

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H. RES. 259
OFFERED BY MR. ENGEL OF NEW YORK

Strike the preamble and insert the following:

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

Whereas, in 2016, then-Secretary of State John Kerry announced, “In my judgment Daesh is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims. Daesh is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology, and by actions—in what it says, what it believes, and what it does. Daesh is also responsible for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at these same groups and in some cases also against Sunni Muslims, Kurds, and other minorities.”;

Whereas these atrocities were undertaken with the specific intent to bring about the eradication and displacement of Christians, Yazidis, and other communities and the destruction of their cultural heritage, in violation of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide signed by the United States on December 11, 1948;

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

Whereas through joint efforts of the United States and 79 allies and partners, ISIS has been territorially defeated in Iraq and Syria;

Whereas, in July 2018, under the direction of Vice President Pence, the Genocide Recovery and Persecution Response Program partnered with the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, and local faith and community leaders to rapidly and directly deliver aid to persecuted communities, beginning with Iraq;

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

Whereas armed militia groups linked to Iran, operating systematically in Sinjar and the Nineveh Plains, have harassed and intimidated religious and ethnic minorities thereby destabilizing northern Iraq and preventing local and indigenous minorities to return to their homelands;

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

Whereas over 500 acres of productive agricultural lands in eastern Ninevah Governate have been burned in cases of arson in May 2019 alone, destroying significant wheat and barley cultivation areas;

Whereas these agricultural resources are critical to northern Iraq's livelihood, especially that of minority populations, and continued crop arson prevents safe and prosperous return of minority populations as well as complicates stabilization efforts; and

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

Strike all after the resolving clause and insert the following:

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

3 (1) it should remain a policy priority of the
4 United States, working with international partners,
5 the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional
6 Government, and local populations, to support the
7 safe return of displaced indigenous people of the
8 Nineveh Plain and Sinjar to their ancestral home-
9 land;

10 (2) it should be a policy priority of the Govern-
11 ment of Iraq, the Kurdish Regional Government, the
12 United States, and the international community to
13 guarantee the restoration of fundamental human
14 rights, including property rights, to genocide victims,

1 and to see that ethnic and religious pluralism sur-
2 vives in Iraq;

3 (3) Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish
4 Peshmerga should work to more fully integrate all
5 communities, including religious minority commu-
6 nities, to counter current and future terrorist
7 threats; and

8 (4) the United States, working with inter-
9 national allies and partners, should continue to lead
10 coordination of efforts to provide for the safe return
11 and future security of religious minorities in the
12 Nineveh Plain and Sinjar.

Amend the title so as to read: “A resolution express-
ing the sense of the House of Representatives to support
the return and repatriation of religious and ethnic mi-
norities in Iraq to their ancestral homelands.”.

