

**GENOCIDAL ATTACKS AGAINST CHRISTIAN
AND OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN
SYRIA AND IRAQ**

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

AND THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 2 o'clock p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. The meeting of the subcommittees will come to order. Good afternoon to everyone.

We are convening this extremely urgent hearing on the desperate plight of Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq and Syria. As images of beheaded American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff are seared into our consciousness, we would do well to honor their memories by recalling what they saw as their mission, to alert the world to the horrors committed by the fanatical terrorist group ISIS in Syria and Iraq: Children forced to view crucifixions and beheadings; women bartered, sold, and raped; prisoners lined up on their knees to be shot. This is the ISIS legacy.

Today Christians and other religious minorities such as Yezidis, Shabaks, and Turkmen Shiites are not just facing a long winter without homes. They are not just hungry and thirsty and wandering from village to village in northern Iraq and Kurdistan. They are facing annihilation, genocide, by fanatics who see anyone who does not subscribe to its draconian and violent interpretation of Islam as fair game for enslavement, forced conversion, or death.

If the phrase "never again" is to be more than a well-meaning sentiment we simply give lip service to, then we must be prepared to act when we see genocide unfold before our very eyes. After the United States pulled out of Iraq in March 2011, we left in charge a Prime Minister hostile to political inclusion of all Iraqis beyond simply Shiites.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS, saw an opportunity to exploit Sunni sentiment at this treatment and surged to fill the gap. We withdrew; they surged. This is not the junior var-

sity team of terrorists, as the President dismissively asserted earlier this year.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iran and Iraq, Brett McGurk, has described ISIL as having unprecedented resources in terms of funds, weapons, and personnel. We have seen what ISIS is doing in Syria, beheading and crucifying Christians and political opponents, taking hostages and kidnapping religious leaders, blowing up churches and mosques, and forcing religious minorities to convert, flee with the clothes on their backs, or pay an exorbitant tax, or die.

When ISIS overran Mosul in June, Mosul's 35,000 inhabitants not too old or sick fled for their lives. At checkpoints leaving the city, ISIS took the Christians' wedding rings, money, travel papers, medicines, and even their cars. Families walked carrying their children, pushing wheelchairs and elderly parents, mile after mile into the hot, barren, Nineveh Plain.

As ISIS continued to gain territory in July and August, the Christians fled further north joining Yezidi and many other minorities trying to find safety in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. More than 1.7 million people have been displaced in Iraq this year, many were Christians who fled the brutal Syrian Civil War, now on the run again. Where will they be safe?

Kurdistan, a region of 8.35 million people, currently hosts nearly 750,000 refugees. The Kurdish militias are underfunded and underarmed now that ISIS has captured U.S. heavy weapons across Iraq, yet they soldier on. I have received emails from bishops and nuns chronicling the dire needs of their flocks who are being exterminated and expelled from regions their people have occupied for millennia.

The U.S. has, in the last few weeks, geared up for the humanitarian crisis. As of September 5, the U.S. has dedicated nearly \$140 million in humanitarian assistance to Iraq, and USAID airlifted more than 60 metric tons of humanitarian aid into Kurdistan's capital of Erbil. We need, however, to make sure that the aid gets people to need it most. This means, of course, working with religious leaders who are the closest to those in need.

We also have to invest more in our relationship with the Kurdistan Regional Government, a regional government which has taken on the aspects of a de facto national government and one whose brave militia have stood up against ISIS while members of the Iraqi Armed Forces have folded and fled.

It must also be remarked and remembered with gratitude that the Kurdistan Regional Government has extended protection to Christians and other victims of religious persecution. While their record has not been perfect, the Kurds appear to be more tolerant of diversity, of thought, and belief than many of their neighbors.

But aid alone is not the solution. The U.S. has already spent some \$2.4 billion on the Syrian humanitarian crisis that rages on. We need shrewd power, a strategy for action that is in touch with reality on the ground, a strategy borne of thinking ahead and preparing in advance for the contingencies, so that we are not playing catch up while the enemy rapes, pillages, kidnaps, massacres, and amasses wealth and weapons.

The reality for religious minorities is that their very lives are at risk as long as ISIS controls territory and continues to gain strength on the ground, drawing funds and fighters from around the globe. As Pope Francis has noted with regard to this crisis, and I quote, “where there is unjust aggression . . . it is licit to stop the unjust aggressor.”

Of course, that may indeed require the use of force, but it also requires using other means that are at our disposal. I have called for the establishment of a Syrian war crimes tribunal, introduced H. Con. Res. 51 to hold all sides accountable for the heinous atrocities they have committed.

H. Con. Res. 51 introduced last September calls for the creation of an international tribunal like in Sierra Leone, the former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda, that would be more flexible and more efficient than the International Criminal Court—it has already been vetoed by the Russians anyway—to ensure accountability for human rights violations committed by all sides.

I believe with a herculean effort pushed by the United States and other interested nations, past success in creating war crime courts can indeed be prologue. Such a tribunal would also draw upon past experience. We had two hearings, one by the full committee and one in my subcommittee, in which we heard from David Crane, the former chief prosecutor at the Sierra Leone tribunal. He and his tribunal were the ones that put Charles Taylor behind bars who has entered into the 50 years of his sentence. Nobody ever thought in the beginning that Charles Taylor would be behind bars, especially after the atrocities and the power that he wielded.

Such a tribunal, like I said, would draw upon these past experiences, but it would also be a mechanism that is robust enough to right, or at least bring some justice, to the most egregious wrongs, yet minimal enough not to derail changes for peace due to rigidity.

The Foreign Affairs Committee approved H. Con. Res. 51 on April 30, and our hope is that the House will take it up, but frankly the administration can take this up and do this any time it pleases.

As ISIS does not respect borders, of course the idea behind this would be Iraq and Syria. Today, the black flag of ISIS flies over vast swaths of northern Iraq and even cities such as Fallujah, which we had won at such great cost. Indeed, ISIS says that they intend to see the black flag fly over the White House. Where the black flag flies, there is only death and misery. We have to do everything humanly possible to stop this cancer from spreading.

Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. Mr. Chairman, as always, thank you for your leadership and convening today’s hearing on an important issue that is growing in severity and affecting various religious and ethnic minority populations in the region.

ISIS continues to violate the human rights and religious freedom of minority groups in significant swaths of territory in both Syria and Iraq. Oh, I did want to acknowledge our colleague, Mr. Deutch, since this is a joint hearing, is not able to be here yet. Hopefully, he will join us, but he is in another hearing of the Ethics Committee, so he is not here with us today.

And, Mr. Chair, you have named this hearing the Genocidal Attacks Against Christians and Other Religious Minorities in Syria and Iraq. And, you know, frankly, obviously I am very concerned about this, but the phenomena of ISIS and seeing them attack Muslims, I mean, one thing we know is that they don't seem to discriminate in their terror and what is going on in these countries.

I recall, the whole world saw the video of them capturing the soldiers, the 250 soldiers, and marching them down, and then later the videos of them being executed. And I can assume that many of those soldiers were Muslims. So the phenomena in ISIS and to hear that al-Qaeda thinks that they are too extreme is really an ominous situation.

Of course, I would like to thank our distinguished witnesses, and I am interested in hearing your perspective on the grave reality on the ground; specifically, how widespread the attacks have been on soldiers, women, and children, among other vulnerable groups. I am also interested in hearing your perspective on the atrocities that have recently occurred like the one that I just mentioned with the 250 soldiers, and of course we have to remember the two American journalists.

In addition, thousands of individuals from minority religious groups have been forced to seek refuge across borders, and the chairman spelled that out in quite a bit of detail. I do hope that this hearing sheds light on the important nuances of the situation and what is needed going forward in order to protect human rights and religious freedom in the region. I am committed to working toward this end and look forward to working with my colleagues to find the most effective and sustainable solutions.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Member Bass. Thank you very much.

Next we will hear from the co-chair of this hearing, the chairman emeritus of the full committee and the chairwoman of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass. Thank you for your passionate words and for your longtime leadership on this important issue. You, Mr. Smith, have been a vocal and steadfast ally for all those who suffer and are denied their basic and fundamental rights, especially those who are targeted for persecution and harassment because of their religious beliefs.

We, on this committee, have had several hearings focusing on religious minorities in the Middle East and on the humanitarian crisis in Syria and now in Iraq. Last September, Mr. Smith, I remember you remarked in your opening statement about how the Christians are not dying because they are in the war or as collateral damage. No. Their communities are being deliberately targeted, and it is important to remember that the Christian communities in Syria, as well as in Iraq, are both ancient communities that have long had their roots in the region, and even pre-date Islam by several centuries. But as we have seen, these communities are quickly dwindling in number as they face the ISIL threat in Iraq and in Syria.

These vulnerable populations are taking the brunt of the unending humanitarian crisis in Syria as Assad, ISIL, other rebel

groups, and the opposition, all continue to struggle for supremacy. Just 10 years ago, the Christian population in Iraq numbered 1.5 million people, and before Assad began his campaign to quell calls for reform and democracy with military force and upended the entire country, Christians numbered close to 2 million in Syria.

Today, after 3½ years of brutality and unending violence, about one-third of Syria's Christians have been forced to flee their centuries old homes with many having been beaten, tortured, forced to convert, or murdered. Their churches have been destroyed, their homes robbed, their children raped or kidnapped, and the plight of Iraq's Christians is just as bad, if not worse.

There are now less than 400,000 Christians in Iraq. Many faced the same fate as those in Syria, forced to flee, convert, or be killed. Tens of thousands, if not more, have fled to Erbil to seek refuge in Kurdistan, away from the ISIL scourge. What was once Iraq's most populated Christian town is now down to just a few dozen, and this is not something new.

The persecution of Christians, and in fact many other religious minorities in the Middle East and North Africa and elsewhere, has been rampant and prevalent for years. But it took the threat of the extinction of the Yezidis in Iraq just a few weeks ago for the administration to finally take any meaningful action in defense of a persecuted religious minority in Iraq or Syria.

It was certainly the right thing to do, but my question is: Why did it take so long for the administration wake up to the realization that it isn't just the Yezidis who are being targeted for extinction by these radical and fundamental Islamist ideologues, but it is Christians, too, who have suffered greatly.

This is not a political issue, Mr. Chairman, this is about right and wrong, about a belief in our ideals and our morals that everyone everywhere, that is about justice, that is about freedom of religion, everyone should be able to live freely and openly without fear of persecution and be able to practice their faith.

When President Obama spoke to the American people about his decision to intervene in Libya he said, "Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different. And as President, I refuse to wait for the images of slaughter and mass graves before taking action."

But where has that leadership been in Syria and Iraq? Why have we allowed the Christians to be persecuted and murdered to the brink of extinction without taking action? Taking action against ISIL is an important step further, but leaving Assad in power will not fix the problem because he is part of the problem.

Now we are left with even more difficult decisions than ever, and we cannot, for the sake of the Christian communities in Iraq and Syria and the other religious and ethnic minorities in the region, dither and remain indecisive or non-committal any longer. These crises are not new, and we on this committee have been highlighting them for years now.

The administration has had plenty of time to hash out a clear set of objectives and map out a strategy, and it is way past time that the President presented that to the American people, to those who need our assistance, and to those who seek to harm us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, thank you, Ms. Bass, for this joint hearing.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, for your very eloquent statement.

Mr. Vargas.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And I want to thank both you and the other chair and the ranking members for holding this very important and very timely hearing.

We have seen ISIS seize the land of the Nineveh Plain and force Christians and other religious minorities to flee, to convert, or to be killed. We have seen the horror and now we need to act.

I have recently introduced the Nineveh Plain Refugee Act of 2014, which would provide asylum relief for religious minorities in ISIL-held territories. This bill lowers the threshold for admission and allows religious minorities in ISIL-held territories to apply directly to the United States for admission.

I would also like to thank those that are here to testify, but I would like to add this, that America has always been a refuge for those that have been persecuted around the world. And I hope that we can open our doors for these people that need a place to go. Many of them have family members here in the United States that are begging for them to come and join them. So I proposed this bill. I hope that we can act on it and save lives.

Again, thank you very, very much for this hearing.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Vargas, thank you very much.

Mr. Schneider?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for calling this hearing today on a crucial issue. As my colleague from Florida indicated, the United States is different. We do not turn a blind eye. And I think of the line from scripture, "Justice, justice, shall you pursue" and the importance that we, not just in the United States, but around the world, do seek justice by not turning a blind eye, reflecting on Martin Luther King's words of injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

And what is happening in Syria and Iraq, not just the Yezidis, but so many religious minorities who are coming up severe persecution and threat, it is unacceptable. We, as a nation, the United States, are a nation of many diverse peoples, and we celebrate and embrace that diversity. But we can't just focus on the United States; we need to make sure that we are supporting minorities and religious minorities to make sure that they have the freedom to practice their faiths and do so in security.

So thank you again, and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

Mr. Yoho?

Mr. YOHO. No comments.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Cotton?

Mr. COTTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to make a brief statement. Obviously, the barbaric actions of the Islamic State have brought the persecution of Christians more immediately in front of the American people, crucifying Christians or even burying them alive, cleansing them from Mosul, the ancient Biblical town of Nineveh, this is not a new phe-

nomenon. This is something that has been happening for many years.

When I served in Iraq in 2006, we saw the persecution of Christians in the neighborhoods in Baghdad where my soldiers and I patrolled. It is something that the United States cannot stand idly by and tolerate, especially when it is perpetrated by enemies that mean to strike the United States here and the United States homeland. It is a reminder that they are our enemies not because of anything we have done in the world but because of who we are and what we stand for.

We are a country built on freedom, and the first of those freedoms is the freedom of religion, and they want to strike us because of those freedoms. It is important that we have the courage to stand up for our own national security and for the oppressed minorities in places like Iraq.

Thank you very much. I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Cotton, thank you very much. And thank you again for your extraordinary service to our country, both in government as well as in the military.

I would like to now recognize Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What we are witnessing in Iraq and Syria is a form of genocide. Consider the options fighters for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant force upon religious minorities living within territory under the group's control. Individuals and families must decide under threat and duress if they are going to pay a special tax, evacuate, convert, or be executed.

While the targeted persecution of religious minorities is hardly the sole transgression of ISIL and similar radical groups operating in Iraq and Syria, it is certainly one that has commanded the world's attention. In addressing this immediate threat, we can take steps to protect both religious and ethnic minorities as well as the broader population.

The violence in Syria and Iraq and the commensurate rise of ISIL threatens what 2,000 years of history has failed to do—the illumination of a culturally rich, ancient Christian community. America cannot stand idly by as religious fanatics destroy other religious communities who have lived side-by-side for almost two millennia.

Tonight the President plans to address the nation regarding our path forward against ISIL. Bringing this issue before the Nation, he will no doubt address the public butchery emanating from ISIL-controlled regions of Syria and Iraq. This includes the well broadcast videos of the beheadings of American journalists James Foley and Steve Sotloff, as well as the aggressive programs of genocide ISIL has carried out in the region.

I know we wish the President well, and I know we have an opportunity, Mr. Chairman, finally for this Congress to come together on a bipartisan basis to provide some basis of support for the President's proposed actions. But I do think it is really important we also manage expectations.

This is not going to be an easy enterprise. And, frankly, the goals and objectives are nowhere near as clear as those we faced in the post-9/11 world and Afghanistan with al-Qaeda.

But ISIL has to be pushed back. Communities have to be protected, and the interests not only of the United States but of its regional allies must be also protected. So I look forward to this hearing, Mr. Chairman. I know we are about to call votes. I thank you for hosting it. I think the timeliness of it is very important, and I know we all look forward to the President's remarks tonight for further guidance and leadership.

And with that, I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

Mr. Clawson.

Mr. CLAWSON. As I prepared for today's committee meeting, I was struck by how difficult of a map this is, how difficult and tough of a neighborhood this is, the ruthless nature of the opposition that we face, and the vulnerable nature of many of the religious groups, including those of you here today. I welcome you because we stand with you.

I think that in times of great challenge we need even more fortitude and strength. Now is a good time for leadership, to protect vulnerable Christian groups, to back up our friends, and to restore a little bit of order in the world. So I hope that the U.S. will step up and show the leadership that the world needs and you who have come today are clearly asking for.

I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Kinzinger, any opening comments?

Mr. KINZINGER. I will just say quickly, it is—and thank you all for being here. Thank you for holding this hearing. It is a very important issue, and I hope to hear, as was said earlier, from the President. As Mr. Connolly said, I hope to hear from him tonight a very solid plan on how to eradicate this cancer in the Middle East.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Meadows.

Mr. MEADOWS. I just wanted to thank both chairmen for their leadership on this particular issue. Thank you for being here to testify.

I know about 4 weeks ago I listened to a number of folks come in about the genocide that was happening in Iraq, and it wasn't covered in the media, and it wasn't even being really talked about. Now we talk about it every day.

But, sadly, there is persecution that goes on each and every day, more than just with ISIS. It happens—people in this room have experienced it for years and years, and so we must do what we can and I remain committed to do all that I can to make sure that this issue doesn't just disappear, that it is not just a hearing, but that we take real decisive action to make sure that those who are being persecuted don't have to live in fear any longer.

I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Okay. I would like to now introduce our three distinguished witnesses for the first panel, beginning first with Tom Malinowski, who was sworn in as Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, in April 2014. Previously, from 2001, he was Washington director for Human Rights Watch.

Prior to that he served as senior director on the National Security Council at the White House, and was a speechwriter for Secre-

taries of State Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright, and a member of the policy planning staff at the Department of State. He began his career as a special assistant for Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

We will then hear from Ms. Anne Richard, who is the Assistant Secretary of State, for Population, Refugees, and Migration, a position she has held since 2012. Ms. Richard's previous government service includes time in the State Department, the Peace Corps, and the Office of Management and Budget. She also worked at the Council on Foreign Relations, the International Rescue Committee, and was part of the team that founded the International Crisis Group.

She testified before a subcommittee hearing earlier this year on the Central African Republic, and so welcome back.

We will then hear from Mr. Thomas Staal, who is currently Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance at the U.S. Agency for International Development. His previous experience with Iraq includes serving as USAID's Mission Director in Iraq from 2012 to 2013, serving as USAID regional representative for southern Iraq, where he oversaw all USAID projects in that part of the country, and as the director of Iraq Reconstruction Office in Washington.

Before joining USAID, Mr. Staal worked for World Vision as their country representative in Sudan.

Secretary Malinowski, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE TOM MALINOWSKI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Chairman, thank you so much, Madam Chair, members of the committee. In the State Department, especially in my little bureau dedicated to human rights and religious freedom, we have been watching this nightmare unfold, including growing sectarianism in Iraq, attacks on members of religious minorities for some time.

As you know very well, Christians in Iraq and other minorities have been under severe stress well before the horrors of this summer, and we have been in very close touch with these communities, working with them, assisting them, for a great period of time.

And when ISIL started taking territory, first in Raqqa in Syria last year, on to Mosul this year, when it started forcing people to convert to its warped vision or be killed, when it started crucifying even members of its own Sunni sect, when it started a targeted and systematic drive to eradicate entire religious communities from their ancestral homelands, we were horrified, but we also saw it as the logical extension of the cancer that groups like this represent.

Now, in early August, we faced a particularly dramatic moment. Thousands of people, members of the Yezidi ethnic minority group in the Sinjar district of Iraq, found themselves driven from their homes and trapped on a mountain, a discrete geographical space, surrounded but not yet assaulted by ISIL fighters, with just days left before they ran out of water or food and would face certain death.

Representatives of the Yezidi community contacted my staff to share the stories of their suffering and their plight on that mountain. Our contacts told us about hearing children crying for water in the background of phone calls. One man told us how he was on the phone with his brother, called him back 5 minutes later, his brother had been shot in the head by ISIL forces who were chasing the group at the time.

Messages relayed from that mountain by cell phones with dying batteries, messages that told us exactly, with GPS coordinates, where the survivors were hiding, where the ISIL forces were amassing, made their way through my office, throughout the State Department, to the White House, to the Pentagon, on to CENTCOM.

And, as you know, on August 7, within days of this crisis beginning, President Obama authorized, first a humanitarian airlift, then a series of strikes, to break the seizure of the mountain and protect the evacuation route as people were escaping.

Shortly thereafter, a similar situation arose in the town of Amerli, where we again acted to break the siege of the minority community that was surrounded by ISIL. One woman who spoke to us recently, who had made a 50 kilometer hike from the village where she and her family had been held captive, through the wilderness to get back to Mount Sinjar and to this evacuation route that we had opened, told us, “. . . my husband my two children, and I—were on the run from ISIS. After 20 hours of walking . . . everyone was terrified, everyone was shaking, crying. We could only calm down after hearing U.S. jets above us. We felt ‘There is still someone there to save us.’”

Now, a lot of people weren’t able to flee. Those are the happy stories, and there are many, many unhappy ones that are unfolding still today. We are especially anguished by the plight of thousands of women who have been kidnapped by ISIL from a variety of groups and held as spoils of war or sold in markets as sex slaves.

This is obviously still the beginning. These discrete rescues are not enough. We need to defeat ISIL. We need to mount the effort that the President is mounting to eradicate this threat. And as we look to that, let me just make a few simple points.

First of all, ISIL is unique, not because it uses bombings, assassinations, beheadings, which are sadly commonplace among terrorist groups, but because it targets entire groups of people simply because of who they are. This casting aside of all limits, that is what makes this so particularly dangerous, and that is why it is absolutely imperative that those who commit such acts not be allowed to project a narrative of invincibility and success to others who may follow their example.

Second, ISIL is not self-limiting. It is not going to exhaust itself. People with the power to stop it are going to have to take action to stop it.

Third, that is what we are going to do. As President Obama has said, and as he will explain further tonight, these murders have stiffened our resolve and repulsed and united the entire world as well. And that creates an opportunity out of this disaster and tragedy, to build a coalition that includes the countries in the Middle East most immediately threatened and to confront these killers

with allies from all the communities that ISIL has terrorized—Christian, Shi’a, Yezidi, Sunni, and others—and that is what we are doing.

Finally, very, very importantly, we know that if we want to protect religious minorities in Iraq and Syria and beyond, it is not going to be enough just to defeat ISIL militarily. We have to insist the governments in the region govern for all their people. That is why we insisted that additional action in Iraq depended on a more inclusive government there, and I think that was the right thing to do.

Secretary Kerry is in Baghdad today, and this is a central part of his message. Just a few hours ago he said, “. . . the fundamental principle of organization for this entire new government thus far has been that we must move in a different direction from the direction that has existed in these last years. And that direction was one of sectarian division, of exploitation of divisions, of political retribution, even political arrests, political accusations.”

Those who have been driven from their homes by ISIS should be able to return to their homes in safety and security with a say and a stake in the Government of Iraq.

So I will just end by saying ISIL abuses human rights, but it is also the product of abuse of human rights in Syria and Iraq, and that is a lesson for all of us, and that is a lesson that is going to guide our strategy going forward.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Malinowski follows:]

Testimony of Assistant Secretary Tom Malinowski
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittees on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and
International Organizations
and the Middle East and North Africa
September 10, 2014

Chairman Smith, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Bass, Ranking Member Deutch and Members of the Subcommittees, thank you for holding this hearing on such a timely and important issue. We, like you, are outraged by the violence waged by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) against Iraqis of all sects, ethnicities, and religions. The U.S. government is very focused on ending ISIL's reign of terror and ensuring protection and access to humanitarian assistance for all its victims. We are particularly appalled by ISIL's targeted and systematic efforts to drive out and potentially eradicate entire religious communities from their historic homelands in the Ninewa plains area and Sinjar district. Among ISIL's clear ambitions is the destruction of Iraq's rich religious heritage and ethnic diversity and absolute subjugation of all people within its reach.

The Iraqi people need and deserve a government that not only represents all of their voices but also provides basic government services and security, paving a stable and prosperous path forward for all the people of Iraq, regardless of religion or ethnicity. The State Department was very pleased to see the new government formed earlier this week, and we are urging them to quickly demonstrate their commitment to be responsive to the ongoing threat against minority populations, including the abduction of and sexual violence against women and children. We are also working with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government and with a wide array of international partners, to address the urgent needs of Iraqi forces, including Kurdish forces, as they continue to battle ISIL.

When ISIL took Mosul on June 9, the world once again was made witness to the heartbreaking human cost of this group's brutality. Beyond the mass evictions and forced migrations perpetrated against Christians, Yazidis, Shia Muslims including Shabak and Turkmen, and others, we have seen reports of extrajudicial and mass killings, beheadings, abductions, forced conversions, torture, rape and sexual assault, using women and children as human shields, and people being burned or buried alive. Women and girls as young as 12 or 13 have been taken captive, to be sold as sex slaves or put into forced marriages with ISIL fighters.

Meanwhile, we realize that ISIL's recent assault on northern and western Iraq is an extension of its brutal acts in Syria, where it has conducted a similar campaign of violence and atrocities against the Syrian population, targeting broad swathes of the population. There have been reports of mass killings in Christian and Alawite villages, conversion at gunpoint, beheadings, kidnappings, and extreme oppression and abuse of women from all communities. Two Syrian bishops and a priest were kidnapped by extremists in early- and mid-2013, and their fates remain

unknown. And in February, ISIL announced that Christians in Raqqa, Syria must convert, pay a special tax administered during medieval times, or face death—just as it later did in Mosul, Iraq. This, Mr. Chairmen and Ranking Members, to say nothing of the unspeakable atrocities they have committed against members of their own sect, Sunni Muslims, who we've seen ISIL crucify in public squares and stone to death Sunni women accused of adultery, proudly tweeting and posting these horrific acts on Youtube and other social media.

The interconnected aspects of ISIL's campaign of terror in both countries have the potential to further destabilize the region and dramatically increase gross violations of human rights.

Iraqi ethnic and religious minority populations suffer acutely. While exact numbers are not known, many organizations working with displaced Iraqis, as well as religious leaders and activists, believe nearly all of the Christian and Yezidi population in areas controlled or contested by ISIL have been displaced. These are communities that have lived on these lands for thousands of years, forced to flee their ancestral homeland. Shabak and Turkmen Shia have been significantly affected as well, with Turkmen leaders, reporting an estimated 300,000 Turkmen Shia were displaced. My colleagues from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and USAID will address the issue of displaced persons more thoroughly, so I will focus my testimony on ISIL's brutality and persecution. But I do want to note the immensity of the needs the displaced now face, even to meet their most basic of necessities—clean water, something to feed their children, shelter from the scorching heat as well as the looming winter. These are the challenges my PRM and USAID colleagues are grappling with.

After about a week in Mosul, ISIL began ramping up the pace of religious persecution. Christians were barred from receiving work at public sector jobs and wage stipends. Christian churches and offices were looted and occupied by ISIL. Meanwhile, further west near the Syrian border, dozens of Yezidis were kidnapped for a \$50,000 ransom to avoid execution. A group of Yezidi men held captive had their eyes gouged out for refusing to convert to Islam. They were then reportedly burned to death.

In addition to their attacks on religious minorities, ISIL targeted religious leaders of any group that opposed its unconditional and absolute dominance. According to UN officials, in June ISIL murdered at least 13 Sunni Muslim clerics in Mosul who had encouraged their followers to reject ISIL. They paid the ultimate sacrifice for refusing to submit to ISIL's hateful ideology.

By mid-July, ISIL had destroyed hundreds of mosques and shrines throughout the territory it controlled, destroyed Christian statues of the Virgin Mary, and took sledgehammers to the tomb of the Prophet Jonah in Mosul.

Then we learned of the ultimatum against Christians, Yezidis, and at least some Shia groups in Mosul, that they must convert, pay a special tax I mentioned earlier, or vacate the city by July 19—or face execution. This ultimatum prompted a wave of hundreds more displaced families, robbed of all possessions as they fled the city. We received reports that ISIL took a reported five

Christians unable to flee due to disability or illness to a mosque and forced them to profess acceptance of Islam.

ISIL's second major offensive, on August 2 and 3 led to another wave of displaced people from Ninewa—again, many of them from towns with predominantly Christian or other minority populations. Some were fleeing for the second time. We heard heart-breaking reports of a 3-year old child taken from her mother by an ISIL fighter as the family was forced to continue on.

Concurrently, ISIL also advanced into Sinjar district near the Syrian border, a predominantly Yezidi region. With little warning, Kurdish forces retreated in the face of ISIL's advance and the Yezidi population was left with almost no means of defending itself. Hundreds, if not thousands, were killed, and tens of thousands were stranded on Mount Sinjar where they sought refuge from the immediate onslaught, only to find themselves at risk of perishing from thirst or exposure.

Representatives of the Yezidi community in the United States contacted my bureau, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) immediately to share the terrible stories of suffering they were hearing from relatives trapped on the mountain, communicating via mobile phones they were sometimes able to charge using car batteries. As the crisis on Sinjar unfolded, my staff organized meetings with high-level officials at the State Department and the White House for representatives of the Yezidi community in the United States and we heard firsthand their stories and requests for assistance. They talked about hearing children crying for water in the background of phone calls with relatives. One man told us how he was on the phone with his brother as the family was fleeing ISIL fighters, and when he called back five minutes later no one answered because, as he learned from another relative, his brother had been shot in the back of the head as he was trying to shepherd his family to safety. One woman described how she had heard a woman being raped by ISIL fighters in the background of a call with another woman.

As you know, on August 7, in addition to authorizing operations to protect U.S. personnel, President Obama authorized a humanitarian effort to help save thousands of Iraqi civilians who were trapped on Mount Sinjar without food and water, facing almost certain death. This effort was reinforced by a series of targeted airstrikes to assist forces in Iraq as they fought to break ISIL's siege of Mount Sinjar and protect the civilians trapped there. The U.S. military conducted seven nightly humanitarian air drops between August 8-13, delivering more than 114,000 meals and 35,000 gallons of water to those displaced on Mount Sinjar. Detailed information—and even GPS coordinates—provided by the Yezidi community in the U.S. on where the people were sheltered on Mount Sinjar helped inform decisions about where to drop aid. Targeted airstrikes helped protect the evacuation route as people were escaping. Our contacts in the Yezidi community also provided us information about where ISIL fighters were advancing or firing on evacuees as they escaped, and we shared this information immediately with the military. During that week, most civilians were able to evacuate from Mount Sinjar.

But not everyone in the surrounding area was able to flee. For example, residents of the village of Kocho were trapped in their village, held hostage for almost two weeks under the threat of death if they refused to convert to ISIL's brutal, twisted version of Islam. On August 15, residents were rounded up at the village schoolyard, where women and children were loaded onto buses and taken away. The men were taken to the outskirts of town and executed, shot in the back of the head at the edge of shallow ditches.

The women and children from Kocho joined the hundreds upon hundreds of others being held captive by ISIL in various cities in northern Iraq. Hundreds of families have reportedly been pressured to convert, in some cases with severe coercion by, for example, forcing mothers to watch their young children beaten until they could no longer stand. In most cases, girls and unmarried women as young as age 12 are separated from mothers and children. We regularly receive blood-chilling reports of girls distributed to ISIL fighters as spoils of war, sold in markets in the cities as sex slaves, or held in houses in small groups where they are raped by a daily rotation of ISIL fighters. We have seen reports that ISIL trafficked hundreds of Yezidi women to Syria for its fighters there. We recently heard reports that a few dozen Christian women from Qaraqosh who had been unable to flee before ISIL's recent offensive were taken to Mosul, likely to same fate as ISIL's other women captives.

Truly, this brutality is beyond imagination, but despite the odds, a few captives have managed to escape, often when their ISIL guards are distracted, for example by airstrikes in the area. One woman shared her reaction after making a 50 kilometer hike from the village where she and her family had been held captive, through the wilderness, to get back to Mount Sinjar and the safe evacuation route the other IDPs had used: "My family—my husband, my two children, and I—were on the run from ISIS. After 20 hours of walking from the town of Til Azir to Mt. Sinjar, everyone was terrified, everyone was shaking, crying. We could only calm down after hearing U.S. jets above us. We felt, 'There is still someone there to save us.'"

Officials throughout the Administration have been closely tracking developments on the ground, and in Washington we are in regular communication with representatives of the Iraqi Yezidi, Christian, and other religious communities in Iraq. They are sharing helpful information with us about ISIL abuses against their community members in northern Iraq and about humanitarian conditions their displaced community members are facing. These reports are invaluable as the entire U.S. government examines all the viable options for protecting Iraq's minority vulnerable communities and halting the parade of atrocities ISIL is committing. My staff in DRL hears regularly from contacts in the Iraqi Christian diaspora in the U.S. and Iraqi Christians in Iraq with information about where aid is reaching IDPs and where more assistance or coordination is needed, which we share with colleagues in PRM and USAID, who also share information they hear from these communities with us. We've met with church leaders like the Patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church, advocacy and aid groups like International Christian Concern and Catholic Relief Services, and human rights organizations like Yezidi Human Rights Organization—International. Our diplomats in Iraq have the same kinds of meetings regularly.

Likewise, we collect reports from our contacts in religious minority groups facing discrimination about cases of abuse against minorities by local Iraqi or Kurdish security forces.

In Syria, after sustained engagement by U.S. officials, the Syrian Opposition Coalition has committed itself to “the protection and inclusion of all the constituent groups of the Syrian people,” including religious minorities, and to meeting its obligation to “ensure the rights, integration, and participation of all Syrians, regardless of religion...” in the transition process and in the new government. We have received assurances from a number of armed opposition leaders that they understand and are committed to these principles, and we continue to closely monitor the situation.

In Iraq we have repeatedly emphasized to both the Iraqi government and the KRG the need to take measures to protect all Iraqis, including Iraq’s vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities. During these formative days for the new government, we are continuing to urge political party leaders and lawmakers to be inclusive in their governance, responsive to the needs and concerns of all Iraq’s people. In a phone call with President Obama on Monday, the new Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, expressed his commitment to work with all communities in Iraq. We will continue to press Iraqi and Kurdish regional government officials to take appropriate action to ensure the security and rights of members of ethnic and religious minority communities are respected.

The Government of Iraq has continued to send equipment to the Kurdish forces - the cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil on this effort is at historic levels and we hope to continue to build on that. The Iraqi Air Force continues to provide direct support to Kurdish forces engaged in combat against ISIL. We are also working closely with the Government of Iraq to expedite Foreign Military Sales that will help Baghdad resupply Iraqi forces, including Kurdish forces in the north.

At the same time, we have been and will continue to invest in measures to address the underlying causes of and motivations for violent extremism, religious intolerance, societal polarization, and elected officials. We are working with NGOs, civil society groups, and religious leaders to build relationships between religious communities, combat terrorist propaganda about religious minorities, and administer programs that promote tolerance and empower minorities to better advocate for their interests and rights.

In conclusion, ISIL’s systematic persecution of religious minorities in northern Iraq, and their brutal and oppressive ideology in general, is of utmost concern to the Department and to the Administration. We are painfully aware of the suffering of so many people in Iraq, and in Syria, simply because their beliefs differ from those of these ruthless, inhuman terrorists.

Mr. Chairmen, members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to address you today and for your engagement on this important issue. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.
Anne Richard.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ANNE RICHARD, ASSISTANT
SECRETARY, BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MI-
GRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Ms. RICHARD. Thank you very much, Chairman Smith, Chair Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Bass, other members of these two subcommittees. Thank you very much for holding the hearing today on this important issue.

My bureau, the Population, Refugees, and Migration Bureau, depends on and benefits from your support all year round on a number of issues and crises all around the globe. Please accept my full testimony for the record.

In June, the U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, announced that for the first time since World War II the number of refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced people worldwide exceeds 50 million people. The list of complex crises is long. The chairman well knows the list in Africa includes instability and violence in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, refugees also fleeing longer term crises, the spread of Ebola. In the Middle East, we are in the fourth year of the Syria crisis, and also have witnessed conflict in Gaza this summer.

We welcome the opportunity today to discuss the situation in Iraq, particularly for minorities, our response to it, and how it relates to our response to the Syria crisis. My remarks will focus on aid to displaced people fleeing the violence, and in my testimony for the record we outline the advance of Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, or ISIL, forces. But the main point I want to make is that it has driven an estimated 1.8 million Iraqis from their homes.

Included in these numbers are members of minority groups who have, as you said, deep roots in Iraq. Mr. Chairman, you said they have occupied area there for millennia. Mr. Connolly said they are ancient, they go back to ancient times there.

According to the State Department's 2013 International Religious Freedom Report, approximately 3 percent of Iraq's population is composed of Christians, Yezidis, Sabeen-Mandaeans, Bahá'ís, and others, and a very small number of Jews. In addition, Iraq has sizeable Turkmen and Shabak minority communities, many of whom reside in northern Iraq.

While the United States tries to help all vulnerable people in war-torn areas, we know that minority communities can face special peril, and they deserve our special attention. Prior to the 2014 conflict, there were an estimated 500,000 Christians and 500,000 Yezidis living throughout Iraq with large communities living in Nineveh. Now, most members of religious minority communities have fled Nineveh.

In just 1 week in August, 200,000 Yezidis from Nineveh, Sinjar District, fleeing ISIL advances, poured into the Kurdish region, and many fled with little more than the clothes on their backs. In the Kurdish region, they joined hundreds of thousands of other displaced Iraqis, including approximately 100,000 Christians who escaped the brutal occupation of Mosul and nearby communities.

UNHCR estimates that the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq now host more than 1 million people, and it is a mixed displacement, mostly Iraqis who are displaced but also over 200,000 Syrian refugees. ISIL has demonstrated unbounded bigotry and brutality toward ethnic and religious minorities. I don't have to tell you this. You all know it and have included that in your statements, as has my colleague, Tom Malinowski.

Our main message is: We care. The U.S. Government has long focused on the rights and safety of Iraq's vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities, and that is especially true today. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and Consulate in Erbil are in daily contact with the Iraqi Government, the U.N., and other aid agencies in Iraq to ensure that they can reach, protect, and aid displaced Iraqis, including minorities.

My testimony goes into some detail about the humanitarian assistance efforts we made this summer. Tom Malinowski has already told you a little bit about the extraordinary measures taken this summer to aid imperiled civilians, including air drops of aid to Yezidis trapped on Mount Sinjar, and then also later the town of Amerli received air drops after ISIL attempted to starve the town's Shi'a Turkmen population.

While military deliveries of humanitarian aid are a last resort, and not recommended if other options are available, these were desperate situations where people were in mortal danger, cut off from assistance by land, air drops were the only possible means of getting them lifesaving aid, and we are very grateful to our colleagues in the U.S. military who staged those.

We also have faced challenges because families have had to flee multiple times, as the places where they initially sought refuge turned into battle grounds. In late June, for examples, clashes between ISIL and Kurdish peshmerga forces drove thousands of Christians from their homes in the Hamdaniya District of Nineveh to the Kurdish regions. When the clashes died down, some Christians returned home but were forced to flee a second time in August when ISIL again advanced on their communities.

In my testimony, I talk about the overall U.S. and international response. Humanitarians have launched what U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres described as the single largest aid push we have mounted in more than a decade. UNHCR and other aid agencies have been present in the Kurdish regions of Iraq helping Syrian refugees since 2012. In fact, I went to the Kurdish regions of Iraq last December to talk to them about what they were doing hosting Syrians. And so I have subsequently met with some of these same contacts here in Washington to talk about this latest wave of people fleeing violence who have come in from other parts of Iraq.

UNHCR continues to be a key part of this global effort. On August 19, the first of UNHCR's chartered cargo jets arrived in Erbil with 100 tons of emergency relief supplies to be distributed throughout Iraq for displaced Iraqis who now are living in unfinished buildings and parks or by the roadside. And the United States was one of the first donors to contribute to humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq.

And you probably heard that today Secretary Kerry in Baghdad announced another aid package, an additional \$48 million in humanitarian aid. So the total U.S. Government humanitarian funding for Iraqis this fiscal year is more than \$186 million. This includes the new aid announced by the Secretary, programs for nearly 1 million Iraqis previously displaced in the period 2006 to 2008, and for Iraqis who are refugees in the region living in other countries.

The U.S. Government provides humanitarian aid according to greatest need and does not discriminate based on religious, ethnic, or political considerations. But, clearly, the minorities that we are talking about today are among the most vulnerable. What we provide is food, shelter, water and sanitation, and medicine. Other core relief items include mattresses, blankets, fans, kitchen sets, jerry cans, and hygiene kits.

We are very happy that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provided \$500 million to the U.N. in June. That helped U.N. agencies ramp up quickly, airlift critical supplies, and procure and distribute shelter supplies. Other countries have also come to help. United Kingdom, the European Union, Kuwait, Australia, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, Japan, and New Zealand are some of the other countries who are donating.

In terms of next steps in Iraq, displaced Iraqis need places to live and cash to pay rent, and UNHCR is helping to construct 26 camps for displaced persons. But I have to tell you that areas that have come under siege, including Anbar and Nineveh, remain difficult, if not impossible, to reach. Humanitarian agencies continue to try to negotiate access and deliver assistance when and where they can.

The United States is working hard to build a coalition of governments committed to supporting the Government of Iraq, so that it in turn can protect its own people, especially minority communities.

I think that if you refer to my written testimony you will see that I talk about what we are doing for refugees in each of the countries to which some of these Iraqis have fled the neighboring countries—Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, and then also I have a section on the potential of resettling some of the refugees in other countries, including our own. And I am happy to answer any questions you have about that in the Q&A.

So let me stop there and assure you, though, that the U.S. Government will continue to use every means available to protect and assist vulnerable Iraqi civilians, including minorities.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Richard follows:]

U.S. Humanitarian Assistance in Response to the Iraq Crisis

**Testimony of
Assistant Secretary Anne C. Richard
for the
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittees on Africa, Global Health, Global
Human Rights and International Organizations
and the Middle East and North Africa
September 10, 2014, 2:00 p.m.**

Thank you, Chairman Smith, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Bass, Ranking Member Deutch, and Members of the Subcommittees, for holding a hearing on this important issue and for your strong support for our humanitarian programs. The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration depends on and benefits from your support all year round.

In June, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) announced that for the first time since World War II, the number of refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced persons worldwide exceeds 50 million people.

The list of complex crises is long, and many people need and deserve aid. Your two subcommittees are already well aware of crises in Africa and the Middle East. In Africa, we see instability and violence in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, refugees from these countries and others seeking sanctuary and the spread of Ebola. In the Middle East, we are in the fourth year of the Syria crisis and also have witnessed conflict in Gaza this summer. We welcome the opportunity today to discuss the situation in Iraq, particularly for minorities, our response to it, and how it relates to our response to the Syria crisis. The Population, Refugees, and Migration bureau, as you know, funds and supports the UN and other international aid agencies but also plays an important role in State Department and interagency deliberations on humanitarian crises and we appreciate being included on this panel. My remarks will focus on efforts to get aid to displaced people fleeing the violence in Iraq.

The Advance of ISIL

Since the beginning of the year, relentless and ruthless attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have driven an estimated 1.8 million Iraqis from their homes, forcing them to seek safety in more than 1,600 locations throughout Iraq and in neighboring countries, including Syria. The UN estimates that the violence this year has affected more than half of Iraq's population. ISIL gained a foothold in Syria 18 months ago and has consolidated control of vast

swaths of Deir ez Zour, Al Hasakah, and Ar Raqqa governorates during the past year, intermittently threatening Aleppo. Many of the horrors ISIL is inflicting on Iraqis now have been inflicted on Syrians over the past year.

ISIL first seized control of Fallujah and other parts of western Iraq (Anbar Province) in January. It then in June swept into the north-central provinces (Salah ad-Din, Kirkuk, and Diyala) and reached Ninewa Province of northwest Iraq. In Ninewa, ISIL militants overran Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, and areas to its northwest and east, where hundreds of thousands of people who belong to religious and ethnic minorities were living.

Protecting minorities in Iraq

According to the State Department's 2013 International Religious Freedom Report, approximately three percent of Iraq's population is composed of Christians, Yazidis, Sabean-Mandaeans, Baha'is, Kakais, and a very small number of Jews. In addition, Iraq has sizable Turkmen and Shabak minority communities, many of whom reside in northern Iraq. Prior to the 2014 conflict, there were an estimated 500,000 Christians and 500,000 Yazidis living throughout Iraq, with large communities living in Ninewa.

Now, most members of religious minority communities have fled Ninewa. In just one week in August, 200,000 Yazidis from Ninewa's Sinjar district fleeing ISIL advances poured into the Kurdish region. Many fled with little more than the clothes on their backs. In the Kurdish region, they joined hundreds of thousands other displaced Iraqis, including approximately 100,000 Christians, who escaped the brutal occupation of Mosul and nearby communities. UNHCR estimates that the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq now host more than one million people, a mix of displaced Iraqis (850,000) and Syrian refugees (215,000).

While the United States strives to help all vulnerable people in war-torn areas, we know that minority communities can face special peril. This is certainly true of the Christians, Yazidis, Shabak, Turkmen, and other minorities who are being targeted by ISIL forces. ISIL has demonstrated unbounded bigotry and brutality toward ethnic and religious minorities. Its atrocities include mass killings, beheadings, abductions, forced conversions, forced marriages, and rape. My colleague from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor will discuss ISIL's human rights abuses in more detail.

The U.S. Government has long focused on the rights and safety of Iraq's vulnerable populations, including religious and ethnic minorities. And that is especially true today. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and Consulate in Erbil are in daily contact with the Iraqi government, the UN and other humanitarian organizations in Iraq to ensure that they can reach, protect, and aid displaced Iraqis – including minorities. Our Consulate in Erbil has regular and ongoing contact

with community leaders. The Consul General in Erbil, Joe Pennington, reports that displaced Christian communities are receiving aid. Numerous religious and political leaders have confirmed this.

Staff of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad visited schools and community centers in Baghdad where dozens of Shia, Sunni, Shabak, and Yezidi families sought refuge after fleeing from Mosul, the Ninewa Plains, and Diyala Province. Each family benefited from relief items provided to them by UNHCR and other international organizations.

In Washington, New York, and Geneva, the United States is working with UN headquarters staff and donors to speed the delivery of aid. We are working with the diaspora community to gather and share information on the needs of displaced persons.

June through August, 2014

The United States has taken extraordinary measures to aid imperiled civilians. When ISIL drove thousands of Yezidis up Mount Sinjar and encircled them, stranding them without food, water, or even shade, President Obama said, “When we face a situation like we do on that mountain – with innocent people facing the prospect of violence on a horrific scale, when we have a mandate to help – in this case, a request from the Iraqi government – and when we have the unique capabilities to help avert a massacre, then I believe the United States of America cannot turn a blind eye. We can act, carefully and responsibly, to prevent a potential act of genocide.”

Between August 7 and 13, the U.S. military conducted seven airdrops of emergency supplies to the besieged Yezidis on Mount Sinjar. The militaries of the United Kingdom and Australia later joined these efforts. In total, the United States delivered more than 114,000 ready-to-eat meals and more than 35,000 gallons of safe drinking water—supplies that many displaced persons carried onward as they departed for safer areas. Concurrent with these aid deliveries, the U.S. military conducted targeted airstrikes against ISIL positions, allowing Iraqi and Kurdish security forces to try to roll back ISIL’s gains in the area.

In a second instance, when ISIL surrounded and besieged the town of Amerli, attempting to starve the town’s Shia Turkmen population, the U.S. military, joined by the UK, Australia, and France, supplemented aid flights conducted by the Iraqi government, dropping more than 7,000 ready-to-eat meals and 10,545 gallons of water to the town’s residents, whom the UN and other aid agencies could not reach. At the same time, Iraqi and other security forces launched an offensive to dislodge ISIL from the area, eventually breaking the more than 70-day siege.

While military deliveries of humanitarian aid are a last resort, these were

desperate situations, where people were in mortal danger, cut off from assistance by land. Airdrops were the only possible means of getting them life-saving aid. In Iraq, we responded to a specific request by the Iraqi government to augment efforts by its security forces to supply humanitarian assistance to Iraqi citizens under siege by ISIL. The Syrian regime, on the other hand, is a primary perpetrator of violence against its citizens and prevents aid organizations from reaching people in need. Further, without the consent of the Syrian regime, similar airdrops could put those performing the airdrops at risk.

We have also faced challenges because families have had to flee multiple times as the places where they initially sought refuge turned into battle grounds. In late June, for example, clashes between ISIL and Kurdish Peshmerga forces drove thousands of Christians from their homes in the Hamdaniyah district of Ninewa to the Kurdish regions. When the clashes died down, some Christians (17,000-to-20,000) returned home, but were forced to flee a second time in August when ISIL again advanced on their communities.

Since the end of July, an estimated 30,000 Shabak and Turkmen Shia households fled from the Ninewa Plains. They first went north to the Kurdish regions, and then moved again to the Shia-majority governorates of southern and central Iraq. Despite sharing religious beliefs with their new hosts, these tens of thousands of Shabak and Turkmen have no established links with their host communities and are dependent on aid.

The Overall U.S. and International Response

To aid civilians fleeing from ISIL, humanitarians have launched what UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres described it as, “The largest single aid push we have mounted in more than a decade.” UNHCR and other aid agencies have been present in the Kurdish regions of Iraq helping Syrian refugees since 2012, and UNHCR continues to be a key part of this global effort. On August 19, the first of UNHCR’s chartered cargo jets arrived in Erbil with 100 tons of emergency relief supplies to be distributed throughout Iraq for displaced Iraqis who were living in unfinished buildings, in parks, or by the roadside.

The United States was one of the first donors to contribute to humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq, committing \$12.8 million in June to help international aid organizations respond to the fall of Mosul and the crisis in Anbar. And we continue to support the massive aid operation underway to save lives and ease suffering for hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

Total U.S. government humanitarian funding for Iraqis in fiscal year 2014 has now reached more than \$138 million. This includes programs for the nearly one million Iraqis still displaced by the sectarian violence that raged in Iraq from 2006-2008. It also includes funding for programs for Iraqis who have fled to

neighboring countries.

The U.S. government provides humanitarian aid according to greatest need, and does not discriminate based on religious, ethnic, political, or other affiliations. Our money provides displaced and vulnerable people with food, shelter, water and sanitation, and medicine. Core relief items also include mattresses, blankets, fans, kitchen sets, jerry cans and hygiene kits.

Other countries have also supported this relief effort. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia contributed an unprecedented \$500 million to the UN in June to assist those fleeing ISIL in Iraq. This Saudi contribution enabled UN agencies to ramp up quickly, airlift critical supplies, and procure and distribute shelter supplies, hygiene kits, and other basics. As this humanitarian crisis continues over the coming months, however, additional resources will be required.

Next Steps in Iraq

In addition to relief supplies, displaced Iraqis need places to live, and shelter is essential as winter approaches. Many of the displaced are living in unfinished building or schools. Others have moved into hotels or rented rooms and need cash to pay rent. UNHCR is helping to construct 26 camps for displaced persons, winter-proof existing buildings, and distribute cash to displaced people who need to pay rent for rooms in hotels or apartments.

The situation on the ground in Iraq remains fluid and dire for many civilians who do not subscribe to ISIL's ideology and thus are threatened by ISIL's campaign of terror. It may require a long term commitment. Many of those who escaped with their lives now suffer from trauma and say they no longer want to return to their homes – even if ISIL were driven out.

Areas that have come under siege – including Anbar and Ninewa – remain difficult, if not impossible, to reach. Humanitarian agencies negotiate access and deliver assistance when they can.

The United States is working hard to build a coalition of governments committed to supporting the Government of Iraq to so that it, in turn, can protect its own people, especially minority communities. Indeed, we want to help lay the groundwork for Iraqi government action under the new Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi.

Neighboring Countries

While many newly displaced Iraqis have found refuge in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq and several of Iraq's southern governorates, tens of thousands have fled to neighboring countries. Even before ISIL unleashed the latest explosion of violence this year, UNHCR reported that more than 91,000 Iraqis were registered as refugees in the region, and an unknown number were

unregistered refugees. By the end of August, an additional 50,000 refugees had fled Iraq. Counting them accurately is challenging, especially because many live hidden in cities. Their situation varies depending on the country to which they have fled.

Turkey: The number of Iraqi refugees registered or awaiting registration with UNHCR in Turkey spiked from approximately 18,000 in July to more than 70,000 in August. Embassy Ankara reported on August 28 that 10,000 Yezidis had relocated to southeast Turkey. Turkey also hosts more than 832,000 registered Syrian refugees, although the government and UNHCR estimate the total number of Syrians in Turkey to be 1.35 million. Iraqis arriving in Turkey today have to wait up to six years for comprehensive UNHCR registration and an average of another two years if they are identified by UNHCR for resettlement.

Passport-bearing Iraqis are entering Turkey through official border points. Others fleeing the violence are entering Turkey unofficially. The Turkish government and aid agencies from Turkey have focused their efforts on transporting aid into Iraq. The Turkish government is helping to build three camps for displaced Iraqis in the Kurdish region. While this is generous and needed assistance, the United States also urges Turkey to keep its borders open for those fleeing conflict to seek protection in Turkey.

Jordan: More than 32,000 Iraqi refugees were registered in Jordan with UNHCR by the end of August, approximately 4,000 of whom were Christian, Sabeian Mandaean, or Yezidi. UNHCR in Jordan has reported that the number of Iraqis registering with UNHCR is up sharply (from an average of 30 per day from January–May to 110 per day in August). While these numbers (more than 5,500 since January) are manageable and existing programs should be able to absorb new arrivals, we are watching the situation there closely. UNHCR has begun contingency planning in case many more Iraqis cross into Jordan. Jordan is already under the pressure of hosting more than 615,000 Syrian refugees. In June, after the fall of Mosul, the Jordanian Permanent Representative to the United Nations told the UN Security Council that his country could not host additional Iraqis. Currently, only Iraqis with valid visas who fly into Amman are allowed into Jordan.

Non-governmental organizations, including faith-based groups, are helping refugees meet these entry requirements and caring for them upon arrival. For example, a local U.S. government-funded organization, Caritas, is working with the Government of Jordan to welcome Christian Iraqi refugees who fled their homes in Mosul. With the Syrian Catholic Church in Erbil, Caritas is helping up to 40 refugees a day get half price discounts on the daily Royal Air Jordanian flight from Erbil to Amman. Catholic churches, schools, and community centers are currently housing 350 Christian Iraqis in six locations in Amman and Zarqa.

Refugees are receiving food, mattresses, blankets, psychosocial assistance, and medical services. Caritas has gotten permission from the Jordanian government to bring a total of 2,000 Christian Iraqis to Jordan, and expects 570 to arrive this week.

Lebanon: As of August 31, there were approximately 7,000 Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR in Lebanon, more than 2,000 of whom are Christian or Yezidi. Lebanon also hosts almost 1.2 million Syrian refugees. In June, Iraqis who registered at the Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center in Lebanon reported that their relatives and neighbors remaining in Iraq were planning to flee to Lebanon as soon as it was safe to do so. As of September 2, the Center reported that it had received nearly 300 Iraqi Christian refugee families and, based on reports from these refugees, it estimated another 300 to 1000 families would follow. Nearly all Iraqi Christian refugees arrive after contacting family or friends with connections in Lebanon. These family and friends assist them in finding apartments, and nearly all new refugees are settling in the Christian suburbs of Dekweneh and Fanar in the northeastern area of Beirut.

Syria: Many Yezidis who fled Mount Sinjar escaped into Syria. There, they sought shelter and protection in the Newroz Camp in northeastern Syria. While most of them have since crossed back into Iraq, and the camp's population has dropped from approximately 15,000 to about 5,000, some Yezidi families continue to arrive at the camp, including families bringing disabled members who had to wait for transportation. As of August 31, there were nearly 25,000 Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR in Syria, of whom fewer than 3,000 were Christian, Sabeian Mandaean, or Yezidi.

Resettlement to Other Countries

While both the Kurdistan Regional Government and neighboring countries have been generous hosts, some Iraqis may need to be resettled in third countries outside the region. Many of the minorities, particularly the Yezidis, have told us that their only future lies in third-country resettlement. They hope to cross into Turkey to apply for resettlement with UNHCR.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, operating both inside Iraq and in neighboring countries, has resettled more than 110,000 Iraqis since 2007. This includes a significant number of ethnic and religious minorities. As of August 31, nearly 18,000 Iraqi refugees had been resettled to the United States in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, with a projected total of 19,500 to 20,000 by the end of the fiscal year. The chart below shows overall Iraqi refugee arrivals to the United States in the last three years.

Fiscal Year	Refugee Arrivals to the United States
2011	9,388
2012	12,163
2013	19,488
2014 (projected total)	19,500-20,000

Any Iraqi, regardless of ethnicity, religion, political opinion, or social group can seek the protection of UNHCR in a neighboring country. There, they may be considered for resettlement to the United States or another country. Nearly half of the more than 75,000 Iraqis resettled in the United States based on a referral from UNHCR are Christian.

A smaller percentage (15 percent) of the more than 25,000 Iraqis admitted directly from Iraq is Christian. This is because in-country refugee processing in Baghdad was set up to consider applications from those Iraqis who believe they are in danger because they worked for the U.S. Government, military, or another U.S.-based entity. Others are the beneficiaries of immigrant visa petitions filed by relatives in the United States. There is no special in-country refugee processing program for religious minorities. Our experts believe that such a program could make Iraqi religious minorities even more vulnerable to being targeted by extremists because they would be identified as a population of special interest to the United States.

Our ability to process applicants inside Iraq is extremely limited. In June, we had to suspend screening and eligibility interviews for applicants to the in-country program because security threats forced us to relocate our Baghdad staff. This has affected some 33,000 U.S.-affiliated Iraqis waiting to be processed. Applicants who were already interviewed by Department of Homeland Security adjudicators and approved for U.S. resettlement can complete the process. They undergo necessary security and medical checks and continue to depart Iraq for resettlement in the United States. Because we have devoted considerable attention and resources to the in-country program in recent years, we will resettle close to 10,000 Iraqis directly from Iraq this year – more than in any previous year.

Conclusion

Since 2006, sectarian fighting and tensions have made it difficult for minorities to thrive in Iraq. The campaign now being waged by ISIL has made it nearly impossible. The U.S. government will continue to use every means available to protect and assist vulnerable Iraqi civilians, including minorities. The need for humanitarian aid is enormous and the risks and challenges are daunting. But, with our help, the UN, other aid agencies, the Government of Iraq, the

Kurdistan Regional Government, and other concerned parties will find ways to save lives, ease suffering, and help those in need. Thank you again, and I welcome your questions.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Richard, thank you so very much for your testimony.

Mr. Staal.

STATEMENT OF MR. THOMAS STAAL, SENIOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. STAAL. Chairman Smith, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Bass, and members of the two subcommittees, thank you very much for this hearing and for inviting me to testify on USAID's efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to this very needy group.

The daily atrocities that we have been hearing about committed by ISIL against the Iraqi people, especially the violence targeting religious and ethnic minorities, the treatment of women and children, is unconscionable. And for me this crisis is particularly painful to watch unfold as I spent my early years as a child in Iraq, the son of missionaries working there.

Some of my first and fondest memories come from navigating the canals of old Basra or gliding through the marshes in a canoe, and I have returned to Iraq many times, including as the first USAID representative in southern Iraq, as Chairman Smith mentioned, in 2003 and 2004, and then most recently last year when I served as the USAID Mission Director in Baghdad. And I now have the privilege of leading the USAID Iraq Taskforce here in Washington.

As my colleagues have outlined, the scope of the present humanitarian crisis is enormous. The pace of deterioration since the fall of Mosul and Nineveh Plains is staggering.

In early August, the world's attention was really focused because of the plight of the thousands of Yezidis trapped on Mount Sinjar. As Mr. Malinowski mentioned, we received firsthand accounts from individuals on Mount Sinjar of the horrific circumstances there. And from USAID, we quickly deployed a DART team, Disaster Assistance Response Team, to Erbil to coordinate our response there.

We worked closely with the military on the seven air drops and then joined in an on-the-ground assessment on the mountain to make sure that our assistance was reaching the right people, and we found that it in fact had helped to save lives.

This DART that we have there is working closely with the international humanitarian community, and our partnerships with Christian and other faith-based organizations there and here are critical in our response efforts. When I lived in Iraq, I met with many of these groups myself, and some of them even remembered my family when I talked to them back in Basra.

I recently had the privilege to meet with both Iraqi and U.S.-based leaders of the Chaldean, Assyrian, Yezidi, and other minority groups here in Washington. Regular communication with these groups is vital, of course, allowing us to get real-time information and connect them to the broader international assistance that is going on.

In fact, just this morning I spoke with Archbishop Warda in Erbil, a Chaldean leader there, who reported that the immediate needs of Christian IDPs are largely being met, the basic needs, but

the long-term issues are still there, especially coming up to the winter. Our team also is regularly speaking with Christian families, Christian leaders. They have gone to several locations to make sure that the assistance is actually getting to the people there.

We are focused from USAID's side on filling gaps in the response effort, advocating within the international community for an efficient allocation of resources and effective response coordination, since, as Anne said, there are so many organizations and donors providing assistance, coordination becomes very important.

And then, for example, last week USAID airlifted 60 metric tons of humanitarian aid, as Chairman Smith mentioned. And that aid, by the way, is already being distributed, and some of it even went into the town of Amerli, just in the last couple of days. And we have another airlift arriving in the next day or two.

Now, lack of shelter is the most serious concern right now as about 45 percent of the IDPs in Iraq are living in public buildings like schools, open spaces, or camps across the country. USAID is working to provide additional shelter support to ensure access for emergency and transitional shelter.

In addition, as winter in northern Iraq descends, coming not too far away, we are working with partners to reach the most vulnerable populations to make sure that winterization assistance is being provided, things like clothing, blankets, and mattresses.

We are also working to address public health concerns, including provision of safe water, essential hygiene supplies, and access to health services for the IDPs. Additionally, USAID has deployed an emergency food officer as a part of the DART to monitor food needs. And, by the way, since mid-June, the World Food Programme reports that they have actually reached 838,000 Iraqis with food aid throughout the country. We are focused on addressing massive protection and trauma issues that the populations have experienced because of these untold horrors.

For example, USAID is providing targeted psychosocial assistance and distributing relief supplies to Yazidi and Christian IDPs as well as others. In conjunction with the Government of Iraq, which of course has the primary responsibility, we are addressing the needs of children and their families throughout such things as mobile, child-friendly spaces, and which can serve as platforms for meeting psychosocial needs of children wherever they are located in the area.

USAID's response to this humanitarian crisis also builds on a solid foundation of 10 years of programs that have helped build Iraq's health, governance, and civil society capacity. So in recent weeks we have adjusted those existing programs to make sure that they are focusing on the immediate needs of the IDPs, and then also while continuing to work toward the longer term goals.

So, in conclusion, in the coming months the international community will continue to face challenges. It is not going to be over soon. Humanitarian access will remain a critical problem. Displaced persons will likely be unable or unwilling to return home to their towns and villages. Displaced persons will likely also have long-term needs that will need to be addressed.

As we work in support of the Government of Iraq and alongside our international partners to address these challenges, we will con-

tinue to focus on the vulnerable populations. USAID will also remain engaged with faith-based leaders, both here and in Iraq, to hear and address their concerns.

Our hearts are with the thousands of people who remain besieged and are gravely concerned for their health and safety, and personally I feel that having been a son of Iraq in a certain way. And so we are really appreciative of this hearing, of the ongoing support that Congress has provided to us so that we are able to in turn provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq.

Thank you for your interest, thank you for calling this hearing, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Staal follows:]

Testimony of U.S. Agency for International Development
Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator Thomas Staal

House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Human Rights
and International Organizations and Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

September 10, 2014

Chairman Smith, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Bass, Ranking Member Deutch, and Members of the Subcommittees, thank you for inviting me to testify on the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) efforts to provide humanitarian assistance in Iraq. We share your concern about the attacks on Christians and other vulnerable populations, who are suffering unimaginable horrors from the systematic violence carried out against them by the terrorist organization known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). USAID remains committed to providing assistance to all those in need in Iraq and will hold true to our mission to partner to end extreme poverty and promote resilient democratic societies while advancing our security and prosperity.

The daily atrocities committed by ISIL against the Iraqi people – including the violence targeting ethnic minorities and religious groups – is claiming and destroying countless lives, tearing at the fabric of society, and further enflaming sectarian violence. Furthermore, ISIL's abhorrent treatment of women and children is unconscionable. These circumstances demand—and are receiving—our focused attention and utmost effort.

For me this crisis is particularly painful to watch unfold. I spent my early years in southern Iraq, as the son of Christian missionaries. In fact, some of my first and fondest memories come from navigating the canals of old Basrah and gliding through the still waters of the Amarah marshes in a canoe. I have returned to Iraq many times over the years, including as the first USAID Representative for Southern Iraq in 2003 and 2004, and most recently last year, when I served as USAID Mission Director in Baghdad.

Throughout my career in Iraq, I met regularly with community leaders, civil society and women's groups representing Christian and other minority groups. I learned firsthand of their long history in the region, their concerns, and ambitions. Along with my USAID colleagues and our implementing partners, I made sure that our assistance was reaching these vulnerable populations. I also had the chance to travel throughout the country. I visited ancient sites including a monastery in the hills outside the village of Tel Kaif, just a few miles north of Mosul. Standing for well over 1,000 years, this revered structure is now probably in the hands of ISIL; its history and cultural wealth are likely gone.

I now have the privilege of leading our USAID Iraq Taskforce and am bringing much of my background and experience to bear on our Agency's current response. USAID is proud to join the Administration, the distinguished colleagues here today, and the international community in our collective efforts to provide needs-based humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq. We not only condemn ISIL's reprehensible actions, but are actively working to respond to this destruction through the strategic delivery of humanitarian assistance and the continuation of targeted development assistance. We are working to support Iraq as it strives to form a new non-sectarian government which ensures that all individuals, including members of Iraq's diverse and historic communities, receive equal protection under the law and the human rights to which they are entitled.

Today I want to update you on three areas – the current humanitarian situation in Iraq, USAID's ongoing efforts to provide needs-based humanitarian assistance to all displaced

persons, including members of ethnic and religious minorities, and our efforts to protect and assist specific victimized groups.

The Current Humanitarian Situation in Iraq

Let me begin by addressing the current humanitarian situation. The humanitarian community is grappling with an unprecedented four Level 3 (L3) emergencies—the United Nation’s (U.N.) most severe emergency designation. These include complex emergencies in Iraq, Syria, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic. We are simultaneously combating the devastating spread of Ebola in West Africa and working to address protracted emergencies in a number of other places throughout the globe. The U.N. declared the Iraq crisis an L3 emergency on August 13, resulting in the deployment of humanitarian veteran, Kevin Kennedy, to oversee U.N. humanitarian operations in northern Iraq.

It is within this context that for the first time in USAID’s history, our Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance has deployed four Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DART) and activated four Response Management Teams (RMTs) concurrently. The courageous work of USAID’s humanitarian experts is saving lives around the globe and is providing U.S. leadership within the international arena. I am proud to be part of these efforts. We stand together in a spirit of partnership—with our U.S. government colleagues, with other governments, with the U.N. and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, with civil society, and with the households, families, and communities that are suffering.

In Iraq, the scope and complexity of the present crisis are enormous, and the pace of deterioration since the fall of Mosul to ISIL on June 9 is staggering. Nearly all parts of the country are affected by violence, and ISIL particularly targets Christians and members of other minority groups. According to the U.N., there are currently an estimated 1.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) throughout Iraq. Of the 1.8 million IDPs, the U.N. estimates that nearly 850,000 are located in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. We acknowledge and applaud the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) for offering shelter and refuge to these IDPs, along with 215,000 refugees from Syria.

Dohuk Governorate in particular is shouldering the largest portion of these IDPs, with displaced people living in host communities, schools, public buildings, open areas, and makeshift camps. More than 650,000 of the IDPs are located in ISIL-controlled areas of Anbar, Ninewa, and Salah Ad-Din where limited access makes provision of humanitarian assistance extraordinarily challenging, if not impossible. Furthermore, IDPs are scattered across approximately 1,500 locations, so centralized provision of humanitarian assistance is difficult. Because the conflict is ongoing, and people are not able to return to their areas of origin, the continued displacement crisis is likely to become protracted and require ongoing humanitarian assistance from the international community.

Moreover, the IDP crisis is not limited to northern Iraq. Since January, over 440,000 people have been displaced in Anbar, Diyala, and Baghdad governorates and we are also seeing secondary and tertiary displacement, with increased IDP movements to central and southern Iraq. In recent weeks, attacks by ISIL and armed groups have increased throughout the country—particularly against Christians and members of other religious and ethnic minorities. To add historical context to this point, this is not the first occasion that Iraqi Christians and other religious minorities have been forced to flee their homes. During 2004 meetings in Basrah, Christian leaders (as well as Sabeen/Mandean leaders) informed me that once the Iranian-backed Shias had taken power—Shias are the majority in the south of Iraq—and imposed religious restrictions, life was made extremely difficult for Christians and other minorities. As a result, most fled to the Ninewa plains area north and west of Mosul—the area that ISIL now controls.

The Mt. Sinjar Mission in Iraq

The rapid fall of Mosul on June 9 resulted in the displacement of thousands of Christians, Yazidis, and members of other minority groups, as well as Shia. Soon after Mosul fell, the Embassy in Iraq issued a Disaster Declaration in close consultation with USAID, which began providing humanitarian assistance through a number of partners.

In early August, the world's attention focused on the plight of thousands of Yazidis, with mass killings being reported in several parts of the Sinjar region. As this desperate scene unfolded and we received first-person accounts from individuals on Mt. Sinjar of the horrific conditions, we acted quickly to explore all possible options for relieving the situation, including deploying a DART to Erbil led by seasoned humanitarian response official and a liaison deputy team leader to Embassy Baghdad and the USAID Mission. As the President noted in his remarks on August 7, we were seeing innocent people facing the prospect of violence on a horrific scale, and we had a mandate to help—in this case, a request from the Iraqi government.

We immediately coordinated with the U.S. military to begin a humanitarian air drop operation to deliver crucial commodities for thousands of trapped civilians. The U.S. military conducted seven nightly humanitarian air drops between August 8-13, delivering more than 114,000 meals and 35,000 gallons of water to those displaced on Mt. Sinjar. USAID joined our Department of Defense (DoD) colleagues to conduct an on-the-ground assessment of the situation on Mt. Sinjar after the airdrops and concluded that our actions had helped save lives. USAID continues to work with our military colleagues as needed to bring additional airdrops of commodities to other besieged areas, such as the recent military airdrops to Amerli.

In the days after the Mt. Sinjar mission, USAID's DART worked closely with local and national authorities, U.N. officials, Embassy and USAID mission officers, and NGO partners to identify needs, scale-up operations, and ensure a large-scale, coordinated international response. The generosity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which provided an historic \$500 million in humanitarian relief funds in June, helped enable this rapid scale-up.

The Iraqi government and the KRG have also taken responsibility and dedicated substantial funding in support of humanitarian relief efforts. This includes initial cash grants of approximately \$860 per displaced family, which are being distributed by the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement. We are pleased to see this financial commitment, have worked with Iraqi officials to find more efficient and effective ways to distribute their resources, and we will continue to engage with Iraqi officials to ensure that these funds are being distributed in a non-discriminatory and impartial fashion.

Outreach to Iraq's Faith-Based and Minority Communities

USAID is currently working through a range of partners to provide needs-based humanitarian assistance. Some of the most effective international relief organizations, many of which are USAID's implementing partners around the world, come out of Christian and other faith communities. USAID's partnerships with these organizations are enormously valuable and critical in our current response.

While we are not publicizing our NGO partner names or the specifics of their work due to security concerns, our current implementing partners work with an array of faith leaders throughout northern Iraq. We do not know exactly what percentage of the IDPs are religious minorities, however we do know, based on partner reporting and field-level assessments, that many of Iraq's Christians lived in the Ninewa plains area, and an overwhelming majority of them have been forced to flee their homes. We are working closely with faith-based partners to

monitor the situation and ensure that these communities are treated impartially and are receiving assistance at the same level as all other IDPs.

USAID actively monitors our programs to ensure our assistance reaches all those in need in an equal fashion, including Christian and other minority communities. We and our State Department colleagues are meeting regularly with faith-based leaders in and around Erbil and Baghdad to ensure assistance is reaching those groups. On August 30, our DART met with Archbishop Bashar Warda of the Chaldean Church in Erbil, who reported that the Government of Iraq had been distributing cash grants to Christian IDPs in an impartial fashion and that any hold-up in the grant process was due to broader issues with IDP registration. Our team also spoke with displaced Christian families sheltered in the church, who told us that although they had access to basic relief items and air-cooled tents, there were still IDPs without access to adequate shelter. USAID is working closely with international partners to address this concern.

In the recent weeks, I have had the privilege to meet with both Iraqi and U.S.-based leaders of religious minority groups. These groups include Chaldean organizations, American Mesopotamian Organization, Assyrian Aid Society of America, Assyrian Aid Society of Iraq, Assyrian International News Agency, Catholic Near East Welfare Association, Hammurabi Human Rights Organization, One World Medical Mission, and the Yezidi Human Rights Organization. Regular communication with these groups is vital, allowing us to exchange real-time information, learn about their efforts, and connect them to the broader international humanitarian architecture.

USAID Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq

Total U.S. government humanitarian funding for Iraq in fiscal year 2014 has now reached more than \$138 million. USAID is focusing our assistance strategically, with the aim of filling critical response gaps, and using our voice within the international humanitarian community to advocate for an efficient allocation of resources and effective coordination among response actors. We are providing assistance to deliver immediate relief commodities; address emergency health needs; provide water, sanitation, and hygiene support; ensure emergency and transitional shelter; and address the massive protection and trauma needs of populations who have fled untold horrors.

In addition, as winter in northern Iraq descends as early as the end of September, we are currently working with partners to reach the most vulnerable populations—including women, children, and religious and ethnic minorities with winterization programs. USAID assistance includes basic supplies which are critical for those who are displaced and seeking refuge. Clothing, kitchen sets, blankets, mattresses, and bedding, as well as materials to prepare shelter for winter conditions all provide dignity and a semblance of comfort in the midst of chaos. On September 2, USAID airlifted more than 60 metric tons of humanitarian aid into the city of Erbil, from where one of USAID's partners will distribute the commodities to vulnerable families countrywide. Another airlift is planned for this week.

Lack of shelter is a serious concern as 45 percent of all IDPs in Iraq are living in public buildings, open spaces, or camps across the country. Nearly half of all schools in the Iraqi Kurdistan Government are hosting IDPs in cramped conditions not intended for longer term accommodation. As the school year begins, this will be problematic. In fact, officials from the KRG have already indicated that IDPs should be relocated to camps as soon as possible to make the schools available for the beginning of the new school year. The Government of Iraq (GOI) and the KRG are working to construct IDP camps with technical assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). While in some contexts UNHCR or the International Organization for Migration (IOM) might run the IDP camps, in this case the GOI

and the KRG are the official responsible authority, with UNHCR or IOM providing technical assistance. The GOI is also providing financial support, and I commend the GOI and the KRG for working in partnership to address these needs.

USAID is working to provide additional shelter support, and address public health concerns, which are particularly acute in IDP populations. With the support of USAID, UNICEF is providing safe drinking water and hygiene supplies to IDPs, and an NGO is conducting hygiene promotion campaigns and sanitation infrastructure improvements. Similarly, USAID support is helping provide five liters of water per person per day in areas of Dohuk and Ninewa governorates while also supplying women and girls with essential hygiene supplies to maintain optimal health. A USAID partner is strengthening the water and sanitation infrastructure in Diyala and Sulaymaniyah governorates and working with local authorities to devise a strategy for managing these resources.

In times of crisis, food is a critical lifeline. The World Food Program (WFP) and its partners are providing different types of food aid appropriate to the needs and mobility of various IDPs. WFP has received support from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia sufficient to fund its food assistance in Iraq until November. USAID has deployed an emergency food officer with the Erbil-based DART to monitor food needs in consultation with WFP and other partners. Since mid-June, WFP and partners have reached more than 719,000 Iraqis with food. This figure includes 176,000 IDPs still in transit, or without access to cooking facilities, who have received three-day emergency rations since displacement escalated in early August. It also includes 128,800 IDPs in more stable locations, or with access to cooking facilities, who WFP and partners reached with monthly household food rations in August. From field kitchens in Dohuk and Erbil governorates, WFP and partners have served approximately five million hot meals in total, currently benefiting 218,000 people daily.

Protection is another critical component of our humanitarian response, particularly given the type and scale of human rights violations being witnessed. We know that there continues to be a danger of sexual and gender based violence, that children and youth are at risk of recruitment into armed groups, that families have been separated, and that all those affected by this crisis have witnessed violence, lost family members, and live in an environment of fear and uncertainty. As a result, we are working on programs and strategies to respond to the urgent needs of survivors, mitigate the long term effects of these abuses, and most importantly, help prevent further instances from occurring.

USAID support has helped establish mobile protection teams, which will visit IDP-hosting communities and provide opportunities to meet confidentially and share protection concerns, including those of women at risk of violence and abuse. In conjunction with the GOI, we are also helping address the needs of children and their families through mobile child-friendly spaces, which will serve as platforms for meeting the psychosocial needs of children. USAID is also working in Diyala and As Sulaymaniyah governorates to establish family tracing and reunifications systems, as well as provide appropriate temporary care for separated and unaccompanied children and youth.

Given significant threats against members of minority populations in Iraq, USAID is providing targeted psychosocial assistance and distributing relief commodities to Yezidi and Christian IDPs, in coordination with the broader humanitarian community and local government authorities. Similarly, USAID is helping the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) provide psychosocial care to children, train social workers, create safe spaces, and conduct other protection activities in Anbar Governorate and other areas of Iraq hosting IDPs.

All USAID partners are required to apply a protection and gender lens to their programming and ensure that assistance and programs meet the unique needs of beneficiaries and can be accessed safely and equitably, regardless of age, gender or religious and ethnic

identify. These efforts help ensure that all of our assistance programs, regardless of the sector, work to promote the protection and wellbeing of all, especially women, children, the elderly and infirm, and members of marginalized groups.

USAID Development Programs in Iraq

USAID's response to this humanitarian crisis builds on a solid foundation of over ten years of programming to help build Iraq's health, governance, and civil society capacity. In recent weeks, our existing programs were able to shift some focus to shorter-term humanitarian needs, while continuing to work toward longer-term goals of a stronger Iraq. Before this latest crisis, USAID programs in Iraq were working to build local governance capacity and support civil society and religious and ethnic minority groups. These programs ensured that USAID was well placed to help local Iraqi partners respond to the crisis. Our deep contacts with threatened communities and local groups also made USAID one of the first stops for Christian groups and others seeking and offering help.

For example, our Access to Justice Program in Iraq had previously established a national legal assistance network to help with issues like identity documents and legal protections for women and members of minority communities. When entire communities were displaced by ISIL's advance, they often left behind or destroyed identity documents as they fled out of fear of retribution if identified as a non-Muslim or part of another minority group. In response, our Access to Justice Program pivoted to work with IDPs as well as the Government of Iraq on identity and registration issues, including replacing identification documents essential to government and international assistance, greatly easing the burdens of Christians and other minority groups who had fled.

Further, our "Foras" (Arabic for "Opportunities") project is working on economic development by focusing on the employability of Iraq's labor force by the private sector. This program has been able to use its structure and contacts to pivot and begin to provide short-term labor opportunities for IDPs—because we know that a job is preferred to humanitarian aid in both the short- and long-term. Other ongoing programs in Iraq are serving both IDPs and other Iraqis around the country by improving government provided primary health care, strengthening local governments' ability to provide essential services, promoting administrative reform in the Government of Iraq, assisting with the decentralization of key services from the central government to the provinces, and strengthening the role of civil society in local communities.

Key Challenges Moving Forward

In the coming months in Iraq, the international community will continue to face challenges. First, as ISIL and other belligerents continue to try to claim territory and as sectarian violence roils across much of Iraq, displaced persons will likely be unable or unwilling to return home. In recognition of this, the U.N. will release a revised Strategic Response Plan in late September, laying out a longer-term humanitarian strategy, along with financial and human resource needs. Early discussions with senior U.N. officials indicate that the cost of such a plan to the international community may exceed \$1 billion, far exceeding the Saudi contribution. USAID is working closely with our U.N. colleagues to determine how we can most appropriately leverage our resources to support another long-term response.

Second, humanitarian access will remain the central challenge of this response, particularly in ISIL-held and contested areas where attempts at negotiated access have fallen short. We will continue to work closely and creatively with DoD and other entities, including

other donor governments, and to determine how to best maximize humanitarian effectiveness in semi-permissive to non-permissive environments.

Third, there will continue to be perceptions of preferential assistance going to one group over another. Imperfect coverage and perceptions of bias are realities in large-scale humanitarian emergencies where large numbers of people require assistance. We will remain sensitive to how the provision of needs-based assistance to members of religious and ethnic minorities impacts the perception among a broader population, and we will calibrate assistance accordingly to ensure that assistance does not lead to further protection challenges.

Finally, identifying long-term, durable solutions for IDPs and members of minority groups, including local integration or return to their areas of origin, will be challenging and will require creativity and diplomacy to resolve. The central Iraqi government and provincial governments have requested technical assistance for the longer term from our USAID Mission and Embassy colleagues, which may require resources not yet programmed or available. USAID is prepared to engage in a dialogue with the new Iraqi government, when appropriate, about future technical assistance.

Conclusion

Due to these immense challenges, forging strong partnerships will be critical. We remain deeply committed to assisting all those in need, and we will continue pushing to secure access to additional populations currently trapped in areas controlled by ISIL. In the coming months we will seek opportunities to link our humanitarian and development efforts to ensure that displaced families can recover from the current crisis, and become more resilient in the coming years. USAID will also continue to engage closely with faith-based leaders, meeting regularly here in Washington and in Iraq to hear and address concerns. Our hearts are with the thousands of people who remain besieged or trapped under unsustainable conditions, and we are gravely concerned for the health and safety of these displaced men, women, and children, including Christians and other vulnerable ethnic and religious minorities.

USAID continues to be deeply appreciative of Congressional support to provide the resources that makes our humanitarian assistance work possible in Syria, Iraq, in the broader Middle East, and indeed throughout the world. Thank you for your interest, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Staal, thank you very much for your testimony, for your leadership, and thank you to Dr. Shah, the head of USAID. I think that USAID is trying to respond as effectively as possible, and so, again, I want to give you high marks, and I know I am joined by members of the committee. It is difficult to get humanitarian aid on the ground in a war situation when even the aid workers are put at high risk. So I appreciate your commitment.

Let me begin with some questions. First of all, let me ask Tom Malinowski. Tom Farr, who we all know is one of the preeminent, and he is the quintessential leader I think when it comes to religious freedom. I have read his book. As you know, I chaired all of the hearings that led to the enactment of the International Religious Freedom Act, Frank Wolf's landmark legislation on religious freedom.

At the time, you will recall the administration, the Clinton administration, was opposed to it. John Shattuck, the Assistant Secretary in your position previously, sat right where you sit and testified against it on frequent occasions. When the bill was finally passed, House and Senate, with huge bipartisan majorities, the President signed it.

But I have always been concerned that a bias against that mission has pervaded and persisted in many in the State Department, particularly at the higher levels, so much so—and Tom Farr makes this point in his testimony, and I quote him in pertinent part, “While no administration has been successful in promoting religious freedom, the issue has been an especially low priority under the current President,” and points out that the Ambassador-at-Large position was vacant for half of the Obama administration's tenure in office, which is a revelation of priorities in my opinion.

And we have had hearings on it in this committee. We have asked, we have begged, we have admonished, we have used every word we could possibly think of, I and members of the committee, to encourage the President to take that step and make that an important office, but also—and I know, you know, there is a man—we know the rabbi very well that is slated for that position. He will do a fine job. But it has been a very checkered past, recent past.

I mention that because Tom Farr again makes a very, very important series of recommendations as well as observations. He points out that “The threat to Christians and other minorities in this region was not ultimately caused by U.S. military action of the struggle for democracy. The root cause is Islamic terrorism of the kind that hit us on 9/11. That phenomenon finds its origins in a radical, and spreading, interpretation of Islam-nourished and subsidized by secular and religious Middle Eastern tyrants.”

It seems to me that any strategy has to incorporate trying to get after the laws, the policies that make religious pluralism and tolerance non-existent in many of these countries with whom we are strong allies.

So my question would be, how do you respond to that criticism, that religious freedom has not had the dominance, the rightful place would be the better way of putting it, within the administration? And, secondly, was the administration late in recognizing the ISIS threat as well as the Syria threat? Last year, right around now, the distinguished gentlelady from Florida, Ileana Ros-

Lehtinen and I, chaired a hearing on Syria. The government witnesses wouldn't call it a genocide. Every one of the private sector, religiously-based, witnesses said it is indeed a genocide, what is happening in Syria.

And my question to you will be, is what is happening to the Christians in Iraq and Syria today a genocide? Mr. Secretary?

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you. That is quite a few. I will try to tackle all of them. First, on the importance of religious freedom, I hear you, we hear you. The central point of my testimony is that this begins before we had beheadings and Mosul taken and cities falling and hundreds of thousands of refugees. This begins with policies that exploit religious difference for political ends. That is what we had in Iraq. That is what we had in Syria.

And the foundational principle of our efforts on religious freedom is not just that these kinds of abuses are bad things. It is not just that they offend our conscience. It is that when cynical political actors exploit religion, when they go after people because of these incredibly deeply rooted feelings that people of faith have, it is one of the most dangerous things that can happen in the world. The conflicts that begin that way are very, very difficult to end, and so that is why it is a priority, should be a priority, will continue to be a priority.

In this crisis, the most important part of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor has been our religious freedom office. They have been on the front lines. They have been bringing the stories of the victims of ISIL to everybody in the administration, all the way up to the President—and I think you will hear some of that reflected tonight in his speech—to the planners at CENTCOM who are organizing this operation.

You mentioned Rabbi David Saperstein. He is the President's nominee. He is one of the most distinguished leaders on human rights and religious freedom in this country. He has his hearing in the Senate tomorrow. We hope he will be confirmed very, very quickly, and I think the importance of his job in the estimation of all of us, the urgency of that effort, has only gone up in the last few weeks.

Were we late? Were we early? We will have these debates for a very long time. I think both of you mentioned, you and Ms. Ros-Lehtinen, you raised the question of why did we act when we acted as against before or after? I can tell you there are absolutely no distinctions here, nor should there be, nor will there be, between Christians, Yezidis, Shiites, Sunni, or what have you.

We didn't act when we acted on Mount Sinjar because those were Yezidis on that mountain as against another group of people. We acted because there were people who were in a uniquely perilous situation, thousands of them surrounded with no way out.

The same thing happened in Amerli with a different religious minority. We acted because we had the intelligence, and we acted—and this is particularly important in light of both of your questions—because we had capable partners on the ground who at that point were ready to act with us.

There is not much that you can do from the air in a situation where you are trying to rescue men, women, and children if you don't have capable partners on the ground who are ready and will-

ing to act with you. And at that point, we did. Several months ago, sadly, we didn't, which is why a huge part of this effort, in Iraq in particular, has been trying to get a more inclusive, more capable, more committed government, which we now have. And that is the basis of the strategy that the President will announce tonight.

As for your question on genocide, I have been around that so many times, from the early days of the Bosnia crisis to Kosovo to Darfur, and all I can tell you is that I have never experienced a situation of mass killing, of mass atrocities, in which the lawyers were ready with a legal determination of genocide, and that is what it takes for the State Department to be able to make that formal determination in time for us to be able to decide on a course of action.

The decision to act inevitably, invariably, comes before the experts, the international law experts, come together around a definition. And we have decided to act, and that is the important thing. We are doing right now exactly what we would be doing if the Secretary of State had already determined that genocide, as a legal matter, had taken place.

Those kinds of determinations do become important when you get to the legal process, where you get to accountability, where you get to justice, and you prosecute people for what they did. But it—

Mr. SMITH. On that point, if I could ask you—

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Sure.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. Because I am almost out of time, do you support—does the administration support a regional court? You know, the ICC has already been rejected. It has only one conviction, as you know, over the course of a dozen years, several indictees, but one conviction.

And as David Crane testified recently here in this room, he was the chief prosecutor at the Sierra Leone court, the ICC is not the means to hold these people to account. A regional court, a hybrid, something like Sierra Leone, might be the best way to go.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I think it is worth—

Mr. SMITH. Where is the administration—

Mr. MALINOWSKI. It is worth exploring. What I can tell you is that we are committed to ensuring that these people are brought to justice. All those in this conflict who commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, if they are captured, can, should, and will be brought to justice.

A regional tribunal would also require the assent of the Security Council, so you still have the same problem as—

Mr. SMITH. In Russia, you will recall, with Yugoslavia, even though they were close allies with Milosevic, agreed because all sides would be prosecuted.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Absolutely. But we would need that—

Mr. SMITH. It needs to be initiated in order for it to happen.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. But the principle of it, I think there are a variety of mechanisms through which you could get to that point, both national, international, and hybrid, and we support the concept. We need to find the most practical way to do it.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to ask you a few questions, especially concerning the children. And I know that the World Health Organization and UNICEF did a 5-day polio vaccination campaign that reached millions of Iraqi children. So I wanted to know if you could discuss the ongoing international efforts to support this campaign and prevent the spread of polio and other dangerous diseases. Anybody?

Mr. STAAL. Ranking Member Bass, thank you very much. That is a critical issue that we are looking at as a part of our health support to the country. And they have indeed done a major campaign to vaccinate children against polio, including now reaching out to the IDPs. So that is going to be something that we are making sure that it reaches the IDPs as well. And other diseases, whenever you get a group of displaced who often live in close quarters, we worry about a number of types of diseases, polio being one of them.

Thank you.

Ms. BASS. Anybody else? The people that were on the mountain—some were rescued and then some were able to leave or get to safety, do we know what happened to them? And then, also, did any of them come to the United States?

Ms. RICHARD. Yes. Many got off, and many have gone to the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq where they are getting assistance now from UNHCR and other U.N. agencies. It is too soon to have brought any to the United States, but certainly they would be in a population that we would want to look at, whether they needed resettlement in the U.S. or not.

But, you know, our long-term goal is that these minority groups be allowed to stay, to live, and to thrive in their own country.

Ms. BASS. Right. I know that is the goal.

Ms. RICHARD. Yes. But, certainly, for some people who—here, as in other parts of the world, if they have been truly traumatized, and really feel that they cannot continue to live in their own country, or to go back home to their own country, we would work with UNHCR to see if they could be determined to be in the list to be resettled. And the U.S. takes most of the refugees who are resettled in the world every year.

Ms. BASS. And finally just—as I believe votes have been called, and maybe another member wants to get in—do you have recommendations for more that you think we should be doing, what Congress should be doing right now?

Ms. RICHARD. One of the wonderful things that the Congress does is to provide solid humanitarian assistance in both the budget that my office oversees and that USAID controls. And this is making a major difference in Iraq, in Syria, and all the crises around the world. So your support for that is fantastic.

I think also what is helpful about today's hearing is all the people sitting behind us, bringing together concerned Americans and their friends from overseas to make sure that we have fresh information. I was very impressed by the Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Bureau's reach into the American diasporas of groups overseas and how they were getting same-day information that fed into operations that were being carried out to rescue people.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Anyone else?

Mr. STAAL. Yes. Just to echo what Ms. Richard said. Your highlighting of this issue is a huge thing, as well as the support to us. We have seen a lot of international support. The Saudi Government providing \$500 million, that was critical, the other support coming in. When I spoke to Archbishop Warda, he mentioned that 60 families there in Erbil of displaced Christians were getting support from Christians in America, private donations. That is critical, too, of course.

And then the other thing is we need to maintain the pressure, if you will, on the Iraqi Government who have the primary responsibility to provide support. They have pledged almost \$900 million from the Iraqi budget to support IDPs. They have a program there through their Ministry of Displacement and Migration that provides about \$860 to each IDP.

That is starting to roll out, but it is something that we are following to make sure that it really does get to all of them equally, fairly, appropriately, and that is an important issue to also maintain the focus on.

Thank you.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. I yield.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Ros-Lehtinen?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Smith.

Before I begin to ask my questions, I would like to state for the record that Ranking Member Ted Deutch is at another committee hearing, and that is why he cannot be with us today. But I know that he is deeply troubled by the human rights violations occurring against persecuted Christians in the region.

Thank you for allowing me to say that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member Bass, for this hearing.

Assistant Secretary Richard, you had testified in front of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee last September on the humanitarian crisis. Unfortunately, not only has the situation gotten worse, but Iraq is now facing real crisis as ISIL has become stronger, more sophisticated. The Christian communities in Iraq and Syria are important ones in the history and fabric of the Middle East, and they are without a doubt being targeted for extinction.

We must do everything possible to ensure that these communities are protected and allowed to remain, because it would indeed be a tragedy to lose such ancient communities at the hands of radical Islamist terrorist groups.

And I have seen throughout your testimonies that we are doing a lot in the way of humanitarian assistance, and I thank you, much needed assistance. We need to continue to do so, but I keep saying at these hearings, we continue to provide this assistance without addressing the underlying issues. And right now the major obstacle is that there is this pervasive attitude throughout much of the region that views Christianity and other religious minorities through pure hatred.

What are we doing to address this? What can we do? What plans can we implement, programs in the region, or in the refugee camps and in neighboring countries, that promote moderation or religious tolerance? What can those countries do, similar to what the King-

dom of Morocco has been able to implement? So that is the first question.

We have heard from the panel the steps the administration is doing in conjunction with the U.N. Commissioner for Refugees and our overall humanitarian assistance inside Iraq. But these programs encompass everyone impacted by ISIL's march, including in Erbil. Are there any specific programs designed toward aiding the Christian community? How much are we spending directly in aid to help them?

From what I have seen, also religious freedom and human rights seem to be ranked very low on the priority scale for this administration. It took the administration 10 months to name an Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, and the State Department repeatedly ignores recommendations by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom to add gross violators to our list of Countries of Particular Concern.

It finally recertified countries this year after failing to do so for many years, and added a new country for the first time since 2006, but failed to add countries that the Commission had been recommending for years now, including both Syria and Iraq. We continue to provide aid and sell arms to some of the world's most egregious violators. We have waived sanctions on some of these Countries of Particular Concern.

So, in closing, my last questions are, where does freedom of religion and the protection of rights fall on the administration's foreign policy priorities? And why has the administration ignored repeated recommendations by the Commission to add Syria, Iraq, and several other countries to the Countries of Particular Concern list despite more than ample evidence that religious minorities have been in danger?

Thank you so much for the time, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. RICHARD. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for your interest all year long, and thank you for acknowledging that we are indeed doing a lot for humanitarian assistance. The U.S. Government really leads, and we are fortunate to have congressional support for this and really largely American public support to do a lot on the humanitarian front around the world.

You have said we need to address the underlying issues. I agree with you and so does my boss, Secretary Kerry, who is today in Baghdad and is obviously spending a great deal of time and attention on the Iraq situation right now, and really the situation in the wider Middle East. And he leads us in doing that.

You mentioned what we could do to promote moderation, religious tolerance. In that respect, you are on the same wavelength as our new Under Secretary, Sarah Sewell, who has instructed a number of our bureaus, including both Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and mine, the Population, Refugees, and Migration Bureau, to look at ways that we can counter the spread of violent extremism. And so this is very much front and center on our to do list at the moment, building on programs that already exist that Tom will be able to speak to.

And, third, I don't agree that somehow religious freedom is being ignored in the Department, and partly because Secretary Kerry has created a faith-based office headed by Sean Casey. He did this

nearly as soon as he came in, and we see that Sean Casey is working very closely with our special envoys in outreach to the Muslim world to fight anti-Semitism. And we are all anxious to get Rabbi David Saperstein on board as well as part of the team, but Tom is more the expert on that.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. As far as what we do to promote this cause, and I would say very strong self-interest in religious tolerance around the world, and particularly in this region, I would say we work bottom up and top down. Bottom up, we do fund a lot of small programs, and these are by definition small programs, working with civil society organizations, with religious organizations, on the ground in these countries.

In Iraq, for example, we helped fund an organization called the Alliance of Iraqi Minorities, which was working before this crisis to try to build bridges between religious communities in these areas that we have been discussing. We have funded Christian activists who have worked to try to build connections between their communities and local and regional governments in Iraq.

We funded similar programs in Syria in the midst of the civil war, and we have insisted that the Syrian opposition groups that we support in that horrible situation be as inclusive as possible and respectful as possible of minority groups. And then we work top down, and that is what Secretary Kerry is doing in Baghdad today, where in addition to the very general top line message on the importance of governing inclusively with respect for all of Iraq's people, we have been discussing very, very discrete, specific questions like how to organize a more integrated, less sectarian security force for Iraq in the future, discussing the establishment of National Guard forces, so that local communities can feel that they can protect themselves with the support of the Government of Iraq, but also with a degree of autonomy. So bottom up and top down.

In terms of the CPC designations, as you mentioned, we just added Turkmenistan. We add countries when we feel that there are egregious violations of religious freedom going on, they are committed by governments, and those governments are being wholly unresponsive to diplomacy.

So it is not simply a question of, are there terrible things happening in a country, but whether we feel that diplomacy is being exhausted, and this tool needs to be used.

Syria of course is under every sanction that we ever have thought of already. Iraq has a new, more inclusive, less sectarian government that has made the commitments that we want to—

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. I know that I am way out of time.

Mr. SMITH. Real quick—if the gentlelady would yield very quickly.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Please.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. So we will have to see how that government—

Mr. SMITH. Our concern has been—that is why I think Mr. Farr's statement about low priority—it is not that you haven't done anything, and I would respectfully submit that under Secretary Kerry it has been increased, and it was at a much lower level under Secretary Clinton.

And we had a hearing, and we heard from Robbie George, who was then the chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, and he pointed out in the strongest possible terms, it was since 2011 and at that point that no CPC designations have been made, and that looked like asleep of the switch if ever there was one.

I mean, again, having been one of the architects of the Wolf Act, there was no doubt that that was meant to be done every year. It was to be robust, and then the sanctions part was meant to really have teeth. And Saudi Arabia gets on the list every year, and what do they get? Not even a slap on the wrist.

And we know that much of the funding of Wahhabis and others, I mean, I travel frequently to Africa, and just as in the Middle East—I was just there in June, and before that in Nigeria, 10 months ago in Jos, a few months ago in Abuja—they are being funded, and we are not doing enough, I don't think, to mitigate that funding.

And as Mr. Farr points out, the root cause is this radical Islamist view. And he makes a good point, and I am sure you share it, that moderate Muslims are many, but they are being crowded out and they are being victimized as well by these other more virulent extremists who see first Christians, and then if they are not winning accomplices with the extremists, then they target the more moderate Muslims.

Mr. Vargas.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And, again I want to thank you very much for this meeting. I think one way to show I think a strong commitment here to religious freedom is to help the Chaldeans right now that are trying to escape the terror there. There are many, many Chaldeans in Michigan and also in San Diego that are prepared, ready, to take their family members. They want to reunite. And I think the administration has an opportunity here, really, to show the commitment to religious freedom, and I hope they do that.

In San Diego, I can tell you the community there is begging—is literally begging for the administration to take action to allow their brothers, their sisters, their mothers, to come to this country. We have always been a country of refuge for these people, people that are suffering under religious persecution. And now we see these horrific acts that are being committed against children. Not even parents now, not even adults, they are committing horrific acts against children.

The United States should act, and we should do something immediately to help these people. I would ask you, I know you have the authority to do it. You know, allow these people to come to our country, reunite with their families. Why aren't we doing that?

Ms. RICHARD. Congressman, I want to assure you we are bringing refugees to the United States. We brought 70,000 last year. Since 2007, we have brought 110,000 Iraqi refugees to the United States. Nearly half are Iraqi Christians. And so we have every intention, with your help, and the——

Mr. VARGAS. I will do anything I——

Ms. RICHARD. I am thrilled to hear you say such supportive things——

Mr. VARGAS. Absolutely.

Ms. RICHARD [continuing]. And your help continue to bring refugees to the United States. But we all know what we really should be doing is putting ourselves out of business. We should be living in a world where people don't have to flee in the first place, and so we need to do both. We need to——

Mr. VARGAS. Absolutely.

Ms. RICHARD [continuing]. Continue to leave an open door for people who will never be able to go home, and we also need to work overseas at the same time to create the conditions so that they can live peacefully in stable countries. And so I really welcome your remarks in support of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

Mr. VARGAS. Absolutely. And in fact I have a bill specifically on that. But I would say this, that, you know, there are people right now who are in dire threat of dying, if we don't act. At the same time they have their family members here in San Diego and Michigan and other parts begging, they will do anything possible to help them. And I think we should act.

I know that they are organizing in San Diego. I have been involved in that effort, and I will do anything I can—my office will do anything we can to help out in this. And I know that it would be great to have the situation where everybody gets along, but they are talking about being put out of business.

Radical Islam is putting these Christians out of business by killing them. We ought to save them. And that is why I thank you for what you have done, but we need to do a lot more.

Ms. RICHARD. The program—the Refugee Admissions Program takes refugees for whom there is no possibility of going home and brings them to the United States. But it is run in a very careful, deliberate manner to make sure that the people who come here pose no threat to other Americans. And so it is not a rapid response program.

Unfortunately, the days of flying planeloads of people quickly to Fort Dix in New Jersey, as was done during the 1990s, is over, and that ended on September 11, 2001. But what we need to do is get people to safety, and we need to provide safe places for them and get them the aid that they need, so that they are not in jeopardy after they have fled.

Mr. VARGAS. If I can just interrupt for a second, and I apologize, but I guess I would go back to what I think the chairman said quite well. I think this is the issue of religious liberty. We are not talking about people who are radical Muslims here. We are talking about Christians. These are Chaldean Christians. You have to make the separation here.

How can you say that these Chaldean Christians are radicals that we have to watch out because of September 11? I mean, there is no evidence—there is no evidence whatsoever to say that these Chaldean Christians have committed any kind of terrorist act against the United States. And, I mean, I wouldn't even accuse anybody else, but you certainly have no evidence against these Chaldeans.

Ms. RICHARD. I certainly did not mean to suggest that Chaldean Christians are prone to terrorism. Most refugees in fact are not——

Mr. VARGAS. That is correct.

Ms. RICHARD [continuing]. Prone to terrorism.

Mr. VARGAS. That is exactly right.

Ms. RICHARD. Most refugees are just trying to survive and have their families survive. I traveled with—

Mr. VARGAS. That is exactly right.

Ms. RICHARD [continuing]. Congressman Sander Levin to meet with Chaldean Christian communities in the Dearborn area. I have also met with refugees in San Diego, but it was mostly Somalis. I think the San Diego community is fantastic in offering a new home. If I were a refugee, I would want to go to San Diego.

But I also realize that we take in less than 1 percent of the world's displaced here in the United States. So we have to get a way to get people to safety overseas in addition to resettling refugees to the United States.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know my time is over. I just hope you take specific care of the Chaldean Christians. They are in special need at this moment.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Vargas, thank you very much.

We have four votes on the floor. Mr. Vargas and I may have just missed the first one. So we will stand in recess. And I apologize, and I thank our panel. We will go to Panel II. I am not sure who would come back. So I thank you very much for your distinguished service and look forward to working with you.

[Recess.]

Mr. SMITH. The subcommittee will resume its hearing. And, again, I apologize to our witnesses for the delay. We did have four votes and a speech in between, which made it very difficult to get back here quickly. So I do apologize. Members have indicated that they will come back.

We have been joined by Chairman Frank Wolf, and I would like to yield to him to just say a word or two. Chairman Wolf, I think as most of you know, is the architect, the prime author, of the International Religious Freedom Act. He also is the author of the legislation to establish a Special Envoy for Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia. He is incomparable.

He has been tenacious throughout his entire 34 years as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives on the issues of human rights in general and religious freedom in particular.

Chairman Wolf.

Mr. WOLF. Thank you, Mr. Smith. I just wanted to welcome Mr. Farr and Mr. Galbraith and the others. I have a 4:30 meeting which I am going to go to. I am going to stay until that time. Thank you for holding the hearing.

Thank you very much. I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Chairman Wolf.

Let me begin by inviting Ambassador Peter Galbraith, who has served as an advisor to the Kurdistan Regional Government and is currently the senior diplomatic fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation where his work focuses on Iraq, the greater Middle East, and conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.

From 1979 to 1993, he was a senior advisor on the Middle East, South Asia, and International Organizations to the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee. From 1993 to 1998, he served as U.S. Ambassador to Croatia and helped mediate the agreement that ended the war in Croatia.

We will then hear from Mr. Tom Farr, who is visiting associate professor of religion and international affairs at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service. He directs the Religious Freedom Project and a program on religion and U.S. foreign policy at Georgetown's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, and where he is a senior fellow.

Dr. Farr has served in both the U.S. Army and the American Foreign Service and he became the first Director of the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom where he led American diplomatic efforts to promote religious liberty, and is also an author and I have read his book. It is an extraordinarily well-written book, and I thank him for his service.

And, finally, we will hear from Ms. Pascale Esho Warda, who is currently serving as the president of the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization and was Minister of Immigration and Refugees in the Iraqi Interim Government. She was one of only six women in the 32-member Interim Iraqi Council of Ministers which operated following the transfer of power from the Coalition Provisional Authority to the Interim Iraqi Government in 2004.

Chaldean Catholic and ethnic Assyrian, she was born in northern Iraq, but was later exiled to France. She studied there and was the representative of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, the primary Assyrian political party in Iraq.

Unfortunately, Bishop Ibrahim Ibrahim of the Chaldean Church, the Bishop Emeritus of the Chaldean Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church here in the United States has taken ill, but we are hoping that one of his top advisors will take the time to at least convey to us his testimony. So I would ask him to join us as well.

And, again, send our best to the Bishop. We certainly hope he has a speedy recovery. He was here for the first three testimonies, but then fell ill.

Ambassador Galbraith, if you could begin.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE PETER GALBRAITH
(FORMER ADVISOR TO THE KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT)**

Ambassador GALBRAITH. Mr. Chairman, let me express my appreciation to you and the committee for holding this important hearing and for the invitation to testify.

Kurdistan is key to any strategy to protect the Christians and other minorities in northern Iraq, because it is the place of refuge and also the home to very significant Yezidi and Christian populations. It is also, I dare say, unique in the Middle East for its commitment to tolerance and diversity.

As I outline in my written testimony, Kurdistan region has had a policy since it was created in 1992, of using public funds to rebuild churches and to try to encourage the Christian community who are also victims of Saddam's depopulation efforts to return home. And in contrast to many other parts of the Middle East, public funds, for example, are not used to rebuild mosques, although

it is also a safe area for Shiites and Sunnis who have been fleeing ISIS.

I am not going to try to add to the excellent testimony you have already received, because my time is short, and because in some way it is superfluous. In my previous experience dealing with war crimes, and that has been a good part of my career one way or another, you have had to rely on investigations, forensic work, reporting, to uncover the crimes because the perpetrators covered them up.

But in this case, ISIS actually advertises its crimes with slickly produced videos and other material. So collecting the evidence is not so difficult. The real challenge is what to do about it, and I have five recommendations.

The first is to recognize that ISIS is committing genocide against the Yezidis and the Christians. The genocide convention says, "Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group." The specified acts are killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, or deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

ISIS is killing, causing bodily harm, and creating intolerable conditions of life. It is doing so with the announced intent of destroying these Christian and Yezidi, and I might add Shi'ite, communities. So it fits within the four corners of the genocide convention. And the important point about the genocide convention is that it is a convention to prevent, as well as punish, genocide.

You don't want to wait until everybody has been killed to determine that genocide took place, because you can't prevent it once it has actually happened. This is not just semantics, it is very important to say that this is genocide.

Second, the United States could do much more to assist the Kurdistan Regional Government to care for 1.25 million displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees now finding safety in Kurdistan. Since June, more than 1 million Iraqis have taken refuge in Kurdistan. The Kurdistan region has a population of 5 million. It is an equivalent as if 50 million people came into the United States this summer, and even from my home in Vermont I cannot help but notice the uproar in Congress over 50,000 illegal immigrants in our big country. Imagine if we had 50 million coming in. That is what they are up against.

And since February the Maliki government, and he was supported by the man who is now Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, has refused to pay the Kurdistan Government's constitutionally mandated share of Iraq's budget. And Kurdistan doesn't have the resources to take care of its own people, much less the million people who have just come in.

And so that leads to my third recommendation, which is that the United States should prevail on Baghdad to end its vendetta against Kurdistan in the interest of jointly confronting the common enemy of ISIS. It means paying the KRG's budget arrears immediately, as well as extra amounts to take care of the other Iraqis who are there. It means ending self-destructive actions. Let me cite one.

After ISIS took over Mosul, the Maliki government closed the space of Kurdistan to cargo flights because they were afraid that arms would be flown into Kurdistan. Well, of course, what would the arms have been used for? It would have been used to fight the common enemy, but sectarian politics trumped the national defense even at a time of grave peril. Now, I know that there are quarrels, but those quarrels can be set aside at least for the moment.

Fourth, we need to ensure that Kurdistan has the necessary weaponry. For the peshmerga, it is the only military force in Iraq that is capable of fighting ISIS, because by and large the Iraqi Army has dissolved. Weapons are beginning to flow, but there is a need for more advanced weapons, including helicopters, MRAPs, things that will match what ISIS got, the American weapons that ISIS got from the Iraqi Government.

And, finally, we need a broader strategy to combat ISIS. I look forward to hearing what the President has to say. And from what I have read, I think there is much to commend what appears to be in the offing.

But I want to conclude with a word of warning. The notion that a strategy that relies on a more inclusive government, Iraqi Government, can work is a fallacy, because there is no inclusive Iraqi Government that can reach out to the Sunnis, certainly not one led by Dawa, al-Abadi's party, which seeks to define Iraq as a Shiite state. And, frankly, there is nothing that has happened from al-Abadi to even deal with the Kurdish question which ought to be the easier part. So if it all rests on the hope of a more inclusive government, then the strategy is not likely to succeed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Galbraith follows:]

Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith
“Genocide in Northern Iraq”
Testimony before the
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International
Organizations
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the fate of the Christian and Yazidi communities in northern Iraq. Beginning thirty years ago when I served on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I have been visiting Kurdistan and northern Iraq regularly.

Kurdistan is key to any strategy to protect northern Iraq’s Christians and Yazidis. Kurdistan is home to a substantial part of Iraq’s population of both groups and it is the place of refuge for those fleeing ISIS. If ISIS is to be rolled back, the Kurdistan peshmerga will have to provide the ground troops to do so, since the Iraqi Army is significantly degraded and no western country is willing to send its own forces.

Kurdistan is unique in the Middle East for its strong commitment to religious tolerance and diversity. In the 1980s, Saddam Hussein’s regime systematically destroyed every village in Kurdistan, bulldozing or dynamiting homes and deporting the inhabitants. Assyrian and Chaldean villages were among those destroyed. Since it was established in 1992, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has made a special effort to encourage Christians to return to their villages. The KRG has restored property to Christians and has paid for rebuilding Christian villages. The KRG does not use public money to build mosques but it does use to build churches. To be fair, these efforts have met limited success—not due to lack of effort—but because so many Christians have relocated to cities or left Iraq altogether. Today, the KRG is using public funds to create a Catholic University in Ainkawa, the Christian area of the Kurdistan capital, Erbil. There is no similar funding of Islamic Schools.

From the start, the KRG has included Christians and Yazidis in the Kurdistan parliament, as ministers in the Kurdistan Government and, since 2005, as parliamentarians in Baghdad on the Kurdistan party lists. For many years, the KRG Deputy Prime Minister was a Christian as was the Finance Minister. In the current negotiations with Baghdad, the Kurds asked for a ministerial portfolio in the national government for a Yazidi, a demand rejected by Prime Minister-designate Haider al-Abadi.

Since 2003, Kurdistan has been a refuge for Christians fleeing sectarian attacks in Baghdad and other parts of Arab Iraq. In all this time, there has—to the best of my knowledge—not been one religiously motivated attack on Christians or Yazidis within the Kurdistan Region.

Many of northern Iraq’s Christians and Yazidis live in the borderlands between the Kurdistan Region and Arab Iraq. Some, like the Yazidis in Sinjar, lived in areas disputed between the KRG and the federal government. Others, like the Christians on Nineveh Plain, live in areas not claimed by the KRG. And, it is in these borderlands that Christians and Yazidis are most at risk from ISIS.

While I have been to the borderlands in the past, I have nothing to add to the testimony you have already received. The US Government, human rights organizations, and brave reporters like the New York Times' Alissa Rubin have done an excellent job documenting ISIS' crimes. In this case, however, their work is a bit superfluous.

In the past perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity have tried to cover up their crimes. ISIS advertises its atrocities in slickly produced videos.

We know what is happening. The question is what will the United States and its allies do about it. I urge the following five steps:

First, recognize that ISIS is committing genocide against Iraq's Christians and the Yazidis. In relevant part, the Genocide Convention says:

"Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, "

ISIS is (a) killing, (b) causing serious bodily and mental harm, and (c) inflicting intolerable physical conditions with the announced intent of destroying the Christian and Yazidi religious groups in their entirety. These actions fit within all four corners of the Convention's definition of genocide.

In her Pulitzer Prize winning book A Problem from Hell on the US response to genocide, Samantha Power points out that genocide is a crime of intent. The treaty's first goal is to prevent genocide. We can't prevent genocide if we wait until everyone is dead. Power chronicles the contortions of successive US administrations from Reagan to Clinton to avoid using the "g-word". If it is genocide, then the United States is legally and morally obliged to act, which past presidents have not wanted to do. President Obama, to his great credit, did use the word the genocide when he announced airstrikes on August 7. However, what was happening to the Yaizidis was not, as the President, said a "potential act of genocide"; it was genocide.

Second, the United States should do much more to assist the KRG to care of the 1.25 million displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees now finding safety in Kurdistan. These include almost all of the Christians and Yazidis that had lived elsewhere in northern Iraq. After ISIS began its offensive in June, more than one million Iraqis fled to the Kurdistan Region. Kurdistan's pre-crisis population was just 5 million so the influx amounted to twenty percent of the Region's population. It would be the same as if the United States had fifty million people coming across our southern border this summer, and not just the 50,000 that has so pre-occupied the Congress.

Since February, the Maliki government—supported by Prime Minister-designate Haider al-Abadi—has refused to pay the KRG’s constitutionally mandated share of Iraq’s budget. The KRG has neither the resources to take care of its own people nor to assist the more than one million non-Kurdish Iraqis who have fled to the Region.

This leads to my third recommendation: The United States should prevail on Baghdad to end its vendetta against Kurdistan in the interest of jointly confronting the common enemy of ISIS. This means paying KRG budget arrears immediately, as well extra amounts to care of the IDPs and the 265,000 Syrian refugees in Kurdistan. But, it also means ending self-destructive actions. After ISIS took over Mosul and the Sunni north, Prime Minister Maliki closed Kurdistan’s airspace to cargo flights in order to keep arms out of the hands of the peshmerga. Nothing better underscores the narrow sectarian bias of an Iraqi Government that was willing to risk the lives of six million fellow Iraqis (many of whom are not Kurds) in order to score points in an ongoing policy quarrel. Al-Abadi is from the same political party as Malik and he has so far shown no greater flexibility than Maliki. Maliki and al-Abadi apparently fear that a financially sound and militarily strong Kurdistan might soon opt for independence but their actions are designed to produce just that result.

Fourth, we need to ensure that Kurdistan has the necessary weaponry to defend itself. The peshmerga are the only ground force that can protect northern Iraq’s Christians and Yazidis. The Administration is now facilitating the supply of weapons, but I hope the Congress will monitor the situation to insure the timely arrival of heavier weapons including armored vehicles, anti-tank weapons, and artillery. Inadvertently, the United States provided ISIS--- via the feckless Iraqi army—with the advanced weaponry that it used so effectively against the Kurds, Christians and Yazidis. We should provide comparable weaponry to the only military in Iraq that is reliable ally, the peshmerga.

Finally, we need a broader strategy to combat ISIS. The President is working on a strategy and, from what I have seen, there is much to commend it. It is a mistake, however, to develop a strategy that relies on a more inclusive Iraqi Government. No Shiite-led government that can win over the Sunnis, given how polarized Iraq has become. And, there is no indication that Iraq’s third Dawa-led government has any intention of becoming more inclusive than the first two.

Thank you.

Peter W. Galbraith, a former US Ambassador to Croatia and Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, is the senior diplomatic fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. He is the author of [The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War Without End](#). The views expressed here are his own.

Mr. SMITH. Ambassador Galbraith, thank you very much for your testimony and your very solid recommendations.

Mr. Farr.

STATEMENT OF THOMAS FARR, PH.D., DIRECTOR, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM PROJECT, BERKLEY CENTER FOR RELIGION, PEACE, AND WORLD AFFAIRS, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Mr. FARR. Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to this hearing. And if I could be permitted a brief personal remark, it is an honor to be here in the presence of two lions of the Congress, Mr. Smith and Mr. Wolf. If I could just say to Mr. Wolf, we are going to miss you, sir. Thank you for your service to this country and to religious freedom.

Tomorrow we mark the 13th anniversary of the Islamist terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. What we are facing in Iraq and Syria today has deeply troubling similarities to 9/11, both in its origins and its threat to American national security.

There is, of course, one major difference between then and now. While Christians in the Middle East were under mounting pressure in 2001, today their very existence is at risk. We are witnessing the disappearance of Christians and Christianity from Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere in the Middle East, a religious, cultural genocide with terrible humanitarian, moral, and strategic consequences for Christians, for the region, and for us all.

Some blame the current threat to Christians on the 2003 American invasion of Iraq and the chaotic movement toward democracy that it triggered. While there is some truth in that assessment, I believe it is at best a half truth. The threat to Christians and other minorities in this region was not ultimately caused by U.S. military action or the struggle for democracy. The root cause is Islamist terrorism of the kind that hit us on 9/11. That phenomenon finds its origins in a radical and spreading interpretation of Islam, nourished and subsidized by both secular and religious tyrants in the Middle East.

Since 2001, Islamist terrorist movements have emerged throughout the world, and notwithstanding administration insistence that al-Qaeda and others of its ilk were on the run and a spent force, these movements today are present in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. While they have doubtless taken advantage of the chaos, attendant on transitions to democracy in places like Iraq and Egypt, democracy did not incubate these barbarians.

Instead, these groups, from ISIS to the extremist ayatollahs in Iran, are motivated by a common belief that God is calling them to brutality and violence against the enemies of Islam, and to control territory in order to carry out this divinely ordained mission.

Over the long term, while the use of military force will doubtless be necessary, stable self-government grounded in religious tolerance and ultimately religious freedom is the only reliable antidote to the toxic religious convictions of Islamist terrorists.

Let me quote from the 9/11 Commission Report, and I quote,

“Islamist terrorist leaders draw on a long tradition of extreme intolerance within one stream of Islam. That stream is motivated by religion. Islamist terrorists mean exactly

what they say. To them, America is the font of all evil, the head of the snake, and it must be converted or destroyed.”

Mr. Chairman, we must destroy ISIS militarily, if we can, but we cannot destroy with force of arms the religious ideology that sustains it and other Islamist terrorist groups. Notwithstanding economic grievances or hatred of the United States or sociopathic tendencies that may motivate them, all of these groups have in common an interpretation of Islam that comes down to this: Islam must be defended with violence.

Now, the vast majority of Muslims—Sunni, Shiite, or Sufi—let alone the Islamic minorities like the Ahmadiyya or the Bahá’í, do not support violence or cruelty. But it is also the case that most Muslim majority countries are supportive of legal and social structures such as anti-blasphemy, defamation, and anti-apostasy laws and practices that encourage extremism and discourage the liberalizing voices of Islam.

It is here that U.S. religious freedom policy can make a contribution. Until the extremist understanding of Islam is utterly discredited in the Islamic world, or at least moved to the margins of intellectual, theological, and political life, Islamist terrorism will continue to grow and flourish. A regime of religious freedom would help in this task by ensuring open debate about Islam and other religions without fear of criminal charge or mob violence.

History, modern research, and common sense tell us that religious freedom undermines radicalism. On the other hand, repression of the kind that has been endemic in the Middle East encourages it.

The United States has had, for 16 years, a statutory requirement to promote religious freedom in its foreign policy. It has failed to accomplish that task.

Our ineffectiveness is evident in the findings of the Pew Research Center that 76 percent of the world’s population lives in countries where religious freedom, in effect, does not exist. Millions of people are subject to violent persecution because of their religious beliefs or those of their tormentors.

While the United States is not responsible for these numbers, it is or ought to be a source of deep concern that we have done so little to effect them. While no administration has been successful in promoting religious freedom, the issue has been an especially low priority under this President.

For example, the position of Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, which was the position established by the IRF Act to lead this policy, has been vacant for over half this President’s tenure. And even when it was filled, the incumbent had virtually no resources or authority. There was then, and there is now, no American strategy to advance religious freedom in our foreign policy.

Given the stakes in the Middle East and elsewhere for American national security, this lassitude, this inertia, is stunning. I, like you, Mr. Chairman, am hopeful there will be positive changes under Rabbi David Saperstein, the man nominated to be the next Ambassador. And I urge the Senate to confirm him quickly.

Mr. Chairman, my prepared remarks end with a recommendation that the administration develop a national security strategy

that includes religious freedom. In addition, I recommend five steps that this committee might take to amend the IRFA and improve U.S. IRF policy. I will just briefly hit on them.

First, require the State Department to have the Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom report directly to the Secretary of State, as do other Ambassadors-at-Large, such as the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues. This will increase the status and authority of the IRF Ambassador and help overcome the real perception among American diplomats and foreign governments alike that this issue is not a priority.

Second, give the Ambassador the resources he needs to develop strategies and to implement them in key countries around the world.

Third, make training of American diplomats mandatory in three key stages, which I lay out. Presently, it is voluntary, this training, and not terribly effective.

Fourth, amend the IRFA to require that the list of severe violators, the Countries of Particular Concern, be issued annually with the report. Require the State Department to provide an analysis of other policy tools being applied in each Country of Particular Concern, including programs that target democratic stability, economic growth, and counterterrorism.

And, finally, require the State Department to respond in writing to recommendations by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which the chairman correctly notes are routinely ignored by the State Department.

Now, such changes will not work miracles. They will not work overnight. But without steps like this, and without the commitment of the President, the Secretary of State, the Congress, and the Ambassador-at-Large, the remaining Christians and other minorities of the Middle East will face violent persecution into the indefinite future. And the United States will face a permanent threat from the ever-spreading phenomenon of violent religious Islamist extremism.

For all of these reasons, I urge this committee to take action. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Farr follows:]

Islamist Terrorism, Genocide, and U.S. National Security: Empowering U.S. IRF Policy

Testimony before Sub-Committees of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs

September 10, 2014

Thomas F. Farr*

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Sub-Committees, thank you for inviting me to this important hearing.

Tomorrow we mark the 13th anniversary of the Islamist terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. What we are facing in Iraq and Syria today has deeply troubling similarities to 9/11, both in its origins and its threat to American national security.

There is, of course, at least one major difference between now and then. While Christians in the Middle East were under mounting pressure in 2001, today their very existence is at risk. We are witnessing the disappearance of Christians and Christianity from Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere in the Middle East – a religious/cultural genocide with terrible humanitarian, moral, and strategic consequences for Christians, for the region, and for us all.

Some blame the current threat to Christians on the 2003 American invasion of Iraq and the chaotic movement toward democracy that it triggered. While there is some truth in that assessment, I believe it is at best a half truth. The threat to Christians and other minorities in this region was not ultimately caused by U.S. military action or the struggle for democracy. The root cause is Islamist terrorism of the kind that hit us on 9/11. That phenomenon finds its origins in a radical, and spreading, interpretation of Islam -- nourished and subsidized by secular and religious Middle Eastern tyrants.

Since 2001 Islamist terrorist movements have emerged throughout the world, and – notwithstanding administration insistence that Al Qaeda was “on the run” and a spent force -- are today present in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. While they have doubtless taken advantage of the chaos attendant on transitions to democracy in places like Iraq and Egypt, and of the openness of free societies, democracy did not incubate these barbarians.

Instead, these groups – from Al Qaeda to the extremist Ayatollahs in Iran -- are motivated by a common belief that God is calling them to brutality and violence against the enemies of Islam, and to control territory in order to carry out this divinely-ordained mission. Over the long-term, while the use of military force will doubtless be necessary, stable self-government, grounded in religious tolerance and ultimately religious freedom, is the only reliable antidote to the toxic religious convictions of Islamist terrorists.

President Obama is said to be pondering – as did President Bush in 2001 -- a military strategy to destroy or contain the Islamist group, ISIS, which is responsible for the current threat to

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Christians and other minorities in Syria and Iraq, and which could threaten the American homeland as did Al Qaeda on 9/11. Such a strategy is, in my view, necessary.

But we should have learned from the growth of Islamist extremism since 9/11 that military force alone cannot kill the religious ideology that created and sustains ISIS, Al Qaeda, the Al Nusra Front, the Taliban, Boko Haram, Al Shabaab, Hezbollah (and its Iranian sponsors) and the countless other violent Islamist terror groups that would destroy us if they had the means.

I will focus my remarks today on the nature of the threat, the stakes involved, and how U.S. International Religious Freedom policy might play a role in addressing this crisis. Since 9/11, that policy has played almost no role in American diplomatic attempts to encourage stable self-government and undermine violent religious extremism. This must change.

The Threat and the Stakes

Last year, prior to the movement of ISIS into Iraq, Georgetown's Religious Freedom Project, in partnership with Baylor University, sponsored an international conference in Rome. The subject was Christian contributions to freedom, historically and in the contemporary world. Our keynote address was given by the Iraqi Patriarch of the Chaldeans, Archbishop Louis Raphael Sako, a heroic and holy man who is now in the eye of the storm.

The title of the Patriarch's speech was: "What Happens to the Middle East if Christians Flee?" His answer was hauntingly prescient. Christians, he said, would continue to suffer the agony of violence and displacement. But, he insisted, Middle Eastern societies and Muslims themselves would also suffer. In Iraq Christians had lived for two millennia, and had made substantial economic, intellectual, and religious contributions to the common good. The very presence of Christian communities was stabilizing, the Patriarch told our audience. Among other things, it ensured religious pluralism, and made possible a measure of religious toleration that is utterly necessary for the success of any highly religious society.

I am told that Patriarch Sako is safe at the moment. But if he and his Christian flock are never to return in peace to their homes in Iraq, we will have witnessed the virtual elimination of an ancient religious community -- by death, conversion, or expulsion. It is difficult to overstate the civilizational catastrophe that such a development would portend. The purging of Christians and others from Iraq and Syria has already ended or devastated the lives of millions of innocent human beings. The disappearance of Christianity from Iraq, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East will also reduce dramatically the chances of achieving stable self-government grounded in religious tolerance, and the long-term defeat of violent Islamist extremism.

Mr. Chairman, it is true that Christians fared better in recent years under tyrants in the Middle East, such as Saddam Hussein, the Assad regime, and Hosni Mubarak. But tyranny is a fragile safe haven. It has played a major role in the emergence and spread of Islamist terrorism. We cannot, and should not, support a return to despotic political systems that incubate violence and protect terrorists. Such systems are, in the long-run, safe for no one but tyrants and terrorists; they pose a long-term threat to Christians, other minorities, and American national security.

Violent Islamist extremism has deep roots in the last century. Varying factors contributed to the emergence of religiously disparate groups like Saudi Wahhabism, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Taliban, Hezbollah, ISIS, the Al Nusra Front, Boko Haram, Al Shabaab, and Al Qaeda in its various guises. I have heard many of those factors discussed by experts in recent months – economic deprivation, rage at the West because of its history of imperialism, the U.S. invasion of Iraq. After the vile beheadings of two American citizens, I also read a good deal of psychoanalysis – the killer is a sociopath, a mal-adjusted youth who could not fit into his own society. Much of this analysis is similar to what we heard after 9/11.

I leave it to others to sort out these factors, some of which are, doubtless, nonsense. Whatever their relative salience, there is one overarching cause of Islamist terrorism, whether it is Sunni or Shi'a, one that we long ago identified, but that our foreign policy leaders continue to ignore. On this day preceding the 13th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, let me quote from the 9/11 Commission Report:

“... Islamist terrorist leaders draw on a long tradition of extreme intolerance within one stream of Islam That stream is motivated by religion.... Islamist terrorists mean exactly what they say: to them America is the font of all evil, the ‘head of the snake,’ and it must be converted or destroyed. [This] is not a position with which America can bargain or negotiate. With it there is no common ground – not even a respect for life – on which to begin a dialogue. It can only be destroyed or utterly isolated.”

Mr. Chairman, we must contain ISIS militarily, but we cannot destroy with force of arms the religious ideology that sustains it and other Islamist terrorist groups. Notwithstanding any economic grievances, or hatred of the United States, or sociopathic tendencies that may motivate them, all these groups have in common an interpretation of Islam that comes down to this:

Anyone who insults my religion must be punished because they have insulted God. I, on the other hand, am Islam's defender and God's enforcer. I must defend Islam with ferocity, violence, and cruelty because it is my obligation to God. If I do this well, I will be rewarded in Heaven.

The vast majority of Muslims, Sunni, Shi'a or Sufi (let alone the Islamic minorities like the Ahmadiyya or the Baha'i, who suffer grievously), do not support violence or cruelty. They are horrified by what is taking place in the name of their religion and point out that the acts of ISIS constitute a grotesque and barbaric distortion of the religion in which they believe. But it is also the case that most Muslim majority countries are supportive of legal and social structures, such as anti-blasphemy, anti-defamation, and anti-apostasy laws and practices, that encourage extremism, including against Muslim minorities, and discourage the liberalizing voices of Islam.

It is here that U.S. religious freedom policy can make a contribution. Until the extremist understanding of Islam is utterly discredited in the Islamic world, or at least moved to the margins of intellectual, theological, and political life in Muslim-majority countries, Islamist terrorism will continue to grow and flourish.

Better U.S. intelligence (such as the mine of information gleaned from the Bin Laden raid, information which apparently has still not been completely mined by the intelligence

community) and precise military strikes that limit the damage to innocents, can certainly help disrupt terrorist actions. But intelligence and military action, however effective, cannot, by their nature, kill the ideas that motivate the terrorists. Those ideas will remain virulently attractive to some until Muslim majority societies become convinced that *their own interests* demand religious toleration and, ultimately, religious freedom.

Let me give a brief example to illustrate the point. A few years ago an Afghan graduate student submitted a research paper that argued from the Koran that Islam supports the equality of men and women. His professors turned him in to local police; he was charged with blasphemy, convicted, and sentenced to death. The rationale for this action was that the young man had offended Islam and must be punished.

So long as this malevolent idea remains institutionalized in Muslim societies, radicals will dominate the discourse about what Islam requires of its adherents. That idea must be isolated within, if not eliminated from, Muslim societies if they are to rid themselves of the scourge of Islamist extremism and terrorism. A regime of religious freedom would help in this task by ensuring open debate about Islam and other religions without fear of criminal charges or mob violence. One could criticize anti-blasphemy laws, and support religious freedom, without fear of being murdered, as were two Pakistani leaders -- Shabbaz Bhatti and Salman Taseer. Religious freedom would afford full equality under the law for all religious groups and individuals. History, modern research, and common sense tell us that such a system undermines radicalism. On the other hand, repression of the kind that has been endemic in the Middle East encourages radicalism.

The Potential Role of U.S. International Religious Freedom Policy

As it happens the United States has had for 16 years a statutory requirement to promote religious freedom in its foreign policy. It has utterly failed to accomplish that task. Our ineffectiveness is evident in the findings of the Pew Research Center that 76 percent of the world's population lives in countries where religious freedom is highly or very highly restricted. Millions are subject to violent persecution because of their religious beliefs or those of their tormentors.

While the United States is not responsible for these numbers, it is, or ought to be, a source of deep concern that we have done so little to affect them. While no administration has been successful in promoting religious freedom, the issue has been an especially low priority under the current President.

For example, the position of Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom (IRF) -- the position established by the IRF Act to lead this policy -- has been vacant for over half this President's tenure. Even when it was filled, the incumbent had virtually no resources or authority. There was then, and there is now, no American strategy to advance religious freedom in our foreign policy. Given the stakes in the Middle East and elsewhere for American national security, this lassitude is stunning.

To be sure, there are people in the State Department who care deeply about religious freedom, and have been responsible for some potentially fruitful internal steps. For example, there is a

working group of civil society representatives on religious freedom, and a training program for diplomats that includes some discussion of religious freedom. But overall our policy has devolved into reports and speeches without strategy or policy action. We need a working group of U.S. foreign policy officials, not just of private citizens. We need formal, mandatory training on what religious freedom is, why it is important for our national security, and how to advance it.

I am hopeful that there will be positive changes under Rabbi David Saperstein, the man nominated to be the next ambassador. I urge the Senate to confirm him quickly.

Let me end by addressing what a wise and effective U.S. International Religious Freedom policy might do to mitigate the crisis of Islamist terrorism in the Middle East. The key to success is overcoming the presumption that religious toleration and, ultimately, religious freedom are in effect a Trojan Horse designed to destroy Islam.

In particular, we must convince the struggling democracies such as those of Iraq, Egypt, Afghanistan, and Pakistan that until they move toward religious freedom, they will never achieve their own goals of stable self-government, internal security, economic growth, and peace. Hopefully in the near future, the Syrian people will be freed from the Assad regime, and in a position to hear and act on this message as well.

Those should be our general goals. In order to achieve them, we will need an overall national security strategy that incorporates IRF policy, and a strategy for each country where the absence of religious freedom threatens our national security.

I do not discount the extraordinary difficulties that will attend the development and implementation of such a policy. But, in my view, the stakes are high enough to make the effort. While I support military action against Islamist terrorism, I believe we can also mount an effective IRF counter-terrorism policy that does not entail the costs in blood and treasure that military action does. Indeed, IRF diplomacy, if successful, would reduce the need for military action.

I want to emphasize, however, that none of this can happen until and unless the position of the IRF Ambassador at Large, and the training of America's diplomats, is taken seriously. Accordingly, I call on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs to offer the following amendments to the International Religious Freedom Act. These amendments will help mainstream U.S. IRF policy.

1. Require the State Department to treat the IRF Ambassador as it does the Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues, i.e., to report directly to the Secretary of State, rather than the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. This will increase the status and authority of the IRF ambassador and help overcome the perception – among American diplomats and foreign governments alike – that this issue is not a priority.
2. Give the Ambassador the resources he needs to develop strategies, and to implement them, in key countries around the globe. This need not involve the appropriation of new monies, but the

allocation of portions of existing appropriations for programs such as democracy promotion and counter terrorism.

3. Make training of American diplomats mandatory at three stages: when they enter the Foreign Service, when they receive “area studies” training prior to departing for post, and when they become Deputy Chiefs of Mission and Ambassadors. This training should tell them what religious freedom is, why it is important for individuals and societies, why advancing it is important for America’s national interests, its status in the country and region to which they have been assigned, and how to advance it.

4. Amend the IRFA to *require* that the list of particularly severe violators (the “countries of particular concern”) be issued annually with the Report. In addition to describing any economic sanctions that might be levied against these countries, *require* the State Department to provide a comprehensive analysis of other policy tools being applied in each country, including programs that target democratic stability, economic growth and counter terrorism.

5. Require the State Department to respond in writing to recommendations by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. At the same time, require the Commission to pay greater attention to the question of why the United States is not succeeding in advancing religious freedom, as gauged by objective reports such as those of the Pew Research Center. The Commission should recommend concrete steps for the State Department that will result in increasing the status and authority of the ambassador at large, increasing the resources allocated to religious freedom policy, achieving permanent, effective training for all diplomats, and integrating religious freedom into US strategies for democracy promotion, economic growth, and counter terrorism.

Such changes will not work overnight. But without steps like this, and without the commitment of the President, the Secretary of State, the Congress, and the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, the remaining Christians and other minorities of the Middle East will face violent persecution into the indefinite future. And the United States will face a permanent threat from the ever spreading phenomenon of violent Islamist extremism. For all these reasons, I urge you to act.

Thank you for having me here today.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for your testimony and very useful recommendations which we will look to promote. So thank you.

I would like to now ask Ms. Warda if you would proceed.

**STATEMENT OF HER EXCELLENCY PASCALE ESHO WARDA,
PRESIDENT, HMMURABI HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION
(FORMER MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEES IN
THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT)**

Ms. WARDA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am sorry Mr. Frank Wolf is out now, but I would like to really thank you both for your concern about Iraqi Christians. Since 2003 to now, we are just seeing your interventions always are for the best of the Christians.

I would like to really represent today the voice of a civil society. I am chairman of the Hammurabi Human Rights organization and would like to say what is really going on on the ground.

I was here 2 months ago, and I was just qualifying this situation as genocide. And people were saying, "Please don't say genocide. It is not genocide." No, it is genocide. I thank you to say it is—all of you, you said it. It is a genocide.

And I would like to say now I am coming and the situation is really contrary of what we were waiting that to—to be better, now the situation is worse, coming out from a situation of persecution and going to—up to the ongoing genocide now.

The number of persons displaced by ISIS rose to more than 1 million people. Most of those are Christian and Yezidis, Turkmen and Shiite as well, because Shabak are Shiites and Turkmen are Shiites.

Minorities are threatened with death and executed. They are kidnapped and raped. They are robbed and pillaged, and so on. They are denied water and electricity services. Women are kidnapped and sold and forced to marry with ISIS members. Women are forced to wear veils. Men are forced to grow beards.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is genocide unfolding in the north of Iraq now. There are 200,000 Assyrian Christians, 150,000 Yezidis and other minorities displaced from their homes and living in refugee camps in Erbil, in Ankara, in Dohuk, in Suleimaniya, and so on.

Worldwide, Assyrians have four major denominations: Chaldeans, Syriacs, Syriac Orthodox, Catholic, and so on, of, you know, sectarian names. Forty-five percent are Chaldean Catholic, 26 percent are Syriac Orthodox, 19 percent are Assyrian Church of the East, 4 percent are Syriac Catholic.

The refugees are living in streets, open fields, schools, church halls, courtyards; abandoned, condemned, and unfinished buildings; and in large tent camps. Winter is coming, and winter in this area is so cold. Those children will really not survive if the situation is in the state of today. The displaced children will miss their school, and even the local children will miss their school because the displaced people are occupying the schools.

What we would like to really suggest, we suggest long-term and short-term solutions. The short-term solution is providing humanitarian aid to the refugees. Aid is inadequate actually now. There

is a lack of shelters, lack of food and water, lack of medicine and clothing.

A second point, and I think is the first is clear ISIS from Mosul. If Mosul is not freed, we have no insurance to stay any more near to Mosul, so—and the Nineveh Plain so that displaced residents may return to their homes ahead for winter. They will not return if ISIS is still in Mosul.

Designate the Nineveh Plain as a safe haven and provide an international force for protection to stabilize the region, regardless of whether Iraqi or Kurdish forces or Iraqi Army forces.

The Nineveh Plain has been neglected by both the Kurdish and Baghdad regimes. This long-term safe haven would be similar to the one provided for the Kurdish in 1991. Financially compensate all displaced persons for their property and income losses, because everybody has lost house and everything in house and even their own clothes.

Long-term solutions, establish an autonomous region for each—the Assyrian Christian and the Yezidis—to be administered by them. Create Assyrian Christian and Yezidi manned units with Iraqi police and military, and all kinds of security tools, in the different institutions of security tools. And station these in Assyrian and Yezidi areas, so that they will defend themselves and their villages.

I was contacted from Sinjar Mountain by Sheikh Kamal, who is a Yezidi, who was really requesting and saying to me, “Please tell our brothers and our friends to send us the weapons, to us directly to defend ourselves from Sinjar Mountain.” So there is a problem of confidence there.

Gain international recognition for the genocide against Assyrian Christians, which has been ongoing since 1915. It is not of today. Since 1915, we are in ongoing genocide. Each 10 years, each 5 years, we have genocide in different areas of Iraq.

The solution for the Iraqi displaced by ISIS is not offer them passage out of the country, but to remove the threats to them, whether from ISIS or from their neighbors who collaborate with ISIS and stabilize the region, providing civil and economic security. This will insure that Christian Assyrians, Chaldean, Syriacs, and others will remain in their land where they have been since more than 6,700 years.

The ideology which controls the Muslim jihadists is criminal Islamic ideology, which is based on two sources, the Koran as the obligatory word of Allah, and the Sunna—Hadith—of the Prophet Mohammed. This is encapsulated in the Muslim Brotherhood in one sentence, “Allah is our goal. The prophet is our ideal, the Koran is our constitution, the jihad is our way, and the death for the sake of Allah is our aspiration.”

How we can get really a real insurance of the life here if we are not protected internationally? Please, international protection, this is the request of Patriarch Sako, is the request of all Christians and Yezidi on the ground.

This phrase was repeated in the streets of Paris while French Muslims were demonstrating, most of them Arab origins. The Muslim Brotherhood is the base cell from which stems all of these cur-

rent Islamic terrorist movements, regardless to their denominations.

ISIS is not just a danger to Iraq and Syria only. It is a danger to all democratic countries. Therefore, democratic countries must hold accountable all countries and entities that support ISIS and similar groups. I think the problem is not really local or original. It is international. That is why we need an international solution, we need international protection.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Warda follows:]

Genocidal Attacks Against Christian and Other Religious Minorities in Syria and Iraq
 Joint Subcommittee Hearing
 Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
 September 10th 2014-Washington DC
 Testimony by Pascale Warda
 President of Hammurabi Human Rights Organization, Iraq
 Former Iraqi Minister of Migration and Displacement

Thank you for inviting me to this hearing. I was honored to meet with a number of congressional members, their staff and organizations interested in developments in Iraq during my two previous visits to Washington in June and July, especially the hearing on July 15, 2014. But, I am sorry to report nothing has changed. On the contrary, the suffering and abuse of Iraqi minorities continues and I say here and now we have not seen the worst of pain and sorrow.

The number of persons displaced by ISIS rose to more than 1.5 million, mostly Christians, Yazidis, Shabak and Turkmen Shiites.

Minorities are threatened with death and executed, they are kidnapped and raped, they are robbed and pillaged. They are denied water and electric service. Women are kidnapped and sold and forced to marry ISIS members. Women are force to wear veils. Men are forced to grow beards.

There are 200,000 Assyrian Christians and 150,000 Yazidis and other minorities displaced from their homes and living in refugee camps in Arbel, Ankawa, Dohuk and Suleimaniya.

Worldwide, Assyrians have four major denominations: 45% Chaldean Catholic, 26% Syriac Orthodox, 19% Assyrian Church of the East and 4% Syriac Catholic.

The refugees are living in streets, open fields, schools, and church halls and courtyards, abandoned, condemned and unfinished buildings and in large tent camps.

Winter is approaching, and many of the old, young and weak will not survive the cold weather.

The displaced children will miss their school year. The local children will also miss their school year because schools are overfilled with refugees.

The following actions must be taken to avert an even worse catastrophe.

Short term:

- Provide humanitarian aid to the refugees. Aid is inadequate. There is a lack of shelter, food, water, medicine and clothing.
- Clear ISIS from Mosul and the Nineveh Plain so that the displaced residents may return to their homes ahead of winter. They will not return if ISIS is still in Mosul.
- Designate the Nineveh Plain as a safe haven and provide an international force for protection to stabilize the region, regardless of whether Iraqi or Kurdish forces are there, so that residents may return to their homes. The Nineveh Plain has been neglected by both Kurds and Baghdad. This long term safe haven would be similar to the one provided for the Kurds in 1991.
- Financially compensate all displaced persons for their property and income losses.

Long term:

- Establish an autonomous region for each the Assyrian Christians and the Yazidis, to be administered by them.
- Create Assyrian Christian and Yazidi manned units within Iraqi police, military, security and other institutions and station these in Assyrian and Yazidi areas, so that they will defend themselves and their villages.
- Gain international recognition for the genocide against Assyrian Christians, which has been ongoing since 1915.

The solution for the Iraqis displaced by ISIS is not to offer them passage out of the country, but to remove the threats to them, whether from ISIS or from their neighbors who collaborated with ISIS, and stabilize the region, providing civil and economic security. This will insure that Christians Assyrians, Chaldeans Syriacs, and the others will remain in the land in which they have lived for over 6700 years.

The ideology which controls the Muslims Jihadists is a criminal Islamic ideology, which is based on two sources, the Koran as the obligatory word of Allah and the Sunna (Hadith) of the Prophet Mohammed. This is encapsulated in by the Muslim Brotherhood in one sentence: "Allah is our goal, the prophet is our ideal, the Koran is our constitution, jihad is our way, and the death for the sake of Allah is our aspiration."



This phrase was repeated in the Streets of Paris while French Muslims were demonstrating, most of them Arab origins. The Muslim Brotherhood is the basic cell from which stem all the current Islamic terrorist movements, regardless of their name.

ISIS is not a danger to Iraq and Syria only, it is a danger to all democratic countries. Therefore, democratic countries must hold accountable all countries and entities that support ISIS and similar groups.

Hammurabi Human Rights Organization Reports

September 6, 2014

- In Mosul there has been a sharp increase in the number of persons detained at the Badush prison in the last ten days, resulting from increased arrests of people resisting ISIS. Arrests are made by ISIS mostly in night raids.
- Looting and pillaging continue in the Nineveh Plain, and especially in the cities of Baghdede and Tel Kepe. Trucks roam the neighborhoods and select houses to be raided and transport the furniture to unknown locations. Organized gangs from surrounding villages conduct the looting under the supervision of ISIS.
- ISIS are holding a number of Yazidi women in one of the villages near Tal Afar in a prison built for this purpose. The conditions are extremely harsh. The women are given one Loaf of bread per day and are forced to use contaminated water for drinking. The women are also being forced to marry ISIS members.
- 25 Christians who were being held by ISIS in the SayedaZaineb mosque in Sinjar were transferred two days ago to nearby homes west of the mosque. ISIS gunmen forced two other Christians to convert to Islam and they are being held in a house separate from the other detained Christians.
- Two Christian families, residence of Baghdede, who were detained by ISIS in Mosul were released. It is not known why ISIS released these two families.
- Hundreds of Yazidiefamilies are still being held in the Yazidi village of KasirMihrab in the Tel Afar District. ISIS are preparing to transfer these families to an unknown location.
- ISIS have forced Yazidi girls to marry in the village of Kojo in the Sinjar District and are planning to conduct a collective wedding in the next few days.

August 30, 2014

- Most homes of university professors who fled Mosul are completely controlled by ISIS and were looted of all valuables, including furniture.
- New families are appearing in many of Mosul's neighborhoods. ISIS are bringing Iraqi and non-Iraqi families from other cities and towns and placing them in the empty homes of the Christians, Yazidis, Shabaks and Turkoman.
- There is a transfer of bodies in open cars every morning in Mosul, indicating a campaign to cleanse certain groups from the city. There is a high probability of the existence of mass graves for the bodies of citizens who are executed.
- A large, crowded market has sprung up, and it is cynically called "Daash Market." There is much furniture and household items for sale, as well antiques, old cultural heritage goods and a large selection of mobile phones. All of the merchandise is stolen from homes abandoned by fleeing residents.
- Families continue to suffer from lack of official documents after ISIS stripped them of everything. HHRO has appealed to the government to facilitate the issuance of new documents.
- Concern is escalating among the refugees that they will not return to their homes before winter. Nearly all of the refugees do not have winter clothing to protect them from the cold and snow.
- A number of women and girls who had been sold by ISIS were able to escape and some of them have arrived in the city of Dohuk. ISIS has abducted hundreds of women and girls and sold them in Mosul and in the Syrian city of Raqqa.
- Many suicides have been recorded among the refugees, especially among the ones who were stranded in remote areas and who lacked food, water and shelter. HHRO confirmed the suicide of a Yazidi in Dohuk on August 29.

August 28, 2014

- Many homeless children have begun to appear in Mosul. A 4 month old infant was found in a garbage dump.
- ISIS seized all homes in Mosul belonging to Nineveh Province judges and some of these homes were granted to ISIS leaders for housing, others were closed and marked with "reserved for the State of the Islamic Caliphate."
- ISIS is trying to recruit residents of Arab villages for looting the homes of Assyrians in the Nineveh Plain. Many have been recruited but many Arab residents of these villages have refused and have condemned the looting and any persons engaged in the activity.
- Seven people were kidnapped by ISIS in Baghdede, among whom were young girls.
- There are daily, organized robberies taking place in Baghdede, including looting of all auto parts stores, vehicles, tires, batteries, as well as large scale looting of home furniture.
- The majority of refugees have now spent their money and they are now begging in the streets, particularly women.
- The risk of disease and epidemic is extremely high in refugees camps, especially in halls and houses that are packed over capacity with refugees. Overcrowding is seen in church halls, schools and other areas.



Figure 1.HHRG Humanitarian relief with the aid of CSI.

August 24, 2014

Mosul

- Residents contacted via telephone say life in the city is unbearable and discontent with ISIS is very high. Residents have expressed readiness to join any resistance that can liberate Mosul from the terrorists.
- Thousands of students remains in limbo regarding the 2014-2015 school year, especially with ISIS orders that contradict entirely normal academic operations.
- ISIS is delivering messages to some non-minority residents who fled from Mosul that they can return to the city, declare repentance and receive pardon so they can resume their daily lives. Upon returning, they are arrested and imprisoned. Attorney Najla Omari was arrested using this ruse, as well as tens of others.
- ISIS has ordered some government departments to open, but sends its inspectors to ensure the staff is adhering to Sharia dress code imposed by them, and to severely punish the offenders, especially the women, who must wear the full veil from head to foot.

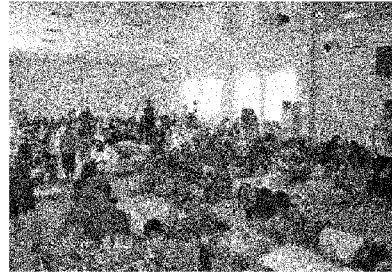


Figure 2 Assyrian refugees in Anka-wa, Iraq.

The Nineveh Plain

- ISIS left the city of Telsqof in near total destruction. Homes and public buildings were looted and vandalized. All farm equipment was stolen. Muslim residents from surrounding villages assisted ISIS in the looting of Assyrian homes and business.
- ISIS bombed the Yazidi shrines in Bashiqa, as well as shrines of the Kakaeya Sufi sect. All are destroyed.
- Information from Yazidi families indicates that ISIS has placed captured nearly 15,000 Yazidis and placed them in schools and hospitals in Tal Afar and surrounding areas. They separated the men from the women. The captured Yazidis are starving. The Yazidi women are guarded by ISIS women. The prisoners are scattered in south Sinjar, Ghazlani camp and at the airport in AlGayara.
- Relatives of Yazidi prisoners say they received a call from a captive woman from the village of Kojo who witnessed Yazidi men being killed, and the women being taken to Tal Afar.



Figure 3 HHRQ distributing aid to Assyrians and Yazidis.

August 21, 2014

In Arbel there are now 5 refugee deaths per day, going back to August 7.

- The number of refugees has overwhelmed the relief agencies. There is scarcity of food and shelter. Distribution channels are slow and ineffective.
- Refugees are anxious about the military operations against ISIS in their towns and villages, and they fear for their property, especially in light of the fact that many of their former Muslim neighbors have participated in looting and plundering.
- The number of Assyrian Christian families seeking asylum has risen as hundreds of families who are now in Turkey are waiting in front of United Nations offices in Ankara to register and apply for emigration.
- The vast majority of the refugees are pressuring religious and political leaders to find a way for a rapid mass exodus out of Iraq, because of all the suffering, hardship and difficulty they are experiencing. Large numbers of families are still sleeping on sidewalks and parks and there is the fear this situation and their plight will extend into winter.
- Their is anger, frustration and tension among the refugees as they are being moved from the halls and courtyards of churches into United Nations camps.
- The Ministry of Displacement and Migration is extremely slow in giving grants to refugees. Thousands of families in Dohuk have yet to receive grants. In the words of one refugee, "they move on the back of a turtle."
- The condition of Yazidi refugees is becoming critical for lack of camps to house them, forcing hundreds of families to shelter in unfinished buildings in the city of Dohuk.

August 18, 2014

- Yazidi refugees from Mount Sinjar and Assyrian refugees are still heading to the province of Dohuk and its outskirts, where there is no longer an area not inundated with refugees. The Dohuk province does not have the infrastructure to service the refugees, unlike Ankawa in Arbel, and the threat to the refugees from the lack of food, water and shelter is now critical.

- International aid organizations are overwhelmed and cannot provide the required level of relief aid to refugees. There is also gross deficiency in the distribution of aid because of the lack of accurate data on the number refugees and their locations.
- Military operations for clearing ISIS from the Nineveh Plain and Sinjar are slow, allowing ISIS to loot and plunder the abandoned homes and villages, as has occurred in Bartella, Telsqof, Bashiqa, Baghdede and other areas.
- The Department of the Ministry of Displacement and Migration in Dohuk is overwhelmed, delaying the processing refugees for receiving of aid from the Iraqi government.
- Large numbers refugees who are government employees have not been paid for months of June and July and do not have money to purchase basic daily necessities.
- ISIS killed more than 200 Yazidi men in the village of Kojo, located in the south-east area of the Sinjar district, after the village was besieged for several days. They were given a choice to convert to Islam or be killed. More than 100 Yazidi woman were taken from the village.
- Conditions in Mosul hospitals is deteriorating rapidly as ISIS imposes strict rules on female doctors, ordering them to be fully veiled, including the hands, which hampers their work when treating patients.
- The conditions of the Assyrian and Yazidi refugees in Ankawa and other areas in the Kurdish region is desperate because of the acute lack of food, water and shelter. There is now great suffering, with refugees losing hope of returning to their homes and becoming depressed.



Figure 4 Yazidi children injured by ISIS attack.

August 13, 2014

Mosul

- ISIS forced child patients at the cancer hospital in Mosul to hold ISIS flags and then photographed them for propaganda purposes.

The Nineveh Plain

- The Assyrian Christian towns of Telsqof and Bashiqa have been completely looted and plundered by ISIS. All homes have been emptied of valuables. The looting and theft occurred during daytime hours.

Yazidis

- Reliable sources report that Turkish border guards killed ten Yazidis who had gathered at one of the border points between Iraq and Turkey and were demanding to be allowed to enter Turkish territory to save themselves from attacks by ISIS.
- More than 100,000 Yazidis and other minorities are now in the town of Khanak and their situation is extremely dire. They do not have any food, water and shelter. The village of Hizawa has received a large number of refugees and is also in need of relief aid.
- A paralyzing despair has gripped the Yazidis, who are pleading and begging for their rescue and asking to emigrate from Iraq. The prevailing sentiment among Yazidis is that there is no force that can protect them and that another catastrophe will befall them after a few years even if a safe haven is secured for them now in Iraq.

August 11, 2014**Mosul**

- ISIS ordered all families to obtain approval before burying their dead. Approval must be obtained from ISIS "princes" and burials must be in accordance with procedures specified by the "princes."
- The city saw the remarkable appearance of completely veiled women accompanied by a male family member, and there has not been a sighting of any woman out alone even in markets or for other tasks.

The Nineveh Plain

- The number of people who have left the areas of Baghdede and the Nineveh Plain is nearly 200,000; they have fled to Arbel, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah. Some have traveled to the Iraqi-Turkish border crossing of Port Ibrahim, hoping to leave their country.
- There is no information on the fate of the families and individuals who remained in Baghdede, Tel Kepe, and Karemles. Verified reports indicate that ISIS gathered these families in the Tawheed mosque in Baghdede and ordered them to convert, pay jizya or be killed.
- ISIS is providing gasoline for a number of families to facilitate their flight. This has occurred in several towns and villages.
- According verified reports, there are Yazidis still in flight, walking in forests and barren lands, hoping to meet officials from the offices of the United Nations.
- Reliable sources report that the number of women who have been kidnapped by ISIS is increasing on a daily basis, and there are armed women with ISIS whose duty is to inspect the faces of the girls and women and select and isolate the beautiful ones to sell them or forcibly marry them to the ISIS fighters.

General Condition of Refugees

- The situation of the refugees is past critical and is now a humanitarian crisis. Aid must be delivered immediately to prevent thousands of deaths. According to an Iraqi General, 70% of the Yazidis on Mount Sinjar are dead.
- Water is the most critical component, as there is not enough for the needs of the tens of thousands of refugees, who have already begun using unpurified, stagnant and dirty water. The threat of a cholera outbreak now looms large on the refugees.
- While the bulk of the refugees in Dohuk and Ankawa (Arbel) are Assyrian Christians, there are a great number of Yazidis, Turkmen and Shabaks as well.

ISIS "Amnesty" Offer

- Assyrian Leaders dismissed an offer of "amnesty" by ISIS, which it made to the few Assyrians who had remained in Mosul and Baghdede. ISIS asked these Assyrians to tell their Christian friends and relatives that ISIS has "pardoned" the Christians and they may return to their homes without fear.
- Calling the offer "preposterous," Assyrian leaders asked how such an amnesty can be issued to Iraqi citizens who are guiltless and faultless, saying that amnesty is usually issued for criminals and outlaws and not for law-abiding citizens. The leaders demanded that ISIS admit to committing gruesome crimes against humanity against Assyrians, Yazidis, Turkmen and Shabaks.

August 9, 2014**Mosul**

- On August 9 ISIS began forcing all women to wear the full veil, which covers the face completely. Males members of the family of a woman who does not comply would be flogged according to Sharia law.
- ISIS has established a black market for basic necessities, especially medicine, its financial gain.

- According to reliable sources, some of the young men and boys recruited by ISIS who are receiving training in camps inside the city have started to flee and are in hiding for fear of prosecution by ISIS.

The Nineveh Plain

- ISIS continues to violate human rights in areas under its control.
- There is no accurate information about the number of families that stayed behind and did flee from the areas now dominated by ISIS, though the number is thought to be low.
- Some reassurance was felt from the likelihood that the security situation might soon improve after ISIS positions in the province of Arbel were bombed by the Americans.
- The Yazidis trapped at the foot of the Sinjar mountain have begun to safely leave and are likely to head to the far north, close to the Turkish border. A large amount of relief has been airdropped.
- Communication was lost with many displaced families that are still wandering in the wilderness and remote areas, especially after the batteries of their cell phones were depleted.
- The refugees who traveled to the far north of the Nineveh Plain suffer from the lack of basic services, as well as a shortage of medicines because of limited health care services available in these areas.
- Most of the refugees lack funds needed to buy some special needs.
- Homes in Baghdade and Tel Kepe have been confiscated for the "princes" of ISIS.
- The living conditions for refugees are miserable. In many cases there are more than 100 people living in a space that normally accommodates only 20 people.
- The condition of the refugees in Arbel is worse than that of those that are in the Dohuk and the northern areas because greater numbers of people went to Arbel, and there are huge crowds of displaced people in the area of Ankawa.
- The aid provided by human rights and charitable organizations is severely limited. There is a humanitarian crisis.
- There is great fear of the possibility that ISIS will begin abducting women and enslaving or selling them, as happened in Tal Afar and Sinjar.
- Suicides have occurred in Sinjar as a result of frustration, desperation and fear. One case has been confirmed of a girl committing suicide after she saw ISIS kidnap four of her sisters from her home.

July 8, 2014

Mosul

- All construction work has come to a complete stop and construction workers are now unemployed.
- There is increased demand for black colored clothing and veils and hijabs.
- Women are not allowed to walk the streets unless accompanied by a male.
- Nearly all barber shops and women's salons have closed.

The Nineveh Plain

- Water and electricity continue to be severely limited. Residents who have dug wells are unable to purify the water for safe drinking.
- Relief efforts are not adequate. The Christian Solidarity International Commission, International Red Cross, Kana, Caritas and Hammurabi Organization for Human Rights are providing some relief.

June 30, 2014

Mosul

- ISIS seized the house of Dr. Duraid Hikmat Tobia in Mosul. Dr. Tobia is a member of Hammurabi Human Rights Organization and an Advisor to the Governor of Nineveh on Minority Affairs and General Coordinator with International Organizations. Dr. Tobia had received a telephone call from the militants telling him that his home has been confiscated by them.

- ISIS continues to takeover houses belonging to Christians who fled the city.
- ISIS seized control of the house of the Chaldean Patriarchate in the city.
- Mosul resident continue to leave, most to Dohuk and the Nineveh Plain, with fewer going to Arbel.

The Nineveh Plain

- Tension continues in the areas of Baghdede (Hamdaniya District) between the ISIS and Kurdish forces, causing instability and the slow return of the displaced Assyrians, Shabak and Turkmen.
- Kurdish forces continue to reinforce their position on the western side of Baghdede.
- After the kidnapping of two nuns, Sisters Utoor and Miskintah, two girls and one boy three days ago, nearly all churches and monasteries in Mosul are now empty, the religious staff has left them abandoned for now.
- Electricity continues to be in scarce supply. Only 15 megawatts reaches the Nineveh Plain, which is only 3% of the required amount.
- ISIS have cut off the water to Tel Kepe, Batnaya and other villages.
- Garbage and waste continues to accumulate in towns and villages because municipal waste workers were fired by ISIS.
- ISIS occupied a house belonging to the Chaldean Bishopric located in the AlShurta neighborhood in Mosul.
- There is a shortage in medical services because medical workers, particularly Shabak and Turkmen, have fled or were fired by ISIS. Only a few Christian doctors and staff remain.
- The continuing shortage of water and electricity is preventing residents from returning to Baghdede.
- Residents of Baghdede have begun drilling wells to secure water.

June 30, 2014

Mosul

- The disappearance of two nuns, Sister Utoor and Sister Miskintah, who managed the Miskintah Orphanage in Mosul, has been confirmed (AINA 2014-06-30).
- Families continue to leave Mosul; most of the displaced are heading north to the Nineveh Plain and to the Dohuk Province.
- The growing scarcity of basic supplies and medicine, as well as severe shortage of electricity and water, is becoming a threat to the health and safety of the population.
- The status of thousands of civil servants who were removed from the jobs by ISIS remains unclear. These employees were to receive their salary for the month of June last week, but they have not been paid.

The Nineveh Plain

- Assyrian Families have begun returning to Baghdede (Qaraqosh) with caution as security in the area is still uncertain.
- There continues to be a severe shortage of water and electricity. The use of portable generators is declining as fuel supplies diminish.
- There has been a substantial increase in unemployment because of the suspension of commerce in the districts of the Nineveh Plain, as caused by the ISIS invasion.
- Numerous villages, towns and districts of the Nineveh Plain continue to receive families displaced from the center of Mosul, as well as from the district of Tal Afar.

June 26, 2014

Mosul

- Reliable sources report that gunmen rounded up many of the security agency members of the police and army and others in Sabrine Mosque and asked them to declare what they call "repentance" and surrender

their weapons and other military equipment. After doing so, all of the prisoners were tried and sentenced according to Sharia law and executed.

- A resident of Mosul who fled with his family to the Nineveh plain reported that ISIS members told him by telephone that his home in Mosul had been confiscated for one of the "princes" of the Militia. He also added that there are many more similar cases.
- ISIS has prevented delivery of government food rations to Tel Kepe and other areas not under their control.
- Cars with large loudspeakers roamed the streets of Mosul telling people that the judgements that will apply in the city are according to Sharia laws and no other laws will apply.
- There has been a significantly pronounced decrease in the movement of women and children within the city. Gunmen have prevented all employees in the city from attending their jobs.
- There has been a significant rise in food prices. Fruit and vegetables have become very scarce. ISIS has ordered that no ice blocks are to be sold.
- Residents continue to leave the city and are having great difficulty reaching safe areas.

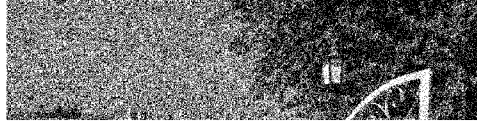
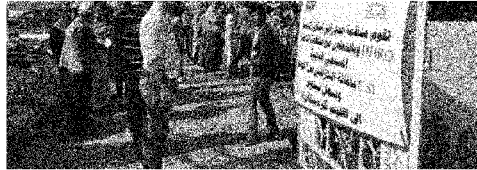


Figure 5 MHRO helping Christians and Yazidis.



The Nineveh Plain

- Electric and water service is still severely limited. All districts and municipalities in the Nineveh Plain only obtain about one hour of electricity per day, and these areas suffer from lack of water because of ISIS control of AlRashidiya and AlSlamiya water projects that provide the Northern and Southern Nineveh Plain with potable water.
- The villages of AlKibba and Shraikhan within the Tel Kepe district came under attack on the night of June 25 by insurgents who targeted the residents of the village, forcing people to escape on foot. A number of the residents were killed and many men, young and old, were arrested, their fate is still unknown.
- Residents who fled from Baghdede have not been allowed to enter the Dohuk Province on June 25, forcing these families to stay in the open or to go to other towns in the Nineveh Plain.

June 24, 2014

Mosul

- There is a job paralysis and a halt in all financial and banking activity as ISIS has forcefully prevented all female employees from working. All members of minority groups have been fired from public service positions.

The Nineveh Plain

- The suffering of the residents of the Nineveh plain has been exacerbated since the fall of Mosul to the militants. Residential neighborhoods receive only one hour per day of electricity while only 10 to 15 megawatts of energy reaches the Nineveh Plains and that is devoted mostly to hospitals and water projects. An agreement with the Government of the region to provide 40 megawatts has not been honored.
- Militants are still in control of Hamdaniya water project and are only allowing 90 minutes of pumping through two pumps. This situation has intensified the suffering of the people in Hamdaniya, Bartella and Ba'shiqah municipalities, particularly with the sharp rise in temperature.

- In the district of Tel Kepe, all residents receive domestic water for only two or three hours per day. The source of drinking water is under the control of the militants in the area of al-Rashidiya. The people of Tel Kepe also receive one hour of electricity per day and they are unable to use their private generators for lack of fuel. The electricity shortage is expected to worsen in the next few days.
- The accumulation of trash in residential areas is significantly noticeable because most sanitation employees are not working and fuel shortages. Doctors have warned of the possibility of the spread of epidemics as a result of the decomposition and decay of the waste.

Mental Health

- Monitors of this situation have noted a high frequency of anxiety, fear and frustration as a result of the exceptional circumstances that prevailed in the region, the scarcity of electricity and water and the surge in fuel prices. There are reports of high anxiety and unrest which is causing some people to leave the affected areas.

Government Assistance

- The Ministry of Displacement and Migration embarked this morning on distributing aid including food items and furniture to more than 250 displaced families that came to Hamdaniya District.

Other Cases

- We have been informed by reliable sources in the Makhmor District that gunmen told all the Arab service employees and security forces to leave Makhmor District and not attend work, but to return to their Arab villages, even though Makhmour District is still under the control of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

June 23, 2014

Nineveh Province

- On 6/21/2014 ISIS destroyed the statue of the Virgin Mary at the Immaculate Church of the Highest in the neighborhood of AlShafa in Mosul, as well as the statues of Mullah Osman Al-Musali and the poet Abu Tamam.
- ISIS militants ordered Christian, Yazidis and Shiite government employees not to report for work in Mosul.
- Shiite Turkmen in the villages of AlKibba and Shraikhan fled after receiving threats from ISIS.

Sinjar District

- Militants have threatened to attack the center of Sinjar District with mortars because it received the displaced Shiites from Tel Afar.

Hamdaniya District (Baghdeda)

- On Saturday, 6/21/2014, gunmen attacked the village of AlShamsiyat in the Alhamdania District and arrested 25 village elders and young men who are Turkmen; their whereabouts is still unknown.
- Armed militants raided the village of Qaratapa Arabs to search for a person wanted by them, but they did not find him.
- On Saturday, 06/21/2014, the insurgents raided the village of AlKahara in the Nimrud Municipality in Alhamdania District to search for the Director of the District, Mr. Ahmed Obaid, and one of his relatives from the military leaders named Khaled Kosofi, but they were not found, and as a result the militants bombed their homes.

Utility Services in Hamdaniya, Bartella, Karamles, Bashiqa and other villages

ISIS has severely limited the electric service to Hamdaniya. The available electric power is first used for water purification projects and pumping, and what is left is distributed to residents at a rate of just one hour per day.

The water supply in Mosul is under the control of ISIS, it is only available for a few hours per day. This is the sole source of water that feeds Hamdaniya, Bartella and Ba'shiqah municipalities. The number of people who depend on this is more than 350,000. The populations has been forced to depend on wells and many of these are not suitable for drinking.

Economic situation

The economic situation in the District suffers from volatility and decline. A number of displaced families visited the Department of Immigration and Displacement for aid. The registered number for this aid reached hundreds by Saturday June 21, 2014 and the number continues to increase.

Iraqi Women Under ISIS

We in the Iraqi Women Network we have struggled for years for women's issues.

There are hundreds of reports from Sinjar, Tel Afa, Bashir sub-district, Mosul city, Nineveh Plain and Amerli about incidents of kidnapping and harassment against women and girls, as well as assaults, sale of women into sexual slavery, murder, threats, robbery and forced conversion to Islam. This is in addition to the seizure of their houses and the looting and destruction of their possessions.

In the areas controlled by the terrorists, fear spread among women because of the threats and attacks perpetrated on them. In Badush prison in Mosul, there are 160 women from various groups. Some, accompanied by their children, are subjected to torture, beatings, whipping and sexual persecution. Three of these detainees were released, one only 17 years old, under the condition of Jihad marriage for every 15 days with one of the gunmen.

On August 13, 2014, Doctor Ghada Shafiq (female) was killed in Mosul. Later, attorney Ms. Najlaa Al-Omari, who was a candidate in the elections of April 2014 was killed. On August 21 a woman accused of prostitution was publicly beheaded. Women are prevented from going outside the house and in all those areas women suffer from lack of medicines and the necessary needs for health.

During the last two weeks, there have been kidnappings and murder of women, as well as suicides. Seven women in Mosul have been kidnapped. Three women were murdered. A Yazidi woman and girl both committed suicide after they escaped from an ISIS prison. Upon arriving at Sinjar mountain, they threw themselves over the cliff because they could not bear the shame of being repeatedly raped while in prison.

Dozens of children and pregnant women have died from lack of medical treatment.

ISIS have set up prisons in every city and town and village it controls. There are more than 500 Christian and Yazidi women being held, as well as Shabak women, and their fate is unknown.



Figure 6 Yazidi woman defending her children in Sinjar.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Ms. Warda, very much for your testimony. And, finally, we will hear from Johnny Oram, who is with the Chaldean Chamber of Commerce in California. Again, Bishop Ibrahim was slated to testify, was here earlier, but fell ill. And so please send him our best, but please, if you could fill in for him.

STATEMENT OF MR. JOHNNY ORAM, PRESIDENT, CHALDEAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. ORAM. Thank you very much, Chairman, and I thank you, distinguished members and guests, for the opportunity. My name is Johnny Oram of the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce of California. However, I am here on behalf of Bishop Ibrahim Ibrahim, who is the Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle, which represents the largest Chaldean population in the world outside of the Middle East, right in the metro Detroit region, of about 150,000 strong. And this is a statement on behalf of the Bishop, and who actually is the representative of the Patriarch Sako, who is the leader of the Chaldean Church worldwide.

I am writing to provide you an update on the ongoing crisis impacting Iraq's Christians and other minority communities. Our organization and others have been working diligently to assist the displaced communities. We are in daily contact with our religious and political leaders in northern Iraq. They are providing updates on the displaced communities which are primarily in Erbil and Dohuk.

Currently, more than 500 families are living in streets and parks, and we have been working to find shelter for these families. The Detroit community has raised more than \$800,000 and sent much of the money to northern Iraq for immediate humanitarian aid, primarily to find shelter for those that are on the streets.

The United Nations has stepped up their efforts and are providing food, water, and basic necessities, and our friends at the United States State Department have provided us with contacts on the ground in Iraq that our people can call on if they need immediate humanitarian aid.

Senator Carl Levin visited Erbil on September 3 and had the opportunity to meet with Assyrian, Chaldean, and Yezidi religious leaders in which they provided a summary which is consistent to the recent statement issued by Patriarch Sako of what their immediate request and needs are.

They are primarily, number one, the international community must immediately intervene to provide direct humanitarian aid to the displaced Christians and other minorities in the regions of Erbil and Dohuk.

Number two, Christian and other minority villages in Nineveh Plains must immediately be liberated, and the community must have safe passage to return.

Number three, the Christian and other minority villages in the Nineveh Plain must be protected by an international force under the supervision of the United Nations.

During the conversation, they also stressed the importance of a coalition to defeat ISIS, and that they are a threat not only to minority communities but to all Iraqis and to the United States of America.

Furthermore, they asked the Senator specifically if there is a future for minorities in Iraq and if the minorities, specifically Christians and Yazidis, are a part of the overall plan for Iraq because they are feeling hopelessness.

They specifically requested immediate support. And if it is not going to come, as many meetings such as this have taken place with other dignitaries throughout the world, they may be allowed to leave with dignity, so that they are just waiting around and hoping for the best while they continue to be eroded.

I have attached a photo I want you to review which was sent to me by Bishop Nicodemus Matti, the Syriac Orthodox Bishop of Mosul. He took this photo while in Erbil last week as one of the government processing centers open up for people requesting visas and passports. As you can see, most people would like to leave based on their current horrific conditions that they are living in.

This week, you are probably aware of the In Defense of Christians Conference that is taking place in Washington. Many people throughout the world, including several of the Middle East patriarchs, are in town trying to raise awareness of the plight of the Christians in the Middle East, especially those in Iraq and Syria.

Although they are a minority community, a Middle East without Christianity will be radicalized. As Christians leave the area, it will become much more turbulent. Although they are a minority, Christians are a disproportionate number to the population of educators, physicians, lawyers, engineers, and entrepreneurs.

We are anxiously awaiting to hear what President Obama will say in his remarks tonight. We continue to appreciate all the efforts you are providing our community and the guidance and direction you are providing our leaders.

There are a few pending bills that have been brought up recently to try to increase the number of visas to come to the United States specifically for the Christians of Iraq as well as other minority communities that have been impacted by ISIS in Syria and elsewhere. The visas are for those displaced in Syria, Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon.

I would like to also add that Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Brett McGurk tweeted the following remarks yesterday, which we are in full support of: "Iraq's National Program, adopted last night, calls for the formation of National Guards 'from sons of each province' to secure local areas."

We think the long-lasting solution for minorities in the Middle East, specifically the Christians in Iraq, is for them to have their own safe haven that is protected initially by international forces and subsequently by their own members in which they can secure an area that would be part of the greater Iraq but have some sort of self-governance.

Thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to speaking with you in the future.

[See the appendix for the prepared statement of Mr. Oram.]

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for your testimony and for conveying those very strong sentiments to the two subcommittees.

Just a few questions, and, again, I apologize for the lateness and thank you for your patience with the intervening votes that we had.

I just want to note that Dr. John Eibner is in the audience, and he testified at our hearing on Syria last June. And the issue was very strongly made by the panel of experts, of which he is an admitted expert, about this being—what is going on then in Syria. Now, of course, that border has been breached, and it is Iraq as well, that there is genocide.

And as Ambassador Galbraith pointed out by simply reciting the definition, if this doesn't rise to the level of genocide, I don't know what does. And my question would be, in your view, what would be triggered if that word were to be used in a demonstrative fashion? If the genocide convention, the expert treaty body, were to take this up? It is my understanding that both countries are signatories to it.

It certainly would have a level of focus that it continues to evade. And if you could, while you are answering, you did talk about how we should do more, the United States, to assist the KRG in the care of the displaced Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Kurdistan.

You do point out that the Iraqi Government has been derelict in providing funds that they are obligated to provide. Are we, the United States, using our diplomatic leverage, our Ambassador, Secretary of State, and others, to admonish, if not insist, that the Iraqi Government live up to those obligations?

You also point out that Kurdistan needs the weapons to defend itself. Yes, there are some weapons flowing. Is it sufficient in your opinion?

And if I could also ask—again, I thought, Dr. Farr, you made a very important series of recommendations, and I did read some of those, some of your testimony, to Tom Malinowski in particular during his presentation. And I did ask him how he responds, how does the administration respond, not only to being late, which I believe is a no-brainer, they were late, they were asleep at the switch. I mean, many of us were saying this 1 year ago, 1½ years ago, and others were saying it even before that, while the President golfed.

And my question would be about not utilizing the very significant tools embedded in the International Religious Freedom Act. One of the beliefs or one of the undergirding and important elements of that law is to train Foreign Service Officers. You talk about, and your points are well taken, that we need to update the law, make it mandatory in a number of areas. That seems not to happen. Or if it is, it is part of a module somewhere in their training that almost diminishes it in application and by its juxtaposition to other things.

So if you could speak to this low priority under the current President to promoting religious freedom. And I think your point is missed by most people in this discussion, and the others might want to speak to this as well. That when you get the Saudi Arabias of this world and the others, you know, with their anti-apostasy laws and your example, which you didn't read, but it is worth noting for the record orally, of the person in Afghanistan who wrote a statement—where was that—a graduate student in Afghanistan submitted a research paper that argued from the Koran that Islam supports the equality of men and women.

His professors turned him in to local police. He was charged with blasphemy, convicted, and sentenced to death. I mean, Afghan is

a country where the United States spent considerable treasure and, more importantly, lives—and I used to chair the Veterans Affairs Committee, and I have been in so many veterans' hospitals over the course of my 34 years. Men and women are walking around missing limbs, and then this particular student is condemned to death because he talks about equality between men and women.

That is where that strategy I think that you are talking about needs to be far more robust than it has been. So if you could elaborate on that, and any other points any of you would like to make before we conclude the hearing.

Ambassador Galbraith.

Ambassador GALBRAITH. Thank you. You would think with all the years I was at the Foreign Relations Committee I would at least know the mechanics of this.

The first question you asked was, what are the implications of saying something is genocide? In my testimony, I discuss Samantha Power's book. Of course, she is now our Ambassador to the U.N. But her argument is that U.S. policy on genocide has done exactly what Presidents have wanted it to do, Presidents of both parties, which is nothing.

And that is why when I was Ambassador to Croatia, Secretary of State Christopher went to great contortions to avoid describing what was going on in Bosnia as genocide, because if it is genocide we would have to act. And while I have some criticisms of President Obama—and, in fact, I started writing on August 7 and had had accepted an op-ed earlier that day criticizing him for not using the word “genocide,” he in fact did use the word “genocide.” And I think that is really important, because once it is genocide, we have an obligation to act.

President Obama described it as potential acts of genocide. It isn't potential acts of genocide. Genocide actually took place, because ISIS is engaged in killing with the intent of exterminating the group. That is very much within the four corners of the treaty, perhaps the most clear-cut case that I can think of. Even if the level of killing doesn't match some other recent cases, the intent is abundantly and completely clear.

So there is an obligation on the part of the United States and on the part of other countries to act. It is both a legal obligation and a moral obligation.

On the question of U.S. aid to Kurdistan, and I emphasize that because the only place where people are safe is in the Kurdistan region. And the only reason they are safe is because the peshmerga is defending them, but it also imposes an enormous burden on the local government, and especially Dohuk Governorate, which is where most of the people have gone, it is the area that is closest to Sinjar, there is one refugee for every resident of that region. And so imagine you have a situation where the government in Baghdad has not been providing the money for services for 7 months, and your population doubles. No wonder people are sleeping in the streets and are having a hard time getting medical services, and that kind of thing, because the resources are not there.

And in some ways it is quite extraordinary that the Kurdistan Government and the population has been as forthcoming and generous as it has. It has a second problem, which is it doesn't know

who all of these people are. There has been exactly one major act of terrorism in Kurdistan since 2003, and those were the bombings that took place on February 1, 2004.

There have been a few minor attacks, but their whole economy—and until last year it was the fastest growing place in the world economically—depends on the security. They have more than 1 million IDPs, not all of whom are Christians and Yezidis. Some are Sunnis. How do they vet them? They need assistance to take care of people, erect camps.

And that, then, leads to the need for military assistance. There were 17 Iraqi divisions, my understanding—this may not be exactly right, but roughly right—at the beginning of 2014. There may be five now. The peshmerga, there is no doubt that they were pushed back, and I think that has been deeply shocking to the Kurdistan Government. And there is a recognition that they need to do more training. A lot of people had—they hadn't fought since 2003. Now they have gone on to help develop their own country, but now they recognize they need to do more training, but they were absolutely underequipped as compared to what ISIS had.

But the important point is, when they withdrew, they withdrew as units. So they are there. They are capable of being armed. And if you want to talk about the defense of these people, of the people who have come there, including Christians, Yezidis, the Shabaks, the Shiites, then we need to arm them.

Air power, as has been said earlier, it only works when there are forces on the ground. There is no prospect of U.S. forces on the ground, but these are forces on the ground that we can help with our air power.

You asked, are we sufficiently engaged in the diplomatic leverage? Well, the fact is that all of the leverage we have been using has been on the Kurdistan Government and the Kurdish Block to join the Government of National Unity. They did so in the most openly reluctant way. They had a series of demands. Frankly, Prime Minister al-Abadi didn't engage on—in a discussion on those demands. None of them were met.

There are three Kurdish Ministers—three out of 30, although their share of the population of the Parliament would entitle them to six. They actually refused to be sworn in. They have said, "We are going to give al-Abadi a 3-month trial period." This really isn't a government of national unity. They have said very clearly that the only reason they joined at all was U.S. pressure and the deadline related, frankly, to the President's speech tonight.

But there hasn't been, in my view, sufficient leverage on doing some pretty basic things, like paying the budget. Yes, there is a dispute over the oil issue, but, frankly, that can be set aside. The Kurds have been clear they are prepared to share the revenues. So let it go forward, share the revenues, and then resolve it later. Don't try to fight this internal political battle at the time that the country is in grave peril. But that is exactly what the previous Iraqi Government has done, and there is no sign that the new one is doing anything—

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Ambassador, if you don't mind me interrupting, how much are we talking about? I mean, ballpark.

Ambassador GALBRAITH. I think it is in the range of \$10 billion. It is a lot of money. And that is not an amount of money that can be made up with money from UNHCR or from USAID. First, it isn't the kind of money that international agencies provide. It is for salaries, it is to pay the police, to pay the peshmerga, to pay teachers, to run the electricity, all the things that go with a functioning state.

And, finally, you asked whether the military assistance was sufficient. And the answer is in terms of the small arms I believe it is now sufficient. But if you are talking about a force that is self-sufficient, able to defend their territory, able to help recover the Nineveh Plain, because much as one might like to see an international force there, I think we know that isn't going to happen, and certainly not in the foreseeable future.

So if that is to be done, then the one force that is capable of doing it is the peshmerga, but they need tanks, MRAPs, helicopters, and training. I think that is the only realistic possibility. The Iraqi Army is not even close to there. I mean, just look at the map and you will see where ISIS is.

The Kurds make the point that they have a 1,500-kilometer border with ISIS and 30 kilometers with Iraq. So the possibilities of joint operations are really limited. They are the force that is close to Mosul. They are the force that is close to the Nineveh Plain. They are the force that is still intact.

So, yes, it is good that things are started, but not sufficient.

One further point, we have an arrangement now in which the arms that are going to Kurdistan, the planes fly to Baghdad, and then fly to Kurdistan where they are inspected and where presumably any shipment could be stopped. That also is ridiculous.

If there really was a concern about the country and about fighting the common enemy, you wouldn't be having that kind of cumbersome system. The flights would go straight to Kurdistan, to the airports in Erbil and Suleimaniya. And, frankly, at this point, one of the Kurdish demands, which hadn't been a previous issue, is that they should control their own airspace.

Why? Because the government, after June, as I said in my prepared testimony, actually closed down the airspace to stop the peshmerga from being able to defend themselves, even though they were also defending many non-Kurdish Iraqis. At least 20, 25 percent of the people there are not Kurds. They are other Iraqis who have fled there.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Chairman, if I might first just say that Patriarch Sako played a part in my prepared testimony. He is a good and holy man who is, frankly, a hero of mine. I had the honor to meet him at a conference we did in Rome in December, and I hope that you will convey that back to him. I will give you a copy of my prepared remarks that reflect some of the things that he has had to say that he repeated in what was said today.

I will be brief, conscious of the lateness of the hour. Let me make three points, Mr. Chairman, and offer to the committee, if useful, to provide elaboration in writing. You asked why you think this is such a low priority. There are many technical and pretty good answers to that. I think there is a big picture answer. Religious free-

dom is no longer seen as the first freedom by many of our political and foreign policy elites.

By “first freedom,” our founders understood it to mean “necessary to individual human flourishing and to the success of any society.” We no longer believe that, and that is why we are not very effective in convincing others that it is good for them. We don’t even try. I’m happy to elaborate.

Second, you mentioned the training recommendation I made. I want to say something good about this administration, particularly under Secretary Clinton. As you know, Mr. Chairman, there was begun a 3- or 4-day course on religion and foreign policy at the Foreign Service Institute. I have been honored to teach there several times.

The problem with it is that it is voluntary, and the people that go have time to go, and, you know, you get lucky sometimes. But mainly it is folks that have time on their hands rather than the people that need to be trained. And even the course that exists, it kind of goes like a college seminar, and I think sometimes people are entitled to be confused when they come out of a debate on whether all of this is unconstitutional or not, whether we should be doing it at all.

Well, you know, if you want to have that, have it at Georgetown. But teach our Foreign Service Officers how to promote religious freedom. The law says do it; let us do it. We are not doing that, and I think it is not a complicated point.

Finally, the Afghan grad student, thank you for bringing that up. This young man is a Sunni Muslim, pious as far as I know. He was punished for writing a graduate term paper because he was taken to be offending Islam.

The idea that those who offend Islam must be punished is a malevolent idea. I once wrote a piece, “The Idea that Threatens the National Security of the United States.” That idea is it. This is not unusual in religious history. The Catholic Church, for a long time, frankly, had to get over the idea that it had to punish those who either left it or criticized it.

And one of the great examples is *Dignitatis Humanae* of 1965 where the church said, “We no longer claim privileged authority to civil and political authority to silence those who disagree. What we demand is freedom to make our claims.” And we require that for everybody else.

What if Islam could come—all the Muslim majority countries of the world could come to that very simple but very powerful idea? It doesn’t mean that it is good to criticize somebody’s religion. It simply means that if you criticize my religion, which, frankly, I believe the New York Times does daily, the response is not violence. That is the idea that threatens peace and, frankly, freedom in the world.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Warda?

Ms. WARDA. Thank you very much. I would like to come back to the diplomatic assistance. I think it is very, very important to see that we can do something. As America, as I think all democratic countries, it is in their hands to put pressure on countries which we know they support ISIS.

So the pressure, I don't know, in political—other political ways, but it is in the hands of countries to really be aware of this dramatic situation, which is genociding people and with indifference.

The second point I would like to mention is the humanitarian help. The humanitarian help I think is not necessarily—and we saw this experience of Iraq—is not necessarily—will arrive on time and in good way just throughout the officials. I think the NGOs are there, and they are the most present, more than all governments, even Baghdad, even KRG, which is really—KRG, which is the area which really receives and serves all those people.

But for this humanitarian help, I think NGOs they are the most concerned, and they are the most present. So please, we would like to ask you to really insist on NGOs role, directly to NGOs present in the area to help because this is, you know, the bad time and we would like not to press our time and policies and trainings, and et cetera, et cetera. That is the way of officials, and NGOs are really not very welcome in this, because we say, “No, now we must do.”

Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Thank so very much to each of you for sharing your extraordinary insight and wisdom with the two subcommittees. This will obviously help all of us be better informed going forward.

You know, the world awaits what the President has to say tonight. I hope we are not disappointed, and I hope especially those who are beleaguered and being destroyed, literally, exterminated, get a ray of hope from tonight's speech by the President.

We have received letters, written submissions from the following organizations, which will, without objection, be made a part of the record, the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce of California, Yezidi Human Rights Organization International, One Free World International. And hearing no objection, they will be made a part of the record.

Again, thank you so very much. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:02 p.m., the subcommittees were adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X



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**Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman**

September 9, 2014

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held jointly by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at www.foreignaffairs.house.gov).

DATE: Wednesday, September 10, 2014

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Genocidal Attacks Against Christian and Other Religious Minorities in Syria and Iraq

WITNESSES:

Panel I

The Honorable Tom Malinowski
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Anne Richard
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Thomas Shal
Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
U.S. Agency for International Development

Panel II

His Excellency Ibrahim N. Ibrahim
Bishop Emeritus
Chaldean Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle

The Honorable Peter Galbraith
(Former Advisor to the Kurdistan Regional Government)

Her Excellency Pascale Esho Warda
President
Hammurabi Human Rights Organization
(Former Minister of Immigration and Refugees in the Iraqi Government)

Thomas Farr, Ph.D.
Director, Religious Freedom Project
Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs
Georgetown University

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Office, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organization
the Middle East and North Africa HEARING

Day Wednesday Date September 10, 2014 Room 2172 Rayburn

Starting Time 2:04 p.m. Ending Time 5:02 p.m.

Recesses 1 (3:27 to 4:04) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___)

Presiding Member(s)

Rep. Chris Smith

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session

Electronically Recorded (taped)

Executive (closed) Session

Stenographic Record

Televised

TITLE OF HEARING:

Genocidal Attacks Against Christian and Other Religious Minorities in Syria and Iraq

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

AGH: Rep. Karen Bass, Rep. Mark Meadows

MENA: Rep. Juan Vargas, Rep. Curt Clawson, Rep. Ted Yoho, Rep. Bradley Schneider, Rep. Heena Ros-Lehtinen, Rep. Tom Cotton, Rep. Gerry Connolly, Rep. Adam Kinzinger, Rep. Brian Higgins

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

Rep. Gus Bilirakis, Rep. Jeff Duncan, Rep. Frank Wolf**

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes No

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

Mr. Johnny Oram, President, Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce of California

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Statement for the record from Rep. Gerry Connolly

Statement for the record from His Excellency Ibrahim N. Ibrahim of the Chaldean Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle, submitted for the record by Rep. Chris Smith

Statement for the record from Mr. Johnny Oram of the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce of California, submitted by Rep. Chris Smith

Statement for the record from Rev. Majed El Shafie of One Free World International, submitted by Rep. Chris Smith

Statement for the record from Mr. Mirza Ismail of Yezûi Human Rights Organization-International, submitted by Rep. Chris Smith

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 5:02 p.m.

Gregory B. Simpkins
Subcommittee Staff Director

Statement for the Record
Submitted by Mr. Connolly of Virginia

Lest there remain any doubt that what we are witnessing in Iraq and Syria is genocide, consider the options fighters for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) force upon religious minorities living within territory under the group's control. Individuals and families must decide under threat and duress if they are going to pay a special tax, evacuate, convert, or be executed. While the targeted persecution of religious minorities is hardly the sole transgression of ISIL and similar radical groups operating in Iraq and Syria, it is certainly one that has commanded the world's attention. In addressing this immediate threat, we can take steps that protect both religious and ethnic minorities as well as the broader population from further depredation.

The violence in Syria and Iraq, and the commensurate rise of ISIL threatens what 2,000 years of history has failed to do: the elimination of a culturally rich, ancient Christian community. America cannot stand idly by as religious fanatics destroy other religious communities who have lived side-by-side for two millennia.

Tonight, President Obama plans to address the nation regarding our path forward against ISIL. In bringing this issue before the nation, the President will no doubt address the public butchery emanating from ISIL controlled regions of Syria and Iraq. This includes the broadcast of the beheadings of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, as well as the aggressive programs of genocide ISIL has carried out in the region. The moral and security imperatives are such that an announcement of decisive military action against ISIL would likely find broad support among the American public.

This summer, the world watched as ISIL fighters carried out a siege on Mount Sinjar. ISIL trapped Yezidis men, women, and children on the southern slope of Mount Sinjar and threatened them with the prospect of annihilation. In the face of a mounting humanitarian crisis and a potential massacre, the United States executed out airstrikes in early August that facilitated an evacuation of the Yezidis, with the assistance of Kurdistan Peshmerga, through a safe corridor on Mount Sinjar's southern slope. This became part of broader air campaign that was carried out to guard U.S. assets, protect key Iraqi infrastructure, and assist forces fighting on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

ISIL's forcible takeover of Mosul in northern Iraq forced the city's ancient Christian community to flee their homes in July. The city's 60,000 Christians, a nearly two millennia old Christian population, fled the wrath of ISIL as violence and the destruction of religious sites and artifacts signaled the installation of ISIL's brand of religious persecution. ISIL's subsequent advances north of Mosul pushed 200,000 Assyrians, who feared for their well-being, into the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR).

Thus far, 1.25 million refugees of the wars in Iraq and Syria have sought refuge in IKR. This is an unbelievable burden on a regional government normally tasked with public administration for a population of 8.35 million. Further complicating the plight of the KRG, is the refusal by Baghdad to release budget arrears to the KRG based on cynical political motivations. This only further complicates the already difficult, if not impossible, task of holding the country together via a strong central government in Baghdad. Whereas ISIL has waged a religious war and the Iraqi government has fomented sectarian strife, the KRG has by all accounts safeguarded religious and ethnic minorities. As we move forward, the Kurdistan Peshmerga and KRG will likely remain a vital component of the U.S. response to ISIL.

After the President's address this evening, I hope that Congress can work with the Administration in a constructive manner to eliminate the threat posed by ISIL to the people of Iraq and Syria as well as the national security interests of the United States. I also hope that Congress will answer this charge. It was one year ago this month that the President consulted Congress on the issue of military action in Syria and Congress demurred. The resolution that I offered with my colleague Representative Chris Van Hollen authorizing strikes in Syria against the Assad regime went undebated, as did other vital questions such as the strategy of arming opposition forces.

I thank the Chairmen and Ranking Members for holding this timely hearing. On the eve of concerted action against ISIL, it is appropriate that we would correctly define this conflict and the ruthless manner in which ISIL carries out its program of terror. It is genocide; it is violence for the sake of violence; it is murder as a public spectacle, and it is unacceptable.

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD FROM HIS EXCELLENCY IBRAHIM N. IBRAHIM OF THE CHALDEAN EPARCHY OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE

Dear Friends,

I am writing to provide you an update on the ongoing crisis impacting Iraq's Christian and other minority communities. Our organization and others have been working diligently to assist the displaced communities. We are in daily contact with our religious and political leaders in Northern Iraq. They are providing updates on the displaced communities which are primarily in Erbil and Dohuk. Currently, more than 500 families are living in streets and parks and we have been working to find shelter for these families. The Detroit community has raised more than \$800,000 and has sent much of that money to northern Iraq for immediate humanitarian aid, primarily to find shelter for those on the streets. The United Nations have stepped up their efforts and are providing food, water and basic necessities that are needed and our friends at the US State Department have provided us with contacts on the ground in Iraq that our people can call if they need immediate humanitarian aid.

Senator Carl Levin visited Erbil on September 3 and had the opportunity to meet with Assyrian/Chaldean and Yazidi religious leaders in which they provided a summary which is consistent to the recent statement issued by Patriarch Sako of what their immediate requests and needs are. They are primarily:

1. The international community must immediately intervene to provide direct humanitarian aid to the displaced Christians and other minorities in the regions of Erbil and Dohuk.
2. Christian and other minority villages in the Nineveh Plains must immediately be liberated and the community must have safe passage to return.
3. The Christian and other minority villages in the Nineveh Plains must be protected by an international force under the supervision of the United Nations.

During the conversation, they also stressed the importance of a coalition to defeat ISIS, and that they are a threat not only to the minority communities but to all Iraqis and all of the people in the region and the United States. Furthermore, they asked the Senator specifically if there is a future for minorities in Iraq and if the minorities (specifically Christians and Yazidis) are a part of the overall plan for Iraq because they are feeling hopelessness. They specifically requested immediate support and if it is not going to come, as many meetings such as this have taken place with other dignitaries throughout the world, that they be allowed to leave

with dignity so they are not just waiting around and hoping for the best while they continue to be eroded. I have attached a photo I want you to review which was sent to me by Bishop Nicodemus Matti, the Syriac Orthodox Bishop of Mosul. He took this photo while in Erbil last week as one of the government processing centers opened up for people requesting Visas/passports. As you can see, most people would like to leave based on the current horrific conditions they are living in.

This week, you are probably aware of the In Defense of Christians conference taking place. Many people throughout the world, including several of the Middle Eastern Patriarchs are in town trying to raise awareness of the plight of the Christians in the Middle East, specifically those in Iraq and Syria. Although they are a minority community, a Middle East without Christianity will become radicalized. As Christians leave the area, it will become much more turbulent. Although they are a minority, Christians are a disproportionate number to the population of educators, physicians, lawyers, engineers and entrepreneurs.

We are anxiously awaiting to hear what President Obama will say in his remarks tonight. We continue to appreciate all of the efforts you are providing our community and the guidance and direction you are providing our leaders. There are a few pending bills that have been brought up recently to try to increase the number of Visas to come to the United States specifically for the Christians of Iraq, as well as other minority communities that have been impacted by ISIS. The visas are for those displaced in Syria, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.

I would also like to add that Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Brett McGurk tweeted the following remarks yesterday which we are in full support of, "Iraq's National Program, adopted last night, calls for formation of National Guards "from sons of each province" to secure local areas." We think the long lasting solution for minorities in the Middle East, specifically the Christians of Iraq, is for them to have their own safe haven that is protected initially by international forces and subsequently by their own members in which they can secure an area and be part of the greater Iraq but have some sort of self-governance.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to seeing you and speaking with you in the near future.

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD FROM MR. JOHNNY ORAM OF THE CHALDEAN AMERICAN
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF CALIFORNIA



September 10, 2014

FOR THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS & SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

SUBMISSION OF JOHNNY ORAM
PRESIDENT, CHALDEAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF CALIFORNIA

“SYSTEMATIC CLEANSING OF CHRISTIANITY IN MIDDLE EAST”

Thank you Chairman Christopher Smith and Ranking Member Karen Bass and thank you to Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Ranking Member Theodore Deutch. Thank you to all the distinguished members of both Sub-Committees. I want to take this time to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all of you for taking time today to focus on the persecuted Christians of Iraq and Syria, as such persecution is one that is beyond anything that we have ever seen before.

My name is Johnny Oram and I am the President of the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce of California. We represent Chaldean and non-Chaldean professionals in California, Arizona, Nevada and other parts of the country. We are a non-profit organization of professionals and businesses who seek to build a healthy and vibrant economy throughout the United States of America. Our organization has transcended beyond just helping business but also into a charitable group. We are also tasked with the moral and fundamental obligation that we have to combat the persecution of our Christian brothers and sisters in Iraq, Syria, and other parts of the Middle East.

Chaldeans are the descendants of the original peoples of Abraham. We are speakers of Aramaic, the language in which Jesus Christ spoke. The Chaldean Catholic Church is an Eastern Rite of the Roman Catholic Church which entered into union with the Vatican in the 16th Century. Chaldeans are not just indigenous to Iraq, but, in fact, they are found throughout the world, such as Syria, Iran, Turkey, Sweden, Germany, France, United States, Canada and Australia, etc. These populations spread throughout the diaspora are reflective of the Chaldo-Assyrian-Syriac populations. The largest Iraqi-Christian population outside of the Middle East resides in the Metro Detroit region, with approximately 150,000 people and the second largest resides in San Diego, California with approximately 80,000 people. Other areas that have a large Chaldean-Assyrian population are in Phoenix, Las Vegas, San Jose, Modesto, Turlock, and San Jose.

Our peoples immigrated to the United States in the 1920's having first settled in the Metro Detroit area. They came here to seek a better opportunity in America, an opportunity that freed them from religious oppression and persecution. They did everything from working on Henry Ford's assembly line to working in the grocery business. Their entrepreneurial spirit and drive took shape and they started numerous businesses, particularly independent mom and pop grocery stores. Chaldean / Assyrian Americans expanded their pursuits as their population continued to evolve in the United States by serving in the US Armed Forces, seeking higher education, becoming doctors and lawyers, etc. Our people have a strong close knit family and we are devout to our Catholic faith. Moreover, we have a love and strong connection to our ancestral homeland which is Iraq, especially more so than ever in light of the struggles that our peoples are facing today.

How did we get here?

Let us not be mistaken that in the advent of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, we had a plan to get into Iraq and topple the government of Saddam Hussein, however, we did not have a plan in place that would have protected Iraq's minority populations. On Tuesday, August 31st, 2010, President Barack Obama addressed the nation in declaring that all major military operations in Iraq was coming to an end, however, the President erred in his statement to our nation by stating, "The United States has met its responsibility to that country and that it is now time to turn to pressing problems at home." Sure, we did have pressing problems at home with a troubled economy and countless Americans losing their homes and jobs but we did not meet our responsibility for a sustainable and secure Iraq. It was these policy voids that created conditions in Iraq which gave rise to the beginning of a systematic cleansing and displacement of Iraq's Christians. The President of the United States when having shortly announced his air strike campaign in Iraq to protect the Yazidis that were trapped on Mt. Sinjar and to quell the advance of ISIS from moving towards Erbil, placed blame on his predecessor, President George W. Bush for our troops being absent in Iraq. We lost sons and daughters, the brave men and women who fought valiantly for the United States of America and incurred over a trillion dollars in debt in what we thought was the liberation of Iraq. We all grieve for our losses and the loss of innocent Iraqi lives during Operation Iraqi Freedom, however, I must tell you this day, that the premature withdraw of US Forces from Iraq at the end of 2011 coupled with the commencement of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 gave rise to the beginning of the displacement of over 1 million Iraqi Christians. Prior to the 8th Century and before the Islamic Conquest, the majority of the Middle East abounded with Christianity. 100 years ago, it accounted for 30% of the population. Fast forward today, it only accounts for 3% of the entire Middle East region with 10% of Egypt's and 10% of Syria's national populations, respectively. The so-called "Responsibility to Protect" Doctrine as advocated by the then National Security Aide and current US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power literally failed back in 2011 when the President ordered air-strikes on Libya and the subsequent withdraw of American troops in Iraq. The Responsibility to Protect justifies America's intervention to prevent a humanitarian disaster, such as Eastern Libya was expected to face with the Advance of Gadhafi's forces on Benghazi. The NATO bombing campaign saved Benghazi from Gadhafi,

however it did not save the city from terrorists who took it over (1). Moreover, our reckless and premature withdraw of US troops from Iraq did not save Iraq from terrorist who now claim large swaths of land. That was the only time and the last time that the President of the United States and his administration used the so-called “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine. We did not respond to the Syrian conflict and we did not respond to the current Iraqi conflict. As Joel Pollak wrote back in August 2011, he was 100% accurate in that he said, “It bears reaping: whatever the rights or wrongs of the decision to go to war in Iraq, once there, the U.S. not only had a vital strategic asset but a responsibility to the people of that country. It was clear years ago that the hasty withdraw favored by candidates Obama and Hilary Clinton would lead to genocide. And so it has. (1). We the People of these United States of America have a fundamental and moral obligation to protect people from mass atrocities. Our current Administration’s policies have literally failed the Iraqi Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq. President Obama can point the figure at his predecessor for starting the war in Iraq and now blaming him for the withdraw of troops. As far as I can remember, President Obama was Commander-in-Chief when decision was made to bring our troops back home, leaving our mission in Iraq a mess with no end result that providing protection for our Christians and all law-abiding Iraqis.

Asylum for Persecuted Christians in Iraq & Syria

I’m advocating for the expeditious visa processing of persecuted Iraqi and Syrian Christians and to give these people an opportunity to seek asylum here in the United States of America. Many western nations such as Australia, Canada, France, and Germany have taken bold steps to pave the way for our persecuted brothers and sisters to come to their nations, so that they can escape oppression and possible death and be afforded the right to live. Living is a human right, however it is unfortunate that we see life as just an opportunity or less thereof in places like Iraq or Syria. French Foreign Minister Fabius Laurent said, “We are assisting displaced persons who are fleeing the Islamic State’s threats and seeking refuge in Kurdistan.” (2) “Should they so wish, we are prepared to offer them asylum on our soil.” said Laurent (2) I commend Kurdistan for playing its role in the absorption of our persecuted Christians and other religious minorities. Their government has provided security and relief to those who have fled from the Nineveh Plain. But Kurdistan and even the Government of Jordan has been strained with resources, as they have accommodated almost 2 million refugees, collectively and provided “safe haven’s” for them. These refugees come from Iraq and Syria, respectively. We have numerous resolutions that have been introduced and passed in the US House and the Senate with respect to addressing the protection of Iraqi Christians. S.RES 530 authored by Senator Rob Portman of Ohio calls for the US State Department to collaborate with the Iraqi and Kurdish governments and other nations to establish safe havens for Iraqi Christians and other religious minorities and it also urges President Obama to ensure the timely processing of visas for minority groups fleeing persecution and to have such plans to be in accordance with US immigration laws and national security procedures. House Resolution 683 introduced by CA Congressman Juan Vargas aims to do similar thing and urges the President to re-allocate the 70,000 visas he has at his Presidential discretion to be reserved for those facing persecution.

I can share with you countless phone calls I have received from here in the United States and around the world from families who need immediate help. I'm currently working on an emergency case of a family being provided refuge in a house of worship by a heroic priest in which I do not want to identify their name and the place of the religious facility as such would compromise their security. They are surrounded by barbaric terror and tending to the need of disabled person that needs aid. Other cases of mine include a woman stuck in Baghdad with a chronic medical condition and fears for her safety, as she cannot venture out to safety to an elderly man who is accompanied by his wife at a hospital in Northern Iraq. He has cancer and is not receiving adequate treatment. All these people have something in common. They were forced to flee their homes with nothing but the clothes on their backs. They lost everything! We in no way, shape, or form are advocating for depopulation, as there many Christians that would like to remain in Iraq and go back into their villages if they are afforded security and protection. But there are those who have completely lost everything and would like to reunite with their families, mostly in the Detroit area as well as San Diego, Phoenix, Chicago, and other parts of the United States. Please keep in mind that many of the nations in which Iraqi Christians and other religious minorities reside in such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are nations that are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention. As such, many of these refugees are not being afforded the rights and protections that are afforded to refugees in other nations. Because these nations have not signed the Convention, many persecuted Iraqi Christians and other minorities are systematically being discriminated against because they cannot legally work, and lack access to health care services, education, and social services. This has resulted in my fellow Iraqi Christians to become destitute. We are the best hope, the United States of America. Let us be the leader that we are and pave the way for a certain amount of Iraqi Christians to come to the United States. I hereby request the resettlement of at least 50,000 Iraqi's in the United States in the current fiscal year. There are many organizations throughout the United States that would help aid in the process to assimilate and acclimate refugees in America such as the Chaldean Community Foundation and Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan in the Metropolitan Detroit area to organizations like ours, the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce of California to the International Rescue Committee and Catholic Charities in San Diego and elsewhere. There are countless organizations that will help alleviate the burden on our government to provide direction for these refugees.

Silence is Acceptance and Conclusion

Please let's move forward and be the leader that nations throughout the world look upon for help in dire situations like what we are facing right now. Timing is of the essence. The fall months are upon and it will soon get cold in Northern Iraq and in Syria. Many of our refugees who are internally displaced are going to continue to suffer with no food and no adequate shelter from the elements and so on.

These are my ancestral lands, the Christian villages of Northern Iraq where my parents were born. It was the cradle of civilization. My parents immigrated to the United States in 1963 and 1970, respectively. Our Chaldean / Assyrian / Syrians were once living in peace

and free to profess their faith for thousands of years, however it was this vacuum of public policy voids that have put our existence as descendants of the peoples of Abraham in peril. Our Churches have been bombed, our priests kidnapped and beheaded, our nuns and daughters being raped, our brothers and sisters forced to convert to Islam or die. The very church that my father was baptized in Sacred Heart in Tel-Keppe, Iraq once bore the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ but now bears the Flag of Death, the flag that the Islamic State has threatened to hoist above the White House. Its tragic and a living nightmare for us all. It was due to immigration in the 60's that gave my parents the opportunity to come to America and contribute to her economy, to come to America to flee religious persecution and to profess their faith freely. It was through America's immigration that allowed me to be born here in the United States and to have served in numerous capacities in local, state, and federal units of government, having served as Legislative Aide in the Hawaii House of Representatives to a Chief of Staff in the Michigan House of Representatives. It was through immigration to America that allowed my brother Robert to be born here and served honorably in the United States Army to protect and defend our liberties in places like Korea, Kosovo, Africa, etc. It was through immigration to America that allowed my brother Scott to dream of becoming this aspiring filmmaker. Its immigration to America folks which given rise to millions of people to call this their home, their birthplace, and helped realize the dreams of millions. Immigration is the backbone to America's history and growth.

We have been silent for far too long as to responding to the pain and suffering of our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters and other religious minorities. We cannot wait any longer and allow a genocide to ensue. Your distinguished colleague here in the House of Representatives Rep. Frank Wolfe once said, "The silence in this town – in Washington – is deafening." (2) "Does Washington even care?", Wolfe further added (2). I cannot sit here today and be silent as to the oppression and persecution of my Christian brothers and sisters. Elie Wiesel once said, "I swore never to be silent, whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Our silence ladies and gentleman has, in fact, not been helpful to those who have suffered and died, but, in fact, our silence has aided and helped the terrorists to thrive. Thank you very much and God Bless You All and as I will say in the language of Christ, in our Aramaic, "Alaha shouklookhon kulookhon", meaning, God Bless and keep you all.

Endnotes:

- (1) Pollak, Joel. Blue State Blues: Why no 'Responsibility to Protect' Iraqi Christians and Yazidis?", August 7, 2014. Breitbart
- (2) Goodenough, Patrick. "As France Grants Asylum to Iraqi Christians, Rep. Wolf Slams 'Silence' in Washington. June 30, 2014. CNS News.

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD FROM REV. MAJED EL SHAFIE OF ONE FREE WORLD INTERNATIONAL

I. Introduction

One Free World International (OFWI) is honoured to present this brief to the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs and to present herein the findings of our recent fact-finding mission to northern Iraq and the Kurdish autonomous region.

The OFWI delegation was led by Rev. Majed El Shafie, Founder and President of One Free World International, and included three Canadian members of parliament participating as observers, Brad Butt, Russ Hiebert, and Leon Benoit, as well as religious representatives from Canada and the United States. The purpose of the mission was to assess in person the situation caused by the brutal advance of ISIS (also known as ISIL or IS) and to meet with refugees and Kurdistan government officials to encourage those who have lost everything and to discuss ways that we can help in the current crisis.

We have all seen the news reports with images of thousands of people belonging to ancient Iraqi religious minorities fleeing before advancing ISIS forces or besieged on a rocky desert mountain. The minorities in Iraq are facing what can only be described as the beginning of a genocide. ISIS forces are systematically eliminating all religious minorities from areas under their control – whether by expulsion, forced conversion, slavery, or killing. If the international community does not take action immediately there is no long- or even short-term future for minorities in Iraq and the implications for minorities in the broader region are similarly ominous. On the other hand, the prospects for a vastly destabilized region and the impacts such destabilization will have on the international community, including vital interests of the United States, demand an immediate and effective response.

Iraqi minorities and the international community urgently need to see United States leadership in addressing both the immediate needs of the situation, primarily humanitarian aid for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees¹ and support for local military efforts against ISIS, and the long-term needs, including resettlement of IDPs and refugees and support for a Kurdish entity that will be capable of providing a stabilizing force in the region.

II. About One Free World International

OFWI is a Toronto-based international human rights organization that focuses on protecting the rights of religious minorities and educating the public and decision-makers about violations of religious freedom around the world. Rev. El Shafie was himself detained and severely tortured by Egyptian authorities after he converted from Islam to Christianity and began pursuing equal rights for Egyptian Christians. After he was sentenced to death, he was able to escape from Egypt and finally settled in Canada where he established OFWI to share a message of freedom, hope, and tolerance for religious differences and to promote human rights in this area through advocacy, humanitarian aid, and public education.

¹ While the Iraqi minorities in Kurdistan are technically IDPs, this brief uses the term “refugees” interchangeably with “IDPs” for ease of reference, except where otherwise evident from the context.

OFWI has advocated on behalf of religious minorities and individuals regardless of creed, including Christians, Jews, Ahmadiyya and Uyghur Muslims, Falun Gong, and Bahá'í's, among others. Rev. El Shafie has also led delegations on fact-finding missions to countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Cuba, Israel, India, and Bangladesh, among others, where he has met personally and addressed these issues with government and opposition leaders and local human rights advocates.

Rev. El Shafie has appeared several times before parliamentary bodies in Canada, and before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Committee of the United States Congress. He has also provided expert testimony for numerous courts and tribunals on behalf of individuals seeking protection in Canada and the United States. He has developed relationships with members in the Canadian Parliament and the American Congress and addressed these issues directly with cabinet ministers and officials in the Canadian government, including the Prime Minister's Office, in order to help educate decision-makers about the on-going issue of religious persecution around the world. Further information about his background and work can be found in Appendix A.

III. Religious Freedom

1. Freedom of Religion as a Human Right and in International Law

Freedom of religion is a fundamental, universal right that speaks to the very core of what it means to be human. The basic freedom to believe in (or not believe) and to practice the religion of one's choice (or equally to refrain from any religious practice) forms the very basis of human dignity and is a pre-requisite for true equality under the law. After all, our ability to observe such beliefs about who we are in this universe is unique to humans among the living beings on this planet. As a result, the right to religious freedom is recognized both by U.S. and international law as foundational and intrinsic to any truly free society, and without freedom of religion, experience has shown there can be no democracy, peace, or security.

Recognition of the rights of individuals and nations, minorities and majorities, is basic. Ultimately everyone is in some respect or at some time or place a member of a minority and one need only consider one's own position but for a moment in order to see the importance of respecting the rights of others and the universal nature of this principle, known in the Christian tradition as the Golden Rule, or "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you".

Human beings have learned this painful lesson the hard way over thousands of years of violations of this foundational principle. In fact, the United States of America was built to a large extent on the hopes of those who fled Europe centuries ago in order to be able to worship freely, and much of the unique character of the American culture, way of life, and legal institutions is based on this very foundation. Over the last century, communities and humanity as a whole have joined together to seek ways to promote respect for these painful lessons by enshrining this principle in constitutions and international documents such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR).

The UDHR, while not in itself binding, is considered by international law experts to reflect customary international law which in turn is binding on states. The UDHR states in Article 18 that,

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.²

Thus we have a moral and legal right to religious freedom and consequently an obligation to respect and protect the rights of others in this area. This obligation is primarily entrusted to sovereign states but where a state is unwilling or incapable of meeting its responsibilities in this area, the international community must step in to secure this fundamental right.

2. Religious Freedom in U.S. Foreign Policy

Religious freedom cannot be separated from the more 'traditional' focuses of diplomacy and international relations – such as peace, security, and, more recently, fostering democracy. Such an approach is not only morally untenable, but also fundamentally flawed, especially in a highly religious area such as the Middle East. Despite the best efforts and predictions of western secular humanist academics and prognosticators that "God is dead", religion holds an enduring and even increasing relevance in our 21st-century world. In these circumstances, the absence of religious freedom has far-reaching implications that must be taken into account in the formulation of foreign policy. Even if one solitary individual in a remote part of the world was denied his or her right to their beliefs and practices, we ought to treat it as an assault on the humanity of each and every one of us – all the more so when the lack of religious freedom affects entire communities and societies.

Even a cursory review of history shows that societies that restrict religious freedom are far more likely to experience profound social upheaval that jeopardizes the long-term survival of democracy as well as international peace and security and the freedom of every human being. Moreover, the foundational role played by religious freedom in the United States is eloquently expressed in the preamble of the *International Religious Freedom Act* of 1998 (IRFA), where Congress stated that:

The right to freedom of religion undergirds the very origin and existence of the United States. Many of our Nation's founders fled religious persecution abroad, cherishing in their hearts and minds the ideal of religious freedom. They established in law, as a fundamental right and as a pillar of our Nation, the right to freedom of religion. From its birth to this day, the United States has prized this legacy of religious freedom and honored this heritage by standing for religious freedom and offering refuge to those suffering religious persecution.³

(emphasis added)

Promoting religious freedom is one area where the United States must not give in to the challenges of its role as the world's leading power. Rather it must vigorously, but tactfully,

² *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, GA Res. 217(III), UN GAOR, 3d Sess., Supp. No. 13, UN Doc. A/810 (1948).

³ U.S., Bill H.R. 2431, *International Religious Freedom Act of 1998*, 105th Cong., 1998, § 2(a)(1) (enacted).

pursue the establishment of conditions in which every member of the human community can pursue their religious beliefs and identity with only their conscience as their guide and not the dictates of the state or oppressive religious leaders. This is a critical determinant not only for peace and security in far-flung countries around the world, but ultimately for the peace and security of American citizens in their homes across the United States.

At the same time, freedom of religion in Iraq must not be viewed as merely a 'means to an end,' as this will inevitably lead to the compromising of the 'means' (religious freedom) for the sake of the 'ends' (national security). Religious freedom is an end in itself. Any diplomatic initiatives on behalf of religious freedom must be premised on a commitment to its intrinsic value as an inalienable right vested in individuals on the basis of their humanity alone.

In order for the United States to live up to its responsibilities as the 'leader of the free world,' it is not enough that the American government respect the rights and freedoms of its citizens within U.S. borders. It must ensure that its foreign policy is consistent with the fundamental values that form the basis of American society and identity. There is no question that freedom of religion is one of these fundamental values.

Freedom of religion is absolutely intrinsic to the broader system of rights and freedoms that underpin the United States as a society and a nation. President Obama acknowledged as much in his 2009 Cairo speech when he stated, "[f]reedom in America is indivisible from the freedom to practice one's religion."⁴ Thus for U.S. foreign policy approach to ISIS to be truly 'American' it must be reflective of and consistent with core American values, including the centrality of freedom of religion. Overlooking violations of religious freedom is to legitimize those actions and undermine the very principles that underlie American identity and society.

For all these reasons, the United States is obligated, morally, legally, and out of its own national security and self-interest, to take every measure within its power to ensure that religious minorities in Iraq are able to exercise their full rights as human beings and citizens and, in particular, able to hold to and observe their religious beliefs and practices without fear.

IV. ISIS, Iraq, and Religious Freedom

The recent OFWI delegation to northern Iraq met with leaders of the Christian and Yazidi communities in order to show them our support and to hear their most urgent needs in this time of crisis. Both of these communities have roots in the region that predate the existence of Islam yet today they face regional extinction. Christians have been present since the earliest days of Christianity some 2,000 years ago, and while the Yazidi religion is newer and incorporates Islamic influences, it also traces its roots back to ancient Zoroastrian and early Christian influences. The plight of the Yazidis in particular has captured the imagination of the western public, perhaps due to their insular, exotic image and unusual beliefs, which have garnered

⁴ "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning at Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt", 4 June 2009, online: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>> accessed 12 November 2011 ["A New Beginning"] (emphasis added).

accusations of devil-worship, particularly from Islamic extremists.⁵ It is worth noting, however, that while Christians and Yazidis have been the most obviously affected by ISIS, other minorities have also been affected together with Shia Muslims in the face of the brutal violence of Sunni-based ISIS.

Our delegation visited several refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region, where minorities have fled the advance of ISIS with little more than the clothes on their back, and witnessed unspeakable pain and suffering. OFWI's conversations with refugees on the ground confirmed reports of the horrific savagery of the ISIS fighters. Children are being butchered, women raped and killed, men hanged or crucified. We met with children who had lost their parents; husbands who had lost their wives and daughters; families with loved ones who were missing and presumed captured by ISIS. We heard consistent reports of widespread sexual violence against minority women and girls (some as young as two and a half years old), who were being taken from their family and abused by ISIS fighters. OFWI also heard reports of minority women and girls being sold as slaves – at times for as little as 20 USD each.

There is evidence that ISIS, with an estimated force of 1,500-1,800, did not and could not have made its remarkable advances in Iraq without assistance and support from Iraqi Sunni tribal leaders disillusioned by Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki's sectarian-based policies. The result has been an exceptional humanitarian catastrophe as hundreds of thousands have been forced from their homes and thousands are missing or dead. According to one Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) official, there are at least 1.6 million refugees and IDPs in the Kurdistan region. An estimated 90,000 families of refugees (approximately 700,000 people) have sought refuge in the city of Duhok alone since the start of the ISIS crisis – 250,000 of whom arrived on the same day. In one camp OFWI visited there were 500 children under the age of 3.

V. Recommendations for U.S. Policy Regarding ISIS in Iraq

Iraqi minorities have suffered enough. For over ten years, since the United States invasion in 2003, they have found themselves in the crossfire of the ensuing Sunni/Shia conflict, both as general casualties and being targeted directly by extremists on either side of the conflict. With ISIS the situation is only getting worse and the United States must use all foreign policy tools at its disposal both to address the on-going brutality and to ensure long-term protection of the rights of religious minorities. As history has shown, diplomatic engagement and political dialogue – however sustained and constructive – is often insufficient. In order for United States policy in Iraq to be effective, diplomatic efforts must be backed by a demonstrable commitment to take substantive policy measures and stand behind diplomatic measures with concrete action.

In this regard, OFWI fully supports providing aid directly to the KRG or to Kurdish partners rather than through the central government of Iraq. This was reinforced in our conversations with refugees and community leaders, where it was very clear that the people have lost confidence in Baghdad. The Kurdish authorities, however, are in desperate need of assistance.

⁵ Yazidis revere several angels charged by God as caretakers of the earth and led by Malak-Taus, also known as the Peacock Angel, who is equated by many outsiders with Satan of Christian and Islamic traditions due to certain similarities in their stories.

1. Humanitarian Aid

The sheer volume of refugees has overwhelmed the resources of the KRG, with a population numbering only from five to six million. These people have urgent need of all the basic necessities of life – clean water, food, and shelter. KRG health officials also reported to OFWI that there is a desperate shortage of medication to treat the sick and wounded. The urgency of the situation is underscored by the fact that winter is only little over a month away. Contrary to popular perception, winter nights in Iraq (particularly in the north) are bitterly cold and the refugees, many of whom left their homes with nothing but the clothes on their back, are living in hastily assembled camps in schools, churches, and abandoned or unfinished office buildings and warehouses.

The KRG's efforts to provide for the needs of the IDPs are commendable, but this humanitarian crisis is too vast for the KRG to face on its own. OFWI would like to thank the Canadian and United States governments for their support so far through both military and humanitarian aid. However, much more is needed – and it is needed now. OFWI calls on the United States and the international community to take urgent steps to address the basic needs of the religious minorities in northern Iraq.

2. Military Support

Due to the tragic recent history of Iraq, many of these refugees are on the run for the second or third time. Some fled their homes in southern Iraq over the last ten years for the relative safety of the north and now have been forced to flee yet again. This fact underscores the desperate need of these displaced minorities for basic security. Providing humanitarian aid is necessary and even critical, but without security such aid may end up a futile effort if ISIS or other religious extremists continue to pursue these people. As a result, OFWI calls on the United States and the international community to urgently provide military aid to local forces fighting to protect the areas not yet targeted by ISIS and to regain and secure those areas that have already been overrun.

The need for international troops is critical. After facing more than ten years of official indifference or outright hostility and seeing the ineffectiveness of Iraqi forces against ISIS, the religious minorities have no confidence in the willingness or ability of Iraqi forces to protect them. In fact, KRG forces (and specifically the Peshmerga) have proven to be the only effective fighting force against ISIS, mostly due to self-interest in their desire to preserve and defend their homes, independence, and way of life. However, even Peshmerga withdrew from some minority areas ahead of ISIS advances without warning the people, leaving some of the minorities (particularly the Yazidis) feeling abandoned by the Kurdish authorities.

In light of these circumstances, it is absolutely critical that international troops be mobilized to protect the minorities and to restore a peaceful and secure environment in which the refugees can return and begin to re-build their lives without having to fear ISIS. It must be noted, however, that due to the support of local Sunni tribes for ISIS and the work needed to change the conditions that have led to that support, there is no quick fix for this situation. We must be

prepared to engage for the long haul to ensure that this problem is solved and not left to fester and cause further problems in the future.

3. Refugee Resettlement

In the interim, the international community also has a responsibility to help resettle refugees who have no prospect of returning home in the foreseeable future. Kurdish authorities can only do so much and a population of a few million simply cannot absorb nor support an indigent mass of over one million. The international community must help the Kurdish and other regional authorities to resettle as many of these unfortunate people locally as they can and to resettle others internationally. The sooner these people can be resettled and given the opportunity to regain their dignity by being contributing members of society, the better the chances that they will be able to contribute to a lasting solution once the current threat is resolved.

4. Support for an Independent, Secular Kurdistan

During our recent mission, the OFWI delegation also met with officials from the KRG to determine the most immediate needs that the international community can help address. Our goal was to show OFWI's support for Kurdish authorities in light of the challenges they face and the way in which they have, on the whole, met those challenges to date. However, we also emphasized that our support is premised on the importance of ensuring that minorities are protected and not left behind during this crisis or in future, no matter what the circumstances.

As stated above, OFWI believes that any immediate assistance must go through Kurdish and other local sources, which obviously provides an opening for the Kurdish people to realize their aspirations for independence. In saying this we are aware that both the history and current actions of Kurdish authorities are not without blemish. However, of all the actors in this unfolding drama, a Kurdistan that has the support of the international community based on a firm commitment of all parties to the basic importance of secularism has the potential to provide a stable future for its people and to serve as an anchor of stability for the surrounding region.

OFWI believes it is important to support the independence of the KRG for several reasons. First of all, the Iraqi central government has been governed by sectarian interests while innocent, marginalized minorities have paid the price. On the other hand, even with its limited resources and a majority Muslim population, the KRG has demonstrated it can be a safe-haven for minorities and has potential to be a moderate and tolerant state that is welcoming to minorities. The reported failures of Peshmerga troops notwithstanding, the KRG has opened its territory to over 1.6 million IDPs ... according to official government sources ... and done its best to provide humanitarian aid in the circumstances. Such a demonstration of responsibility on the part of Kurdish authorities deserves consideration from the international community.

The KRG is proving the most reliable partner in this crisis; however, support for an emerging Kurdish state must not be unconditional nor can such a state be given *carte blanche*. In addition to concerns over the actions of some of the Peshmerga, there is a history of discrimination in the KRG with Christians, for instance, reporting that some officials have told them they "do not belong" in the KRG because they are not Muslim. There are concerns a Kurdish government

might set itself up as a Muslim state, which would be contrary to the interests of minorities and stability in the region.

In our meetings with KRG officials we heard a commitment toward creating a state that was inclusive and respected the rights of minorities. However, even if one accepts the stated good intentions of the current leadership, any state that is not based on the clear separation between church and state creates the potential for abuse, discrimination, and persecution of religious minorities. Thus a Kurdish constitution must create a secular state that affirms the separation of religion and state, and the international community must not support the creation of a Muslim state even with constitutional guarantees of religious freedom. As we have seen in other countries (including the current Iraqi constitution), setting Islam as the state religion effectively renders any guarantees of religious freedom meaningless.

A Kurdish constitution must provide for robust and meaningful protections of the rights of religious minorities. It must not contain discriminatory provisions or confer rights on the majority that are not granted to all minorities. Moreover, the new state must make a firm commitment to keep its borders open to religious minorities seeking refuge from ISIS or other religious extremists. It must become a party to the Refugee Convention and work with the UNHCR to promote and facilitate the resettlement of refugees when there is no reasonable prospect of them returning to their homes. Moreover, any long-term aid and trade relations with the new Kurdistan must be explicitly made conditional on respecting the rights of minorities.

In the meantime, a Kurdish state does not solve the crisis in Iraq. The policies and conditions that fostered Sunni support for ISIS must be reversed, ISIS defeated, and an environment created that enables Iraqi religious minorities to return to their homes and begin to rebuild their lives and contribute to a prosperous, peaceful Iraq where minorities are treated equally and with respect.

VI. Conclusion

Every member of the international community has undertaken a sacred trust to uphold fundamental human rights. There is no right more fundamental to human dignity and to truly free and inclusive societies than freedom of religion. In light of the horrific abuses of this basic right being perpetrated by ISIS in northern Iraq today, the United States and the international community are morally and legally obligated to step in to protect religious minorities in Iraq and to help secure the conditions for a safe and prosperous Iraq for all Iraqis regardless of their religious beliefs.

It is in times of crisis that one discovers who their friends truly are. OFWI travelled to Iraq in a time of crisis to show that we are standing with the minorities and will not leave them behind. We hope that the United States government will choose to be a true friend to the minorities of Iraq by providing refugee support through humanitarian aid and resettlement, guaranteeing their physical security through military aid and defeating ISIS, and supporting the Kurdish authorities to create a secular, inclusive state. Today, on behalf of Iraqi minorities, will the United States and the rest of the international community choose to be part of the problem or the heart of the solution?

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD FROM MR. MIRZA ISMAIL OF YEZIDI HUMAN RIGHTS
ORGANIZATION-INTERNATIONAL

Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International (YHROI), ezidis@gmail.com , www.yezidihumanrights.org. Defending and Protecting Human Rights



Statement on Acts of Genocide Committed by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham against the Yezidi People

September 10, 2014

Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Your Excellencies:

You may be aware of the crimes that are taking place against the Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrians in Northern Iraq. In all respects it is a genocidal campaign that began August 3, 2014.

Today, we Yezidis need your urgent and immediate help and support. Over our six thousand year Yezidis have faced 74 different genocides in Middle East, which includes the present one, just because we have a different culture and religion. The Yezidis are an ancient and proud people from the heart of Mesopotamia, the birth place of civilization and the birth place of many of the world's religions. Unfortunately, today we are on the verge of total annihilation and extinction. The wand the World is remains silent.

The Yezidi are largely based in Iraq but there are Yezidis also in Syria, Turkey, Iran, Russia, Georgia and Armenia. Many have been forced to flee their ancient homelands and many reside in European countries, especially Germany. There are many Yezidi families also in the US, Canada and Australia.

The Yezidi religion is the third largest religion in Iraq after Islam and Christianity. The Yezidi religion developed in Mesopotamia during the Sumerian period four thousand years before the birth of Christ. It is one of the oldest religions in the world. Ancient religion developed along with many other religions such as Mithraism and Zoroastrianism.

Historically, Yezidis have been exposed to policies of expulsion and assimilation. That is why we fled to the mountains and then many migrated to the European countries in the last century. We Yezidis were then followed by other Yezidis from Syria and finally from Iraq. As a result of the Iraqi Baath government policies; which aimed to replace Yezidis with Arab Muslims of on Yezidi farmland, we were driven from our Yezidis homes, shops and farms. This campaign severely affected social and economic situation, and the Baath government's cleansing of Yezidi lands was largely ignored.

Since 1991, when the Iraqi Kurdish Region began to enjoy its own autonomy and since 2003 after the fall of the previous dictatorial Baath regime, the "Kurdish Question" has over-shadowed our people. The fact is that the Kurds have been trying to assimilate the Yezidi into a Kurdish identity. In other words, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has taken over Saddam Hussein's unfinished work. Where are our cultural rights as a people? We ask the United Nations and all other members of

the international community to put pressure on the KRG respect the rights of the Yezidi and to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Our Current Situation:

Around 12:10 am on Sunday, August 03, 2014, the KRG quietly pulled its militias from Sinjar and the surrounding region before ISIS attacked us. They did not notify the Yezidis of their plans. They also refused to give weapons and ammunitions to local Yezidis there to fight against the ISIS and defend their homes and families. The Kurdish forces melted back to safety.

Hours later, ISIS forces attacked the Yezidis in Sinjar. The Yezidis in towns and villages of the South side of the Sinjar Mountain had some light weapons, such as AK-47 rifles with a small amount of ammunition. They fought against ISIS forces for four to five. While this minimal defense was proceeding, many Yezidi fled to Sinjar Mountain. Finally, the defenders ran out of bullets and our positions were overrun.

ISIS took control of villages on the south side of the Mount Sinjar. The ISIS militias slaughtered hundreds, killed thousands of innocent Yezidi men and raped thousands of innocent Yezidi women teenage girls.

The lucky few Yezidis who made it to Mount Sinjar stayed on the mountain for several days without any foods or water. Hundreds then died from starvation and dehydration, especially babies, young children, sick people and our elders.

On August 6, 2014, the ISIS then attacked the Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrians in the Nineveh Plain. The result is tens of thousands of Yezidis, Chaldo-Assyrians, Shabaks and Turkomen refugees and the erasing of one of the most culturally diverse areas of the Middle East. Now these tens of thousands have taken refuge in the Iraqi Kurdish Region, in cities and towns such as Dohuk, Zakho, Erbil and Sulaymania. They need urgent assistance.

The next day the Yezidis from across the United States and Canada protested in front of the White House, demanding support to save the Yezidis in Sinjar and Nineveh Plain. We greatly appreciate President Obama's decisive action to send humanitarian aid and authorize limited air strikes.

Humanitarian aid, while necessary, is not sufficient. Much humanitarian aid distributed by the Kurdish Regional authorities and the Iraqi government never gets into the hands of those who need it, due to skimming, corruption, and politics. Some outside observers say that as much as 90 percent of humanitarian assistance has been diverted away from displaced persons.

And there are hundreds of thousands of Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrians who are not willing to leave their ancient homeland. Therefore, we ask you in the name of humanity and respect for human rights to lend us your help and support to save our most indigenous people in the Middle East and Iraq in particular.

On August 6, while ISIS forced flushed other Yezidi and Chaldo Assyrians from their Nineveh Plain homes ISIS also advanced towards Mount Sinjar. Then the Yezidis had no choice but to flee to Kurdistan by foot, a journey that took days.

There are now hundreds of thousands Yezidis are in all areas of the regions of Dohuk and Erbil and the Turkish-Iraqi border. To date, thousands of those displaced Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrians in Dohuk and Erbil regions have not received any "Humanitarian assistance from the United Nations or others." There are some facilities hosting our displaced persons, such as schools in Zakho and Dohuk, where there are four to five families sharing one classroom. There are still thousands of families sleeping in parks, in streets and in open fields. We are grateful for the support of some local Kurds who have provided help, but there are other Kurds who insult those who are seeking food and shelter, withhold help, and discriminate against us because of our faith.

For example, on Friday, August 15, Kurdish intelligence paramilitaries went to one refugee encampment at a school in Dohuk. They asked the Yezidis gathered there if they consider themselves Yezidis or Kurd. When they replied what they are in fact Yezidi, the Kurdish officers told them they should break their camp and leave the school. The next day, Kurdish authorities requested registration of the group as a pre-requisite for expelling them.

The same day, more than 210 Yezidi families in Kocho village, which is just South of Sinjar city that they received an ISIS order to convert to Islam or be killed. In that village The ISIS militia beheaded more than 70 young men, killed hundreds and took all women, girls and children to Badosh prison near Mosul. The women and children are now being sold for as "sex slaves by ISIS commanders."

Some may ask how other groups in Nineveh are coping with the ISIS invasion. Sadly, many have joined ISIS. Local Arabs, Kurds, Sarhoky and Khatoni quickly joined up with ISIS at the time of the attack. There are several reports of former neighbors and are looting the possessions of the displaced Yezidi, from jewelry to farm equipment to automobiles.

A further note on our neighbors: our long-battered faith in the Kurds has been betrayed in dozens of new ways since the arrival of ISIS. First, the Kurds abandoned the very Yezidi they were allegedly protecting and in some ways at least had advance notice of the ISIS offensive against the Yezidi. Secondly, they have refused to support Yezidi efforts to defend themselves, and most notably, there are reports of Kurdish Peshmerga killing armed Yezidi husbands and fathers as they fled the battlefield.

I mentioned the treatment of women just a moment ago. Right now there are more than 2,000 Yezidis women and teenage girls are in Badosh prison near Mosul; more than 900 in Talafar airport; more than 1,500 in Baaj city near Sinjar, more than 700 in Hol village over the Syrian border under ISIS control. Currently, these women and girls are being raped, forced to convert to Islam and forced to marry ISIS militia members. One of those young teenage girls called her family from a secret mobile phone at one prison, telling them that she was forced to have sex with four to five ISIS militia men.

This is only one story. There are hundreds. Those women and girls are screaming for your help to save them or be killed – death is much better than what they live in now. We estimate that there are approximately 5,000 women and teenage girls who are being raped and sold as slaves, and we know their locations. This barbarity must be addressed and all of us should take a stand. We need your help to save these innocents.

Seven Urgent Demands:

1. The international community should directly engage ISIS. They should be forced back over the Syrian border and destroyed. Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrians need their homes and livelihoods in the Sinjar region and Nineveh Plain. Put simply, the world cannot stand by and acquiesce to ethnic cleansing and genocide.
2. Humanitarian aid must be sent to those internally displaced in Northern Iraq on an urgent basis. There is a real threat of starvation, dehydration and disease. To the extent possible, this assistance should come from neutral, non-governmental sources to mitigate diversion of food and water.
3. Concerned nations, including the U.S., United Kingdom, NATO and EU member states, and the United Nations should make a concerted effort to liberate ISIS detention centers. As mentioned, we estimate at least 5,000 are currently held young married women with children and teenage girls in Badosh prison, Mosul city, Talafar airport, Baaj town, Kocho village and al-Hol village in the Hassakeh province in Syria, west of Sinjar.
4. Provide arms and weapons to Yezidi and Chaldo-Assyrian-militias that have been established since ISIS began marauding across Nineveh. There are men and women under unified command structures who are capable and willing to defend their ancient homelands, religion, culture and ancient history. They need US help now.
5. We ask the United Nations, US, UK, Turkey, EU, NATO and other members of the international community to intervene with the new Iraqi Government, supporting-creation of an "Autonomous Region" for the Yezidis, Chaldo-Assyrians other minorities in the Sinjar region and Nineveh Plain.
6. Work with the Turkish government and United Nations to build UN-supervised refugee camps in Turkey and escort those internally displaced persons from Northern Iraq to these new camps.
7. We ask all sympathetic governments around the world to develop refugee policies that can work quickly and effectively to provide new homes for needy refugees, not just for the Yezidi but for Chaldo-Assyrians, Shebak, Mandaean, Turkomen, and others who urgently need a new beginning, far from the carnage we have just witnessed.

In the name of my organization, Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International, we urgently need your immediate assistance in the name of humanity and human rights! The innocent need your urgent support so that we can all live in peace and freedom!

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. We need your urgent help. We are hopeful that a peaceful way forward for our people can somehow be the result of so much death and destruction.

Best regards,

Mirza Ismail
Chairman
Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International