

MEETING THE ARMENIAN MP OF IRAQI KURDISTAN

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By **Hamo Moskofian**, Dhok, Iraqi Kurdistan, 3 November 2013

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Dhok (Duhok, Dohuk) Dam & Surrounding

Dhok is considered the most beautiful modern city in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is one of the bustling modern cities of the region. Most of the Armenians in this part of Iraqi Kurdistan are from Zakho, Hawrez and Awzrouk. They are descendants of the 1915 Armenian Genocide survivors who were protected by Kurdish tribal leaders Shandin Beg, Hmo Shro, Jahangiz Agha and others.

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Armenians such as Mr. Aminian and his predecessor Kurdistan MP Aram Shahin Bakoyan have lived and prospered here since 1919. Many of them had emigrated through the help of Levon Pasha, after the fall of the first Armenian Republic. Many villagers re-emigrated to Soviet Armenia in 1947, while others recently received the new Republic of Armenia passports which they proudly carry in an area which was once Western Armenia, Kurdistan, Assyria.

On Oct. 26, our drivers took us on a three-hour drive from Ankawa-Erbil to Dhok to meet Mr. Aminian. We were warmly welcomed by the parliamentarian and Mr. Vartkes Sarkisian, a scholar,



lecturer at several institutions of Kurdish language and literature.

Hovsep Ashjian, the Lebanese-Armenian tourist company founder who was in the group, could not believe that in such a remote part of the Middle East another Armenia exists, with such proud, friendly, hospitable, patriotic compatriots, who can speak only Kurdish and Arabic, understand very little of their mother tongue, but have been the defenders of our "fortress" for decades.

Our hosts took us on a sightseeing tour of Dhok, including the old Armenian quarter, Assyrian and Syriac churches, to mosques, Yezidi shrines, and to the Dhok Dam and waterfall. It was noticeable that our hosts are well known and respected by the Kurdish elite and the military "peshmerga". They consider the Armenians their brothers and allies.

✘ "We always had a very strong presence in Dhok and in the region. We are considered a talented and hard-working people, trustworthy and courageous who played a great role in developing Kurdistan," said Aminian over the lunch. "It's true that Kurdish-Armenian relations during history were not always easy, but today the Democratic Party of Kurdistan and President Masoud Barzani are doing everything to make Armenians feel as if they are in their homeland!"

Now that he is an MP, Mr. Aminian's life will be complicated. In addition to his duties at the parliament in Erbil, he along with his fellow MPs from Dhok, will try to solve the problems of his constituency and that of Armenians of Kurdistan. We wish him success in his commitment for a better society, and in building bridges with Armenia and the Diaspora, as he promised.

* Dhok - ***other variations are Duhok & Dohuk.***

