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Washington, DC 20515-1309

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The Honorable Hillary R. Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

I am writing to you today to urge you to develop a comprehensive strategy for the protection of ethno-religious minorities in Iraq. As you are aware, Iraqi minorities continue to face persistent persecution and danger. In particular, I am extremely concerned about the ongoing ethno-religious cleansing of Iraq's Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac Christian community.

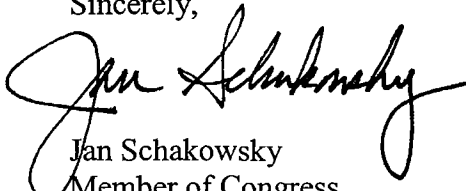
Iraqi Christians have faced relentless persecution, threats, and violence since the commencement of United States operations in Iraq, and the danger has accelerated dramatically since 2004. In fact, 2008 represented one of the most devastating years for Iraqi ethno-religious minorities, especially the Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac Christians. Because of the ongoing crisis facing minority groups, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has now formally designated Iraq a 'Country of Particular Concern.'

Despite this ongoing crisis, the United States has consistently failed to develop a comprehensive policy to address this serious situation. However, I believe that we now have an opportunity to encourage widespread recognition of this crisis and work together to find a solution. Any successful diplomatic policy must consider security, development, and governance dimensions, and must recognize the centrality of the Nineveh Plains to the future of these people. It also must include the full implementation of Article 125 of the Iraqi constitution.

I strongly urge you to develop a meaningful policy outlining concrete steps that the U.S. can take towards a sustainable solution. As you begin this process, I would encourage you to meet with representatives of the Assyrian community to discuss the situation.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress