

FRANK R. WOLF

10TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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SCIENCE

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CO-CHAIR—TOM LANTOS
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

March 23, 2009

241 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4610
(202) 225-5136

13873 PARK CENTER ROAD
SUITE 130
HERNDON, VA 20171
(703) 709-5800
(800) 945-9653 (IN STATE)

110 NORTH CAMERON STREET
WINCHESTER, VA 22601
(540) 667-0990
(800) 850-3463 (IN STATE)

wolf.house.gov

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
2201 C St NW Ste 7276
Washington DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

I recently received two responses from the Department of State to two different letters I had written regarding the plight of Iraq's besieged ethno-religious minorities, specifically the ancient Christian community. Both of the letters were signed by the acting assistant secretary for Legislative Affairs. While I am familiar with the internal clearance process of the department, and gather that these responses reflect the administration's position, I respectfully request that any future letters come from the corresponding assistant secretary who has responsibility for the issue at hand.

I found that the department's response to my letters did not address the core of my concerns—namely the department's lack of a comprehensive policy to address the unique plight of these minority communities. While I am encouraged by the overall improvements in the security situation in Iraq, these are not yet a reality for all of the people of Iraq. A March 18 *Christian Post* article lead with the following sentence: "Nearly six years since the beginning of the war in Iraq, Iraqi's are increasingly saying that their country is becoming a safe place to live, according to a recent survey. For Christians, however, the daily threat of violent attacks means these are still uncertain times."

I have also repeatedly asked, consistent with the recommendations put forward by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, that you appoint a special envoy or some other high-ranking official, responsible for human rights, to our embassy in Baghdad. This individual should report directly to you and serve as the lead human rights official in Iraq for the United States.

The recently released *State Department Country Reports on Human Rights* documented the targeted oppression and killings that the Christian community in Iraq experienced over the course of the last year. Below are a few excerpts:

- "In general Christian residents in the north saw increased threats in the second half of the year, for example in Mosul during October;"
- "In October, 12 Christians were reported killed in Mosul. The attacks began after hundreds of Christians began protesting an initial parliamentary removal of guarantees of

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seats for minorities on provincial councils in Mosul and the surrounding area. According to UNHCR, 2,000 Christian families fled Mosul after the attacks;"

- "In January, Christian churches and convents were the target of ten reported bomb attacks."

Give these realities, nothing short of a comprehensive policy will suffice. The stakes are high. Renowned religion scholar Philip Jenkins recently authored a book titled *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in The Middle East, Africa, and Asia-and How It Died*. In a *Christianity Today* interview about the book, Jenkins had a devastating prediction for this faith community saying, "Iraq is a classic example of a church that is killed over time. The church will probably cease to exist within my lifetime."

Do not allow the church in Iraq to die on your watch.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

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I KNOW YOU CARE ABOUT
THESE ISSUES. THANK YOU