
FAMILIES SAY DEPORTED CHALDEANS WILL BE PERSECUTED IN IRAQ

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DETROIT (WJBK) - Dozens of Chaldean immigrants who were taken into custody over the weekend await persecution once they're returned to Iraq, families say. Now, they're scrambling to make a desperate attempt to save their loved ones from deportation.

On Sunday, dozens of Chaldean immigrants were rounded up by ICE and taken to the immigration detention center in Detroit. They've since been moved on to a correctional facility in Youngstown, Ohio, while they await the likely deportation to Iraq as part of a deal reached by the two countries.

"We're hearing that a plane may be leaving as early as the end of this week," Martin Manna, President of Chaldean Community Foundation said. "Today we're hearing there may be some hunger strikes amongst some of these folks. What do they have to risk at this point? If they are sent back, there is no hope for them unfortunately."

The detained Iraqi nationals would be loaded onto a plane and then delivered back to Iraq. Many of the detained immigrants are Chaldeans. Their families say they'll be persecuted for their beliefs when they're returned to Iraq.

Christian Iraqis are persecuted in Iraq because of their faith. For those reasons, Summer Zora says her husband won't live long, once returned to Iraq.

"My husband has a big tattoo of mother Mary of God. Once he gets to Iraq, ISIS or whatever, they're going to kill him right away," Zora said.

Approximately 400 detainees are being held in Ohio from Metro Detroit and other areas. The majority of the detainees from metro Detroit have some sort of criminal history but their families argue they were convicted of non-violent crimes and many were committed decades ago.

Najah Konja served prison time for a drug conviction in the 1980's. His brother Shoki says he's been a model citizen since and has paid his debt to society.

He fears the worst if his brother is deported.

"Where is he going to go? He's going to be a target as soon as he walks out of the airport," Shoki said. "We come from a small town in the north of Iraq. It was liberated two months ago. There is not one Christian living in our town."

Manna says that the United States should not be sending the immigrants to a country where they will knowingly be persecuted.

"As a country when we talk about human rights violations, there are rules against convention against torture. There's laws that prevent government from sending people to an active warzone where they're knowingly going to be persecuted," Manna said.

Kaynak/Source: