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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

February 5, 2009

Mr. Christopher R. Hill  
Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs  
2201 C St NW  
Washington DC 20520-0099

Dear Mr. Hill:

I write in light of your nomination to serve in the critical position of U.S. ambassador to Iraq.

While I do not question your qualifications as a diplomat, I must be frank in telling you that I was often disappointed in your approach to diplomacy with North Korea—specifically your marginalization and often times seemingly utter neglect of human rights. In a Washington Post piece, Michael Gerson described your shaping of America's North Korea policy in this way, "Hill has been a tireless advocate of preemptive diplomatic concessions and the exclusion of human rights issues from reports and negotiations." It is difficult to know how much the policy you pursued simply reflected the president and the secretary's aims or whether you were in fact the chief architect and advocate of this approach. Regardless, while Iraq and North Korea are obviously two very different countries, it gives me pause as I consider the human rights challenges confronting Iraq's ethno-religious minorities who are increasingly under siege.

More than 500,000 Christians, or roughly 50 percent, have fled Iraq since 2003. Even though Christians make up only 3 percent of the country's population, according to the UN High Commission for Refugees, they comprise nearly half of all refugees leaving Iraq. As Iraq has continued to stabilize, these minority populations, including the ancient Christian community--some of whom still speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus--is dwindling and increasingly vulnerable to marginalization and targeted attacks, of the sort we witnessed in Mosul this past fall.

I have already requested that Secretary Clinton facilitate the development of a comprehensive policy to address the plight of these struggling minority communities, and, consistent with the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, that she appoint a special envoy for human rights in Iraq to our Embassy in Baghdad, reporting directly to her.

Similarly, should you be confirmed, I urge that these communities, which are foundational to a modern pluralistic Iraq, not be neglected on your watch. Before departing for Baghdad, it is critical that you meet with a coalition of NGOs, consisting in part of members of the Iraqi diaspora, so that they might brief you on the unique challenges confronting these ancient faith communities and make additional concrete policy recommendations for their protection.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress