
ISDP NEWS RELEASE

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Iraq and Vulnerable Minorities Can Both Benefit from Article 125

(Washington, DC – December 22, 2011): On December 19, 2011, the United States Congress passed the Appropriations Act for 2012. The Act sets forth the single most concrete articulation of a U.S. Government policy for Iraq's vulnerable minorities. It states:

"The Committee continues to recognize the importance of providing targeted assistance to ethno-religious minorities in Iraq to help ensure their continued survival, especially those living in the Ninevah Plains region. The Committee directs the Department of State to submit a report, not later than 90 days after enactment of this act, detailing U.S. efforts to help these communities, including assistance consistent with Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution; assistance in building an indigenous community police force in the Ninevah Plains; and efforts to support NGOs in the region."

The policy work underpinning this legislative measure is entitled, "*The Nineveh Plain Province Solution*". It calls for a three-track policy covering governance, security and development issues. At the core of the policy is the effort of Iraq's Christian Assyrians, Shabaks, and Yezidis, among others, to establish a province in the Nineveh Plain pursuant to Article 125 in Iraq's constitution. This policy goal, articulated by Iraq's vulnerable minorities, seeks to find a role for them in Iraq's burgeoning system of federalism and to make federalism work to stabilize Iraq.

The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) efforts to annex the Nineveh Plain and other KRG policies generate a type of destructive force known as *centrifugal federalism*, which threatens to split Iraq apart. Christian Assyrians, Shabaks and Yezidis working to form a province in the Nineveh Plain would help ensure their own ability to thrive in Iraq but will also introduce a countervailing political force; *centripetal federalism*. This countervailing force can serve to stabilize Iraq and help develop an appreciation for the benefits of federalism in Iraq.

The formation of the Nineveh Plain Province can achieve the following: 1. prevent the unilateral annexation of the Nineveh Plain, 2. create a truly heterogeneous province that exemplifies political moderation, 3. secure the rights of vulnerable minorities such as Assyrians, Shabaks and Yezidis to ensure ethnic pluralism in Iraq is sustained, 4. create a province that prioritizes consensus in Iraq's system of intergovernmental relations, 5. establish a province within the framework of the constitutional rights of specific vulnerable minorities, making it part of constitutional (higher) law and thereby further protected from annexation by the KRG.

The Article 125 vehicle for establishing a province offers the key tool for ensuring a long-term future for vulnerable minorities like Assyrians. It can also serve to stabilize Iraq as a force of centripetal, '*holding together*' federalism. Article 125 is gaining support from important international actors who recognize these strategic benefits, especially for stability. ISDP will continue to raise awareness on policies essential for the survival of Iraq's vulnerable Peoples and applauds all those who participated in advancing this policy agenda in the United States.

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