

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 20, 2009

Mr. Nouri Al-Maliki
Prime Minister of Iraq
Baghdad Iraq

Dear Prime Minister Maliki:

It was with great sadness that we read recent accounts of targeted church bombings in Iraq. *Reuters* reported on July 12 that, "Bombs exploded outside five Christian churches in Baghdad on Sunday, in apparently coordinated attacks that killed four people and wounded more than 30." The *New York Times* reported that the bombings "appeared to be one of the largest single coordinated assaults against churches and Christians in Baghdad."

As co-chairs of the Congressional Religious Minorities in the Middle East Caucus, we have long been concerned about the plight of Iraq's ethno-religious communities including the ancient Chaldo-Assyrian Christian community. We have written numerous letters to our own government urging that there be a comprehensive policy to address the unique needs of these vulnerable minorities. U.S. Ambassador Chris Hill has indicated that the security of the Christian community is one of his paramount concerns, and we hope his attitude signals a willingness to develop a programmatic approach to dealing with this matter. When the new deputy assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs assumes this post at the end of the month, we will meet to discuss solutions to the problems faced by ethno-religious minorities in Iraq.

Our ongoing commitment to alleviating this situation is shared by many of our colleagues in the United States Congress. Two weeks ago, the House of Representatives approved \$20 million in funding dedicated toward religious minorities in Iraq. This funding is intended to support a range of programs such as security, economic development, health care enhancement and democratization programs primarily in the Nineveh Plain region. Bipartisan congressional support for these minority faith communities remains strong.

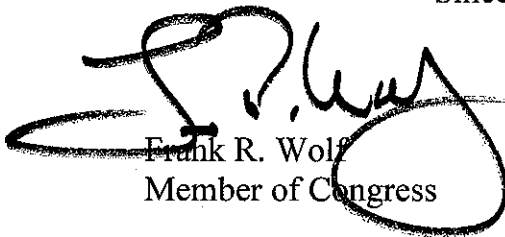
We understand that it is your desire to see Iraqi refugees return to the land of their birth. We share this hope. But news analysis following the bombings indicates that Christians who were contemplating returning will understandably reconsider given the fear gripping their community in the wake of the attacks.

Mr. Nouri Al-Maliki
July 20, 2009
Page 2

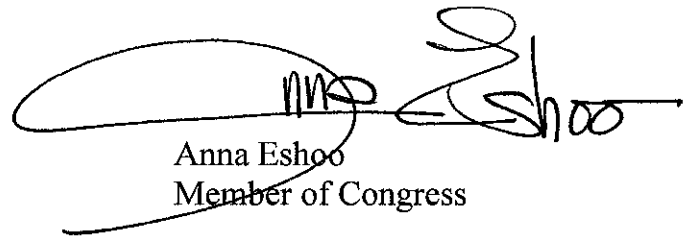
As the U.S. presence in Iraq draws down, the burden for protecting these ancient faith communities rests increasingly with Iraqi forces. Increased security at Christian places of worship and an investigation into who is behind these most recent attacks will send a powerful signal that your government is committed to preserving and protecting Iraq's ethno-religious minorities.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,



Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress



Anna Eshoo
Member of Congress