

Germany urged to shelter Iraqi Christians

by UPI

BERLIN -- Churches in Germany are campaigning for sanctuary in the country for Iraqi Christians, who face persecution from both Sunnis and Shiites in their home country. Bishop Wolfgang Huber, who heads the Evangelical Church, has formed an alliance with the Roman Catholic Church, Der Spiegel reports. About half the estimated 800,000 Christians in Iraq in 2005 are thought to have fled the country. "Threats, murder and abduction are part of daily life for Christians in Iraq," said Gunter Nooke, the human rights commissioner and a member of the Christian Democratic Union party. In addition to persecution for their religious beliefs, many Christians face violence for working with coalition forces. They tend to be better educated than other Iraqis and more likely to speak English, helping them get jobs as translators. About 2,500 Iraqi refugees are already living in Germany. The churches are urging parliament to approve long-term asylum for 25,000 to 30,000 Christians.

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