

Charisma News – Christians Begin 25 Days of Prayer and Fasting for Believers in Iraq

A group comprising mostly Assyrian Christians has begun a 25-day prayer and fasting campaign to draw attention to a humanitarian crisis among Christians in Iraq. Christians for Assyrians of Iraq (CAI) led a demonstration at the White House yesterday, calling on U.S. politicians to “Stand for Iraq’s Assyrians and Save the Nineveh Plains.” Nina Shea of the Center for Religious Freedom, a Washington, organization that defends religious freedom around the world, and the Rev. Keith Roderick of Christian Solidarity International, spoke at the rally that drew several dozen people. Known as Assyrians or Chaldeans, Christians in Iraq make up roughly 5 percent of the population but roughly 40 percent of those fleeing the nation, CAI reported. In recent months, Christians have faced heightened persecution, including the October crucifixion of a 14-year-old Assyrian boy in Mosul; the beheading of the Rev. Paulis Iskander, a Syrian Orthodox priest, the same month; and the kidnappings and murders of 13 Assyrian Christian women in Baghdad in leaders believe the creation of an autonomous zone for Assyrians and other Christians in Iraq could help reverse this trend. They say the formation of the Nineveh Plains Administrative Unit would allow Assyrians and other Christians to practice their faith, speak and teach their language, and work their land without fear of persecution.