

US Putting Iraqi Christian Refugees in Jail

Some Iraqi Christians fleeing the Islamic State sought safety and freedom in America. But instead of being welcomed in as religious refugees, they were arrested and sent to a San Diego prison.

The news comes despite the fact that 300,000 immigrants from Muslim countries were welcomed into the United States last year.

“It’s clear our border is open to everyone except Christians,” Mark Arabo, spokesman for the Minority Humanity Foundation, observed.

Arabo recently joined fellow Iraqi Christians in prayer outside San Diego’s Otay Detention Facility. They gathered in protest and support for some of those detained inside.

For nearly six months now, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has imprisoned 20 Chaldean Catholics here for attempting to enter the United States from Mexico without prior approval.

Rarely does the government comment about pending detainee cases. However, Arabo said the INS did tell the families that it lacked sufficient resources to go through individual case files to provide them with an explanation.

Arabo suggests the families deserve better.

“We’re going to protest. We’re going to pray for the administration and the officials to open up their hearts and minds to the victims of genocide. We’re not going to stop and we’re going to hold them accountable,” he vowed.

Iraqi Christian Aamer Moshi served as an interpreter for the

U.S. Army during the Iraq war.

Muslim extremists threatened his life because he worked for the Americans. Now, he's living in San Diego and prays that his 26-year-old cousin Ziad Matty will soon be able to join him.

Matty was taken into INS custody last January. His case is finally scheduled to be heard later this week.

Moshi wonders why his cousin is still detained. He's not an Islamic terrorist, explained Aamer, but a kind Christian who would not hurt anyone.

"Ziad will not be harmful to this country, will not be a danger to this country. Let him go live with his family. It's not too much. He is young, he can work, he can pay taxes, he can be happy around his family, and his family will sponsor him," Moshi said.

Just moments before the prayer vigil, word came that the mother of one of the detainees inside had died of cancer. The detainee had requested release for a day or two to go to the hospital and see her mother before she died. That request was denied.

These Chaldean Christians say that's just another example of a broken immigration system.

Moshi said many of them now believe America's early troop withdrawal from Iraq is to blame for the rise of ISIS. The jihadist group has been forcing Christians to convert to Islam, leave, or die.

"They did not finish the mission. And we cannot get papers to stay in America? Where should we go now?" Moshi asked.

"When did the symbol of America become a gated fence as opposed to the statue of Liberty?" Give me your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free. These are those

Christians," he said.