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AHC condemns attacks on Christians in Iraq and Turkey

Sydney, 7 November, 2010: The dwindling indigenous Christian minorities of the Middle East have been subjected to two major assaults in recent days. Vandals and terrorists have attacked Orthodox cemeteries on Imvros (modern Gokceada, Turkey) and besieged and killed Syriac Catholic clergy and worshippers in Baghdad, Iraq. The Australian Hellenic Council (NSW) condemns these gross violations of human rights and denounces the lack of security offered to the remaining Christians of Turkey and Iraq.

The Our Lady of Salvation Syriac Catholic Church in Baghdad was the scene of a bloody attack on 31 October. During a service, gunmen broke into the house of worship and took over one hundred clergy and faithful hostage. During a failed rescue effort, dozens of people perished in this latest outrage against Iraq's indigenous Assyrian population.

On 29 October, 76 graves in the Orthodox cemetery of Panayia on the island of Imvros (Gokceada) were vandalised by persons unknown. Such humiliating assaults on the deceased have been a regular feature of life for Turkey's indigenous Christian minority over a number of decades.

Since the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides of 1915-1924, the remaining Canonical and Oriental Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christians of Iraq and Turkey have been under immense physical and psychological pressure to abandon their ancestral homelands.

The AHC (NSW) calls upon the governments of Iraq and Turkey to fulfill their duty and provide adequate protection for their indigenous Christian citizens, both those living and those who have passed away.

The AHC (NSW) also expresses its full support for the Assyrian people, the Assyrian Universal Alliance and all Assyrian political parties in their condemnation of the continued assault on their brethren in Iraq.