματεία επιτροπής/Committee secretariat/Secrétariat de la commission/Segreteria della commissione/Komitejas sekretariāts/Komiteto sekretoriatas/A bizottság titkársága/Sekretarjat tal-kumitat/Commissiesecretariaat/Sekretariat komisji/Sekretariado da comissão/Sekretariat comisie/Sekretariat odbora/Valiokunnan sihteeristö/Utskottssekretariatet	
Rok KOZELJ, Robertino BABIC	
Сътрудник/Asistente/Asistent/Assistent/Assistenz/Βοηθός/Assistant/Assistente/Palīgs/Padējējas/Asszisztens/Asystent/Pomočnik/Avustaja/Assisterter	

- \* (P) = Председател/Presidente/Předseda/Formand/Vorsitzender/Esimees/Πρόεδρος/Chair(wo)man/Président/Priekšsēdētājs/Pirmininkas/Elnök/President/Voorzitter/Przewodniczący/Preşedinte/Predseda/Predsednik/Puheenjohtaja/Ordförande
- (VP) = Заместник-председател/Vicepresidente/Místopředseda/Næstformand/Stellvertretender Vorsitzender/Aseesimees/Αντιπρόεδρος/Vice-Chair(wo)man/Vice-Président/Priekšsēdētāja vietnieks/Pirmininko pavaduotojas/Alelnök/Viçi President/Ondervoorzitter/Wiceprzewodniczący/Vice-Présidente/Vicepreşedinte/Podpredseda/Podpredsednik/Varapuheenjohtaja/Vice ordförande
- (M) = Член/Miembro/Člen/Medlem/Mitglied/Parlamendiliige/Μέλος/Member/Membre/Membro/Deputāts/Narys/Képviselő/Membru/Lid/Członek/Membro/Membru/Člen/Poslanec/Jäsen/Ledamot
- (F) = Длъжностно лице/Funcionario/Úředník/Tjenestemand/Beamter/Ametnik/Υπάλληλος/Official/Fonctionnaire/Funzionario/Ierēdnis/Pareigūnas/Tisztviselő/Ufficial/Ambtenaar/Urządник/Funcionário/Funcionar/Úradník/Uradnik/Virkamies/Tjänsteman