

Ninewa Dialogue Intervention

Religious Rituals Overlap between Shebak and Christians in Bartilla January 5th, 2014

The Religious Rituals Overlap is identified by the Dialogue Committee as one of the elements causing the conflict between the two components, mainly in Bartilla. This is because at the same time the Shebak are mourning the memorial of Ashora event, the Christians are celebrating the Christmas days. This was fed by the political powers in the area that the Shiite parties financially supporting the mourning rituals that were reaching to the Christian zone.

For many years, since 2003, the Christians never had the freedom and capacity to celebrate as they used to. This has resulted in many accidents on yearly basis as they equally feel, that the other is not respecting their religious occasions, and eventually conflict is arising in the community.

Since the initiative of Ninewa Dialogue started in 2012, the team of facilitators made a significant progress by developing communication with the ruling parties in Hamdaniya/ Bartilla such as the PDK, PUK, Supreme Council, Badir Brigade and Christian Assembly in order to prepare the ground for free and peaceful religious rituals by both components.

During 2013, number of critical events occurred, most significantly, the Bartilla Friends Conference [24-25 Nov, 2013] which was hosted by Christians and sponsored by KRG. This conference called for anti- demographic change in Ninewa Valley and accused aggressively the movement of Shebak into the Christian zone in Hamdaniya. This event, among others, has helped developing a potential for conflict between the two components as the Shebak leaderships responded with the same level of tension. While this occurred very close to the religious overlap, the team of facilitators through the dialogue mechanisms they have invested in this project, raised the level of communication and interaction between the two components in order to contain the tension in the area, especially that the event of Ashora and the 40th anniversary of Imam Hussein will take place the same day the Christians will celebrate the Christmas [25th of Dec, 2013]. On this day, members from the dialogue committee paid a visit to the church and congratulated the Christians and expressed the genuine will to sustain the peaceful co-existence, especially during the religious overlapped occasions. Again, members of the dialogue committee as well as the communication committee mentioned that for the second year, the Christmas and Ashora events pass peacefully without any accidents.

In conclusion, the Network of Iraqi Facilitators adopted a realistic approach in designing the process for intervention by developing a community level dialogue mechanisms [Dialogue and Communication Committees] that helped remarkably in sustaining the peaceful overlap during the religious occasions in Bartilla. Furthermore, the identification of stakeholders and the initiation to develop dialogue with them had proved success. This was represented by number of meetings and dialogues with the key personnel in different political parties in the taking control of Ninewa Plain. It is anticipated that in 2014 onward, the overlap will be distant and there will be no potential for conflict between Shebak and Christians.

Local religious and political figures
both of Shabak and Christians
declaring a new start of positive
relations and co-existence
December, 25th 2013

