

How You Can Help Prevent the US From Giving Jewish Property Back to Iraq

Unless immediate action is taken, the U.S. State Department will return invaluable Jewish artifacts to the government of Iraq instead of their rightful owners. Jewish Voice Ministries International is mobilizing the Christian community with a petition drive of 1 million signatures to prevent the dispersed Iraqi Jewish community from losing their history and personal possessions to the government that persecuted them.

President and CEO Jonathan Bernis articulates the injustice: "We didn't return the belongings of the Jewish people who suffered in the Holocaust to the German government. Why would we stand by and allow this terrible injustice to take place?"

Here's some background. The Jewish community in Iraq existed for 2,600 years before 1930s Nazi propaganda ushered in persecution, including seizure of property, pogroms and public hangings. Many Jews fled the country, leaving behind personal possessions.

After the 2003 ouster of Saddam Hussein, U.S. troops discovered thousands of Jewish artifacts in the flooded basement of Iraq's intelligence headquarters. Invaluable artifacts included a 16th-century Hebrew Bible, a 1902 hand-lettered Haggadah guidebook, and Torah fragments, stolen by Hussein's secret police from Jewish synagogues and schools.

The U.S. signed an agreement with Iraq's provisional government, allowing it to salvage the archive and spend \$2 million to restore it. The State Department agreed to return the fully restored archive to the Iraqi government in the summer of 2014, although five Jewish people reside in Iraq and

despite the fact that Iraq refuses to recognize Israel's statehood.

Action is critical. Jewish Voice Ministries urges the U.S. Christian community to stand against further injustice for this persecuted Jewish community. The digital petition to Secretary of State John Kerry can be signed here for delivery to the State Department on May 30, 2014.

Note: Jewish Voice Ministries International is a ministry raising awareness about Israel and the Jewish people through television, streaming and digital media, print, international music festivals, medical clinics and humanitarian aid to the Lost Tribes of Israel.