VIRTUAL CONFERENCE 2020

November 21-22, 2020

Connecting Assyrians and allies around the world for two days of learning and action.
WELCOME

On behalf of the Assyrian Policy Institute, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the API Virtual Conference 2020. While there is certainly no substitute for an in-person conference, we are excited about the unique opportunities of holding an innovative virtual conference, including the ability to reach a wide audience across the world.

This weekend's conference will feature selected timely and critical sessions that address the challenges faced by Assyrians today in their ancestral lands. We're hopeful that the panels and conversations will provide you with the tools and resources you'll need to be better engaged and better prepared to understand our current challenges. I'm looking forward to hearing all of the proactive conversations and how we can all help define the next ideas and opportunities to benefit our community.

We encourage you to get involved early and to take advantage of the many opportunities offered on our virtual conference platform. We're certain these opportunities will lead to connections with a wide network of activists and allies who are here to collaborate, share, and learn from one another.

The fact that you are here is a celebration of our collective resilience and dedication to forging connections without boundaries. We are certain you will find this conference stimulating, rewarding, and meaningful.

Jon Koriel
CHAIRMAN
HOW TO NAVIGATE

Our team has worked to design an inclusive, supportive, engaging experience that transcends a traditional conference design. Here's what you need to know about navigating our conference.

All sessions and on-demand content are hosted on our virtual conference program available [here](#).

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<tr>
<th>LIVE SESSIONS</th>
<th>ON-DEMAND PRESENTATIONS</th>
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<td>Our live sessions will feature a diverse group of speakers who will discuss pressing issues affecting Assyrians today. Each panel discussion will be followed by a Q&amp;A with the audience. Live sessions will be hosted on Zoom.</td>
<td>When the day's live sessions are done, learn at your own pace with on-demand content from additional speakers covering key issues. You'll have replay access for the duration of the conference.</td>
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<th>EXHIBITOR HALL</th>
<th>DISCUSSION BOARD</th>
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<td>Our Virtual Exhibitor Hall will showcase the important work of different Assyrian organizations and businesses. This dynamic virtual space will allow you to learn more about ways to get involved and support community projects and initiatives.</td>
<td>Our online discussion board is a space intended to promote productive discussions on key conference themes and related issues. The forum will allow attendees to come together to share knowledge and ideas throughout the duration of the conference.</td>
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This internet seminar is intended solely to provide information to the public. The views and opinions expressed as part of this internet seminar do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Assyrian Policy Institute.
DAY 1
Saturday, November 21, 2020

EVENT PROGRAM

All sessions are scheduled in Eastern Standard Time. All sessions will be conducted in the English language with live interpreters for non-English speakers.

12:00PM | OPENING KEYNOTES

Welcoming Remarks from Jon Koriel
Chairman, Assyrian Policy Institute

12:10PM

The Hon. Yonadam Kanna, MP
Member, Council of Representatives of Iraq

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Joey Hood
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State

12:30PM

Remarks from The Hon. Fareed Yacoob, MP
Member, Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament

12:45PM

Remarks from The Hon. Basim Bello
Mayor, Tel Kayf District, Ninewa Governorate

1:00PM | PANEL DISCUSSION

Breaking the Status Quo: Policy Pathways to a Sustainable Future for Assyrians in Iraq

The Hon. Yacoob G. Yaco
Board Member, Nineveh Plain Defense Fund
Former MP, Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament

Michael Youash, PhD
Independent Scholar; PhD, University of Toronto

Reine Hanna
Director, Assyrian Policy Institute
DAY 1
Saturday, November 21, 2020

2:00PM | PANEL DISCUSSION

At the Margins:
Assyrians in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Mikhael Benjamen
Board Member, Nineveh Center for Minority Rights

Nahrain Rasho
PhD Candidate, University of California, Davis

Daniel Pols, MD
Ankawa-based Advocate and Organizer

3:00PM | PANEL DISCUSSION

Calculated Conquest:
Understanding the KDP’s Strategy in Alqosh

Matthew Barber
PhD Candidate, University of Chicago

Mariam Georgis, PhD
SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Political Studies and
Mamawipawin: Centre for Indigenous Governance and Community
Based Research, University of Manitoba

Athra Kado
Alqosh-based Educator and Advocate

4:00PM | CLOSING KEYNOTE

Max J. Joseph
Writer and Artist
DAY 2
Sunday, November 22, 2020

11:00AM | PANEL REFLECTION
Strengthening Assyrian Organizing Across the Globe

Ranna Abro
Co-Founder & Board Member, Shlama Foundation

Larissa Al-Bazi
Chairwoman, Assyrian Federation of the Netherlands

Savina Dawood
Co-Founder & President, Etuti Institute

Umta Shino
President, Centre for Canadian-Assyrian Relations

12:00PM | WORKSHOP
Led by Amanda Slefo
Educator, Evanston Township High School

1:30PM | CLOSING REMARKS

Use of participant video encouraged.
SPEAKERS

Ranna Abro

Ranna Abro is a longtime advocate for the rights of Assyrians in Iraq and has been engaged in various volunteer and nonprofit activities for most of her life. More recently, she co-founded the Shlama Foundation, a renowned humanitarian organization serving the Assyrian community in Iraq. The organization was founded in the aftermath of the ISIS assault on territories inhabited by Assyrians in northern Iraq. Ranna currently serves as a Board Member of the Shlama Foundation.

Larissa Al-Bazi

Larissa Al-Bazi is the Chairwoman of the Assyrian Federation of the Netherlands. She also serves on the Board of Directors of the Assyrian Confederation of Europe. For the past six years, she has worked as a history and social science teacher at a high school in The Hague. Her passion for history and politics intertwine with her duties as Chairwoman of the Assyrian Federation when meeting with politicians, advocating for the Assyrian cause, and bringing awareness to the history of the Assyrian people.

Matthew Barber, PhD-c

Matthew Barber is a PhD Candidate studying Islamic thought and modern Middle East history at The University of Chicago. His interests include theological orientations toward pluralism and intercommunal relations. He has published on ethnic and religious minorities in Syria, Iraq, and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In 2015-16 he served in Iraq as the director of the Yazda humanitarian organization, which provides aid to thousands of displaced Yazidis and advocates for Yazidi rights.

The Honorable Basim Bello

Mayor Basim Bello has served as the Mayor of Tel Keppe District since 2004. Tel Keppe District includes important towns such as Tel Keppe, Batnaya, and Alqosh. Mayor Bello has worked closely with U.S. officials over the years on matters related to security and administration in the Nineveh Plain. In the post-ISIS phase, he has been working with USAID to facilitate reconstruction efforts and promote the safe return of displaced populations. Mr. Bello is a member of the Chaldean Catholic Church and he is a member of the Assyrian political party Abnaa al-Nahrain.

Mikhael Benjamin

Mikhael Benjamin is based in Duhok, Iraq, where he serves on the Board of Directors of the Nineveh Center for Minority Rights. He has been a longtime advocate for the rights of Assyrians, and is an expert on human rights issues affecting minorities in Iraq. He also currently serves as the Program Manager of CAPNI. He was recently selected by the UN-OHCHR in Geneva for a temporary assignment as a Senior Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Fellow with the Office of Human Rights at UNAMI—Iraq.
Savina Dawood

Savina Dawood is the Co-founder and President of Etuti Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to educational and humanitarian projects aimed at empowering Assyrian youth, women, and children in the Homeland and nearby regions. She has led numerous projects benefiting Assyrians and specifically internally-displaced peoples in Iraq and Syria. Savina is a widely-respected Assyrian activist, and she has been a strong advocate for human rights, with a focus on Assyrian indigenous rights.

Mariam Georgis, PhD

Mariam Georgis is a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Political Studies and Mamawipawin: Centre for Indigenous Governance and Community Based Research at the University of Manitoba. She holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Alberta, an MA and Honors BA in Political Science from McMaster University. Her doctoral research explored the links between colonial intervention and violence in the international system, occupation, and nation-building in post-2003 Iraq.

Reine Hanna

Reine Hanna is the co-founder and director of the Assyrian Policy Institute, a nonprofit which aims to support Assyrians as they struggle to maintain their rights in their ancestral homeland. She has visited conflict areas in Middle East to conduct fact-finding missions and has authored several authoritative human rights reports on issues affecting Assyrians.

PDAS Joey Hood

Joey Hood is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Mr. Hood has spent much of his career working in the Middle East, and particularly on the Arabian Peninsula. He served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Iraq and in Kuwait, as well as Consul General and Principal Officer in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Prior to these assignments, Mr. Hood was Acting Director of the Office of Iranian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

Max J. Joseph

Max J. Joseph is a writer and artist based in London, UK who has written extensively on Assyrian issues over the last decade.
Athra Kado
Athra Kado is an Alqosh-based community organizer and advocate for the rights of Assyrians in Iraq. In addition to his community work, he is an Assyrian/Syriac language teacher, and takes great pride in his work preserving and promoting the use of the ancient language. Athra also serves as the Director of the Alqosh branch of the Assyrian Democratic Movement. He previously served as a soldier in the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU), and participated in the liberation of the Nineveh Plain.

The Honorable Yonadam Kanna, MP
Yonadam Kanna is a Member of the Council of Representatives of Iraq. He has served as a Member of Parliament since he was first elected in 2005. Mr. Kanna previously served in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament and subsequently as the KRG Minister of Industry and Energy. He was the only Assyrian representative selected to serve on the Iraqi Governing Council. He currently serves as the Secretary General of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, the largest Christian Assyrian political party in Iraq.

Jon Koriel
Jon Koriel is the Board Chairman of the Assyrian Policy Institute. He previously served as the Vice President of the Assyrian American Association of California. He is a seasoned public affairs professional with nearly a decade of experience that includes advocacy, public policy and communications work in the public and private sectors.

Nahrain Rasho
Nahrain Rasho is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Davis. She specializes in Comparative Politics and International Relations, with a focus on nationalism, ethnic conflict, and state-building strategies. Her research examines whether regional autonomy increases regional-level conflict. She conducted her fieldwork in northern Iraq where she interviewed civilians, politicians, and political activists from ethnic minority communities.

Daniel Rawand Pols, MD
Daniel Rawand Pols is an advocate and community organizer based in Ankawa. By profession, he is a practicing medical doctor. Dr. Pols has been a critical voice for the rights of Assyrians and other minorities in Iraq and is widely respected as a local community leader. He is passionate about minority rights and has worked for years to challenge injustice and support efforts to build a fairer and more inclusive society in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.
Umta Shino

Umta Shino is the President of the Centre for Canadian-Assyrian Relations. She first joined the organization in 2015 as a member of the Board of Directors and Secretary. She was elected President in 2018. Umta graduated from the Bachelor of Applied Arts Degree Program in Paralegal Studies from the Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in 2010, achieving honors standing during her studies. She is a licensee who has been in good standing with the Law Society of Ontario since 2010.

Amanda Slefo

Amanda is a US History and Civics teacher at Evanston Township High School. Prior to teaching at ETHS, she worked at Niles West High School and was the Assyrian Club Sponsor there. Before her American teaching career began, she taught in Nablus, Palestine for the non-profit NGO Tomorrow's Youth Organization. Amanda is a graduate of Northeastern Illinois University and National Louis University. She is a world traveler was proudly raised by a single mother who taught her all things Assyrian.

The Honorable Yacoob G. Yaco

Yacoob G. Yaco serves on the Board of Directors for the Nineveh Plain Defense Fund and the political committee of the Nineveh Plain Protection Units. He is also part of the Central Committee of the Assyrian Democratic Movement. Mr. Yaco also previously served as a Member of Parliament in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament.

The Honorable Fareed Yacoob, MP

Fareed Yacoob currently serves as a Member of the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament. He is also a member of the Central Committee of the Assyrian Democratic Movement. Mr. Yacoob is also an expert in the Assyrian/Syriac language, and previously served as the Chairman of the Curriculum Committee which conducts translations of textbooks provided to Assyrian immersion schools in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Michael Youash, PhD

Michael Youash earned his PhD from the Political Science Department at the University of Toronto with a background in democratization, post-conflict transitions, and development studies. His past research on Assyrians in Iraq highlighted violent persecution by state and non-state actors, the denial of political rights, and socio-economic discrimination targeting indigenous Assyrians.
ON-DEMAND SPEAKERS

Gabrial Babella  
President, Assyrian Youth Federation of America

Abdulmesih Barabraham  
Independent Writer

Eamama Daniyal  
President, ACSSU of Canada

Jack Jendo,  
Board Member, Assyrian Support Committee

Berta Kaisr  
Vice President, ACSSU of Canada

Alexandra Lazar  
Executive Director, Assyrian Studies Association

Noor Matti  
Co-Founder & Board Member, Shlama Foundation

Sargon Saadi  
Filmmaker

Ashtar Shamoun  
President, Assyrian Student Association of Los Angeles

Remel Somo  
President, Assyrian Student Association of Los Angeles

Peter Warda  
President, Assyrian American Association of Southern California

William Warda  
Co-Founder & PR Director, Hammurabi Human Rights Organization
VIRTUAL EXHIBITOR HALL

Visit our Exhibitor Hall to learn more about organizations doing important work, how you can support them, and how to get involved. Look for giveaways at the different booths! Note: Exhibitor Hall cannot be accessed from a mobile device.

Featuring:

Assyrian Arts Institute
ACSYA
The Assyrian Journal
Assyrian Kitchen
Assyrian Podcast
Assyrian Studies Association
Assyrians for Education
Bet Nahrain Assyrian Heritage Centre
Etuti Institute
Nineveh Plain Defense Fund
Nineveh Press
Shlama Foundation
SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to our team members and volunteers who will bring this weekend's conference to fruition.

Stephanie Yousif
Emcee (Day 1)

Alexsandra Davood
Emcee (Day 2)

Tumha Dawood
Live Interpreter

Samantha Kakoz
Social Media Moderator

Audrana Esho
Technical Support

Josephine Attisha
Moderator

Nirvana Habash
Moderator

Ata Younan
Moderator
WITH GRATITUDE.

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of the following contributors whose grants and donations aid us in our mission to support Assyrians as they struggle to maintain their rights:

**Assyrian National Council of Illinois**  
**Dr. John Michael**, Retina Institute of Illinois  
**Atorina Zomaya**, Assyrian Kitchen  
**Tony S. Kalogerakos**, Injury Lawyers of Illinois  
**Ninos Ternian**, Assyrian National Broadcasting  
**Aladin Khamis**, Lucky's Car Wash  
**Abe Yousif**, Bucthel Metal Finishing  
**Dr. Edison Ishaya**, Full Smile Family Dentist  
**Robert & Victoria Kaprelian**  
**Manny Goriel & family**, J&S RV Storage  
**Dr. Dennis Gelyana**, Associates Psychiatric Medicine  
**Ramsin Canon**, Canon Law Group

*Many thanks as well to all those who have made small contributions to the Assyrian Policy Institute. As a community-funded organization, we rely on the support of people like you to continue our work. Your support is appreciated and energizing in the pursuit of our mission.*