

February 17, 2016  
President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write as an informal and diverse group of non-governmental organizations and individuals who are scholars, religious leaders, and human rights advocates to urge you to declare the Islamic State's systematic destruction of the ancient religious minority communities in Iraq and Syria including Christians--Assyrians/Chaldeans/Syriacs, Copts, etc.--Yazidis, Shia Muslims, Turkmen (Shia), Shabak and others to be genocide. Last October the International Religious Freedom Roundtable wrote to you regarding the genocide that is taking place and since that time the Islamic State has continued its reign of terror and destruction.

There is a growing chorus of political and faith leaders, genocide scholars, human rights experts and numerous Iraqi and Syrian, Christian and Yazidi firsthand testimonies recognizing that the most accurate description for the atrocities unfolding at the initiative of the Islamic State is genocide. On December 29, 2015, former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, stated, "I am now sure we have enough evidence, what is happening is genocide deliberately aimed at destroying lives and wiping out the existence of Christians and other religious minorities." We believe that without a formal declaration the U.S. Government has abdicated its duty and vow to confront the most heinous of human rights violations, namely genocide.

As you are aware, the Omnibus bill that you signed into law on December 18, 2015, contains a provision requiring Secretary Kerry to provide an evaluation to Congress of "the persecution of, including attacks against, Christians and people of other religions in the Middle East" and determine whether such attacks constitute genocide. This report is required within 90 days from the passage of the bill. Between now and March 16, 2016, your Administration has a tremendous opportunity to extend American leadership at a crucial time on behalf of the ancient religious and ethnic minority communities who are experiencing the most brutal reality imaginable -- genocide.

In their most recent report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq -- Human Rights Office stated clearly that "ISIL continue to target members of different ethnic and religious communities," expounding further "[t]hese acts appear to form part of a systematic and widespread policy that aims to suppress, permanently expel, or destroy many of these communities within ISIL areas of control."

On February 4, 2016, the European Parliament adopted a resolution designating the crimes the Islamic State has committed against ethnic and religious minorities as genocide. In the declaration, they remind other signatories of the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to acknowledge the crimes of the Islamic State and to coordinate with the larger international community. At this critical juncture, a designation of genocide by the United States would strengthen the actions of the international community and further extend American leadership.

Given the growing preponderance of evidence, it is now possible to categorically affirm that the Islamic State clearly demonstrates intent as well as acts based upon that intent to commit genocide against

Christians--Assyrians/Chaldeans/Syriacs, Copts, etc.--Yazidis, Shia Muslims, Turkmen (Shia), Shabak and other religious minorities in Iraq and Syria.

Illustrating this intent, for example, in October 2014 in the fourth issue of Dabiq, the Islamic State's propaganda magazine, they featured a cover photo showing a black Islamic State flag flying over the Vatican and wrote:

And so we promise you [O crusaders] by Allah's permission that this campaign will be your final campaign. It will be broken and defeated, just as all your previous campaigns were broken and defeated, except that this time we will raid you thereafter, and you will never raid us. We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women, by the permission of Allah, the Exalted. This is His promise to us; He is glorified and He does not fail in His promise. If we do not reach that time, then our children and grandchildren will reach it, and they will sell your sons as slaves at the slave market" [Indeed Your Lord Is Ever Watchful].

More recently, in November 2015, Dabiq again restated the intention of the Islamic State:

And nothing changes for the Islamic State, as it will continue to pronounce takfir upon the Jews, the Christians, the pagans, and the apostates from the Rafidah, the Nusayriyyah, the Sahwah, and the tawaghit. It will continue to wage war against the apostates until they repent from apostasy. It will continue to wage war against the pagans until they accept Islam. It will continue to wage war against the Jewish state until the Jews hide behind their gharqad trees. And it will continue to wage war against the Christians until the truce decreed sometime before the Malhamah. Thereafter, the slave markets will commence in Rome by Allah's power and might.

These statements of intent are matched with well-documented acts of destruction based upon that intent. This includes kidnapping, raping and enslaving Christian and Yazidi women; beheading Christians who refuse conversion; mass Yazidi graves; pillaging and wiping out traditional Christian and Yazidi communities; and destroying places of Christian and Yazidi worship, some of which had been in operation for more than one thousand years.

Designating the crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria as genocide against Christians--Assyrians/Chaldeans/Syriacs, Copts, etc.--Yazidis, Shia Muslims, Turkmen (Shia), Shabak and other religious minority communities would build upon your 2015 National Security Strategy which acknowledges, "We have a strong interest in leading an international response to genocide and mass atrocities when they arise, recognizing options are more extensive and less costly when we act preventively before situations reach crisis proportions." And which further promises, "We will work with the international community to prevent and call to account those responsible for the worst human rights abuses, including through support to the International Criminal Court, consistent with U.S. law and our commitment to protecting our personnel. Moreover, we will continue to mobilize allies and partners to strengthen our collective efforts to prevent and respond to mass atrocities using all our instruments of national power."

Such a designation would further support your December 23, 2015, "Statement on Persecuted Christians at Christmas" where you rightly noted, "In some areas of the Middle East where church bells have rung for centuries on Christmas Day, this year they will be silent; this silence bears tragic witness to the brutal atrocities committed against these communities by ISIL."

Mr. President, we urge you to designate the actions perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria against Christians--Assyrians/Chaldeans/Syriacs, Copts, etc.--Yazidis, Shia Muslims, Turkmen (Shia),

Shabak and other religious minorities as genocide. Time and again the Islamic State has committed crimes with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the ethnic and religious minority communities of Iraq and Syria. The world is watching and clear moral leadership by your Administration is needed to declare and subsequently stop such atrocities in order to preserve these ancient communities. It is our belief that officially declaring and subsequently halting this genocide is a matter of vital moral and strategic importance for the United States, the international community, and the overall state of religious freedom around the world.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Chris Seiple  
President Emeritus, Institute for Global Engagement  
Co-Chair, International Religious Freedom Roundtable

Greg Mitchell  
President, The Mitchell Firm  
Co-Chair, International Religious Freedom Roundtable

#### Organizations

1. 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative
2. American Mesopotamian Organization
3. American Syriac Union
4. Americans For Democracy And Human Rights In Bahrain
5. Armenian National Committee Of America
6. Assyrian American National Federation
7. Assyrian Universal Alliance, Americas Chapter
8. Beth Nahrain Organization For Women Iraq
9. Bethnahrin Patriotic Union Iraq
10. Boat People Sos
11. Center For Inquiry
12. Church Of Scientology National Affairs Office
13. Coptic Solidarity
14. Dwekh Nawsha Assyrian Army
15. European Syriac Union
16. Freemuslim Association
17. Hindu American Foundation
18. In Defense Of Christians (Idc)
19. Institute For Global Engagement
20. Institute On Religion And Democracy
21. International Christian Concern
22. International Institute For Religious Freedom
23. Iraqi Christian Relief Council
24. Jubilee Campaign Usa
25. Nineveh Council Of America
26. Patriot Voices
27. Philos Project

28. Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church Of America
29. Shai Fund
30. Shia Rights Watch
31. Syriac National Council Of Syria
32. Syriac Union Party Syria
33. Syriac Women Union Syria
34. Syriac Youth Union Syria
35. United Macedonian Diaspora
36. Universal Syriac Union Party Lebanon
37. World Without Genocide At Mitchell Hamline School Of Law
38. Zentrum Fur Politische Schanheit

Individuals, with title and organization for identification purposes

1. C Naseer Ahmad
2. Sarah AK Ahmed  
Director of Operations  
The Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East
3. Mustafa Akhwand  
Executive Director  
Shia Rights Watch
4. Dr. Abid Thyab al Ajeeli  
Former Minister of Higher Education  
Iraq
5. Nazar Alhaidar  
Vice President  
Iraqi Minorities Council
6. George Allen  
Former Governor of Virginia & US Senator
7. Ismael Alsodani
8. Nahren Anweya  
Assyrian Christian Activist
9. Sabri Atman  
President  
Assyrian Genocide Research Center
10. Father Behnam Benoka  
President Erbil-Iraq  
Humanitarian Nineveh Relief Organization
11. Janet Saleem Benjamin  
Etana Woman Organization  
Iraq
12. Peter BetBasoo  
Founder and Editor  
Assyrian International News Agency
13. Mark Burr  
Basye, VA
14. Dr. Amjad Chaudhry  
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

15. Lisa Curtis  
Senior Research Fellow  
Asian Studies Center  
The Heritage Foundation
16. Robert A. Destro  
Professor of Law & Director, Interdisciplinary Program in Law & Religion  
Columbus School of Law  
The Catholic University of America
17. Steven Emerson  
Founder and Executive Director  
The Investigative Project on Terrorism
18. Ashur Sargon Eskrya  
AAS-Iraq President  
Organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council since 2011
19. Will Estrada, Esq.  
Director of Federal Relations  
Home School Legal Defense Association
20. Thomas Farr  
Director, Religious Freedom Project  
Georgetown University
21. John P. Gallagher  
President & CEO  
Institute for Global Engagement
22. Jeff Gardner  
Founder  
The Picture Christians Project
23. Chris Gersten  
Former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services
24. Khalid Haider  
Parkersburg, WV
25. Omar Haider  
Parkersburg, WV
26. Aram Hamparian  
Executive Director  
Armenian National Committee of America
27. Allen D. Hertzke  
David Ross Boyd Professor  
University of Oklahoma
28. Pete Hoekstra  
Shillman Senior Fellow  
The Investigative Project on Terrorism  
Former Chairman House Intelligence Committee
29. Lauren B. Homer  
Attorney At Law  
Homer International Law  
Law and Liberty Trust
30. Martha Hudson  
International Humanitarian

31. Mirza Ismail  
Founder  
Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International
32. Farahnaz Ispahani  
Author, Purifying the Land of the Pure: Pakistan's Religious Minorities  
Former Member, Parliament of Pakistan
33. Dr. Sargoun Issa  
Restore Nineveh Now Foundation
34. Jim Jacobson  
President  
Christian Freedom International
35. Byron Johnson, Ph.D.  
Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences  
Director, Institute for Studies of Religion  
Director, Program on Prosocial Behavior
36. Joseph T Kassab  
Founder and President  
The Iraqi Christians Advocacy and Empowerment Institute
37. Ziyad Sh. Khalaf  
Yazidi Activist  
Yazidi Youth Union General Consul
38. Magdi Khalil  
Executive Director  
Middle East Freedom Forum-Cairo-Washington DC
39. Father Benedict Kiely  
Founder  
Nasarean.org
40. David William Lazar  
Chairman  
American Mesopotamian Organization
41. Nadine Maenza  
Executive Director  
Patriot Voices
42. Idrees Maleel  
Assyrian Democratic Movement  
Erbil Iraq
43. Paul Marshall  
Senior Fellow, Center for Religious Freedom  
The Hudson Institute
44. Brent McBurney  
President & CEO  
Advocates International
45. Faith J. H. McDonnell  
Director, Religious Liberty Program  
The Institute on Religion and Democracy
46. Louay Mikhael  
Head of Foreign Relations Committee  
The Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council

47. Sister Diana Momeka  
Dominican Sister of St. Catherine of Siena, Iraq
48. Johnnie Moore  
Author of Defying ISIS  
Board Member: World Help, National Association of Evangelicals, and the World Evangelical Alliance
49. Russell Moore  
President  
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
50. Scott Morgan  
President  
Red Eagle Enterprises
51. Brian C. Murphy  
Attorney at Law
52. Douglas Napier  
Executive Director  
ADF International
53. Robert Nicholson  
Executive Director  
The Philos Project
54. Brian O'Connell  
President & CEO  
REACT Services
55. Tony Perkins  
President  
Family Research Council
56. Professor Frank Ramaizel  
Visiting Scholar  
World Engagement Institute
57. Tina Ramirez  
Founder & Executive Director  
Hardwired
58. Robert R. Reilly  
Westminster Institute
59. Scott Rye  
Chairman  
American Foundation for Relief & Reconciliation in the Middle East
60. Sargis Sangari  
CEO  
Near East Center for Strategic Engagement
61. Nina Shea  
Director, Center for Religious Freedom  
Hudson Institute
62. Khaled Shingali  
Sinjar, Iraq
63. Greg Stanton  
President  
Genocide Watch

64. Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett  
President  
Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice
65. William C. Walsh  
Human Rights Attorney  
Bisceglie & Walsh
66. Pascale Warda  
President  
Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO)
67. William Warda  
President  
Alliance of Iraqi Minorities (AIM)
68. Olivia Warham  
Director  
Waging Peace
69. Gene Yoho  
Compiled Technologies  
Davisville, WV
70. Emanuel Khoshaba Youkhana  
Assyrian Patriotic Party  
Iraq
71. William Youmaran  
President  
Assyrian American National Federation
72. Dr. Ali Akram Zainalabdeen  
Chief  
Turkmen Rescue Foundation (T.R.F.)  
Baghdad, Iraq