

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 11, 2007

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

I am writing out of concern for Iraq's Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities, including Catholic Chaldeans, Syriac Orthodox, Assyrian, Armenian and Protestant Christians, as well as smaller Yazidi and Sabeian Mandaean communities. I know that the fate of these communities was the subject of a recent letter to you from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

These communities appear to be targeted by Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish militants. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees reports that Christians, now less than 4 percent of Iraq's population, make up 40 percent of its refugees. And according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, "violence against members of Iraq's Christian community occurs throughout the country, and the Commission has raised particular concern about reports from Baghdad, Mosul, Basra, and the northern Kurdish regions."

Such violence bespeaks a humanitarian crisis of grave proportions. The severe violations of religious freedom faced by members of these indigenous communities, and their potential extinction from their ancient homeland, is deeply alarming in light of our mission to bring freedom to the Iraqi people. In addition, such violence may be an indicator of greater sectarian violence. Such rising sectarian violence and the Iraqi internally displaced people and refugee crises potentially could serve as catalysts for wider regional instability. These crises demand an urgent response from our government.

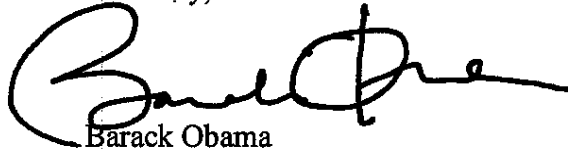
In that regard, I request that you provide responses to the following questions:

- 1) Is it the State Department's view that Iraq's Christian and other non-Muslim minorities face particular threats because of their religion? Do they face a level of threat and abuse disproportionate to their representation in the Iraqi population?
- 2) Has the State Department or our embassy in Baghdad sought out members of these communities to inquire as to what the United States could do to enhance their protection?
- 3) What steps, if any, has the State Department taken to urge the Iraqi government to provide protection to Iraq's Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities?
- 4) Has the Iraqi government been responsive to requests for such protection?

- 5) Do you have reason to believe that any Iraqi security forces or other government forces or personnel are involved in violence against such vulnerable populations?
- 6) What mechanisms are in place to ensure that U.S.-trained and equipped Iraqi Security Forces do not use U.S.-provided assistance for sectarian purposes?
- 7) What plans have the Agency for International Development and State Department developed to increase humanitarian assistance to Iraq's internally displaced?

I thank you in advance for the consideration of these questions, and I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama  
United States Senator

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