



**ASSYRIAN MIGRANT SPENDING TIME IN AUSTRALIAN JAIL**



(Z N D A : Melbourne) Vilperit Betkshohabeh is sitting in Melbourne's Port Phillip Prison with no hope of immediate release, even though his 18-month sentence

ended more than two years ago.

Mr. Betkshohabeh arrived in Australia from Iran in 1992. Although he had visited Australia before, to stay with his brother and sister-in-law in Melbourne, immigration officials took him straight to Maribyrnong Detention Centre. He had a one-way ticket and officials feared he planned to overstay his tourist visa.

Mr. Betkshohabeh had no history of crime or mental illness but, in detention, he became psychotic, forcing authorities to release him into the care of his brother. In 1995

Mr. Betkshohabeh, a member of a persecuted group of Iranian Christians, was granted refugee status here. But, six months later, he broke into a woman's home after making threats to kill her. He was convicted and spent 18 months in jail.

His term finished, the government ordered his deportation but his lawyers appealed to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. While the committee considers his case, Mr. Betkshohabeh stays in jail.

The Federal Court and Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock have rejected pleas to have the deportation order overturned, despite evidence that Mr. Betkshohabeh's mental condition has been successfully treated and that his Australian family wants to take him in.

Mr. Betkshohabeh is now entitled to prison leave to visit his brother but, in the nine years since his arrival, he has spent only 18 months as a free man.

Up to 70 overseas-born Australian permanent residents are in prison indefinitely, despite having served their sentences. The prisoners, all convicted of crimes with sentences of 12 months or more, are awaiting deportation.

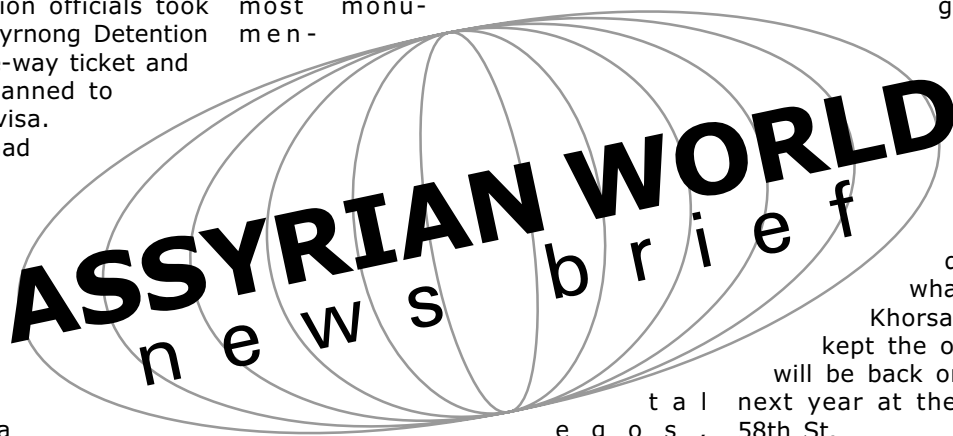
The government's decision to keep these people in jail is indefensible, said Chris Maxwell, president of Civil Liberties Victoria. "It is contrary to basic human rights for people to be kept in

indeterminate detention". Mr. Maxwell said it also contravened United Nations covenants that Australia has signed.

"It's a total travesty," said Professor Patrick McGorry, Mr. Betkshohabeh's psychiatrist, of his patient's case. "The minister (Mr. Ruddock) rejected all the psychiatric evidence that he was not responsible for his actions at the time of the offenses. Now he's well, he's not a threat to anybody and quite happy to continue with treatment. He's a mild mannered and gentle person.

**MUSEUM CARVES OUT ROOM FOR KING'S EGO**

(Z N D A : Chicago) For a man possessed of one of history's most monuments -



Assyrian King Sargon II had a humbling end: slain in ambush during a military campaign in Syria—perhaps by his own men. Vultures ate his unburied remains.

When the museum closed in 1996 to allow construction of a 16,000-square-foot addition, museum director Karen Wilson took advantage of the down time to renovate and reorganize the galleries. One of her prime targets was to reunite the relics from Sargon's fortress, which are among the museum's most massive and precious artifacts.

"Once it's done," Wilson said, "it will be the first time since the palace was destroyed in antiquity that all these pieces have stood upright, together again. From what had lain in crumbled pieces for thousands of years, we've re-created a little bit of the palace Sargon knew."

But bringing them together, at a cost of \$700,000, has not been a simple task of rearranging museum furniture.

The biggest piece is a 16-by-16-foot finely sculpted limestone statue of a human-headed winged bull that guarded an entrance to Sargon's throne room. At 40 tons, the statue was too heavy to be moved and will remain sitting atop a specially built brick and steel pier that rises unseen in the basement.

In inscriptions on the bull statue, Sargon boasted: "With my broad knowledge and wide intelligence ... I built a city. ... In it I had substantial shrines. ... I built palaces using ivory, boxwood, musukkannu-wood, cedar, cypress, juniper, burashu-juniper and [sumac] for my royal dwelling."

The winged bull has long been regarded as one of the most exquisite surviving treasures of Assyrian antiquity. Ten years ago, the Louvre museum in Paris sent a team to make a mold from the sculpture for a copy it now displays.

While moving the panels, museum workers discovered inscriptions never noted before, in which Sargon claimed responsibility for the decoration.

"They seemed to have been left there for the sake of the gods," Wilson said, "to make sure Sargon was credited for the work."

The Chicago expedition, in accordance with the custom of the day, gave half of what it recovered in its Khorsabad dig to Iraq and kept the other half. The relics will be back on permanent display next year at the museum, 1155 E. 58th St.

**NORTHERN WATCH  
Zinda News From Northern Iraq - March**

Mr. San'an Ahmad Agha, president of the Turkoman Front, visited the headquarters of the Assyrian Democratic Movement to discuss the recent political developments.

Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leader Mas'ud Barzani meets with the Assyrian Democratic Movement Secretary, and a delegation of the Movement of Kurdistan Farmers and Oppressed People.

On Tuesday, March 27, the Turkish parliament voted to extend emergency rule in northern Bet-Nahrain. The four regions include Diyarbakir, Hakkari, Sirnak and Tunceli. The emergency rule will be extended for four additional months. The emergency rule regime was first introduced in 1984 to help in the fight against Kurdish insurgency.

Emergency rule has effectively stripped locals of a number of basic rights and has allowed the military wide-ranging powers to suppress dissent. European governments and both local and international human rights groups have repeatedly called for the harsh emergency rule regime in southeast Turkey to be scrapped.

# Aramaic

## Language Lecture



On Sunday the 25th of March 2001 the Gilgamesh Cultural Center of Sydney presented a cultural evening on two topics. The first was on the Aramaic Language, presented by Miss Ruth Lewin from the University of Sydney; the second topic was "Our father Abraham" by Rabbi Pinchos Woolstone from The Jewish House Crises Center.

The function took place at Nineveh Club in Edensor Park, Smithfield. The program started at 6:30 pm with a prayer of King Ashurbanipal VII read in English by the chair speaker Mrs. Mary Mansour. Then a greeting song, *Shlama* was sung on stage by the Assyrian church choir in the Assyrian Language, and on the rhythms of his Baglama (Tambor'ra) the Assyrian singer Mr. Ninos Tooma performed two songs in both the Eastern and Western Assyrian dialects.

The main evening lecture started when Miss Ruth Lewin presented her speech on the Aramaic Language. The structure of her lecture was divided into four main parts :

1) The Aramaic language in relation to other Afro-Asiatic languages; the evolution of the Aramaic alphabet and major developments in the Aramaic language with particular attention to its diverse dialects. Maps and charts were used to demonstrate the spread of the Aramaic language and major stages in its evolution.

2) The place and significance of the Aramaic language in the Old Testament; particular emphasis was given to the book of Daniel. In this part she highlighted the rise of Aramaic as the *lingua franca* for the entire region.

3) The importance of the Aramaic language during the time of Jesus.

4) The Aramaic background for the Gospels, the continuous use of Aramaic in Rabbinical literature and the writing of the early Church Fathers.

After a brief break a short video was played where the prayer of King Ashurbanipal VII was read by the presenters of the Assyrian satellite TV in the Assyrian Language (Eastern and Western dialects).

Three letters of appreciation out of the many that the Gilgamesh Cultural Center received from universities, organizations and people that attended the ceremony of the unveiling of the statue of Gilgamesh at the University of Sydney in October 2000, were read by the guest of honor Dr. Alison Betts from the University- letters from Mr. Graham Findlay the executive director of the University, from Mr. James Samios MLC, the Deputy leader of the Liberal Party, and the last letter of congratulations from Mr. John Hartley of Impresses Visual Production Pty. Ltd.

The lecture ended with discussion and questions from the audience. ■

Moneer Cherie

There is nothing that pleases a Nakosha writer more than a good David and Goliath story. The kind where an undemocratic, powerful nation flexes its military muscle against a smaller, defenceless, nationless people- who in the end win.

We have just that story. You will all recall the case of Father Akbulut, the Assyrian priest in Turkey, unjustly imprisoned for courageously voicing the truth in the face of great personal loss- truth about Turkey's injustices to cultural minorities. Apparently the Turkish government doesn't like the truth and put him on trial for 'inciting racial hatred'. The trials were repeatedly postponed until finally at 10:00 MET on the 5<sup>th</sup> April the 3<sup>rd</sup> trial against Father Akbulut ended in a verdict of not guilty. One of the observers, G e r m a n

parliamentarian Monika Brudlewski said after the trial, "All of us feel relieved and we are content with the decision of the court, but we regret that it took so much time. Turkey obviously only reacted this way due to the international pressure."

The Assyrians of Melbourne should rightfully feel proud of having contributed through their protest, which was reported in last month's Nakosha. The protest visibly expressed what many had been feeling, and along with other Assyrians throughout the diaspora, forced the Turkish Government to release Father Yusuf Akbulut.

The key lesson to be learned from this case is that we *can* make a difference in today's world. We need not feel powerless, or disenchanted. The opportunities are as endless as the distractions that entangle us on a daily basis. Thanks to the Internet and mass-communication, we are now also able to coordinate world-wide protests, hunger-strikes and petitions around the globe.

This month was also a month of conferences, festivals and lectures, mostly conducted in Sydney. This month required the Nakosha team to take a trip to Sydney and report on The Assyrian Australian Academic Society's annual Youth Conference. We bring you a report on this conference along with the numerous other events. ■

David Chibo

Dr. Sennacherib Daniel

editors' note

# TAAAS Youth C



Ask why it is that we suffer from poor leadership. But what makes a good leader? Is it something that we are born with or is it learned? And what is the nature of success, both for the individual and our "nation"?

These were just some of the themes explored at The Assyrian Australian Academic Society's (TAAAS') second successful Youth Conference, set in the rolling hills of Kiama, a two and a half hour bus trip from Sydney (made to seem shorter thanks to music courtesy of Sargon Karim and his *dawoola* or tambour). Only a week after the equally successful Akitu Festival, Sydney braced itself for a second round of activities when on the weekend of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of April, over 85 of Sydney's Assyrian youth, along with 5 Melburnian Assyrians, debated, discussed (and danced!) away some of the more current issues affecting Assyrian Australian youth.

Arriving mid-morning on Saturday after the bus trip we were treated to our first speaker who was not Assyrian but Australian. Mr. Bowden, the general manager of a multi-national corporation, set the tone for the weekend with his talk "My Story"- a story about a young boy from a small outback town who rises above the ordinary and becomes the ambitious manager of a large company.

Leadership needs to be learned, requires initiative and an understanding of the big picture, and is a mix of humility with fierce resolve, he argued. The lessons for Assyrian youth, in the same way often coming from not-so-privileged backgrounds, are obvious.

Not a weekend for being spoon-fed information, we were all then divided into groups of ten and randomly assigned a topic per group. The responses were recorded by TAAAS' workers and will be used in their meetings with the heads of various Assyrian organisations as just a small representative sample of youthful Assyrians' views.

One of the topics discussed was "what hurdles do we need to jump to progress as a community and how do we achieve this?"

The problems of "big Assyrian egos, lack of teamwork between organisations, segregation in the community, lack of respect for different parts of our diverse culture," (in other words separatism, tribalism and ultra-nationalism) would be overcome by Nicholas Aljeelo's "ripple phenomenon": activism, starting at the level of the individual with commitment and self-education, would ripple out to the family and community levels leading to increased teamwork and the setting up of common goals. Finally at the national level via

proper leadership these common goals would be attained.

"Where do we want our community to be in 100 years" was met with youthful over-enthusiasm- "a nation with established armies to fight for our rights!"- through to a calm realism-"autonomous, democratic states with full rights of language, culture and religion where there will be full time Assyrian schools maintaining our language; religious unity; strong leadership; and media linking Assyrians worldwide." And with 32 schools *already* set up in Bet-Nahrain (Northern Iraq) teaching 7,000 students a *full-time* curriculum in Assyrian, we look set to achieve this goal sooner than this group would have imagined!

"Should we be proud to be Assyrian?" was split into two parts- pride for our old history and heritage, and a pride for having maintained that history and language *today*, against the most unbeatable odds. *Sheykhani* and *dolma* had to be added to the list, of course. In a similar vein, the "what does it mean to be Assyrian?" group felt that the strengths of our past still live today in a people dispersed all over the world yet still unified in many ways.

That night we discovered the hidden vocal talents amongst us when we all took part in karaoke night prior to dinner and *lots* of

# Conference, 2001



dancing- we were delighted to see so many young people skilfully manoeuvre their way through hours of *shaykhane*, *tawlama*, *khiga* and *balati*.

Day 1 wound up well into Day 2, as the average amount of sleep was only three hours- between being eaten alive by N.S.W.'s mosquitoes and the prank phone calls that's probably an overestimation!

After the evening's dancing, it was great to see some of us made it to breakfast. No one would have missed the first speaker of Day 2 though- D.J., entertainer, entrepreneur, and motivational speaker extraordinaire Robbie G. "What is Success?" asked Robbie, as he took us through the four steps on how to achieve personal success, which is the necessary precursor to the success of the Assyrian people. There are three levels of commitment- "trying" something-that's really a half-hearted attempt; "giving something your best shot"- if you get hurt you'll give up; the highest level of commitment is giving "whatever it takes!" Dream, don't wish, and be prepared to pay the price, spend the time and do what you have to do, proposed Robbie. We were filled with Robbie's own unique sense of enthusiasm.

The Conference ended with last year's most popular event- the Great Debate. And what better way to liven up an audience than

with the age-old debate over whether "Assyrian women wear the pants"? The girls had won last year, and they were clear winners this year too, on the strength of their arguments, despite the fact that they had the more difficult case-the affirmative (let's face it- Assyrian *men* really wear the pants!)

The Melburnian cohort left N.S.W. with a positive feeling as we saw Assyrians of heterogeneous backgrounds- Assyrians both Eastern and Western, Chaldeans and Assyrian youth of Anglo-saxon and Assyrian parents- mix completely freely with no narrow-mindedness or intolerance, giving us great hope for the future of Assyrians, both here in Australia and worldwide. ■

Dr. Sennacherib Daniel

... (transcription of the beginning of the Great Debate text)

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## Would you ever consider an arranged marriage?

► **Male/28/ Port Vila Vanuatu**

▷ I would consider it if she is my type but otherwise, NO WAY. Not being able to choose my wife is not my idea of a good marriage, even though the ones who have been through it are happy most of the time

► **Female/22 /Australia-Sydney**

▷ Not likely to ever consider an arranged marriage. A marriage should be based on love existing between two people, not a contract arranged by members of a third party.

► **Female/35/Sydney**

▷ No way...In our society, women have enough intelligence, independency & power to make their own decision. We do not need this arranged marriage business.

Open your eyes because we have enough Assyrian societies & groups for any individual to find a companion. I really think that it is hard enough to make a marriage work with some one that you've known for years let a lone some one that you've never met before. Oh No.....

► **Male/19/U.S.A, Reseda, California**

▷ No. In a "civilized" society where the standard of equality and the acknowledgment of rationality is understandable, one should realize that arranged marriages in a Western society will be viewed as "ab-normal". Even though our history and our traditions follow these customs, today's YOUTH are independent. And they are educated and self willing to become independent. They have the ability to "choose" and understand the standard of living. The developed



compatible and ready. If not, it could result in future disasters of divorce and difficulties, even worst, when there are kids in the picture. The habit of enforced Arranged marriages should be terminated! Times have changed!

► **Male/22/Toronto-Canada**

▷ No because you cant get married to someone you don't know, they might turn to be opposite of you

► **Female/32/Melbourne, Australia**

▷ I would only consider an arranged marriage if I had at least met the other person and knew quite a bit about his background, family, work ethics, beliefs etc. There's no guarantee of a happy ending even if you've known someone for years, or even lived with that person. :)

► **Female/23/Born in Iran, currently residing in USA (Los Angeles, CA)**

▷ I would never consider an arranged marriage. I also know very few parents these days would force their children into such marriages. A marriage is a personal life changing decision. Each man and woman should be free to choose their mate, for they will be the ones living that marriage, and not the family members who have merely arranged it. I could go on about historical facts about arranged marriages, but I hope this brief response will do for your magazine.

► **Male/16/Canada**

▷ The answer is simply no. Parents should not choose who their son's or daughter's should marry. The parents do not know if their child LOVES the other person. And that's what marriage should be based on. LOVE! Not want the parents think.

society has changed its ideas and perceptions based on traditional values. Therefore, those that follow these standards are viewed as events. I really cannot be judgemental about this issue. For, I have never experienced the traditions of arranged marriages. Many may say that traditions will never change. Let us wait and see.

► **Female/19/Melbourne**

▷ In our culture there are those wonderful traditions that involve family and friends during a marriage such as planning the fun side of it etc. But sadly there are still Assyrians in the world whose kids (especially daughters) have no say about who to spend their Eternal life with in sickness and in health. This usually occurs amongst the Assyrians who are still living in our homelands. As a result, being in that part of the world they don't just miss out on many of life's opportunities but also they miss out on choosing their partner.

NO WAY!!!! arranged marriages simply do not fit the live styles of today! Marriage is a also a long term commitment and the only parties involved in making the decision should be the couple that are getting married. However, Parents' wise suggestions should only be considered not enforced! A couple should be

# Assyrians in the...



# GREEK FESTIVAL OF SYDNEY

The annual Greek Festival of Sydney, which is a significant feature of Sydney's events calendar, commenced on Sunday 4 March 2001. This Festival is organised by the Greek Orthodox Community of NSW and has made a significant contribution to Sydney's spirit of multiculturalism. The objective of the Festival is to promote Greek/Australian culture and arts in an inclusive and cross-cultural environment and at the same time to include the wider Australian and ethnic communities in the festivities.

It was in this spirit that the Assyrian community was invited to partake in this year's Festival. It was a great opportunity for our community to gain exposure and recognition as a nation in such a high profile and



respected event in Australia. The value of cross-cultural exchange that is witnessed in an event of this calibre can only result in greater awareness and respect for our nation. Not to mention the opportunity to develop close links and networking with other community members and members of the media for which Assyrians have always been striving.

The Assyrian Australian National Federation in conjunction with Assyrian organisations, churches, The Assyrian Australian Academic Society (TAAAS), Assyrian businesses, media- particularly SBS and Channel 31- worked towards coordinating the Assyrian participation and program in this Festival. The Assyrian involvement was in three parts. Firstly, by participating in the Street Fair and the official opening ceremony; secondly by running an Assyrian Stall at the Festival and thirdly by co-organising the Greek and Assyrian cross-cultural function.

The Festival began on Sunday 4 March 2001 and was closed on Sunday 8 April 2001, with events taking place daily at various venues

around Sydney. The most important event of the Festival was the Brighton Le Sands Street Fair, the second largest street festival in Australia. Over 120,000 people attended this year's Street Fair from different backgrounds.

The Assyrian program at the Street Fair was scheduled in two sections. The first section commenced at 1:30pm as part of the official Street Fair program and included a welcoming speech by Dr. Said Stephan (President of the Assyrian Australian National Federation). This was followed by Assyrian folkloric dances performed by the Assyrian Stars Dancing Group from the Assyrian Sports and Cultural Club, led by Youkanna Khamas. The dancing group was accompanied by Yako

Minyanish and Fred Dawood playing the Assyrian instruments (Dawla and Zorna). Following the Assyrian folkloric dances, the Children Choir, of the Assyrian Church of the East, performed the "Assyrian Alphabet" in Assyrian and English, completed by a brilliant performance by the Zuzuki Orchestra, conducted and directed by Maestro Rabi Alexander (Shoora)

Michailian.

The second section of the Assyrian program was sponsored by SBS Radio. Mr. Wilson Younan together with the SBS team ran this section of the Assyrian program that was filled with lots of fun, entertainment, games, give away gifts and prizes. The program commenced at 4pm, straight after the official opening and included short speeches from Mr. Younan, members of the SBS team, followed by welcoming speeches from Dr. Stephan and Ms. Vivi Germanos (President of the Greek Orthodox Community of NSW). Miss. Majidi Anne Warda, an Assyrian youth, also delivered an excellent speech titled "Who are the Assyrians?". Assyrian music

and dancing filled the air and Assyrians and non-Assyrians joined in the dancing of "khigga/haggo". Maestro Rabi Alexander (Shoora) Michailian had organised another brilliant performance by the Children Choir of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Suzuki Orchestra.

Assyrian culture, language and its rich heritage was further promoted through the Assyrian Stall that was displayed at the centre of the Street Fair. There were displays of Assyrian sculptures, statues, maps, pictures, magazines and books. There were also on-line computer demonstrations of Assyrian web pages, Nineveh Gallery and other relevant information about Assyrians. A three-page flyer on "Who are the Assyrians?" was prepared and distributed throughout the day. It was amazing to see large groups of people gathering around the Assyrian Stall expressing interest in Assyrian history, culture, and language, as well as requesting further information.

The highlight of the Greek Festival was the Greek and Assyrian cross-cultural function that was held on Friday 16 March 2001 at the Lakemba Greek Club. This function included music and entertainment from both the Greek and Assyrian communities. The Assyrian section once again included speeches from Dr. Stephan and Miss. Warda. The cultural section of the function was opened by Maestro Rabi Alexander (Shoora) Michailian with a solo violin playing the "Gypsy melody" and the "Serenade Schubert". This was followed by the Assyrian Folkloric Dance performances by the Assyrian Stars Dancing Group. The Assyrian program continued with an excellent violin performance by the Assyrian violinist and singer George Homeh playing "Assyrian Melodies". Assyrian dancing and entertainment commenced when Charles Tooma accompanied by the Charles Band took the stage and presented one of his best performances. Dancing continued until the early hours of the morning.

The Greek program for the night was similar to the Assyrian program. It included a welcoming speech by Maria Georgakopoulou, the Chairperson of the Greek Festival Committee, along with a few

short speeches by a number of prominent Greek figures. The Greek program continued with a brilliant dancing performance by the Cretan Dancing Group followed by a violin performance by Kostas Marangozidis and Pontian Lyra by George Apostolidis. Poseidon, the Greek Orchestra played Greek music throughout the night. ■

Lounarda David



# ملف لغوي

# كلمة لغوية

دُونَا	edono	time	edana	دِينَا
دَابَر	dabar	past	dawar	دَحْدَا
دَاتِي	datyde	future	datyde	دَحْدَا
سَوْرَه و سَوْرَا	sorghodo	calendar	sorghada	سَوْرَه و سَوْرَا
شَاتَا	shato	year	sheta	شَاتَا
أَقْمَا	aqmo	season	aqma	أَقْمَا
يَارَه	yarho	month	yarkha	يَارَه
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يَوْمَا	yoomo	day	yooma	يَوْمَا
رَفُوفَا	rfoffo	second	rpappa	رَفُوفَا

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The Assyrian Youth Group of Victoria is a non-political, non-religious and non-profit organisation. It seeks to promote the Assyrian culture, history and language, as well as the Assyrian name and community, bringing it to the world stage.

# AYGV

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