

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 27, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write you to express our deep concern regarding the situation faced by Assyrian Christians – also called Chaldean and Syriac – and other minorities of the Nineveh Plains in northern Iraq. Since the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) invasion, millions of Iraqis have faced brutal violence, been driven from their homes, or been killed. The U.S. Government has been focused on ending ISIL's reign as well as ensuring protection and access to humanitarian assistance for victims, and the State Department has played a great positive role in assisting refugees and victims of violence, but we urge you to do more to protect vulnerable minorities facing persecution.

Article 125 of Iraq's Constitution currently states: "This Constitution shall guarantee the administrative, political, cultural, and educational rights of the various nationalities, such as Turkomen, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and all other constituents, and this shall be regulated by law." Recognizing the diversity of ethnic minorities across the country, the Iraq Council of Ministers decided on January 21, 2014, to create three new provinces from contested parts of the country, including the Nineveh Plains region for the Assyrian Christian population.

The Fiscal Year 2015 Omnibus Appropriations Bill (P.L. 113-235) included language directing the State Department to support programs designed to assist vulnerable Iraqi ethnic and religious minorities in the Nineveh Plains region, as well as the larger Iraqi Christian community. As stated in the bill report language, the State Department should support the Government of Iraq's establishment of the Nineveh Plains administrative province. Additionally, the FY15 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 113-291) included language that authorizes the direct provision of aid to local security forces protecting vulnerable ethnic and religious minority communities in Iraq, such as in the Nineveh Plains.

As ethnic minorities in northern Iraq continue to flee their ancient homelands to refugee camps in places like Dohuk and Erbil, where inclement weather and deteriorating humanitarian conditions only further risk their lives, we urge the State Department to continue to work with the Government of Iraq in aiding populations facing persecution. We appreciate the work your agency has done thus far and hope it can serve as a positive step toward helping these minority communities protect themselves.

Sincerely,



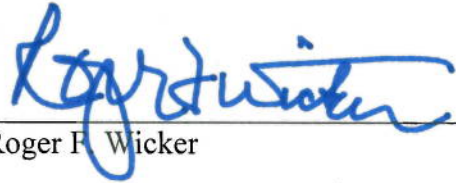
Mark Kirk



Richard J. Durbin



James M. Inhofe



Roger F. Wicker



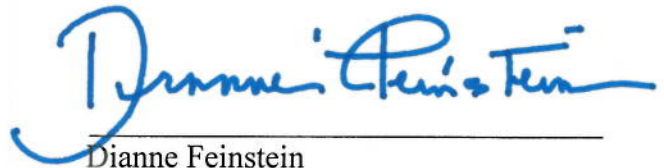
Sherrod Brown



Ted Cruz



Pat Roberts



Dianne Feinstein



Gary Peters



John Boozman



Jeanne Shaheen



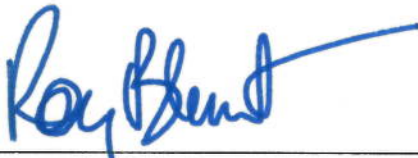
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