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A Nation-Building Undertaking for the Benefit of Future Generations

Under the pretext of establishing democracy, the United States of America transformed Iraq into a condition of complete instability. Having lived in a relatively prosperous country, Christians today are fleeing Iraq to save themselves from unceasing daily terrorist attacks.

Finding themselves in a state of unending fear and desperation, the defenseless Iraqi-Armenian community gradually began a process of emigration from its homeland.

Despite the dire situation in Iraq, an extremely important mission came to fruition to guide and assist Iraqi Armenians through a process of immigration to the fatherland, Armenia. That mission was the establishment of the Los Angeles-based Iraqi Armenian Relief Fund- I.A.R.F.

Founded in 2005, the Iraqi Armenian Relief Fund decided to initially help the neediest of approximately ninety families which appealed for assistance via the fund's web site. Exhibiting a deep sense of faith in the abilities of the fund's Chairman, Mr. Sarkis Tertsakian, as well as Mr. Khachig Janoyan, Mr. Raffi Garabedian and fellow board members, a number of Iraqi Armenian families ultimately made the patriotic yet difficult decision of relocating to Armenia. Having worked hard to raise a substantial amount of funds and to solve certain administrative matters, the fund's board members assumed a heightened sense of responsibility towards their compatriots, who were leaving behind their homes, friends, and livelihood, in pursuit of a relatively more stable and secure new life in Armenia.

The foremost caravan of refugees was succeeded by a second, third and even fourth group.

The Armenian government, in turn, expeditiously facilitated the processing of paperwork and personal documents of the émigrés. The authorities also afforded each immigrant family with social security benefits, a vital necessity for those families willing to permanently settle in Armenia.

In 2008, the Agency of Migration within the Ministry of Territorial Administration of the Republic of Armenia conducted research on the needs of Iraqi Armenian refugees living in Armenia. An analysis of the research reveals that all refugee families have a need for

proper housing, having encountered difficulties in paying the monthly rent for their current abodes.

Having familiarized itself with the results of the research conducted by the Agency of Migration, the United Nations representation in Armenia initiated a benevolent project aimed at acquiring apartments both in Yerevan and in villages throughout Armenia, renovating them, and finally providing the apartments at no charge to Iraqi Armenian refugee families. Initial priority was given to refugees with health concerns, yet eventually available for all Iraqi Armenian families. By way of example, starting in March 2009 Armenian emigrant families from Iraq settled in their separate residences in former student dormitories located in the Nor Nork district of Yerevan. The non-governmental organization (NGO) known as “Mission Armenia,” which has programs designed to alleviate social problems facing refugee families, provided essential items to needy families including mattresses, tables, chairs and other pieces of furniture. The families themselves ultimately chose to either live in a village or in Yerevan.

This act of support aided our socioeconomically vulnerable compatriots to withstand their difficult conditions. Having been uprooted from their homes while living in a state of insecurity, these families are currently focused on rebuilding their lives in the fatherland.

With its modest means, the Los Angeles-based Iraqi Armenian Relief Fund-I.A.R.F. decided to financially assist those families living in the Nor Nork apartments. For approximately three months, these families have felt the care and support provided by their Iraqi Armenian compatriots in America. For the board members of the Iraqi Armenian Relief Fund-I.A.R.F., the welfare of the recently relocated Iraqi Armenian families continues to remain at the center of their attention.

The advantage of living in a state of relative security induced a number of Iraqi Armenian families to permanently settle on their “mother soil” in Armenia. In this respect, the Iraqi Armenian Relief Fund’s efforts are praiseworthy and justifiable. The fundamental purpose of this initiative was not only aimed at evacuating Armenian families from the inferno in Iraq and resettling them in Armenia, but also awakening the memory of their birthright and identity as Armenians.

The Los Angeles-based Iraqi Armenian Relief Fund-I.A.R.F. is currently planning future projects dedicated at improving the lives of their recently resettled compatriots in Armenia.

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