

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 259

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives to support the repatriation of religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq to their ancestral homelands.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 27, 2019

Mr. FORTENBERRY (for himself and Ms. ESHOO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives to support the repatriation of religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq to their ancestral homelands.

Whereas the Nineveh Plain and the wider region have been the ancestral homeland of Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Christians, Yazidis, Shabak, and other religious and ethnic minorities, where they lived for centuries until the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) overran and occupied the area in 2014;

Whereas, in 2016, then-Secretary of State John Kerry announced, “In my judgment Daesh is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims. Daesh is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology, and by actions—

in what it says, what it believes, and what it does. Daesh is also responsible for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at these same groups and in some cases also against Sunni Muslims, Kurds, and other minorities.”;

Whereas these atrocities were undertaken with the specific intent to bring about the eradication and displacement of Christians, Yazidis, and other communities and the destruction of their cultural heritage, in violation of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide;

Whereas, in 2016, the House of Representatives passed H. Con. Res. 75 expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the atrocities perpetrated by ISIS against religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria include war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide;

Whereas it is consistent with the commitments of Iraq, the Kurdish Regional Government, the United States, and the international community to guarantee the restoration of fundamental human rights, including property rights, to genocide victims, and to see that ethnic and religious pluralism survives in Iraq;

Whereas President Trump issued orders to defeat ISIS, and with the joint efforts of the United States and 79 allies and partners, ISIS has been edged out of large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria that it once controlled;

Whereas, in July 2018, under the direction of Vice President Pence, the Genocide Recovery and Persecution Response Program has partnered the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development with

local faith and community leaders to rapidly deliver aid to persecuted communities, beginning with Iraq;

Whereas Christians in Iraq once numbered over 1.5 million in 2003 and have dwindled to less than 200,000 today;

Whereas armed militia groups linked to Iran and operating in Sinjar and the Nineveh Plains are increasing the instability and insecurity of northern Iraq, preventing the conditions for local and indigenous minorities to return to their homelands;

Whereas Iraqi religious minorities have faced challenges in integrating into the Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish Peshmerga; and

Whereas facilitating the success of communities in Sinjar and the Nineveh Plains requires a commitment from international, Iraqi, Kurdish, and local authorities, in partnership with local faith leaders, to promote the safety and security of all people, especially religious and ethnic minorities: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that—

3 (1) it should be a policy priority of the United
4 States, working with international partners, the Gov-
5 ernment of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Govern-
6 ment, and local populations, to support the safe re-
7 turn of displaced indigenous people of the Nineveh
8 Plain and Sinjar to their ancestral homeland;

9 (2) Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish
10 Peshmerga should work to more fully integrate all

1 communities, including religious minority commu-
2 nities to counter current and future terrorist threats;
3 and

4 (3) the United States, working with inter-
5 national allies and partners, should coordinate ef-
6 forts to provide for the safe return and future secu-
7 rity of religious minorities in the Nineveh Plain and
8 Sinjar.

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