

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 26, 2008

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

I am writing to reiterate my concern about the safety and well-being of Iraq's Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities.

Catholic Chaldeans, Syriac Orthodox, Assyrian, Armenian, and Protestant Christians, as well as smaller Yazidi and Sabeen Mandeian communities, have paid a heavy price as a result of the conflict in Iraq and continue to face a high level of threat and abuse. Moreover, Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities continue to constitute a disproportionately high percentage of the Iraqi refugee population.

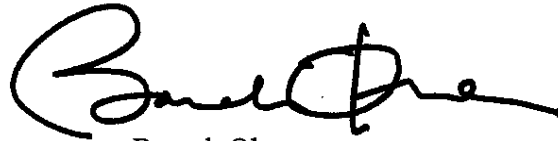
In addition to these troubling trends, Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities continue to face considerable difficulty in ensuring that they are adequately represented in Iraqi governmental institutions. According to press reports, the new election law passed by the Iraqi parliament leaves out a provision that would have reserved a set number of provincial council seats for non-Muslim religious minorities.

I ask that you provide responses to the following questions:

- 1) What progress has been made over the last year in reducing the severe violations faced by these communities of religious freedom and other human rights?
- 2) What specific steps has the State Department taken to urge the Iraqi government to provide protection to Iraq's Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities? Has the Iraqi government been responsive to requests for such protection? What is the U.S. government's assessment of Iraqi government efforts to protect religious minority communities?
- 3) What progress has the U.S. made over the last year in helping to secure asylum for those Iraqis who have a well-founded fear of persecution?
- 4) What steps is the U.S. taking to ensure that Iraq's Christians and other non-Muslim religious minorities are properly represented in Iraq's governmental institutions?

I appreciate your consideration and look forward to receiving your prompt responses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barack Obama". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a distinct "O".

Barack Obama
United States Senator