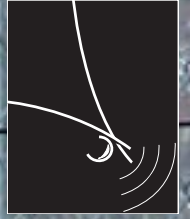


# الجمهورية



الجمهورية . ك 6751 November 2001

## Inside VILLAWOOD



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**Nakosha was established in 1997 with the view of advocating free speech and establishing a social link among our Australian and worldwide communities, especially those in our homeland.**

**Nakosha is growing with a contemporary generation of Assyrians who are aware of their identity, with an understanding and appreciation of our culture, language and heritage.**

**Nakosha is a non-profit publication. Holding a neutral stand within the community, its views are not religiously or politically motivated – they are based on human values not sectarian beliefs.**

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# editorial

*“When I saw those three little girls in the paper this morning something told me (Immigration Minister) Mr Ruddock was wrong. We’re not dealing with problems here, we’re dealing with people.”*

*Former NSW premier Mr Neville Wran on seeing a photograph of three Iraqi girls who recently drowned in our waters seeking refuge in Australia.*

**J**ournalism is a rather inexact discipline. Even the most well-intentioned journalist can get it wrong, exaggerate or miss vital points of information. Other times, disinforming is intentional.

When covering the hugely publicised issue of “illegal immigrants” to Australia, for example, how much of what we are seeing is fact, how much is being left out, distorted, and how much is downright lies? Reports of mothers throwing their children overboard come first. There are no photos or video images to confirm this. Later we hear that the mothers jumped overboard with them – with life jackets on. Finally the media presents us with fuzzy images of women in headscarves in the water with children.

Then we are told that Iraqis have hijacked a boat in Indonesia – and expected to believe that hungry, tired people escaping violence in the Middle East are able to overpower trained, armed Indonesian naval officers, and continue on their way to Australia. You may have noticed that almost all of these “reports” are concluded with something like “these reports could not be confirmed”. Days after this report, the Indonesians admit to assisting refugees make their way to Australia. A little contradictory wouldn’t you say?

Journalism seems to have taken on a “hand-me-down” form, dealing in second-hand bits of information – or is deliberately sensationalised.

You can’t help but wonder what is *really* going on.

That’s why *Nakosha* went to see Assyrian refugees in detention centres in NSW, to find out first hand how, why and for how long these people have been detained.

While to the Australian government’s credit the detainees (just a euphemism for prisoners, really) are well nourished and looked after – unlike, I suppose, some totalitarian countries – their lives are far from what could be called decent.

Under international law these Assyrians are *entitled* to escape from oppressive regimes, but once they arrive in Australia, are treated as “illegal immigrants”. (An “illegal immigrant” is someone who has over-stayed their visa; a “refugee”, someone who escapes oppression. So the annoying phrase “illegal refugees”, which you’ll find in respected newspapers, is an oxymoron, a misnomer). Detained in depressing buildings surrounded by kilometres of razor wire, they simply serve the role of good “negative advertising”, lest others think of doing the same.

Why all the fuss, when Australia accepted a mere 5,000 refugees last year, compared to, say, the U.S.’s 24,000. Estimates of what population

the Australian environment can support vary greatly – some calculate up to 188 million. Admittedly, Australia *is* the driest continent, yet its renewable water resources are five times those of Japan (per person) and twice those of the US.

No, the fuss isn’t over economic or environmental concerns. The fuss, argues Ghassan Hage, a lecturer in anthropology at the University of Sydney and author of *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, is all due to a “loss of hope”. “Hope is not related to an income level,” he writes in his research papers. “It is about a sense of possibility that life can offer. Its enemy is a sense of entrapment, not a sense of poverty...urban dwellers stuck in insecure jobs, small-business people struggling..all have begun suffering from various forms of hope scarcity. They join the already over-marginalized populations of...poor immigrant workers and the chronically unemployed. But unlike them they are not used to their state of marginality, they don’t know how to dig for new hope when there is none...hoping that their ‘national identity’ is bound to be a passport of hope for them. They are ... the ‘refugees of the interior’. And it is ironic to see so many of them mobilised in defending ‘the nation’ against ‘refugees of the exterior’. Global rejects against global rejects.” In other words, a fear that Australia’s resources, jobs and wealth will be plundered by “greedy foreigners”, escaping countries that “should’ve bloody well looked after ‘em in the first place!”

Given that we know for a *fact* that the Assyrians in the Villawood Detention Centre are true refugees, and that they will therefore be eventually freed, and that the problem won’t go away soon, economic arguments against refugees just don’t hold. One wonders what the fiscal and human cost of stubbornly holding onto these refugees will be in the end. While I was talking to one of the young men who’d been in the centre for over two years, his eyes either staring off into the distance or down at his feet, making little eye contact, his knees shaking agitatedly, he must have gone through 10 cigarettes in the hour I saw him. Who knows how many of them are now suffering undiagnosed depression. The cost of rehabilitating these people, of undoing the damage of lost time of the most productive years of their lives, is incalculable.

Leaving the centre, Neville Wran’s words never seemed truer – these were people with deep, profound problems, and locking them out of sight is only going to make matters worse. ■

*Sennacherib Daniel*



# Maria Vamvakinou

**I**t's election year in Australia, and on Sunday 23rd of September 2001 the Australian Labor Party's (ALP's) representative Maria Vamvakinou arrived at the Buchan Street Community Centre, in Meadow Heights, to campaign before the local Assyrian community.

Mrs. Vamvakinou's Greek, political upbringing was evident when she opened the talk with the following words: "We each come from a place that has a problem, and in Australia we are able to come together and work together."

Her observations of the world's current chaos were in contrast to the views of many other politicians. "We are collectively responsible for what happens in the rest of the world," she said. In trying to make sense of it all she explained how the root cause of today's current war is linked to U.S. foreign policy.

When asked about her party's policy on mandatory detention she made it clear that the ALP would lobby to have it removed. However, she regretted, at this stage that the ALP is unfortunately also committed to mandatory detention. "When they come here they're locked up, and have the key thrown away," she said. "Overseas posts are told to go slow and not rush to verify claims."

With the decisive swinging electoral seats dependent on rural voters she explained why she thought the asylum seekers had

become such a key election issue: "Part of them [Liberals]

getting elected is by playing the race card."

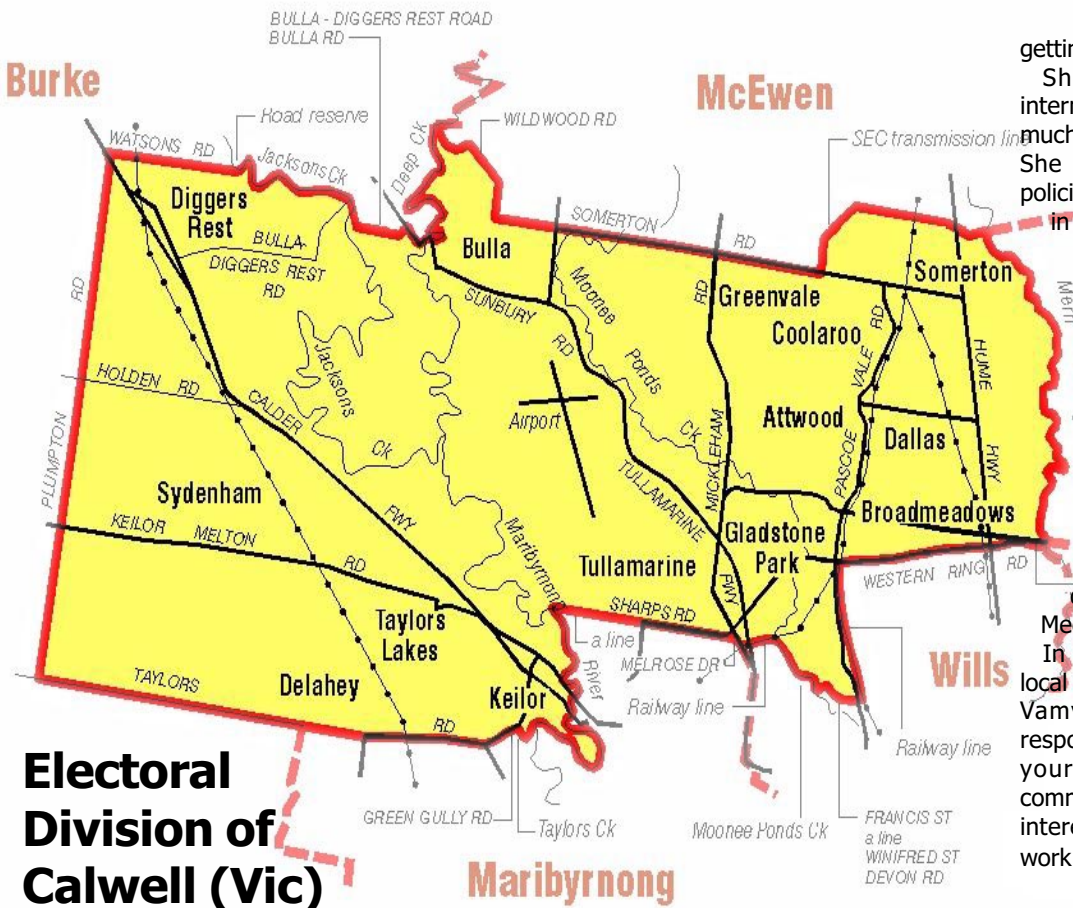
She next shifted her focus from international events onto issues that were much nearer to the lives of everyday voters. She said that the current government's policies were responsible for a deterioration in education and health.

Coming from a teaching background, she also commented on the spending cuts to public schools. "We are creating a two class education system in this country. The reality is unless children find good quality education there is no future, and no jobs," she explained.

Medicare was also targeted. "There's a health crisis in this country," she said. According to Mrs. Vamvakinou the ALP's policy would be different. "Labor needs to restrengthen Medicare," she added.

In response to what she could do for the local Assyrian community if re-elected Mrs. Vamvakinou responded "It is your responsibility to keep politicians aware of your people and your issues. If your community is active, if your community is interested in making things happen, then work with me to make things happen." ■

David Chibo



**Electoral Division of Calwell (Vic)**



## BETH MARDUTHO RELEASES NEW SYRIAC FONTS FOR WINDOWS XP

(ZNDA: Piscataway, NJ) Last Friday Microsoft Inc. launched its latest operating system Windows XP in a publicized event. On the same day Beth Mardutho released a new version of the Syriac fonts package Meltho (Version 1.20) with Windows XP-enabled fonts.



instance, to name files and folders in Syriac. The operating system also knows about Syriac dates and time. For example, when the user inserts an automatic date in Word XP, it will write the name of the day and the month in Syriac.

The built-in On-Screen Keyboard [image below] helps you find any letter, vowel or diacritic mark; you can also type using this tool. Because of the lack of a 'standard'

Syriac keyboard layout, the user has the option of using two different keyboards, one modelled after the

benefactors and the hard work of the Meltho team, the Meltho fonts became available to the public free of charge.

## ATTACK ON SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Stephen Gibbs *Sydney Morning Herald*, Oct 11.

(ZNDA: Sydney) Peter Ryan, Sydney's police commissioner, describes the increased vandalism of Sydney's religious buildings as "outrageous".

Slogans such as "Osama bin Laden is Great", "Muslims Rule" and "Kill Jews and Christians" were spray-painted on the walls of the Syrian Orthodox Church at Lidcombe, NSW.

"We're monitoring this literally hourly and daily," Mr. Ryan told Radio 2UE.

"And we've asked all our patrols, all over the city, to be very, very conscious and to patrol in the vicinity of mosques, churches and institutions, and buildings owned by

# Assyrian W

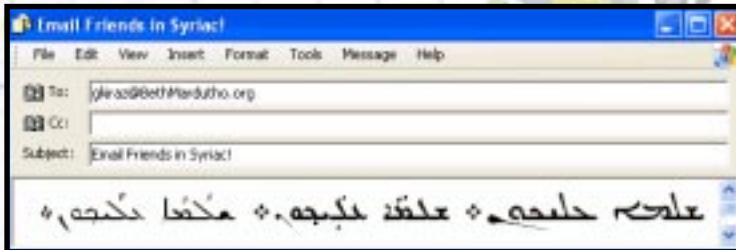
Bill Gates spoke about Windows XP. "Windows XP is the first operating system to have native Syriac support. Both Windows XP Professional and Windows XP Home Edition support Syriac. Users can simply click on the language control

(located on the task toolbar), choose Syriac, and type away using numerous applications, including Office XP (for word processing, desktop publishing, databases, spreadsheets, presentations, web design), Internet Explorer (for web browsing), Outlook Express (for writing emails), as well as many of the Microsoft accessories (Notepad, Paint, etc.). Any application that uses Uniscribe's functionality for text input and output will automatically have Syriac support, paving the way for developers to write Syriac applications,"

he said at the launch.

Native Syriac support means that the language is implemented at the operating system level. This allows the user, for

Arabic keyboard and the other is phonetic. Windows XP ships with one Syriac font, *Estrangelo Edessa*. The font was



developed by Beth Mardutho and given to Microsoft to include it in Windows XP.

Beth Mardutho worked with Microsoft for the past four years to make this happen. Central to the success of this story is Paul Nelson of Microsoft's Complex Scripts Group. Nelson was the communication link between Beth Mardutho and Microsoft and developed much of the Syriac



features inside Windows. Back in 1998, Beth Mardutho took part in a meeting with the Unicode Consortium and the International Standard Organization (ISO) when a proposal to add Syriac to the coding standard Unicode was presented. Subsequently, due to the generous contributions of Beth Mardutho's

the allied coalition partners, America, Israel, and also businesses and institutions owned by Islamic groups."

## ASSYRIAN ENTREPRENEUR SHOCKS AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL MEDIA

(ZNDA: Sydney) The *Australian Financial Review (AFR)* has taken a stab at the illustrious Assyrian entrepreneur, Karl Suleman, the head of Froggy Group ([www.froggy.com.au](http://www.froggy.com.au)) by alluding to his Iraqi origins and asking why he would be willing to shell out \$150,000 to sit beside former U.S-president Bill Clinton at a fundraiser.

Mr. Suleman was born in Baghdad, Iraq and has acquired his undisclosed wealth in running, among other establishments in Australia, an Internet Service Provider and mobile phone businesses.

Mr. Suleman is expected to attend the Melbourne Cup luncheon in Sydney where he will sit side-by-side former-U.S. president, George Bush senior.

*AFR* also notes that Mr. Suleman is Assyrian, "a Middle Eastern race of Christian people, who do not have their own State, but live in Muslim-dominated Iran and Iraq. Though he served in Saddam's Iraqi Air Force, Suleman appears to have



chosen the business route since moving to Australia, and has made powerful friends in Sydney's Jewish community." These Jewish friends include the gem prospector Pnina Feldman and husband Rabbi Pinchus Feldman who hold a 10 per cent stake in his internet business, Froggy Holdings.

In a time when the Internet businesses are badly hurting, Mr. Suleman seems to be attracting a different source of cashflow into his loss-making internet businesses, writes *AFR*, identifying Mr. Suleman's shopping trolley collection business as the source. Yasmin Trolley Services is understood to have recently taken a \$150,000 loan, which it is paying back at the rate of \$8,000 a month plus 10 per cent interest.

Mr. Suleman remains a generous friend of the Assyrian Church of the East in Australia and Assyrian performers around the world. At the invitation of Mr. Suleman several members of the Assyrian Universal Alliance

Dozens of Iraqi archeologists have also been at work since the beginning of the year in Nimrod, 35 kilometres southeast of the northern city of Mosul, uncovering the remains of an Assyrian temple and statues of winged bulls dating back to the 8th century B.C. Iraq, and especially Bet-Nahrain, contain more than 10,000 archeological sites, most of which have still not been uncovered.

### **KDP SHUTS DOWN TURKMEN STUDENT ORGANIZATION**

David Nissman *Radio Free Europe*, Prague, October 1

(ZNDA: Arbil)— Barazani's Kurdistan Democratic Party closes down the offices of the newly established the *Turkmen Student Organization* (TSO). Based on Kurdish media reports, the TSO was not licensed by the Kurdish Regional Government. Soon after, Turkmen political

elsewhere Mr. Barham Salih, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's (PUK's) Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government and Mr. Hoshiyar Zebari, head of the KDP International Relations team, were meeting with U.S. officials to discuss recent events in the region including the war on terrorism and the stability of northern Iraq and the future of Iraq. Mr. Salih has asked State Department and National Security Council officials for aid in the PUK's fight against the Islamic group Jund al-Islam.

Some observers in the region believe that Talabani's PUK is trying to obtain US and Turkish military intervention in northern Iraq by claiming that the Islamic militant Osama bin-Laden is planning to establish an Islamist state in that region. According to a Kurdish report Salih has reportedly held meetings with the Turkish Foreign Ministry officials and the Turkish intelligence units in Ankara regarding Bin-

# World News

in Australia and His Grace Mar Melis, Bishop of the Church of the East in Australia, attended the fundraiser dinner in September and had a chance to discuss Assyrian issues with former-President Bill Clinton.

### **TEMPLE OF ISHTAR UNEARTHED IN SOUTHERN BET-NAHRAIN**

Birmingham Post, Oct 22

(ZNDA: Baghdad) Iraqi archaeologists in a new find have uncovered a temple dedicated to the Assyrian goddess Ishtar in the Bazikh in Zi Qar province 190 miles south of Baghdad. Cuneiform inscriptions on the 25 artefacts found at the temple indicate that the building dates back to the old Babylonian era, and to the reign of King Hammurabi (1730-1687 BC). Excavation teams have also discovered a house with an open courtyard, a number of rooms and graves inside the house in the temple area. Artefacts include a relief on a clay tablet of a woman breast-feeding her child, the first ever to be found. The excavations also yielded a number of jars, clay tablets, seals used at that time and toys. A well and two canals used to carry water to the temple and the houses and clay basins to collect water were uncovered.

leaders and student groups called this action "an attack on the freedom of Turkmen political parties." Two days after the closing of the TSO offices in Arbil, *Al-Iraq* newspaper in Baghdad claimed that a Turkmen group in Arbil "attempts to turn the Turkmen against the Kurds" and may be a front for Turkish intelligence activity in the North. According to the paper, such an act of provocation between the Kurds and the Turkmens is "the aim of Turkish intelligence."

A delegation of the Assyrian Democratic Movement reportedly greeted the Kurdish officials during a meeting with the leadership of the Turkmen Front.

### **ASSYRIAN DELEGATION MEETS WITH U.S. OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON**

(ZNDA: Washington D.C.) Last week a joint delegation of several Assyrian political parties and the Assyrian American National Federation met with U.S. officials, including Henry Hyde (R-6th Illinois)-chairman of the International Relations Committee. While the less organized Assyrian delegation was presenting a simple statement of future cooperation and understanding to the U.S. officials,

Ladin's activities in southern Kurdistan. Last week at a press conference Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Hussain Dirioz assessed the PUK delegation's information in Ankara and noted that reports were evaluated and that the PUK has been warned.

Later on the government in Ankara stated that Turkey "will prevent the coalition that is being established to combat terrorism from launching an attack against Iraq on the basis of such incitements."

Reports of bin-Laden's men working in North Iraq have also appeared in the U.S. journals. Leading journalists such as William Safire are also trying to influence the White House and the CIA. Safire, in an article written for the *New York Times*, for example, claims that 400 armed men from Bin-Ladin's fifth division have settled in North Iraq.

Courtesy of

**Zinda**  
magazine  
"Think Assyrian"

[www.zindamagazine.com](http://www.zindamagazine.com)



# VILLAGE



*“When I look at my baby in Afghanistan that spring, the spectre of another three boatload, to turn away from*

**T**he United Nations Convention, relating to the Status of Refugees, of which Australia is a signatory, specifically states that a signatory country is not to penalize asylum seekers for entering a signatory country ‘illegally’. In stark contrast to this convention the Australian Government’s current arrangement makes Australia the only

western country that has a non-reviewable, mandatory detention policy for all asylum-seekers who enter without documents, in essence penalizing asylum-seekers and violating this United Nations Convention.

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> October - two members of *Nakosha* and I accompanied a family of Assyrians sympathetic to the cause of Assyrian asylum-seekers. Led by Bernadette and Lewis Haroon, we visited the Villawood Detention Centre (VDC), located in a Western suburb of Sydney.

We walked past the roughly 5 metre high fences topped with razor wire and were put through an extensive security screen. After waiting in line for two hours, this screen included being searched, tagged and put through metal detectors. Cameras and mobile phones were among the numerous items banned.

There were 9 detained Assyrians in all - 5 males, 3 females (one pregnant) and a child.

***“We Assyrians have always been stateless, and***

All had come from the Iraqi cities of Baghdad or Nineveh (Mosul). They were scared and apprehensive and reluctant to say too much for fear of it affecting their case. We had permission to bring them some traditional Assyrian food, in order to raise their spirits. We ate lunch together as they told us their stories. They described their lives to us.

1. Headcount - 6 times per day.

2. Sleep deprivation - One of these headcounts is conducted at 3:00am, which means that no one can sleep a full 8 hours

without interruption.

3. Handcuffs - Used when the asylum-seekers visit the doctor. They are also used on the seven-month pregnant Assyrian girl during her checkups.

4. The food and living conditions are average.

5. Anyone who decides to work is paid \$AUS1/hour.

6. Asylum-seekers are not allowed to cook for themselves.

“You’re in a prison. Life is that of a prisoner,” Ninos\* explained in Syriac as he shrugged his shoulders. “In Europe when a refugee arrives he is given accommodation and help while they evaluate his application,” explained a depressed Mary\*.

It would appear that the authorities are told to “go slow” and “drag their heels” while processing. The government openly admits to these delay tactics; in fact during a debate between Mr. Howard and Mr. Beazley, the Prime Minister admitted that the reason was



# W O O D

*y's face and face my fear, it is not the caves of  
to mind, but the buildings of Canberra and the  
years in which Australia is encouraged, boatload by  
from its decency and honor”*

Joanna Murray-Smith, *The Age*

“to string out their asylum application and refugee status claims.”

They explained how they'd been through the entire bureaucratic system, which includes applying for Protection Visas, seeing a case officer, seeing the Refugee Review Tribunal and making further appeals, all of which have been rejected.

“I saw Phillip Ruddock on [the current affairs show] *4 Corners*. He stated that Australia has

leaving Australia with no way of returning these Iraqi refugees, essentially leaving them in limbo. “We cannot return,” explained Charles, “because the U.N. has no access to Iraq.”

As a result, some have been in the VDC for over two and a half years. “When I left Jordan in 1995 my son was 15 years old. I haven't seen my son in 3 years,” said Charles.

When I asked them what we as Assyrians could do to help, their answers were

so many migrants; any more would stretch its capacity. Democrat Senator Stott Despoja, however, was recently reported in *The Age* to be arguing that the number of places allocated is yet to be filled. She told *Channel Nine* that 12,000 places were allocated for humanitarian and refugee cases, but “... we're filling around 4000. So we haven't actually used the quota of places that are allocated for those particular groups, asylum-seekers, refugees”.

***d today we are lost in these detention centres.”***

no refugees in any Detention Centre.... that they're all just 'over-stayers'. He's a liar,” claimed an irritated Charles\*.

The government is caught in a quandary, a quandary of its own making. Its support for what could arguably be called the U.S.-led “genocide-via-sanctions” on Iraq, which has killed 500,000 Iraqi children - over 33,000 of which are Assyrian children - means that it is morally and legally responsible for the asylum-seekers who flee that country. Australia's diplomatic ties with Iraq have been cut-off,

heartbreaking. One man who has been in the VDC for over two and a half years said, “We have been here for many years.... We do not need money, food or clothing. What we need is to see our people, to have them visit us in order for us not to feel so isolated and alone in this strange country.”

Our visiting time at an end, we were escorted outside as the Assyrian asylum seekers were led back to their rooms. Some were crying.

Some argue that the asylum-seekers are being treated this way because Australia can take only

This, along with the knowledge that around 40 of the 350 Iraqi asylum-seekers who recently drowned had already been assessed by the UNHCR to be genuine refugees with a well-founded fear of persecution if they were to return to their home country, is startling.

I recall Charles' parting words, before I left the VDC: “We Assyrians have always been stateless, and today we are lost in these detention centres.” ■

David Chibo

\*Not their real names.

# Refugees...who cares?

The Leader of the Opposition responds to *Nakosha's* stand on refugees.

It isn't just humanitarian and isolated ethnic groups objecting over the treatment of refugees. Seven senior business leaders, meeting for the *Australian Financial Review's* pre-election forum, argued the need for a greater migrant intake.

"Our population doesn't understand that a managed population growth actually adds to productivity and growth, jobs. It helps the country. It

doesn't take other people's jobs away," said Paul Batchelor, the CEO of AMP, a large Australian company.

"Do we regard our current diversity of our people as a national asset or don't we?" asked Mr Phil Scanlan, founder of the Australian American Leadership Dialogue.

*What do the parties running for the election think?*

"To whom it may concern",

I write this letter after hearing of the horrible tragedy that befell 350 mainly Iraqi asylum-seekers in Indonesian waters on Monday 23rd October, 2001.

This letter is a request to change our country's foreign policy in regards to the treatment of these asylum-seekers when you come to power.

A prime example of this was the way in which we took responsibility for our actions at the end of the Vietnam War. After the pointless Vietnam War and the deaths of over 900,000 Vietnamese and over 500 Australian soldiers, we in Australia, under Malcolm Fraser's Liberal government took in thousands of Vietnamese "boat-people" (asylum-seekers) because Australians realized that our support for America's foreign policy meant that we were also partly responsible for "cleaning-up" after the Vietnam War had ended.

My Requests are summarized below.

1. Electronic tagging to replace mandatory detention - I request that Australia move away from the current policy of mandatory detention for the asylum-seekers to allowing them into Australian society after an identity check and electronically tagging them so that they can go to school, visit family and seek all the help they need in order to assimilate into our country. At the end of the review the asylum-seekers will either be sent back to their country of origin, if rejected, or be fully accepted into Australia.

2. Fill our migrant intake quota for this year.

3. Responsibility - I'm also asking that we in Australia collectively take responsibility for our support of the U.S. and its foreign policy by either "cleaning-up" after the event, or not supporting the event in the first place.

I thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing your response to my above-mentioned requests.

**Yours sincerely,  
David Chibo  
Nakosha magazine**

*[An abridged version  
of the original letter;  
see main article also]*

Dear [Nakosha]

Thank you for your letter concerning the treatment of asylum seekers who have entered Australia without authorisation.

We appreciate your comments and understand your concern for these people, the vast majority of whom are fleeing oppressive regimes.

Immigration detention is a sensitive issue. Policy in this area must balance the rights of asylum seekers, who have gained unauthorised entry into Australia but who are not by and large violent criminals, against the damage that the unmonitored release of large numbers of refugee claimants could inflict on our community in terms of illegal employment and health risks.

In its review of policy for the coming election, the Labor Party is undertaking a review of immigration detention issues.

Australia has benefited hugely from our intake of migrants and refugees and has an enviable reputation in the field of human rights. Labor policy on this issue is framed with this in mind, and within the provisions of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



We acknowledge the need to preserve the dignity and human rights of asylum seekers who have arrived in Australia without authorisation, while addressing community concerns about the cost of detention and the need to enforce strict health and character testing. The process of refugee determination needs to be streamlined to ensure that genuine refugees, and in particular young children, are assessed and released into the community as soon as possible, in order to minimise any recurrent trauma associated with long-term detention.

We recognise the importance of providing refugees with access to appropriate counselling and settlement services to help them adjust to life here, so that they can set up home for themselves and their

families and contribute to the community. We believe that measures must be taken to ensure that unauthorised arrivals who do not satisfy the criteria for protection established by the UNHCR are deported as soon as practicable, both to uphold the integrity of our migration program and send a decisive message to the people-smugglers and their victims.

We consider that the allegations raised in the *Four Corners* TV program about conditions and management practices in detention centres such as Villawood are further evidence of the need for an independent judicial inquiry into these centres.

The Government has obviously lost control of the immigration detention regime. No distinctions are being made between those asylum seekers who have a high likelihood of being granted refugee status, but whose application process is not yet complete, and those detainees who in many cases have failed in their applications and are now awaiting deportation.

Though we continue to support a regime of compulsory detention of unauthorised arrivals in order to carry out thorough health and character checks, a future Labor Government will ensure that asylum seekers who are likely to be granted refugee status are not kept in detention for a moment longer than necessary, especially women, children, the frail and other vulnerable people.

Thank you again for taking the time to let me know of your concerns.

**Yours sincerely  
Kim C Beazley  
Leader of the Opposition**

Dear [Nakosha],

You raise some interesting and important issues which deserve a considered response. With 90,000 constituents and 15 days to go, I will have to defer my response until after the election when I can give your note the consideration it deserves.

**Regards  
Ross Cameron [Liberal Party]**

Dear [Nakosha],

Thank you for your email of 24th October.

The position of the Australian Democrats on asylum seekers is very much the same as yours.

In response to your three requests we say that electronic tagging is one possible method that can be used to replace mandatory detention. The important thing is that some fair and humane alternative be found to mandatory detention.

The Australian Democrats will continue to argue that Australia honour its international agreement quotas on the number of refugees to be accepted.

In the area of foreign policy and international aid, the Democrats policy position is that aid should be directed to those directly in need and that sanctions should not harm the helpless. The long view should be taken in regard to any foreign policy to ensure that it does not set the stage for suffering, alienation and resentment in the future.

**Regards  
Senator Andrew Bartlett  
Democrats' Immigration spokesperson**





# What are your responsibilities towards Assyrians in the homeland?

**M/42/Chicago, IL USA.**

I believe what they need the most is FINANCIAL and POLITICAL support. I also believe for us to be able to provide the kind of financial and political support that is needed, we have to be able to accomplish certain goals such as: 1-unity and equal right among all the Assyrians/ Caldians/Syriacs sectors. 2-Qualified and strong leadership regardless of their sector's name. 3-All organizations and churches to unite and have one master fund account to help our people living in the homeland. 4-to have a program for our people all over the world especially our youth to be in close contact such as summer exchange student program. Thank you for the opportunity to share and listen to everyone's thoughts.

**?/?/?**

Dear Assyrians, We the Assyrians who live in the diaspora have the responsibility of doing so many things; 1- get ourselves more involved with the politicians who run the country we live in, then get to help our Assyrians who live in the homeland. 2- We need to unite as one nation then we will have the power to help. 3- let's get a good education to become aware of what is surrounding us and our Assyrian brothers and sisters in the Homeland.

**M/25/Australia**

Hello staff, Support is our responsibility mentally and financially, if they know that they have a strong support and backup from Assyrians in Diaspora, then they would stay and not leave their land to foreigners, other wise without us supporting them, unfortunately very soon we might lose even the little land we own! and not to forget too, that people outside our Assyrian family circle still don't know who we are, we have to do more about it, if they don't know who we are they wouldn't care if our people die or live in our ancestral homeland.

**M/37/California, San Jose**

The Assyrians living in the homeland must be protected. They must receive all types of aid. Their

issues must be brought to the attention of the world. All the above must be done by the Assyrians in the diaspora.

**M/30/Melbourne, Australia**

For the most part, Assyrians in the diaspora are economically and politically at far greater advantage than their brothers and sisters back home. Simply, then, their responsibility is to provide economic and political support for those back home - in the form of money, campaigns, protests, petitions..and above all to make their name known to the international community, something which is greatly lacking at the moment.

**F/33/Melbourne, Australia**

To answer this question I feel we (Assyrians in diaspora) need to ask ourselves what it is we lack which is preventing us from feeling a sense of responsibility toward Assyrians living in the homeland.

I feel that one critical issue faced by Assyrians in diaspora is the lack of accurate up to date and informative news regarding the problems faced by Assyrians in our homeland. I believe this would go a long way to creating a strong, emotional and very real link between Assyrians, and subsequently develop our sense of responsibility toward our distant brothers and sisters.

Instead, we have our own immediate issues and obligations to fulfil. This lends us very little time (and/or inclination) to help alleviate the hardships faced by Assyrians living in the homeland. Therefore, to finally answer the question, I believe our responsibilities would be to provide sorely lacking emotional and/or financial support.

can do nothing for those in the homeland as long as they choose to live in slums like what Fairfield has become, and refuse education. Not only is the ethnic group with the highest rate of suspensions, expulsions and school-leavers in Sydney ours, but the number of Assyrian tertiary students is also low in proportion to our numbers.

Assyrians in the diaspora can do nothing for those in the homeland as long as they have no feeling for them, due to the drastic lack of true nationalism amongst them. The very little that a lot of diaspora Assyrians actually do is for superficial reasons of pride and showing off one's "assets." Assyrians in the diaspora owe it to those in the homeland to do the right thing. Just because we live in the relative freedom of the west, it does not mean that we automatically forget what we've escaped and assimilate into our adoptive countries, while our brothers and sisters in the homeland struggle to survive and maintain the ethnic identity we take for granted.

Assyrians in the diaspora need to take action and strive to be the best in all they can do. We need to educate ourselves (in more ways than one), try to solve our massive social problems, help settle the newly-arrived, become successful, build schools, keep our culture and nationalism alive, urge our political parties and organisations to form a united national front, keep our Churches under control, and organise ourselves socially, politically and culturally. We must, at the same time, link ourselves to our sisters and brothers scattered all over the world - especially through modern conveniences such as the internet.

We need a reform... a rebirth... a renaissance! Assyrian society essentially needs a revolution that will shake it from its core and change it indefinitely for the better. Only then will the Assyrians-Chaldeans-Syriacs in the diaspora be at a stage when they can truly help those in the homeland in a way they will appreciate

**F/35/North American Continent**

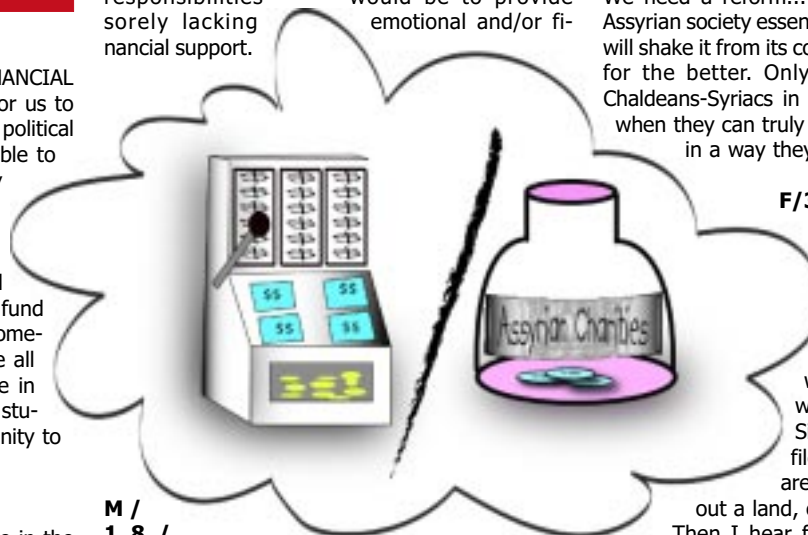
Before even attempting to make sense and try to give a reasonable answer I would like to know when we will be able to say that we are Assyrians and that we have a place to call home? Since as I'm told even in the files of the United Nations we are classified as a people without a land, could that be???

Then I hear from another place a voice saying that we aren't recognized as a people but only as a religious sect and so on and so forth.

Perhaps in the first place let's clarify to all that we are a people with a historic claim for a homeland, and then let's gather each other under one umbrella instead of the several heads that aren't fitting anywhere and then let's see what can we do for our fellow Assyrians who are struggling in the homeland and accepting all kinds of humiliation being considered as a second class citizens almost begging for what is rightfully theirs.

I'm sorry for what I'm writing but this is the truth and as long as we aren't recognized and we're being shoved under the rug here and there and our people aren't known any where then we can't do any thing to our fellow Assyrians who will keep on suffering and who will be anxiously waiting for an opportunity to escape and leave, because no matter what they do if they don't have the backing of the world for a legitimate claim on the homeland then we will remain a people without a land and our cause will keep collecting dust on the shelves of the United Nations.

For me in these days no matter what we do in the diaspora if it's not loud enough it will be nothing.



**M / 18 / Sydney, Australia**

Assyrians in the diaspora can do nothing for the Assyrians in the homeland as long as they are unorganised, their political parties are too busy working against each another and their Churches are too busy creating new national identities and pitching their members against one another. Assyrians in the diaspora

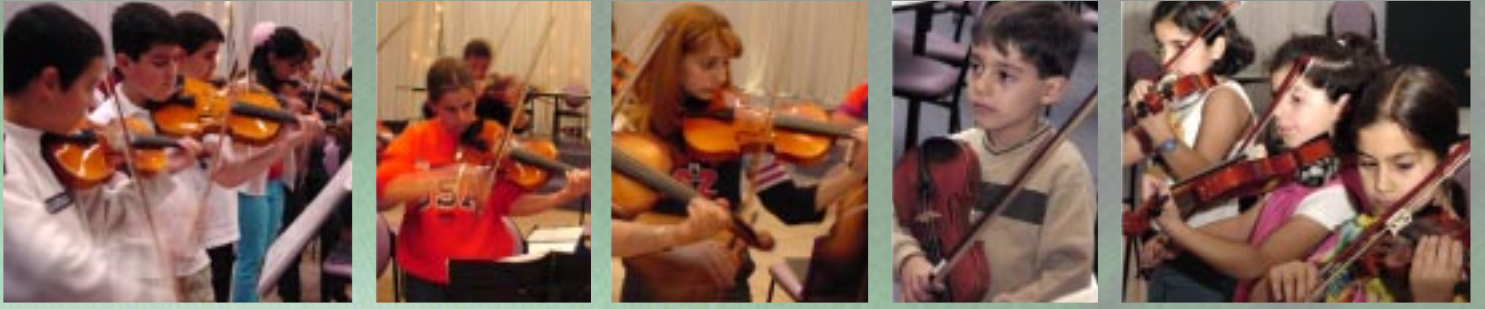






مختار  
مجدي...  
لقد هيبت  
مكة في مخافتك





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**Shoora Michailian's achievements.**

- Head of the Music Department in Tehran, Hamadan and Abadan, Iran
- Director of the Fine Arts Department of Iran's Ministry of Education
- Musical instructor to Iran's school teachers
- Winner of the first place award for his composition for children during an Asian/European musical contest held at Bologna, Italy in 1987
- Received the Royal award from the Shah of Iran for his special composition for the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire
- Wrote the music scores for all of the religious hymns of the Assyrian Church of the East, with the approval of His Holiness Mar. Dinkha IV.

**Below:** Mr Shoora Michailian - "My aim is to teach these young people a musical culture...."





# The Spirit of Boxing

## Steve Hallaby

**N**ever thought the word 'spiritual' could be used in the same sentence as 'boxing'. I was wrong. To the up and coming Assyrian boxer Steve Hallaby, boxing isn't so much a sport but a religion. And if it were a religion, then Steve would be its fundamentalist disciple.

Along with two other Assyrians, Joshua Kallu and Samson Basi, 24-year old Steve is a member of *Team Fenech*, a group of 15 talented young men who box under Jeff's tutelage.

Just like many of those who "make it", Steve's story is part talent and part good fortune. His lucky break came in meeting the head of the Froggy empire, Karl Suleman. "I went up to Karl and said 'I want to open up a [boxing] gym'..." Steve reveals, "so he introduced me to [famous retired Australian boxer] Jeff Fenech". Ah, if only life could be so easy for the rest of us mortals. "Jeff told me to concentrate on myself first before opening a gym", he says. Good advice for a young man in his early twenties – Steve's life has made a 180-degree turn since then.

This boxer has always seen the spiritual in life (he has an impressive tattoo of *Mar Gewargis* on his right upper arm—"It gives me mental energy") but this is even truer now than before. "I love training with Jeff," raves Steve, "he teaches us that you gotta love yourself first before you can fight in the ring."

Those who knew Steve before wouldn't recognise him now. He has shed 14kg (98 down to 84 kg, putting him in the light-heavyweight class), runs 7km a day, and has ditched his packet-a-day nicotine habit of 6 years. Most importantly he's content. "I'm much happier now and outta trouble," he claims.

Life certainly was tough for a young



teenaged Steve. "My parents divorced when I was really young.... my father went to live in Chicago, and I had no role model, no one to guide me," he openly confides. At 15 Steve teamed up with a bunch of Assyrian kids who got up to mischief. "We didn't care about ourselves," he admits. The crescent shaped scar on the left side of his face attests to this. "Got this from a bottle in a street fight," he points out.

Once meeting Karl, life changed. "He's like a second dad to me, an uncle...Karl likes to see Assyrians getting bigger and better...he has changed the mentality of Assyrians, people want to be more 'open-handed'," Steve says.

Steve's boxing idols are Roy Jones Jr and Mike Tyson, the ying and the yang of boxers. Jones is stylish and doesn't like to hurt his opponents, "pound for pound a true champ"; Tyson has more of an instinctive, street-fighting style. And you can just see both of these in Steve today. "Boxing has taught me to be calmer, it's taught me discipline.... things are different in the ring [to street-fighting]...discipline has kept me in a straight line".

Steve definitely intends to stay on the straight and narrow. "I didn't do too well at school or work, but life has turned around. Whichever one of us [three Assyrians in *Team Fenech*] wins, we'll be carrying the Assyrian flag out... As long as you treat your body as a temple, wake up feeling fresh and happy, you can't go wrong," he smiles.

I smile back. Who am I to argue with a light-heavy weight Assyrian? ■

Sennacherib Daniel