

July 20, 2015

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

Dear President Obama,

More than a year after declaring its caliphate, the Islamic State continues its brutal campaign to cleanse the world of all people who do not share its narrow interpretation of medieval Islam. Recent reports indicate that its actions are only becoming more coordinated, systematic and inhumane every single day. Furthermore, mounting evidence unequivocally shows that what is being perpetrated against Yezidis and Christians in Iraq by the Islamic State is nothing short of genocide. We write today to urge the Administration to declare the ongoing atrocities being perpetrated in Iraq genocide.

As you know, Article II of the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment for the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as:

“Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

Since the beginning of its swift and destructive rise in Iraq, ISIS has committed all of these against Christians and Yezidis in whole and in part through a calculated system of atrocity.

Genocidal intent can clearly be seen in Islamic State’s ideology and mission which is directed towards the creation of a global caliphate that has been purged of every man, woman and child deemed to be an “unbeliever” through either forced conversion or death. In Iraq, this has manifested most clearly in the insurgency’s actions against Christians and Yezidis. They have been killed, tortured, kidnapped, raped, sold into slavery, and forcibly removed from their territorial homeland.

As opposed to previous such actions in modern history, there has been no attempt by the group to conceal its actions. On the contrary, the Islamic State regularly uses social media to display these atrocities worldwide. They have broadcast countless decapitations,

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crucifixions, forced drownings and other horrors committed solely for the sake of religious and ethnic cleansing. Just last week in Iraq, militants shared video of an infant being rigged with explosives and used in a detonation demonstration.

A recent "Frontline" documentary produced by PBS shows the extent to which Yezidi women and girls are being kidnapped and used as sexual slaves. Insurgents buy these poor victims, forcibly convert them and repeatedly rape them. This means that, barring escape, the children that are produced from these actions will be expected to be raised to conform to the insurgency's interpretation of "pure" Islam. This is tantamount to both preventing births within the group and forcibly transferring children from one group to another. In addition, ISIS has kidnapped and forcibly transferred the children of Christians and Yezidis, including children as young as seven months. Reports indicate that these children are being intimidated and brainwashed in order to create the next generation of radical insurgents.

In addition to the brutal assaults on human life and dignity that have been reported within ISIS-controlled territory, the group's insurgency has created the world's largest refugee crisis since the Second World War. According to reports we have received, religious minorities are leaving Iraq in a diaspora that currently numbers 17 families per day. However, they may not be safe very long. The insurgency continues to gain ground and they may once again fall victim to the brutality of the Islamic State's forced conversion campaign in the outlying areas where they have taken refuge.

A report from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights on the human rights situation in Iraq, released in March, states, "It is reasonable to conclude that some of these incidents, considering the overall information, may constitute genocide." Furthermore, the report calls for the Security Council "to remain seized of and address, in the strongest terms, information that points to genocide." It is imperative that this issue be brought immediately before the Security Council and that a declaration of genocide be made.

Likewise, when we traveled to Iraq in January of this year, we heard testimony after testimony from Christians and Yezidis who had suffered at the hands of the Islamic State. We spent five days in the region and interviewed 75 people, whose accounts are documented in the enclosed report. After hearing their accounts and seeing the destruction caused by this insurgency, it became clear to us that the situation on the ground was at that point a clearly-definable case of genocide and recent reports indicate that it is now worse.

If immediate action is not taken, the existence of these minority groups will continue on a trajectory of tragic and precipitous decline into non-existence. Yezidis and Christians now face an existential crisis that threatens their very existence in the lands that many have inhabited since antiquity. If the Islamic State achieves its stated goals-capturing large swaths of land, restoring the caliphate, and strictly enforcing its "pure" Shari'a law on all under its rule-the specter of full-scale genocide once again looms large.

Furthermore, the atrocities committed by the Islamic State are a direct threat to United States national security. If allowed to grow in size and resources, there is no doubt that this insurgency will spill out of the Middle East and into the West, bringing this system of organized desolation to our doorstep.

In 2004, the United States took a stand on the situation in Sudan. President Bush, members of the United States Congress and Secretary of State Colin Powell all recognized the needless slaughter of the people in Darfur and unequivocally called it genocide; America could no longer ignore the plight of those crying out for relief. Now we must once again take the same stand for the Christians and Yezidis who face the same fate.


In recent history, the global community has stood still while genocide took place in other countries such as Rwanda, Sudan and Bosnia and the resulting loss of life was catastrophic. Further delay in this matter will only allow for the bloodshed to continue.

Both the genocidal intent of the Islamic State, as well as its systematic fulfillment of it through killing, kidnapping, slavery, infliction of bodily and mental harm, the prevention of births and the transference of children have been obvious to the global community for over a year. We must not ignore the suffering of these people any longer.

This issue must be brought before the United States Congress. Once again it falls upon the United States to lead the world in the protection of the innocent. Until the rest of the world takes a hard stance against this needless, ongoing massacre, the bloodshed and torture will only continue. We firmly believe that the Islamic State's actions against the Christians and Yezidi populations is genocide as clearly defined by Article II of the UN Convention and that it is imperative that the United States declare it so.

We appreciate your attention to this matter as we work together for the protection of innocent human life, dignity and religious freedom for people around the world.

Sincerely,



Frank R. Wolf
Distinguished Senior Fellow
21st Century Wilberforce Initiative

Attached:

Report—The Edge of Extinction: The Eradication of Religious and Ethnic Minorities in Iraq



THIS IS SO IMPORTANT. THANK YOU