

# FULFILLING THE HUMANITARIAN IMPERATIVE: ASSISTING VICTIMS OF ISIS VIOLENCE

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## HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 9, 2015

**Serial No. 114–172**

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/> or  
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

97–859PDF

WASHINGTON : 2016

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## **FULFILLING THE HUMANITARIAN IMPERATIVE: ASSISTING VICTIMS OF ISIS VIOLENCE**

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**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2015**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,  
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in room 2255 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. The committee will come to order, and good afternoon to everybody. Thank you for being here.

Each day, our newspapers, magazines, radios, and television screens are filled to overflowing with images of people fleeing territory controlled by the Islamic jihadist group known as ISIS. More than half of the 653,000 refugees, an estimated 53 percent in Europe, are from Syria alone according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

While violence plays the major part in the impetus of Syrians to leave their homes, Shelly Pitterman of the UNHCR testified at a hearing I chaired on October 20th that the main trigger for the flight for refugee camps or shelter in nations like Jordan is the humanitarian funding shortfall. In recent months, he told us, the World Food Programme cut its program by 30 percent, and the current Syrian Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan for 2015 is only 41 percent funded. The UNHCR expects to receive just 47 percent of the funding it needs for Syria over the next year.

One year ago this month, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs issued a report that detailed the worsening humanitarian situation in Syria. An estimated 12.21 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance including 7.6 million IDPs, or internally displaced people, and more than 5.6 million children in need of assistance. An estimated 4.8 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in hard to reach areas and locations. Those numbers definitely have not improved as the conflict has continued and worsened.

By the third International Pledging Conference on March 31, 2015, the crisis had become the largest displacement crisis in the world with 3.8 million people having fled to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt in addition to those internally displaced. In

support of the Syria Response Plan and Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, international donors pledged \$3.68 billion in money. However, according to the Financial Tracking Service at the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, only \$1.17 of the \$2.89 billion has been received by December 7. That constitutes only about 41 percent of what was considered necessary by that agency.

Today's hearing will focus on the plight of persecuted minorities, religious minorities in Syria and in Iraq, which today constitutes genocide and the failure of much of the international community to live up to their pledges of humanitarian assistance, factors which push refugees to Europe and beyond. In particular, we will examine violence targeting religious minorities such as Christians and Yazidis in territory controlled by ISIS in both Syria and Iraq.

This past September, the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum undertook a "Bearing Witness Trip" to northern Iraq to investigate allegations of genocide being committed by ISIS. Their report is chilling: "Our Generation Is Gone: The Islamic State's Targeting of Iraqi Minorities in Ninewa."; and in it they talk about severe deprivation, rape, sexual slavery, enslavement of many kinds, and murder, perpetrated in a widespread and systematic manner that indicates a deliberate plan to target religious and ethnic minorities.

Mirza Ismail, chairman and founder of the Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International, will testify today that the Yazidis are on the verge of annihilation. Chaldean Bishop Francis Kalabat will testify that, "There are countless Christian villages in Syria who have been taken over by ISIS and have encountered genocide and the Obama administration refuses to recognize their plight."

Carl Anderson, supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus, calls on the Obama administration to publicly acknowledge that genocide is taking place against the Christian communities of Iraq and Syria. Mr. Anderson will testify that "Vulnerable religious minorities fear taking shelter in the camps of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees because of religiously motivated violence and intimidation inside the camps."

Syrian Christians, he notes, and other vulnerable minorities are disproportionately excluded from the U.S.-Syrian refugee resettlement program due to reliance on a functionally discriminatory UNHCR program, so that is where the mistake is initially made and systematically Christians are excluded.

Dr. Gregory Stanton, the president of Genocide Watch and research professor at George Mason University, in his testimony entitled, "Weak Words are Not Enough," says State's failure to call ISIS' mass murder of Christians, Muslims, and other groups in addition to Yazidis, by its proper name "genocide" would be an act of denial as grave as U.S. refusal to recognize the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

And I would note parenthetically that I was in Congress in 1994. I was at the U.N. Commission for Human Rights in Geneva and worked side by side with those in the administration at that time, and there were some who demanded that the Rwandan genocide be called what it was and there was refusal. The same thing happened in Bosnia and it happened elsewhere, and that terrible experience

now replays itself over and over again and it is replaying now. Ethnic cleansing, what does that mean, as Dr. Stanton says in his testimony.

The administration reportedly is considering declaring the ISIS mistreatment of Yazidis to be genocide. Frankly, that is good; I encourage that. But there is no indication that Christians will be included. That is absurd and unconscionable. Such an action would be contrary to the facts and tragically wrong.

Last year the U.N. resolution determined about the Yazidis and Christians were being particularly targeted by ISIS. A group of Christian leaders last week wrote to Secretary of State John Kerry to present their case for treating Christians the same as Yazidis in this matter but they have not yet received the reply, and hopefully it will be a positive one.

As we attempt to end the ISIS threat, we must consider how to help ensure religious pluralism in Syria and Iraq in the future, and that will not be an easy task since animosities have grown during the conflicts in Iraq and Syria exponentially during the rise and the reign of terror of ISIS. Nevertheless, unless we consider how to make these lands safe for religious minorities, we will continue to see them chased out of their traditional areas even if there is no ISIS.

Our witnesses today will provide us a picture of the ongoing struggle, provide us hopefully with some recommendations that can be acted upon, being faced by these religious minorities, and hopefully they will help us to begin to make this issue more prominent and that the designation of a Christian genocide will be declared.

I would again note parenthetically, several years ago I chaired a hearing, and I have had several since, on the plight of Christians. And we had a representative from the administration, who when instance after instance was detailed by the other witnesses he said over and over again—and I don't want to embarrass him—but he said over and over again, let me take that back and take a look at that, as if there was a lack of awareness about the gravity of people being beheaded and told you either change your religion on the spot here or you will be slaughtered.

In like manner, we had a witness that I met in an IDP camp in Jos, Nigeria. That man actually had a Boko Haram terrorist put an AK-47 to his cheek, on the ground, and said, you renounce your faith as a Christian or I am going to blow your brains out. He said, I am ready to meet my Lord. His wife was pleading and sobbing. He pulled the trigger; the Boko Haram terrorist blew half his face away. When he testified, you could have heard a pin drop here, he had nothing but love and compassion for his oppressor, and yet and he was the one, and thank God he survived, to tell that story.

We need to first recognize what is actually going on, call it what it is. We didn't do it in Rwanda, we haven't done it in other places, and do it now.

Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you, Mr. Chair, always, for your leadership on these issues. And as you mention the plight of Christians both men and women, I did want to focus for a bit on the situation faced by women. We read, see, and so much hear about the unspeakable indignities, persecutions, faced daily in the region by women. I would

be remiss if I didn't raise the situation, especially in war-torn Syria and destabilized pockets in the immediate region, and I commend the efforts of the U.N. Population Fund to address the needs of this critical minority. Thousands of women live in fear every day and night. I am talking about the everyday indignities faced by mothers unsure of how they will feed their children on any given day, or a new mother facing hard choices on how to best ensure her infant child and her other children stay in an unsafe battle zone that they know or risk the unknown by moving to another safer region. These are just some of the real stories I have read and heard from the U.N. Population Fund about their critical work in Syria and the region addressing the needs of women and girls in the region, whether they be from a religious and/or cultural minority or from the majority Muslim population.

I am proud to say that the U.S. supports the work of the U.N. in both Syria and the region, women such as an unnamed

26-year-old woman who was kidnapped, sold, and sexually abused for 9 months in northern Iraq who escaped and found shelter at one of the internally displaced camps. She was severely hurt physically, emotionally and mentally. She spent her first days in the camp depressed and helpless before she learned about the U.N. Population Fund supported women at the women's support center through outreach mobilizers.

The social workers at the women's support center immediately offered counseling and healing sessions. Her condition improved noticeably, and eventually she was enrolled in training to upgrade her skills in sewing. She not only completed the courses successfully, but also was promoted to become a trainer. She is now leading classes for other women and girls, including survivors.

(The U.N. Population Fund Regional Situation Report for Syria Crisis.)

For the last month alone they delivered 298,000 services to Syrians affected by the conflict. So although we don't have women on the panel today, I am hoping that the representatives here will include the plight of women in their testimony. Thank you very much, and I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much. I yield to Dana Rohrabacher, chairman of the Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats Subcommittee.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and your ranking member, for this hearing today. American people need to understand the magnitude of the crime that is going on today in the Middle East and is spreading in different parts of the world. We felt it in San Bernardino in my state just a few days ago. There is slaughter of innocent people, and in this slaughter there seems to be not just random or not just a rage that is being experienced at a moment where someone kills someone else, but it is a well thought-out effort to terrorize the world. And we need the good people of the world of every faith, Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Hindus and the rest, the good people of the world need to stand together on this.



And I have a piece of legislation that is aimed specifically at those people who have been targeted for genocide and publicly targeted, meaning the Christians and the Yazidis have been actually singled-out for being eliminated from the planet. And my bill would just say that—it is H.R. 4017—that if Christians and Yazidis are trying to come to the United States through the regular refugee and immigration procedures, we should recognize just like we should have recognized that the Jews were a special case in 1939, instead of sending them back saying you are not going to get any special treatment from us, what we need to give those people who actually are targeted for genocide, as has been announced, a special, basically a priority status of those who are trying to come to the United States. But the American people need to know what is going on. The people of the world need to know. The United States also can't carry this.

One last idea, and I will be interested to hear the points of view of our colleagues today and our people who have come here to give us testimony, and that is the United States, yes, what about other, what about recommending that other people start bringing in Christian and Yazidis refugees? For example, Russia has introduced a very powerful weapon systems to that region, and if they could do that I would call on the people of Russia and the Government of Russia to bring in Christian refugees from Syria and elsewhere where Christians are being murdered for their faith. Let's see not only military action, but let's see some humanitarian action on the part of Mr. Putin's Russia.

So with that said, I am looking forward to the testimony.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Rohrabacher, thank you very much. I would like to introduce our distinguished panel, beginning first with Dr. Gregory Stanton who is the president of Genocide Watch and the research professor in Genocide Studies and Prevention at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution of George Mason University in Virginia.

Dr. Stanton founded Genocide Watch in 1999, was the founder and director of the Cambodian Genocide Project, and is founder and chair of the International Campaign to End Genocide, the world's first anti-genocide coalition. From 2007 to 2009, he was president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars.

Dr. Stanton previously served in the U.S. Department of State where he drafted the U.N. Security Council's resolutions that created the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Burundi Commission of Inquiry, and the Central African Arms Flow Commission.

We will then hear from Bishop Francis Kalabat, who heads the Chaldean Eparchy of Saint Thomas the Apostle in Detroit. It is made up of 12 parishes serving a Chaldean Catholic population of approximately 200,000 people. There are a large number of diaspora Iraqi Christians who stay in touch with and support the Chaldean Church in Iraq proper, and more than half of those remaining of approximately 250,000 faithful have sought refuge from the ravages of ISIS in Kurdish Iraq, home of the Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil, the Kurdish capital.

We will then hear from Mr. Mirza Ismail who is chairman of the Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International in Ontario, Can-

ada, which he founded in 2009 to protect the rights of the Yazidi people worldwide. This organization has worked with the Government of Canada to attain refugee status for Iraqi Yazidis there. Prior to founding that organization he was chairman and co-founder of London Yezidis Community-Canada. He has written and given interviews extensively on the plight of the Yazidis in Iraq. He is from Iraq himself, but now lives in the United States.

We will then hear from Carl Anderson who is the supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus where he is chief executive officer and chairman of the board of the world's largest Catholic, family, fraternal service organization which has over 1.9 million members.

Mr. Anderson has had a distinguished career as a public servant and educator. He has worked in various positions of the Executive Office of the President of the United States including special assistant to the President and acting director of the White House Office of Public Liaison. He worked on the Senate side as a key staffer there, and also as a member for nearly a decade for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

And then we will hear from Mr. Noah Gottschalk who is the senior policy advisor for humanitarian response at Oxfam America where he focuses on Syria, Iraq, Sudan, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as border conflict and human rights issues. He has more than a decade of experience working with children, families and communities affected by conflict in these countries and elsewhere in the Middle East and in Africa. He specializes in gender issues and forced displacement and in the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons. He serves, he traveled on Oxfam Syria policy lead in mid-2013 and travels regularly to Jordan and to Lebanon as part of Oxfam's work with refugees from Syria and host communities.

Dr. Stanton, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF GREGORY H. STANTON, PH.D., PRESIDENT,  
GENOCIDE WATCH**

Mr. STANTON. Chairman Smith, Ms. Bass, and Mr. Rohrabacher, who Jack Wheeler introduced me to at a party many, many years ago, it is an honor to testify before this subcommittee that has always been a champion of U.S. leadership in global human rights.

Soon the State Department is likely to recognize the Yazidi genocide, based not only on an excellent U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum report but also on the many news reports that show ISIS as unquestionably committing genocide against the Yazidis. But also the State Department is debating whether to also state that ISIS is committing genocide against Christians, Shia Muslims, Sabian Mandaean, Turkoman Kakai, and other religious groups.

Genocide Watch said in 2014 that ISIS is committing genocide against all these groups and warned many policymakers about that. Since then, thousands more Yazidis, Christians, Shia Muslims and others have been murdered. Such acts of genocide are strong proof of ISIS' intent to destroy in whole or in part these religious and ethnic groups.

Why is it important to use the word "genocide"? Some people say, well, we can just call them crimes against humanity, and after all

the penalties are the same in the International Criminal Court, pretty much, so what difference does it make? Well, some epidemiologists and I actually did a study of this in 2007. We counted up the number of times the words “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing,” which was at that time very popular, were used in four genocides—in the case of Rwanda, in the case of Bosnia, the case of Kosovo, and then of Darfur.

What we discovered in every single case is as long as it was called ethnic cleansing no action was taken. When genocide became the word that described the crime then action would be taken. And in fact, in the report that I have submitted to you I have actually got the dates exact about when the term “genocide” began to be used and when our action began. And it is striking what a difference that word makes.

Now the reason why it is so powerful is, and that is why Raphael Lemkin invented the word, is that genocide actually means the destruction of a people of a nation, of a whole group of people. And it may not be the whole group, it can be a part of the group; that is often forgotten. But it therefore impoverishes the entire human race. It is not just a crime like some of the other crimes of humanity, this is a crime against the entire future of the human race when you try to eliminate a people.

Now fortunately in this case the U.S. is already taking forceful action to defeat ISIS, as we should, and I only want to just make an argument that we have adequate proof already of the intent to commit genocide by ISIS against Christians and against Shia Muslims. The evidence of ISIS genocide against Christians is put into question in the Holocaust Museum’s report by the fact that they fell through, they accepted the ISIS propaganda that Christians can pay a jizya tax and thereby be spared from being killed.

Well, it is an ISIS lie. The truth is the ISIS tax is so high that few can pay it and so they are beheaded, or even more likely crucified, if they will not renounce their faith in Jesus Christ and convert to Islam. So I would argue very strongly that all of these groups already have plenty of evidence of the intent to destroy their group in part, and they should be included in the finding of the State Department.

There are two especially important reasons why the State Department should declare that these groups are targets of genocide. First of all, as Congressman Rohrabacher has suggested, the term “genocide” makes members of such groups much more likely to receive the preferential treatment as bona fide refugees that they should receive under the U.N. Convention and Protocols on the Status of Refugees to which the U.S. is a state party, and also under the refugee laws of the United States. It will be a huge help to Christians to be able to be recognized as people having a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of their religious faith.

And the second reason is that the word “genocide” more strongly justifies our broad coalition for military support for Kurdish and Iraqi forces to defeat ISIS and, would you believe it, in this case also to even join with another country that would defend Christians, as Congressman Rohrabacher has suggested, namely Russia. It justifies also our arming and training militias of these targeted

groups for self-defense, which is always the best defense against genocide.

So we commend the congresspeople who have introduced H. Con. Res. 75 which declares that genocide is being committed against these groups. We commend the congresspeople who have introduced H. Res. 447 that is specifically aimed at the plight of women that Congresswoman Bass has particularly pointed out because women are treated as sex slaves by the ISIS group; it is a whole system of sex slavery. And we also commend Congressman Rohrabacher for his bill, H.R. 4017. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stanton follows:]

**Weak Words Are Not Enough**  
**Statement of Professor Gregory H. Stanton**  
**President, Genocide Watch**  
**Research Professor, George Mason University**

**Members of Congress**, it is an honor to testify before this committee about the crimes of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which is the greatest threat to civilization since Nazism and Stalinist and Maoist Communism. Like those movements, ISIS has a millenarian, utopian ideology that turns mass murder into an ideological duty, and worse, a religious virtue.

On November 25, 2015, twenty-one human rights organizations, genocide scholars, and religious leaders wrote to President Obama imploring him and the US Department of State to recognize that **ISIS is committing genocide not just against Yazidis, but also against Christians, Shi'a Muslims, Turkmen, Shabaks and other religious groups that ISIS labels "infidels" or "apostates."**

Recent reports suggest that the State Department may be preparing a forthcoming statement declaring the targeted mass killing, rape and enslavement of the Yazidi community under ISIS to be **"genocide."** This is a welcome step in the right direction, but the clearly documented facts on the ground and our country's treaty obligations under the Genocide Convention require that our government include Christians and these other groups as victims of genocide as well.

According to Presidential Study Directive 10, preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States.

Designation of a group as one targeted for genocide would have significant policy implications for American refugee policy, because such victims would be given a rebuttable presumption that they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their religious or ethnic identities. The US is a party to the UN Convention and Protocol on Refugees. We have international legal obligations to offer aid, asylum, and other protections to such victims. This is why it is critical that a presidential statement on the crimes against humanity against Middle Eastern Christians, Shia Muslims, Yazidis and other religious groups be given the proper name, which is **genocide**.

Why does it make a difference whether these crimes not be named "crimes against humanity" or "war crimes," and instead be called **"genocide"**? Ethnic Cleansing is a euphemism for forcible displacement. "Ethnic cleansing" is not a term used in the Rome Treaty of the International Criminal Court. It has no legal meaning in international law.

In 2007, three epidemiologists and I conducted a study<sup>1</sup> of the effect of using the words "ethnic cleansing" rather than genocide in four of the most recent genocides: Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Darfur. Our team counted the number of uses of the terms "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" in The New York Times, UN press releases, law journals, and statements by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

We came to four important conclusions:

1. Use of the terms has no relationship to the number of people who have been killed. 8000 killed at Srebrenica was ruled "genocide" by the ICTY. Yet a U.N. Commission of Inquiry ruled that over 100,000 killed in Darfur (now over 300,000) was judged not to be sufficient evidence of intent to commit genocide by the government of Sudan.

2. Choice of the term to be used is determined by willingness to take action to stop the killing. When the terms "ethnic cleansing" or "crimes against humanity" were used, it indicated unwillingness to take forceful action to stop the crimes. These **weak words never motivated the use of force. Indeed they were probably chosen because the decision whether or not to use force had already been made.**
3. **It was not until the term "genocide" was applied to the crimes, that force was used to stop them.**
  - This occurred three months into the genocide in Rwanda when the State Department finally acknowledged on June 10, 1994 that "acts of genocide" in Rwanda were the same as "genocide", which is defined in the Genocide Convention as "acts." This declaration came after the US had voted in the UN Security Council to pull UNAMIR troops out of Rwanda on April 21, 1994 and voted against sending in UN forces in May, when the killing was still underway. By June 10, the Rwandan Patriotic Front had won the civil war and stopped the genocide. 800,000 Rwandans were slaughtered. The US and other world powers were not willing to risk the life of a single soldier to protect them. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has convicted over fifty leaders of genocide and courts in Rwanda have convicted hundreds more.
  - The same denial emerged in Bosnia, as the world press and the US government called the massacres "ethnic cleansing" from 1991 until the Srebrenica massacre on July 11 - 13, 1995, which provoked a NATO conference on July 21, and resulted in NATO bombing of Serb forces on August 30. The bombing brought Serbia to Dayton to agree to a ceasefire, division of Bosnia, and a NATO peacekeeping operation. The Bosnian civil war came to an end. The ICTY and International Court of Justice have ruled that the massacre at Srebrenica was genocide.
  - Kosovo was called "ethnic cleansing" until US War Crimes Ambassador David Scheffer noted "indicators of genocide" on April 7, 1999, followed immediately by bombing of Belgrade, which brought Serb surrender and NATO occupation of Kosovo. Six Serb leaders were convicted of crimes against humanity by the ICTY and the Kosovo Tribunal has convicted other perpetrators.
  - Regarding Darfur, following a careful empirical survey of evidence of genocide among Darfuri refugees, on September 9, 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell declared that "genocide has occurred and may still be occurring in Darfur. We believe the evidence corroborates the specific intent of the perpetrators to destroy "a group in whole or in part." He also said, "However, no new action is dictated by this determination." A decision had evidently been made by the President not to involve US or NATO military forces in stopping the genocide, so all that followed were ineffective increases in the African Union monitoring force, but no direct military intervention by NATO or the US. Although the International Criminal Court has charged Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and two others with genocide in Darfur, they have never been arrested and brought to trial. Sudan has three active genocides today. It is an example of the failure of the UN to stop genocide, and of the African Union and states-parties to the ICC Treaty to enforce international criminal law.

4. When the term “genocide” is used to describe crimes against humanity, use of force is possible. **When the crimes are only called “ethnic cleansing” or “crimes against humanity,” it is a sure indicator of lack of political will to take forceful action to stop them.**

On September 3, 2015, members of The International Association of Genocide Scholars, the world's largest organization of experts on genocide, stated in an Appeal to Congress: “ISIS’ mass murders of Chaldean, Assyrian, Melkite Greek, and Coptic Christians, Yazidis, Shia Muslims, Sunni Kurds and other religious groups meet even the strictest definition of genocide.”

Assyrians/Chaldeans/Syriacs, whose presence in Syria and Iraq predates Christianity by 4,000 years, were among the first converts to Christianity. They are clear victims of religious genocide, both for their Christian faith, and for the historical heritage their ancestors made to the world. This is genocide.

If the United States fails to adequately recognize the full scope of the intentional destruction of these groups, it will constitute a failure of the values of tolerance and plurality for which our republic stands.

Failure to call ISIS’ mass murder of Christians, Shia Muslims, and other groups in addition to Yazidis by its proper name—genocide—would be an act of denial as grave as U.S. refusal to recognize the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Calling genocide by its proper name cannot wait for a ruling by a court of law. Under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide we have an obligation to work towards prevention and punishment.

The IAGS and the twenty-one religious leaders, many from both political parties, also urged the Obama administration to encourage the U.N. Security Council to refer the case against ISIS to the International Criminal Court.

Congress has advanced important measures to recognize these atrocities for what they are: Genocide. Congressman Jeff Fortenberry introduced H.Con.Res 75, which recognizes the collective persecution of religious minorities as genocide, and to date the resolution has over 150 bipartisan cosponsors. Congressmen Franks, Speier, Smith, Sherman, Rohrabacher, Eshoo, and Fortenberry have introduced House Resolution 447, supporting the establishment of a Syrian war crimes tribunal to try ISIS, especially for its mass rape of women and girls.

There are nearly seven million Middle Eastern - American Christians in the United States diaspora. Congress and the President should recognize that the genocide perpetrated by ISIS has not stopped with the Yazidis. Middle Eastern Christians and other groups have suffered the same level of targeted and systematic crimes of extermination and genocide.

Their blood cries out no less. Their protection is as imperative as that of their Yazidi brothers and sisters. We urgently request that Congress, the State Department, and the President publicly acknowledge and denounce ISIS crimes against humanity against Yazidis, Christians, and other religious minorities by its proper name: **genocide. Weak words are not enough.**

We urge you to act quickly with our allies and the United Nations to ensure that the ongoing, genocides, crimes against humanity, and war crimes of ISIS are halted, prevented, and punished. The religious freedom and dignity of the human race depends on our leadership.

Respectfully submitted,

Professor Gregory H. Stanton  
Founding President, Genocide Watch  
Former President, International Association of Genocide Scholars

Research Professor in Genocide Studies and Prevention  
School for Conflict Analysis and Prevention  
George Mason University  
3351 Fairfax Drive MS4D3  
Arlington, Virginia 22201  
1-202-643-1405  
[president@genocidewatch.org](mailto:president@genocidewatch.org)

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<sup>i</sup> 2007 Blum, Stanton, Sagi, Richter, 'Ethnic cleansing' bleaches the atrocities of genocide. European Journal of Public Health, Oxford University Press, 1-6. Accessed 7 December 2015 at [http://genocidewatch.org/images/Bv\\_Stanton\\_07\\_05\\_18\\_Ethnic\\_cleansing\\_bleaches\\_the\\_atrocities\\_of\\_genocide.pdf](http://genocidewatch.org/images/Bv_Stanton_07_05_18_Ethnic_cleansing_bleaches_the_atrocities_of_genocide.pdf)



Mr. SMITH. Dr. Stanton, thank you very much.  
Bishop?

**STATEMENT OF THE MOST REVEREND BISHOP FRANCIS  
KALABAT, CHALDEAN EPARCHY OF ST. THOMAS THE APOS-  
TLE IN AMERICA**

Bishop KALABAT. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Bass as well as the other distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you very much for having us here before you today. This hearing couldn't come at a more critical time as it elevates the responsibility to protect the most vulnerable ethno-religious populations in Iraq and in Syria.

I would like to mention, when I mention Christians, it will include Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syriac-based Christians who to this day still speak the Aramaic language, the language of Jesus Christ, and uphold an ancient culture and identity. This as we speak is under threat of extinction in that region. Iraq and Syria's Christians are part of the original inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization, who played a crucial role in the advancement of the sciences and philosophies of the region and even had a great influence on the West.

Since the fall of Mosul in early June 2014, Christians have endured targeted persecution in the form of forced displacement, sexual violence, other human rights violations. All 45 churches and monasteries around Mosul fell to the hands of ISIS, which subsequently removed the buildings' crosses, burned, looted, and destroyed much of these properties. By late July, the last of the Christians in Mosul escaped the city following an edict issued by ISIS offering minorities the option to either convert to Islam, pay a tax, flee, or be killed leading to a modern-day genocide.

Before Iraq, ISIS had committed horrible genocidal atrocities against the Christians in Syria. Although I represent and will speak about the Christians, ISIS has committed horrific atrocities against the Yazidis of which my fellow brother sitting next to me will be talking in more detail about, and other sects including Muslims themselves. But I am here to represent the Christians.

It is important to recognize that the atrocities in Iraq began as early as 2005. This preceded ISIS. Christians and other minorities in Iraq have experienced their own slow and perpetual genocide. I wish to note that the Obama administration, including President Obama himself, have neglected to mention that the ISIS atrocities were committed against Christians. Time and time again they rightly mention atrocities committed in Iraq against the Yazidis, absolutely, and they are horrific, but there are also atrocities of rape and killings and crucifixions of Christians, beheadings, hangings that the Syrian and Iraqi Christians have endured and they are intentionally omitted. I hate to say this, but this they do to their own shame.

There are more than 150,000 Iraqi Christians who are now displaced in northern Iraq or are refugees in other countries, such as approximately 35,000 refugees in Jordan, 60,000 refugees in Lebanon, 30,000 in Turkey, who are being victimized—and I hate to say this—by the Obama administration in not recognizing their suffering. There are countless Christian villages in Syria who have

been taken over by ISIS and have encountered genocide, and the Obama administration again refuses to recognize their plight. And again I say, shame on you.

Speaking of these refugees, I do want to take the opportunity to recognize Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. They have been overwhelmed by these refugees and yet they have never closed their doors. And not only the Christian refugees, the Muslim refugees, the Yazidi refugees, all other minorities as well, they have never closed their doors. And especially I want to recognize Turkey went out of their way to grant them free medical needs, free education, countless other opportunities by an act of Parliament—that is huge on the country—to all Iraqi refugees.

But this also brings me to a very sensitive issue. Should these refugees be brought to the United States, and if so should we differentiate between Muslim, Christian or Yazidi refugees? In my mind it shouldn't be an issue because the other Middle Eastern countries should have stepped up as well. Why is it only the West other than the three countries that I mentioned?

Here is my point. Where is the best place for a Muslim Syrian refugee to settle, Kuwait or Germany? Saudi Arabia or Canada? Qatar or America? My point, it is much easier for an Arab refugee to start over in a country where the language is the same, culture is similar and the official religion of that country is the same. Of course there is always that identifying differentiation between the Sunni and the Shiite.

Where is the best place for a Yazidi or a Christian refugee? What ISIS was able to do is the Christian does not feel safe, neither does the Yazidi in his own country. Targeting of the Christian for rape, loss of property, killings, et cetera, as well as the Yazidi, has caused a loss of trust. Christians have not been part of any terrorist activity, but instead of have been the targets of terrorist activities. And now they are being looked at as possible terrorists when they are also lumped and they are told that you can't come to any of these, at least to the United States. This is simply unfair on top of everything that they have gone through. Go back.

But shouldn't it be the same for a Muslim anywhere in the Middle East? I ask, where is Kuwait in all of this? Where is Saudi Arabia? Where is Qatar? Where is Bahrain? Arabs pride themselves on what is called "Arab Hospitality," which includes the proper treatment of those who are needy. What happened to welcoming them as guests and sharing with them their needs? The Muslim faith is very clear about this as well. Where are they? I speak this to their shame as well.

Does this mean that no Muslim Syrian or Iraqi refugee should enter a Western country? No, absolutely not. I don't, not at all. I merely am saying that it would be a much easier task, and I believe many if given the opportunity would prefer to remain in a safe Middle Eastern country than go to Sweden and feel lost. Do I say all? No. But today it is not even an option, and again I say to their shame, who have lost their Arab dignity and Muslim faith, the reason is these refugees are seen as surplus, undignified, excess trash. They don't want them in their countries.

Possible solutions. First, the U.S. Government needs to continue to work with the United Nations and other churches, charities, pri-

vate corporations. We need to find aid. The numbers that were mentioned by Chairman Chris Smith are just beyond understanding especially in places like Syria. The basic needs of these human beings are not being met. Secondly, the U.S. Government should not turn a blind eye to the genocidal atrocities. Proclaim it for what it is. If it is not, then it is not. If it is, then it is. Truth will set you free, a famous man once said. Autonomous regions for Christians is a third possibility. They need safety. If we want them to live in safety we need to provide it for them. Short of a genuine solution, Christians and other ethno-religious minorities of Nineveh will become extinct. Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Bishop Kalabat follows:]

**Testimony by Bishop Francis Kalabat, Chaldean Catholic Eparchy  
of Saint Thomas the Apostle of Detroit  
House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human  
Rights and International Organizations  
December 9, 2015**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and distinguished Members of this Subcommittee, thank you very much for having me here before you today. This hearing could not come at a more critical time as it elevates the “responsibility to protect” the most vulnerable ethno-religious populations in Iraq and Syria.

In this report, whenever I mention Christians, it will include Chaldeans, Assyrians and Syriac-based Christians who to this day still speak Aramaic - the language of Jesus - and uphold an ancient culture and identity. This, as we speak, is under the threat of extinction. Iraq and Syria’s Christians are part of the original inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia, the Cradle of Civilization who played a crucial role in the advancements of the sciences and philosophies of the region and even in the west.

Since the fall of Mosul in early June 2014, the Christians have endured targeted persecution in the form of forced displacement, sexual violence, and other human rights violations. All 45 churches and monasteries around Mosul fell to the hands of ISIS which subsequently removed the buildings’ crosses, burned, looted, and destroyed much of these properties. By late July, the last of the Christians in Mosul escaped the city following an edict issued by ISIS offering minorities the option to either convert to Islam, pay a tax, flee, or be killed leading to a modern day genocide. Before Iraq, ISIS had committed horrible genocidal atrocities against the Christians in Syria. Though I represent and I will speak about the Christians, ISIS has committed horrific atrocities against the Yezidis against other sects including Muslims themselves. But I am here to represent the Christians.

It is important to recognize that the atrocities faced by Christians in Iraq cannot be reduced to only the rise of ISIS. As early as 2005, Christians and other minorities in Iraq have experienced their own slow and perpetual genocide. I wish to note that the Obama administration including President Obama himself, have neglected to mention that the ISIS atrocities were committed against Christians. They rightly mention atrocities committed in Iraq against the Yezidis, and they are horrific. But there are also atrocities of rape, killings, crucifixions (for Christians), beheadings, hangings that the Syrian and Iraqi Christians have endured and they are intentionally omitted. This they do to their shame.

In my twenty years of ministry, whenever I ministered to a person that was a victim of a violent crime such as rape, burglary or physical violence, and the justice system could not adequately proclaim it a crime let alone bring justice, the victims feel violated again. There are more than 150,000 Iraqi Christians who are now displaced in northern Iraq or are refugees in other countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey who are being victimized by the Obama administration in not recognizing their suffering. There are countless Christian villages in Syria

who have been taken over by ISIS and have encountered genocide and the Obama administration refuses to recognize their plight. Again I say, shame on you.

Speaking of these refugees, I wish to take this opportunity to recognize Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. They have been overwhelmed by all the refugees, Muslim and Christian, and yet they never closed their borders to them. I especially wish to recognize Turkey who went out of their way to grant them free medical needs, free education, and countless other opportunities by an act of Parliament to all Iraqi refugees. But this also brings me to a very sensitive issue. Should these refugees be brought to the U.S. and if so should we differentiate between Muslim, Christian, or Yezidi refugees. In my mind it shouldn't be an issue because the other Middle Eastern countries should have stepped up.

Here's my point, where is the best place for a Muslim, Syrian refugee to settle? Kuwait or Germany? Saudi Arabia or Canada? Qatar or America? My point, it is much easier for an Arab refugee to start over in a country where the language is the same, the culture is similar and the official religion of that country is the same (barring between Suni, Shiite, etc.). Where is the best place for a Yezidi or Christian refugee? What ISIS was able to do is the Christian does not feel safe in his own country. The targeting of the Christian for rape, loss of property, killing, etc. has caused a loss of trust. Christians have not been part of any terrorist activity, but instead have been the targets of terrorist activities. And now, they are being looked at as possible terrorists. This is simply unfair on top of everything that they have gone through.

But shouldn't be the same for a Muslim anywhere else in the Middle East. But where is Kuwait? Where is Saudi Arabia? Where is Qatar? Where is Bahrain? Arabs pride themselves of what is called "Arab Hospitality" which includes the proper treatment of those who are needy. What happened to welcoming them as guests and sharing with them their needs? The Muslim faith asks of that as well. Where are they? I speak this to their shame as well.

Does this mean that no Muslim Syrian or Iraqi refugee should enter a western country? No. I don't, not at all. I am merely saying that it would be a much easier task and I believe many if given the opportunity would prefer to remain in a safe Middle Eastern country then to go to Sweden and feel lost. Do I say all? NO but today it's not even an option and again I say this to their shame who have lost their Arab dignity and Muslim faith. The reason is these refugees are seen as surplus, undignified, excess trash that they don't want in their country.

Let us now turn to possible solutions. First, the U.S. government should partner with a wide range of churches, charities, private corporations, foundations, and nongovernmental organizations to ensure the efficient delivery of aid and remove the barriers associated with it.

Second, the U.S. government should not turn a blind eye to the genocidal atrocities faced by Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities including the Christians, the Yezidis and others. A decision by the U.S. to recognize the genocide faced by these groups would send a powerful signal to the United Nations and every member of the international community to act on their plight.

Third, oversee the establishment of an autonomous region for Christians, Yazidis and other vulnerable minorities. This will stop the mass exodus of Iraq's ethno-religious minorities and

enable the refugees who have fled Iraq to return to their ancestral homeland with some certainty of safety. This repositioning of Iraqi Christians has resulted in demographic shifts that have virtually displaced the Christian community's core. The recognition of the Nineveh Province could enable the 2 million diaspora members to become proponents, supporters and investors to the region.

Short of a genuine solution, Christians and other ethno-religious minorities of Nineveh will become extinct. Thank you for your time.

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Mr. SMITH. Bishop, thank you so very much for your very powerful words, your recommendations, and then your bottom line, extinction. This is an existential threat if ever there was one and you have made your case very powerfully.

Mr. Ismail, the floor is yours, and I understand you do have some photographs you would like to show. And I would say with all respect to this reality, just like the Holocaust and so many other atrocities committed by mankind over the centuries, I think it is important that people see what we are actually talking about. So if somebody might be offended, please don't look at the monitor.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Chairman, we only have about 10 minutes, or less than 10 minutes for the vote. I would certainly like to hear the testimony and see the pictures.

Mr. SMITH. Okay, then I think my friend and colleague makes a very good point. Rather than rush, we stand in a brief recess. There are two votes. Hopefully within about 15 or 20 minutes we will be back. But thank you for your patience. We stand in recess.

[Recess.]

Mr. SMITH. The subcommittee will resume its sitting, and we have been joined by two distinguished members. Dr. DesJarlais, who is a member of our subcommittee, and any comments that he might want to make or wait until—and Trent Franks who actually is the head of the Religious Freedom Caucus here in the House of Representatives and has spoken out unceasingly about the slaughter of Christians in Syria and Iraq. Doctor? Okay, or Trent?

Mr. FRANKS. Well, first of all, I want to thank Chris Smith. I think that he is the most persistent and committed voice for human rights in the United States Congress. And for all the people here on the dais here, and I especially want to appreciate those people who have come here to give voice to those who can't be here and to those who are either no longer a part of the human family because their lives have been taken from them or because they just don't have the opportunity to speak to the world like all of you do.

And I think it is noble, I think it is seen by God himself, and I think that only eternity will discover your impact or your reward for what you do. I know that it is as much a part of the American ideal as anything, this notion that all human beings bear the "Imago Dei," the Image of God, and therefore their creation and their being part of God's plan for this world holds them up to such a value that it is beyond any of us to articulate that.

But I am also so broken that sometimes those of us that live in this thing called human family miss that. And there are those that find themselves in the shadows of the world and of the human experience and never have the opportunity to really be seen for who they are. And I take great comfort in the notion that God sees each one of them, and if time turns every star in heaven to ashes that eternal moment of his deliverance will finally come to each one of them whether they were delivered here on this earth or not. But I am grateful that you folks are here today.

I think that there are two relevant suggestions that are at least part of my contribution to this effort, and number one is that when we see malevolence and evil desecrate the innocent it is incumbent upon those of us who are part of the arsenal of freedom to respond and to make sure that it doesn't happen. And to make sure that

those who do desecrate the innocent realize that they do so at great risk to themselves and they can never consider themselves with impunity to this country's commitment to protecting the innocent. And I feel like that in the case of Iraq and ISIS that that responsibility was unconscionably failed and fell so short of what it should have been, even though that there were a lot of voices trying to express the need to respond to this evil before it was able to manifest as it most certainly did.

And then the second thing, when these things do happen that I believe the people of the free world have a strong responsibility to make it clear to the world that these innocents did not die in vain nor did they suffer in vain nor were they tortured in vain. In other words that we in this part of the world will respond and we will hold those not only accountable, but we will hold them up to the world in disdain those that would have desecrated the innocent like they did.

And it is important that we don't leave anyone out. Certainly the Yazidis, I met a number of Yazidis. We had press conferences doing everything we could to bring attention to their plight, and we need to hold that up in the strongest possible way. These are a peaceful people that just desire to live in the light of freedom and try to see their children grow and to lay hold on the miracle of life. It is a very fundamentally reasonable request that they make.

And of course, Mr. Chairman, it is important that we don't leave out any of the religious groups, whether they are Christian, Yazidi, Muslim, whatever they are that they are part of the human family and that they should be looked upon as a brother and a sister and as a fellow child of God. And that means that we should not only stand and do everything we can to protect all of them, but we should do everything that we can to point out the fate of them.

And when we make resolutions calling for assigning genocide it should include all of those that were victims and I say that with the greatest deference and the greatest respect for every last one of them, even those that were especially singled out for some reason than the other. Those things can be articulated in those resolutions, but we should not leave anyone out, because to do so is to invite that same group to be attacked again.

And again I have no words, Mr. Chairman, to express how deeply I wish that we could have responded better and how I wish there weren't evil impulses in the world like ISIS. But I will tell you this, truth and time travel on the same road. And the truth is that ISIS is evil and they will meet an appropriate end, and those that were their victims will find themselves at great advantage in the councils of eternity.

So with that God bless you all and thank you for coming, and I again can't express the level of honor and just goodwill that is in my heart toward each one of you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Franks, thank you very much. I would like to now recognize Mr. Ismail. The floor is yours.



**STATEMENT OF MR. MIRZA ISMAIL, FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN, YEZIDI HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION-INTERNATIONAL**

Mr. ISMAIL. Dear ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Smith, committee members, I am honored to be here. Thank you for this opportunity to speak at this hearing on genocide by ISIS and the refugee crisis. I also want to thank the Holocaust Memorial Museum for its recent report asserting that the Yazidis are indeed the victims of genocide. The Chaldo-Assyrian Christians should have been included in this report. Our loss may not be the same, but the ISIS brutal action against both of us are the same.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here today to speak of preventing the annihilation by ISIS of my people, the Yazidis, and of the Chaldo-Assyrian Christians, Mandaean, in Iraq and Syria. We Yazidis are desperate for your immediate help and support. During our 6,000-year history, the Yazidis have faced 74 genocides in the Middle East including the ongoing genocide. Why? Simply because we are not Muslims. We are an ancient and proud people from the heart of Mesopotamia, the birthplace of civilization and the birthplace of many of the world's religions, and here we are today, in 2015, on the verge of annihilation.

In response to our suffering around the world there is profound, obscene silence. We Yazidis are considered infidels in the eyes of Muslims, and so they are encouraged to kill, rape, enslave, and convert us. On August 2, 2014, on the eve of ISIS' attack on the Yazidis in Sinjar region, more than 10,000 of the local authority forces were present in Sinjar region, allegedly there to protect the Yazidis. In the early hours of the evening, the Yazidis tried desperately to flee for their lives to Mount Sinjar, but the local militia would not allow it.

At about 10:00 p.m., these same local forces who had promised to defend us, began to withdraw from the Yazidi villages of the southern side of the Sinjar mountain, without notifying the Yazidis. They escaped back to the KRG region. The Yazidi men begged the local forces for weapons and ammunition so that we could defend ourselves from ISIS, but they refused. They would not spare even one weapon, not one round of ammo to the Yazidi men, women, and children whom they, the local militia, had trapped in what was a waiting room for the death and carnage at the hands of ISIS. And several Yazidis who begged and pleaded for weapons to save themselves and their people were killed like dogs by the Peshmergas.

And so, God help us, on August 3, at around 2:00 a.m. ISIS entered Sinjar region; the stage was set for the massacre of our people, for we possessed only very basic weapons such as AK-47 rifles. The Yazidi women, children, and elderly, and empty-handed adults with no means of self-defense at all, tried to escape the barbarians and flee to Mount Sinjar. It didn't take long, only 4 or 5 hours, for the poorly armed Yazidi fighters to run out of ammunition and the region was overrun with death and ISIS took over Sinjar region. With no means of defense, of course the carnage was immense. Thousands of men were killed on the spot including the beheading of hundreds. The U.N. estimates that 5,000 Yazidis were murdered and thousands of women and children taken hostage.

Then on August 6, 2014, ISIS attacked the Yazidis and the Chaldo-Assyrians Christians in the Nineveh Plain. The resulting genocide took the lives of thousands of Yazidis and Chaldo-Assyrian and Shia minority. ISIS has wiped from existence one of the most culturally diverse areas across the Middle East. Today, hundreds of thousands who are still alive, have taken refuge in IDP camps across the Iraqi region and Shia in the southern Iraq. They urgently require your help.

There are thousands of young Yazidi women, girls, and even children, who as I speak, have been enslaved and forced into sexual slavery. These girls are subjected to daily multiple rapes by ISIS monsters. According to many escaped women and girls whom I talked to in northern Iraq, the abducted Yazidis, mostly women and children, number over 7,000. Some of those women and girls have had to watch 7-, 8-, and 9-year-old children bleed to death before their eyes after being raped by ISIS militia multiple times a day. I met mothers whose children were torn from them by ISIS. These same mothers came to plead for the return of their children, only to be informed that they, the mothers, had been fed the flesh of their own children by ISIS. Children murdered, then fed to their own mothers. ISIS militia have burned many of them alive for refusing to convert and marry ISIS men.

Young Yazidi boys are being trained to be jihadists and suicide bombers. All of our temples in the ISIS controlled area are exploded and destroyed. The entire Yazidi population was displaced in less than 1 day on August 3, 2014 in Sinjar. The Yazidis and Chaldo-Assyrians Christian face this genocide together. Why? Again, because we are not Muslims and because our path is the path of peace. For this we are being burned alive, for living as men and women of peace.

What I have just recounted to you is what has happened to the Yazidis, Chaldo-Assyrians, Sabians, in Sinjar and Nineveh Plain, and other minorities; nothing less than genocide, according to the U.N. definition of genocide.

On IDPs and refugee crisis in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, humanitarian aid, while necessary, is not sufficient. Much humanitarian aid distributed by the Kurdish regional authorities and the Iraqi Government never gets into the hands of those who need it, those for whom it was intended, due to skimming, corruption, and politics. Some outside observers say that as much 90 percent of the humanitarian assistance meant for Yazidis and other minorities has never reached their hands.

There are more than 30,000 Yazidi refugees currently languishing in Turkey and Syria. At the top of the threatened and persecuted list are the Yazidis, then come the Chaldo-Assyrian Christians. Five thousand Yazidis were murdered by ISIS in August 2014 and 7,000 were enslaved, mostly young women and children. Thousands fled to camps where they are abused by the Muslim authorities in charge, denied food and medicine because they are not their own political parties. Or they cannot get into refugee camps at all; consequently, they are not certified as refugees since one cannot get refugee status without being certified and the Muslims who dominate the camps do not want them there.

The same holds true for the Chaldo-Assyrian Christians who have repeatedly been forced to renounce their religion or die. Enslavement, rape, hundreds of their churches have been desecrated and destroyed. If humanitarianism is the chief reason being cited in accepting refugees, the Yazidis, Chaldo-Assyrian Christians, Mandaean and other minorities should receive priority simply because they are among the most persecuted in the Middle East and the ones who have nowhere else to go.

Perhaps the worst camps for the Yazidi refugees in Turkey are those that border with Syria, because of the fighting between the PKK and the Turkish Government. The Yazidis worry about the Russian plane recently downed by Turkey. In the event of war between the two countries, Yazidi refugees are afraid of being used as human shields. Because of the unsafe situation, hundreds of these Yazidis are fleeing for Europe. They are seeking safety and a peaceful life and yet hundreds of these refugees have lost their lives on the journey, whether in the freezer of truck trailers, or by drowning in their tube boats in the sea between Turkey and Greece. Others die of starvation and dehydration attempting to reach safety by foot. In all cases, their desperation is the cause of death.

I am now pleading with each and every one of you in the name of humanity to lend us your help and support at this crucial time, to save the indigenous and peaceful people of the Middle East—the Yazidis, the Chaldo-Assyrian Christians, the Mandaean, and other minorities.

Recognize the Yazidi and Chaldo-Assyrian Christian genocide and provide international protection so we can live as God created us. Concerned nations including the U.S., Canada, UK, NATO, and EU member states and the United Nations should make a concerted effort to liberate the ISIS detention centers. As mentioned, we estimate at least 4,000 are currently held, young Yazidi women and children, by ISIS.

We ask the United Nations, the U.S., Canada, UK, and NATO, and other members of the international community, to intervene with the Iraqi Government in supporting the creation of an autonomous region for the Yazidi, Chaldo-Assyrians and other minorities in Sinjar region and Nineveh Plain, under the protection of international forces and directly tied to Baghdad's central government. This right is guaranteed under the Iraqi constitution, Article 125, but it needs implementation. This is the only way we can survive in the Middle East.

We ask the U.S. and all sympathetic governments around the world to develop refugee policies that can work quickly and effectively to provide new homes for the needy refugees, for the Yazidis, for the Chaldo-Assyrian Christian and other minorities who urgently need new beginnings, especially the abducted ones who were able to escape from ISIS, far away from the carnage we witnessed.

Germany has agreed to accept 1,000 Yazidi refugees who were abducted by ISIS and about 700 have arrived already. I hope that the U.S. can do the same, and provide social-psycho help to the innocent. Humanitarian aid must be sent immediately to those internally displaced persons in northern Iraq. There is an imminent threat of starvation, dehydration, and diseases especially for the

Yazidis in Mount Sinjar. As much as possible this assistance should come from neutral, non-governmental sources to mitigate the diversion of food and water.

Thank you so much for listening and for the very careful consideration going forward. We beseech you with the greatest urgency, to help save the remnants of our nation, of the Chaldo-Assyrians, of Mandaean, and other minorities. Only with your help, after we have experienced so much death and suffering, is there a possibility of a peaceful life going forward for our people. Thank you so much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ismail follows:]



Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International (YIHOI) [www.yezidihumanrights.org](http://www.yezidihumanrights.org) [info@yezidihumanrights.org](mailto:info@yezidihumanrights.org) 1-416-843-7973

### **Yezidi & Christian Genocide by ISIS in Iraq and Syria and the Refugee Crisis**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am honoured to be here. Thank you for this opportunity to speak at this hearing on “Genocide by ISIS and the Refugee Crisis.” I also want to thank the Holocaust Memorial Museum for its recent report asserting that the Yezidis are indeed the victims of genocide. The Chaldo-Assyrian Christian should have been included in the report. Our loss may not be the same, but the ISIS brutal actions against both of us are the same.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here today to speak of preventing the annihilation by ISIS of my people, the Yezidis, and of the Chaldo-Assyrian Christians in Iraq and Syria.

We Yezidis are desperate for your immediate help and support. During our six thousand year history, Yezidis have faced 74 genocides in the Middle East, including the ongoing genocide. Why? Simply because we are not Muslims. We are an ancient and proud people from the heart of Mesopotamia, the birth place of civilization and the birth place of many of the world’s religions. And here we are today, in 2015, on the verge of annihilation. In response to our suffering, around the World there is profound, obscene silence. We Yezidis are considered “Infidels” in the eyes of Muslims, and so they are encouraged to kill, rape, enslave, and convert us.

On August 02, 2014, on the eve of ISIS’ attack on the Yezidis in Sinjar region, more than 10,000 of the local authority’s forces were present in Sinjar region, allegedly there to protect the Yezidis. In the early hours of the evening, the Yezidis tried desperately to flee for their lives to Mount Sinjar, but the local militia would not allow it. At about 10 pm, these same local forces -- who had promised to defend us, began to withdraw from Yezidis’ villages of the Southern side of Mount Sinjar without notifying the Yezidis. They escaped back to the KRG region. Yezidi men begged the local forces for weapons and ammo so that we could defend ourselves from ISIS. But they refused. They would not spare even one weapon, not one round of ammo to the Yezidi men, women, and children whom they, the local militia, had trapped in what was a waiting room for death and carnage at the hands of ISIS. And several Yezidis who begged and pleaded for weapons to save themselves and their People were killed like dogs by peshmergas. And so, God help us, on August 03, 2014 at 2:00 am, ISIS entered Sinjar region. The stage was set for a massacre of our People, for we possessed only very basic weapons, such as AK 47 rifles. Yezidi women, children, the elderly and empty-handed adults, with no means of self-defence at all -- tried to escape the barbarians and flee to Mount Sinjar. It did not take long -- only four or five hours it took -- for the poorly armed Yezidi fighters to run out of ammo and the region was overrun with death, and ISIS took over Sinjar region. With no means of defense, of course the carnage was immense: Thousands of men were killed on the spot, including the beheading of hundreds. The UN estimates that 5000 Yezidis were murdered and thousands of women and children taken hostage.

Then, on August 6, 2014, ISIS attacked the Yezidis and the Chaldo-Assyrians Christians in Nineveh Plain. The resulting Genocide took the lives of hundreds of thousands of Yezidis, Chaldo-Assyrians, and Shia minority refugees. ISIS has wiped from existence are of the most culturally diverse areas in

the Middle East. Today, hundreds of thousands who are still alive have taken refuge in IDP camps across the Iraqi Kurdish Region and some (Shiaa) in the Southern Iraq. They urgently require your help.

There are thousands of young Yezidi women, girls and even children, who as I speak have been enslaved and forced into sexual slavery. These girls are subjected to daily, multiple rapes by ISIS monsters. According to many escaped women and girls whom I talked to in Northern Iraq, the abducted Yezidis, mostly women and children, number over 7,000. Some of those women and girls have had to watch 7, 8 and 9 year old children bleed to death before their eyes, after being raped by ISIS militia multiple times a day.

I met mothers, whose children were torn from them by ISIS. These same mothers came to plead for the return of their children, only to be informed, that they – the mothers! – had been fed the flesh of their own children by ISIS, children murdered, then fed to their own mothers! ISIS militia have burned alive many Yezidi and Christian girls for refusing to convert and marry ISIS men. Young Yezidi boys are being trained to be jihadists and suicide bombers. The entire Yezidi population was displaced in less than one day on August 03, 2014! The Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrians Christians face this genocide together. Why? Because we are not Muslims, and because our path is the path of peace. For this, we are being burned alive. For living as men and women of peace.

What I have just recounted to you, what has happened to the Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrian Christians in Sinjar and in Nineveh Plain is nothing less than genocide – according to the UN definition of genocide!

#### **IDPs and Refugee Crisis in Iraq, Syria and Turkey**

Humanitarian aid, while necessary, is not sufficient. Much humanitarian aid distributed by the Kurdish Regional authorities and the Iraqi government never gets into the hands of those who need it, those for whom it was intended -- due to skimming, corruption, and politics. Some outside observers say that as much as 90 percent of the humanitarian assistance meant for Yezidis and other minorities has never reached their hands.

There are more than 40,000 Yezidi refugees currently languishing in Turkey and Syria. At the top of the threatened and persecuted list are the Yezidis, then come the Chaldo-Assyrian Christians. Five thousand Yazidis were murdered by ISIS in August of 2014 and 7,000 are enslaved, mostly young women and children. Thousands fled to camps where they are abused by the Muslim authorities in charge, denied food and medicine. Or they can't get into UN refugee camps at all and, consequently, are not certified as refugees since one cannot get refugee status without being certified and the Muslims who dominate the camps do not want them there.

The same holds true for Chaldo-Assyrian Christians who have repeatedly been forced to renounce their religion or die. Enslavement, rape; more than 400 of their churches have been desecrated and destroyed.

If humanitarianism is the chief reason being cited in accepting refugees, the Yezidis and other minority groups should receive priority simply because they are among the most persecuted in the Middle East and the ones who have nowhere else to go.

Perhaps the worst camps for Yezidis are those that border Syria, because of the fighting between the PKK, Syrian Kurds, and the Turkish government. Yezidis here worry about the Russian plane recently downed by Turkey. In the event of war between the two countries, Yezidis refugees are afraid of being used as "human shields." Because of the unsafe situation, hundreds of these Yezidis are fleeing for

Europe. They are seeking safety and a peaceful life, and yet hundreds of these refugees have perished on the journey, whether in truck trailers, or by drowning in their tube boats in the sea between Turkey and Greece. Others die of starvation and dehydration, attempting to reach safety by foot. In all cases their desperation is the cause of death.

I am pleading with each and every one of you in the name of humanity to lend us your support at this crucial time to save the indigenous and peaceful peoples of the Middle East --Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrian Christians.

#### **Our urgent demands**

1. Recognize the Yezidi and Chaldo-Assyrian Christian genocide and provide international protection, so we can live as God created us.
2. Concerned nations, including the U.S., Canada, U. K., NATO and EU member states, and the United Nations should make a concerted effort to liberate ISIS detention centers. As mentioned, we estimate at least 4,000 are currently held young Yezidi women, girls and children by ISIS.
3. We ask the United Nations, US, Canada, UK, EU, NATO and other members of the international community to intervene with the Iraqi Government, supporting the creation of an "Autonomous Region" for the Yezidis, Chaldo-Assyrians, and other minorities in the Sinjar region and Nineveh Plain under the protection of international forces and directly tied to Baghdad's Central government. This right is guaranteed under the Iraqi constitution, article 125, but it needs implementation! This is the only way we can survive in the Middle East.
4. We ask the US and all sympathetic governments around the world to develop refugee policies that can work quickly and effectively to provide new homes for needy refugees, for the Yezidis, Chaldo-Assyrians and others who urgently need a new beginning, especially the abducted who were able to escape from ISIS far from the carnage we have witnessed. Germany has agreed to accept 1000 Yezidis refugees, who were abducted by ISIS and **Seven hundred** have arrived already.
5. Humanitarian aid must be sent immediately to those internally displaced in Northern Iraq. There is an imminent threat of starvation, dehydration and disease, especially for the Yezidis on Mount Sinjar. As much as possible, this assistance should come from neutral, non-governmental sources to mitigate diversion of food and water.

Thank you for listening, and for your very careful consideration going forward. We beseech you with the greatest urgency to help save the remnants of our Yezidi nation, of the Chaldo-Assyrians, and other minorities. Only with your help, after we have experienced so much death, and suffering, is there the possibility of a peaceful life going forward for our People.

Best regards,

Mirza Ismail  
Chairman  
Yezidi Human Rights Organization International  
[www.yezidihumanrights.org](http://www.yezidihumanrights.org)

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much for that very powerful testimony. We are joined by Mark Meadows, vice chairman of the committee.

We will go to Mr. Anderson now.

**STATEMENT OF MR. CARL A. ANDERSON, SUPREME KNIGHT,  
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS**

Mr. ANDERSON. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for this hearing, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before the subcommittee to discuss the Knights of Columbus' humanitarian aid programs.

Over the past year our programs have helped to feed, heal, shelter and educate many thousands of desperate Christians in church-run camps or other private places of refuge in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. We have established a donation and news web portal titled ChristiansAtRisk.org, and have to date donated over \$5 million in direct aid to Christians and other persecuted minorities in the region. And we have partnered with other organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, Aid to the Church in Need, Caritas, and local dioceses in Iraq and Syria.

Our assistance has taken many forms in terms of food, shelter, education, and medical assistance. At times we have been required to give exceptional care. For example, just several weeks ago we helped Katreena, a very sick 15-year-old Iraqi girl, by organizing her airlift from a displaced persons camp in Erbil. Her life was saved when she was brought to a New England hospital for treatment for numerous issues for which she could not adequately be treated in Iraq.

We also are funding the work of a medical clinic in the Kurdistan region, which is the first point of contact for many Yazidi women who are escaping from conditions of sexual slavery there. Through this humanitarian work in the Middle East we have made three basic observations and four recommendations bearing on U.S. human rights and refugee policy that I would like to focus on in my testimony today. In the interest of time I will just briefly summarize them.

The Christian communities of Iraq and Syria, along with those of other vulnerable religious minorities, are suffering genocide that continues to the present time. We recommend therefore that the Congress swiftly adopt H. Con. Res. 75, which names and decries the ongoing genocide against Christians and other vulnerable minorities in Iraq and Syria. Further, we recommend that the United States State Department publicly acknowledge that genocide is taking place against the Christian communities of Iraq and Syria, including in its reportedly impending statement on genocide that according to reports refers properly, but only to Nineveh's Yazidi community.

The United States is rightly viewed, Mr. Chairman, as the world's leading defender of vulnerable minorities, and it is critically important that our State Department consider the best available evidence before issuing a statement that would exclude Christians. An official government declaration of genocide is an opportunity to bring America's religious communities together to pursue the truth,



to support victims, and to bear witness to the noble principle of “never again.”

Last week, the Knights of Columbus sent an urgent letter to Secretary of State John Kerry asking for an opportunity to brief him about this genocide. This letter was signed by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, the Archbishop of Washington, and more than two dozen other religious leaders and scholars from across the political spectrum and from diverse Orthodox, Protestant, Mormon, as well as Catholic faith traditions. A copy of the letter is submitted with my testimony as an addendum.

Third, the Christian communities of Iraq and Syria, along with those other vulnerable religious minorities, fear taking shelter in the camps of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees because of religiously motivated violence and intimidation that occurs inside the camps. We recommend therefore that the United States insists on proper security inside the camps and that it identifies ways to ensure that Christians and other vulnerable minorities from Iraq and Syria are not subject to violence inside the UNHCR facilities, including the possibility of providing separate facilities for minorities and hiring professional staff that would include members of the minority communities.

The U.S. should require the UNHCR to gather and make public along with its other data the religious affiliation of all the refugees it serves. To ignore reports of humanitarian problems without prompt investigation and corrective action is itself an injustice. We have had aid organizations at the camps in Jordan, for example, Zaatari and Azraq, where there are 100,000 Syrian refugees and they are unable to find a single Christian in those camps.

Our fourth recommendation: Syrian Christians and other vulnerable minorities are disproportionately excluded from the U.S.-Syrian refugee resettlement program due to a reliance on what has become a functionally discriminatory UNHCR program. So we recommend that the U.S. Government take immediate action to implement its stated policy of prioritizing the resettlement of vulnerable minorities including Christians. In addition, we recommend that the U.S. Government end its sole reliance on the UNHCR for refugee referrals and engage private contractors to identify, document and refer Christian, Yazidi, and other vulnerable minority refugees from Syria and Iraq who are in need of resettlement.

In conclusion, permit me to observe that the near complete dependency of these refugees on our help and that of other private charities to meet their essential needs will continue for the foreseeable future. Therefore, the policy recommendations we have mentioned just now are urgently necessary. And it should be noted obviously that the Christian communities and other vulnerable minorities have not taken up arms on any side of the violence. They have been peaceful.

Finally, let me just mention again Pope Francis has been in the forefront in calling attention to this ongoing crisis, especially during his visit to the United States. He has said what is happening to these Christians and other religious minorities is “a form of genocide and it must end.” And finally, if you permit me one final request in closing, I would ask you to consider special funding to investigate and obtain documentation and evidence of the crime of

genocide that is occurring in Syria and Iraq. We need to investigate and preserve that evidence now before it disappears if we are going to move forward seriously on the issue of genocide in this region. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Anderson follows:]

Testimony of  
Mr. Carl A. Anderson

Supreme Knight  
Knights of Columbus

Before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health,  
Global Human Rights and International Organizations  
of the  
House Foreign Affairs Committee

At a hearing titled  
*Fulfilling the Humanitarian Imperative:  
Assisting Victims of ISIS Violence*

December 9, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this subcommittee and discuss the Knights of Columbus humanitarian aid programs. Over the course of the past year, our programs have helped feed, heal, shelter and educate many thousands of desperate Christians in church-run camps or other private places of refuge in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. We have established a donation and news web portal titled **Christiansatrisk.org** and have to date donated over \$5 million in direct aid to Christians and other persecuted minorities in the region. We have partnered with other organizations in the region, including Catholic Relief Services, Aid to the Church in Need, Caritas, and local dioceses in Iraq and Syria.

Our assistance has taken the form of food, shelter, education and medical assistance. At times it has required exceptional care: for example, several weeks ago we helped Katreena, a very sick 15 year-old Iraqi girl by organizing her airlift from a displaced persons camp in Erbil, Kurdistan. Her life was saved when she was brought to a New England hospital for treatment for numerous issues that could not adequately be addressed in Iraq.

Through this humanitarian work in the Middle East we have made three basic observations and four recommendations bearing on U.S. human rights and refugee policy that I would like to focus on in my testimony today. In the interests of time, I will summarize them briefly at the outset:

1. The Christian communities of Iraq and Syria, along with those of other vulnerable religious minorities, are suffering genocide that continues to the present time. We recommend, therefore, that Congress adopt House Concurrent Resolution 75, which names and decries the ongoing "genocide" against Christians and other vulnerable minorities in Iraq and Syria. Introduced by Congressman Jeff Fortenberry and Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, this resolution has 153 cosponsors and a similar resolution is soon to be introduced in the Senate.
2. We further recommend that the U.S. State Department publicly acknowledge that genocide is taking place against the Christian communities of Iraq and Syria, including in its reportedly impending statement on genocide that, according to reports, refers only to Nineveh's Yazidi community. The United States is rightly viewed as the world's leading defender of vulnerable minorities, and it is critically important that the State Department consider the best available evidence before issuing a statement that would exclude Christians. An official government declaration of genocide is an opportunity to bring America's religious communities together to pursue the truth, to support victims, and to bear witness to the noble principle of "Never Again."

Last week the Knights of Columbus sent an urgent letter to Secretary of State John Kerry asking for an opportunity to brief him about this genocide. This letter was signed by Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, and two dozen other religious leaders and scholars from across the political spectrum

and from diverse Orthodox, Protestant, Mormon, as well as Catholic, faith traditions. A copy of the letter is attached to this testimony as an addendum

3. The Christian communities of Iraq and Syria, along with those of other vulnerable religious minorities, fear taking shelter in the camps of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) because of religiously motivated violence and intimidation inside the camps. We recommend that the United States insist on proper security inside the camps and identify ways to ensure that Christians and other vulnerable minorities from Iraq and Syria are not subject to violence inside UNHCR facilities, including the possibility of providing separate facilities for minorities and hiring professional staff that would include members of the minority communities. The U.S. should require the UNHCR to gather and make public, along with its other data, the religious affiliation of all the refugees it serves. To ignore reports of humanitarian problems, without prompt investigation and corrective action, is itself an injustice.
4. Syrian Christians and other vulnerable minorities are disproportionately excluded from the U.S. Syrian Refugee Resettlement Program due to reliance on a functionally discriminatory UNHCR program. We recommend that the U.S. government take immediate action to implement its stated policy of “prioritizing” the resettlement of vulnerable minorities, including Christians. In addition, we recommend that the U.S. government end its sole reliance on the UNHCR for refugee referrals and engage private contractors to identify, document and refer Christian, Yazidi and other vulnerable minority refugees from Syria and Iraq who are in need of resettlement.

#### **A Genocide Targeting the Christians**

The near-complete dependency of these refugees on our help and that of other private charities to meet their essential needs will continue for the foreseeable future. Fear of being slaughtered or enslaved for their faith prevents them from returning home. Like the region’s other refugee communities, the vulnerable Christian minority is striving to survive devastating conflicts – in which, it should be noted, the Christian communities have not taken up arms for any side. In addition, like the Jews in Nazi Germany, these Christians are escaping genocide. They are being specifically targeted because they put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis has been in the forefront in calling attention to this ongoing attempt at extermination. About these Christians, he declared that “a form of genocide — and I stress the word ‘genocide’ — is taking place, and it must end.”<sup>1</sup> The Knights of Columbus believes this is the proper name for what has been confronting these churches and, in our media advocacy campaign, we have urged others – including this

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.france24.com/en/20150710-bolivia-pope-francis-calls-end-genocide-christians-middle-east>

Congress – to also recognize that these and other vulnerable minorities from the killing fields of Iraq and Syria are suffering genocide, the most egregious of human rights transgressions.

Last week, the Knights of Columbus sent an urgent letter to Secretary of State John Kerry asking for an opportunity to brief him about this genocide. This letter was signed by Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, and two dozen other religious leaders and scholars from across the political spectrum and from diverse Orthodox, Protestant, Mormon, as well as Catholic, faith traditions. These signatories united in response to reports that the State Department will soon issue a statement on genocide in the region that, while rightly providing a focus on the Yazidi community, unjustifiably excludes the Christians. A copy of this letter is attached to this testimony as an addendum.

Our coalition's letter of December 4<sup>th</sup> observes that the Genocide Convention defines genocide as killing and certain other acts "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." As we then explained:

We have extensive files supporting a finding that ISIS' treatment of Iraqi and Syrian Christians, as well as Yazidis and other vulnerable minorities, meets this definition. They include evidence of ISIS assassinations of Church leaders; mass murders; torture, kidnapping for ransom in the Christian communities of Iraq and Syria; its sexual enslavement and systematic rape of Christian girls and women; its practices of forcible conversions to Islam; its destruction of churches, monasteries, cemeteries, and Christian artifacts; and its theft of lands and wealth from Christian clergy and laity alike. We will also present ISIS' own, public statements taking "credit" for mass murder of Christians, and expressing its intent to eliminate Christian communities from its "Islamic State."

Three days after our letter to Secretary of State Kerry, the independent United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) issued a statement calling upon the U.S. government to designate Christians and other religious minorities of Iraq and Syria as victims of genocide.<sup>2</sup> But we have not received any response from Secretary Kerry or others with the State Department.

We emphasize, the genocidal attacks against Christians began years before ISIS emerged from Al Qaeda in Iraq and before the summer of 2014, when ISIS began stamping Christian homes in Mosul for confiscation with the red letter "N" for "Nazarene."<sup>3</sup> In March 2007, the leader of the group that would spawn ISIS officially articulated the jihadist intent to kill Christians as legitimate targets of war: "We find that the sects of the People of the Book and others from the Sabians and so in the State of Islam today are people of war who qualify for no protection, for they have transgressed against whatever they agreed to in many countless ways, and if they want peace and

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/press-releases/uscifr-statement-the-designation-victims-genocide-persecution-and-crimes>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/8721.htm>

security then they must start a new era with the State of Islam according to (Caliph) Omar's stipulations [the historic "Covenant" of Caliph Omar with Christians] that they have annulled." The Knights of Columbus interviewed Fr. Douglas Bazi, who currently runs a Church-based refugee camp in Erbil. Fr. Bazi was himself kidnapped and tortured by Islamic extremists in 2009 even prior to the current insurgency. Fr. Bazi has said, "Genocide is an easy word compared to what is happening to my people."<sup>4</sup>

The attacks against Christians continue to the present day, as shown in just a few examples which follow:

- In October 2015, ISIS released a video of the point-blank execution in the previous month of three Assyrian Christian men in orange jumpsuits. They were from the group of some 250 hostages taken captive in February 2015 from undefended Christian villages along Syria's Khabour river. ISIS is threatening to execute others from the group unless a staggering \$10 million ransom is paid. Greek Melkite Catholic Archbishop Jean-Clement Jeanbart stated in Fall 2015 that some one thousand Christians had been kidnapped and murdered in his city of Aleppo, alone. Since 2003, so many thousands of Iraqi and Syrian Christians have been held hostage for ransom that Christians there are sometimes referred to as "currency" and such ransoms are cited by experts as a major source of ISIS' revenues. One victim was Chaldean priest Douglas Bazi, featured in our recent television commercial aired on Fox, who now manages Erbil's Mar Elia camp for 100 displaced Christian families. Like many others, Fr. Bazi was severely tortured while a captive. On July 10, 2015, the Vatican press *Fides* reported that, after their families pay ransoms of up to \$50,000, Christian hostages in Baghdad are now being killed instead of freed.
- The US-based Christian Aid Mission reported on its website the rape, beheading and crucifixion on August 28 in villages outside Aleppo, of eleven Christian preachers, including the 12-year-old son of one of them, and two women, because they refused to renounce their faith. These were evangelical Christians converted from Islam, but many Catholics and Orthodox have also suffered horrific ordeals. At least three Christians have been kidnapped and sold in a Mosul slave market and remain enslaved, including three year-old Christina Noah, whose mother was interviewed by former Congressman Frank Wolf. ISIS explicitly announced its approval of the sexual enslavement of Christian women and girls in its magazine *Dabiq*. Numerous clergy including a Catholic bishop in Mosul and two Orthodox bishops in Aleppo, have been assassinated simply for their faithfulness. The pectoral cross of one Iraqi Chaldean Catholic priest, Father Ragheed Ganni, whose throat was slit by Islamic radicals in 2007 when he refused to close his church in Mosul, is now sometimes worn by Pope Francis.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Bazi also told the Knights of Columbus: "What's the point of letting sheep among wolves? Be our voice. I will not be surprised if they are going to destroy us, but I will be disappointed if no one will tell our stories... I will ask you here: pray for my people, help my people, and save my people. And I believe you can."

- On July 6, 2015, ISIS blew up the historic 1,000-year old church in Mosul known as the Church of the Mother of Perpetual Help. In mid-2015, Mosul's historic St. Joseph's Catholic Church was converted into a mosque, with its cross removed and gold dome painted black. St. Ephrem's Cathedral, the seat of the Syrian Orthodox archdiocese, was turned into the Mosque of the Mujahideen, reported the Vatican around the same time. In March 2015, ISIS tweeted photos showing the group blowing up the 4th century Mar Behnam Monastery in Qaraqosh, Nineveh. The monastery was known to contain one of the most valuable Syriac libraries in Iraq. Photos also showed the group's bombing of the tombs of Saint Behnam and Saint Sarah, both believed by the faithful to have been converted to Christianity by Saint Matthew. The 5th century Mar Elian monastery in Qaryatain was bulldozed by ISIS in August. ISIS's destruction of churches, monasteries and convents in the territory it controls has been systematic. But this pattern began a decade before and included the widely publicized attack on Our Lady of Perpetual Help (also called Our Lady of Salvation), a Syriac Catholic Church in Baghdad, in October 2010; it was filled with worshippers celebrating holy Mass, killing about 50 of them, including two priests. In addition to eradicating Christian people, the extremists' goal is to erase every trace of Christianity's two thousand year old presence.

Untold numbers of other atrocities have been documented by a variety of Church and private sources. In the interest of time, I provide only these illustrative few.

We are aware that one rationale for excluding Christians is that, unlike Yazidis, ISIS gives Christians a "choice": they can convert to Islam or pay an Islamic tax (jizya), rather than being killed or enslaved. The implication is that ISIS abides by traditional Islamic Sharia, under which other "People of the Book" (Christians and Jews) pay a tax in exchange for protection by their Muslim rulers. As we wrote to Secretary Kerry and as the facts show, this is emphatically not the case.

Many times the payment of jizya is not presented as an option for these Christians. In the instances where the jizya has been exacted, it has failed to ensure that the Christians could live as Christians, that they were protected from rival jihadists or even other members of ISIS, or that the amount of the payment was not raised over time until it became an impossible sum, causing the family's home and even children to be confiscated and the adults killed or forced to become Muslims. A Dutch journalist reported just such an incident in *Idlib* in 2013 when a number of Christian families began to pay the jizya but, after the amount demanded kept increasing over several months, some Christians decided to flee, leaving behind their farms and property, while others who could not pay or escape were forced to convert to Islam. In the Christian valley outside Homs, an Orthodox priest reported that those who couldn't pay the jizya and who were not able to flee were killed. In some places, ISIS rulers reportedly demand that the jizya be paid in gold, a tax that would be impossible to sustain. Middle East scholar and, until earlier this year, the coordinator of U.S. government ideological



counterterrorism messaging, Alberto Fernandez, writing in a study for *MEMRI*<sup>5</sup>, noted the absence of any open church or evidence of Christian life in Raqqa, where the jizya contract was reportedly drawn up between ISIS and local Christians. He found ISIS jizya to be "a Salafi Caliphate publicity stunt." It should be needless to state that being forced to convert to Islam, under penalty of death or sexual enslavement, is evidence of religious genocide, not an alternative to it.

Today any Christian who was not able to flee when ISIS took control of their area has been killed, taken captive, enslaved, or forced to live as a Muslim. There, no holy Masses or other forms of Christian worship are tolerated and its two thousand year old Christian culture and communities have been effectively eradicated.

#### **Christians and Other Vulnerable Religious Minority Refugees Fear UNHCR Camps:**

The aid of private charitable organizations such as the Knights of Columbus is essential because Iraqi and Syrian Christians and other displaced vulnerable minorities, while justifiably afraid of returning home, avoid seeking refuge in UNHCR camps. The overwhelming majority of Christian families are seeking shelter, food and medicine from Church-operated camps like Father Douglas Bazi's Mar Elia camp, or living with relatives or in apartments and make-shift shelters in the slum areas of Amman and Beirut, apart from the UNHCR camps. They have no right to work, own property or drive a car in these areas and depend on support from local churches and a variety of international governmental and non-governmental sources. Far too little attention has been given to a disturbing reason for why Christians don't seek shelter in UNHCR camps and its implications.

This pattern of avoiding the UN camps first became apparent in Iraqi Kurdistan when the Christians fled Mosul on June 10, 2014, and continues to hold true today for the displaced Christian minorities in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as in Kurdistan. Neither in the large UNHCR Zaatari and Azraq camps in Jordan, which together shelter over 100,000 mostly Syrian refugees, nor in its smaller encampments in Lebanon, did recent visitors find a single Christian refugee family sheltering there.

The United States government is the world's most generous donor to the UNHCR and resettles more refugees from it "than all other resettlement countries combined," according to the department's Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration.<sup>6</sup> However, despite deep US investment in the UNHCR refugee program, our government has given scant focus to the consistent, region-wide, and frankly shocking pattern that the most vulnerable religious minority refugees overwhelmingly avoid the UNHCR camps. In fact, it has been largely silent about the matter and strangely lacking in curiosity about the underlying explanation. Its response has been virtually limited to a

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/8721.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.state.gov/l/p/rm/ra/>

brief, unclassified official email statement which said, “many minority religious groups from Syria are urban refugees and have not entered the UN system.”<sup>7</sup>

The UNHCR, itself, seems to dodge the question, implying that it is unaware of any such issue. It is able to provide age and gender breakdowns but not religious affiliation of those in its camps, despite the fact that a well-founded fear of “religious persecution” is a fundamental issue for determining refugee status under international law and, given the intense religious persecution of the minorities, this should be one of the first questions asked of those seeking shelter in its camps. On December 2, a media report stated: “Queries sent to the UNHCR about the religious breakdown of refugees in its camps, and about Christians’ concerns about their safety, have yet to bring a response.”<sup>8</sup> A second query put to the UNHCR by a U.S. senate office also failed to receive a response.

The reason that the Christians and other vulnerable religious minorities stay away from UNHCR camps can be found in interviews with those who work with the minority refugees and others who’ve been inside the UNHCR camps. The UK’s Lord David Alton is one who has spoken out about this, stating last month that many minorities escaping Syria have either fled the UNHCR refugee camps or have never risked entering them “because they suffer attacks, inside the camps, by radical Islamists.”<sup>9</sup> He reported on the testimony of a witness in an ongoing British parliamentary investigation into this scandal as follows:

The House of Commons International Development Select Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into the Syrian Refugee Crisis. At an evidence session recently, a witness, speaking on behalf of an organisation which works in the region directly with refugees, gave testimony that “we are not aware of Christians being within UN registered camps” – the camps to which UK Aid makes a substantial funding contribution. The Committee was told that Christians avoid these camps – and therefore access to the support within them – because of fear: “if your culture is different, you stand out and are more of a target, which makes you nervous to go there.”

Lord Alton stated further:

Another witness in written evidence to the inquiry states, “Christians are generally not able to go to camps for fear of intimidation and risk... Because many Christians and other minority groups do not enter the camps due to fear of

<sup>7</sup> Unclassified email of October 27, 2015, from Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Middle East Knox Thames to Nina Shea, Director of the Hudson Institute’s Center for Religious Freedom.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/state-dept-us-refugee-program-admits-most-vulnerable>.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2015/11/fiona-bruce-mp-and-lord-alton-our-aid-programme-must-support-religious-freedom.html>

religious persecution, this would result in them being doubly disadvantaged as they will not have equal access to the scheme." This double disadvantage refers to effective exclusion from the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme – after having already been driven away from their home towns or villages, often as a result of religious persecution – these refugees, surviving outside the UN camps, have no chance of being selected as some of the 20,000 refugees the UK has committed to welcome here. An Archbishop familiar with the region says that if they are outside the refugee camps "[t]he UN don't really help these families."

Hudson Institute's international religious freedom scholar Nina Shea interviewed representatives of the Charlottesville, Virginia-based Christian Aid Mission, who visited the UNHCR camps in Jordan to bring food and medicine parcels and found them to be "dangerous" places where ISIS, militias, and gangs traffic in women and threaten men who refuse to swear allegiance to the caliphate. One of its associates from the region told her that even UNHCR offices in the capital cities, which are staffed with locals, mostly from the majority religion, can be intimidating for Christians. Reportedly when one Christian family that escaped ISIS attested to being persecuted for religious reasons, the staff angrily argued back that "Christians are the ones persecuting Muslims."

The Christian Aid Mission provides further details about hostility inside the UNHCR camps in its release interviewing one of its indigenous mission directors. Posted on its website<sup>10</sup>, excerpts follow:

In United Nations camps in Jordan, Islamist gangs bring the same practices that refugees have fled: coercion to join terrorist groups such as the Islamic State (ISIS), conflict between militias on both sides of the civil war, and the criminal buying and selling of females as sex slaves.

"The Muslim gangs come as refugees, but they have their agendas," said the ministry director, whose name is withheld for security reasons. "They're like a mafia. People are even killed inside the camps, and the refugees are afraid to say if they saw somebody get killed. If you ask them, they'll say, 'I don't know, I was asleep.'" ... U.N. refugee camps offer little refuge, he said. "The last time I went inside a camp, I had a policeman with me," the ministry director said. "The camps are dangerous because they have ISIS, Iraqi militias and Syrian militias. It's another place for gangs. They're killing inside the camps, and they're buying and selling ladies and even girls." Inside the camps, ISIS treats the men much as they do in Syria – telling them that they will either swear allegiance to the caliphate or be killed, he said. ISIS militants try to do in secret what they did openly in Syria.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.christianaid.org/mobi/news/2015/mir20151008\\_full.aspx](http://www.christianaid.org/mobi/news/2015/mir20151008_full.aspx)

In the British newspaper *Express*, a terrorist defector asserted that ISIS is sending "teams of trained killers into camps disguised as refugees to kidnap and kill vulnerable Christians."<sup>11</sup>

These reports raise a humanitarian and security problem so severe they should not be ignored any longer. If confirmed, this would mean that some American aid is going toward the support of ISIS and other extremists and toward the fostering of an environment inside purported camps of refuge that intimidates and oppresses all their residents, whether they are a minority or not. It also means that this U.S. support of Iraqi and Syrian refugees is largely bypassing the Christian and other vulnerable minority refugees. And, as Lord Alton pointed out, these are the camps from which the West, including the U.S., will be accepting tens of thousands of Syrian refugees for resettlement, thus posing potentially a serious security risk to the homeland. These camps need improved oversight and security.

**Syrian Christians and Other Vulnerable Minorities Are Disproportionately Excluded from the U.S. Syrian Refugee Resettlement Program Due to Reliance on a Functionally Discriminatory UNHCR Program**

Another implication of being forced to shelter outside the UNHCR system is that the Christians, Yazidis and other vulnerable religious minorities are thus disproportionately excluded from the UN refugee resettlement referrals to the United States and other Western countries. This is borne out in US State Department public data which shows that, since the Syrian conflict began in 2011, cumulatively only about 2.5% of the Syrian refugees resettled through the UNHCR in the United States have been Christians, though Christians comprised 10% of the Syrian pre-war population of 2 million and are facing religious genocide.<sup>12</sup> During this 5-year period, only one lone Yazidi has been resettled in the U.S. through the UNHCR though there were 800,000 Yazidis in pre-war Syria and that vulnerable minority community, too, suffers religious genocide.

Since the Paris terror attacks on November 13, the State Department has admitted 237 Syrian refugees into the United States – 236 Sunni Muslims and one Christian, according to data from the State Department Refugee Processing Center.<sup>13</sup> This is structural discrimination against some of the neediest refugees, and it is shameful.

The administration continues to claim that it is U.S. policy to give "priority resettlement" to Syrian Christian and Yazidi refugees. "Due to the unique needs of

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/614249/ISIS-sends-ASSASSINS-UN-refugee-camps-could-come-Britain>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hudson.org/research/11861-christian-syrian-refugees-united-states-won-t-admit-non-muslims>

<sup>13</sup> <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/04-christian-syrian-refugees-admitted-paris-attacks-include-236>

vulnerable religious minority communities, the State Department has prioritized the resettlement of Syrian Christian refugees and other religious minorities fleeing the conflict,” wrote the Department’s Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Middle East Knox Thames to Shea in the unclassified, official State Department statement. This issue is consequential: The administration is committed to accepting 10,000 refugees from Syria in the coming months, a five-fold increase over the number we have resettled over the last five years combined. Nevertheless, few of these can be expected from the Christian and minority communities as long as the U.S. government relies on a UNHCR refugee referral process that functionally excludes them and as long as administration and congressional leaders remain apathetic about this injustice.

Pope Francis has highlighted the need for the West to include the Christian minority refugees in its welcome of Syrian refugees. In a dramatic gesture, on September 6, the Holy Father, personally, gave refuge inside the Vatican to a Melkite Greek Catholic family from Damascus. The pope has urged others to follow this example.

In light of the foregoing discussion, the Knights of Columbus proposes the following recommendations to ensure this and other guarantees of basic fairness are given effect:

**Recommendations:**

1. Congress, including the House of Representatives, should urgently adopt a resolution recognizing that the Christian communities of Iraq and Syria, as well as other vulnerable communities are facing genocide. The Knights of Columbus supports House Concurrent Resolution 75, which names and decries the ongoing “genocide” against Christians and other vulnerable minorities in Iraq and in Syria. Introduced by Congressman Jeff Fortenberry and Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, this resolution already has 153 bipartisan cosponsors and a similar resolution is to be soon introduced in the Senate.
2. In addition, the U.S. government should publicly acknowledge that genocide is taking place against the Christian communities of Iraq and Syria, including in its reportedly impending statement on genocide that, according to reports, refers only to Nineveh’s Yazidi community. It is critically important that the State Department consider the best available evidence before making any official pronouncement that rejects allegations that Christians are, along with Yazidis, targets of ongoing genocidal acts. The United States is rightly viewed the world’s leading defender of vulnerable minorities and as an historic safe-haven for those fleeing religious persecution. An official government declaration of genocide is a unique opportunity to bring America’s religious communities together to pursue the truth, to support the victims and to bear witness to the noble principle of “Never Again.”

3. As the most generous state both in supporting the UNHCR and in accepting for resettlement refugees referred by it, the United States has a heavy obligation and considerable ability to ensure that places of refuge operated by the UNHCR welcome and provide sanctuary to members of all faiths, including Christians and other vulnerable minorities. It should insist on proper security inside the camps and identify ways to ensure that Christian and other vulnerable minorities from Iraq and Syria are not subject to violence and intimidation inside UNHCR facilities, including possibly by providing separate facilities for minorities and by hiring more professional staffing, including members of the minority communities. The U.S. should require the UNHCR to gather and make public, along with its other data, the religious affiliation of all the refugees it serves. To ignore reports of such humanitarian problems, without prompt investigation and corrective action, would itself be an injustice.
4. The U.S. government should ensure that Christians and other vulnerable minorities are not structurally discriminated against in the U.S. refugee resettlement of ten thousand Syrians during the current fiscal year. Moreover, it should take immediate action to implement its stated policy of "prioritizing" the resettlement of vulnerable minorities, including Christians. The U.S. government should end its sole reliance on the UNHCR for refugee referrals, and engage private contractors to identify, document and refer Christian, Yazidi and other vulnerable minority refugees from Syria and Iraq who are in need of resettlement.

ADDENDUM

December 4, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U. S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary

We write as American citizens concerned about the vulnerable Christian and Yazidi minorities of Iraq and Syria who are being targeted for eradication in their ancient homelands solely because of their religious beliefs. We respectfully request, on an urgent basis, a meeting with a small delegation who can brief you on the continuing religious genocide confronting both these peoples.

We recently learned that a State Department finding is imminent that ISIS is committing genocide against the Yazidis. We would wholeheartedly endorse that finding, but we are deeply troubled by the prospect that the Department's statement will either omit or reserve judgment on whether ISIS is committing genocide against Christians.

Two reasons have been given for excluding Christians from the State Department's findings.

- First, we understand that the Department's statement will be based on a limited review of ISIS' actions in Nineveh, Iraq, since the summer of 2014, and that the Department lacks sufficient information about the experience of the Christian communities in Nineveh during that time to conclude that genocide took place. While your office on International Religious Freedom has requested that we provide additional information, it indicated that the final determination of when (or whether) a genocide declaration will be issued concerning Christians will be made at higher levels. We would like the opportunity to explain why the Department's geographic and temporal focus is too narrow, and to present the available evidence of ongoing genocidal acts against Christians in Syria and Iraq at a level where it can be considered before a finding is made.
- Second, a press report by Michael Isikoff indicates that one rationale for excluding Christians is that, unlike Yazidis, ISIS gives Christians a "choice": They can convert to Islam, pay an Islamic tax (*jizya*), or be killed, enslaved, tortured, or held hostage. The implication is that ISIS abides by traditional Islamic Sharia, under which other "People of the Book" (Christians and Jews) pay a tax in exchange for protection by their Muslim rulers. We would like the opportunity to explain why this is emphatically not the case.

The Genocide Convention defines genocide as killing and certain other acts "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." We have extensive files supporting a finding that ISIS' treatment of Iraqi and Syrian Christians, as well as Yazidis and other vulnerable minorities, meets this definition. They include evidence of ISIS assassinations of Church leaders; mass murders; torture, kidnapping for ransom in the Christian communities of Iraq and Syria; its sexual enslavement and systematic rape of Christian girls and women; its practices of forcible conversions to Islam; its destruction of churches, monasteries, cemeteries, and Christian artifacts; and its theft of lands and wealth from Christian clergy and laity alike. We will also present

ISIS' own, public statements taking "credit" for mass murder of Christians, and expressing its intent to eliminate Christian communities from its "Islamic State".

The world recoiled when it learned that ISIS *jihadis* had stamped Christian homes in Mosul with the red letter "N" for "Nazarene" in summer 2014, but the elimination of Christians in other towns and cities in Iraq and Syria began long beforehand. ISIS genocidal campaign against Christians continues today, with hundreds of Christians remaining in ISIS captivity, and with summary executions, including by beheadings and crucifixions, occurring as recently as only a few months ago.

Pope Francis has called ISIS' crimes against Christians by their proper name: "genocide." The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Christian leaders in the Middle East have done so as well. We agree, and are hopeful that, once you have seen the evidence, you will too.

The United States is rightly viewed the world's leading defender of vulnerable minorities, and as an historic safe-haven for those fleeing religious persecution. A declaration of genocide by the State Department is thus a unique opportunity to bring America's religious communities together to pursue the truth, to support the victims, and to bear witness to the noble principle of "Never Again."

It is, therefore, critically important that the State Department consider the best available evidence before making any official pronouncement that rejects allegations that Christian are, along with Yazidis, targets of ongoing genocidal acts.

We respectfully request that you meet personally at your earliest convenience with a small delegation drawn from those who have signed this letter. We have included point of contact information in a separate attachment.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Carl Anderson  
Supreme Knight, Knights of Columbus

His Eminence Archbishop Vicken Aykazian  
Ecumenical Director and Legate, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

Robert A. Destro  
Professor of Law, The Catholic University of America

Most Reverend Bishop Julian Dobbs  
Missionary Bishop of Convocation of Anglicans in North America

Dr. Thomas F. Farr  
Director Religious Freedom Project, Georgetown University

Robert P. George  
McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton University

Ambassador Mary Ann Glendon  
Harvard Law School

Aram Hamparian



Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee of America

Shirley V. Hoogstra, J.D.  
President, Council For Christian Colleges & Universities

Harry R. Jackson, Jr.  
Pastor, Hope Christian Church  
Bishop, International Communion of Evangelical Churches

Most Reverend Sarhad Y. Jammo  
Chaldean Bishop of Western U.S.A.

Philip Jenkins  
Distinguished Professor of History, Institute for Studies of Religion, Baylor University

Brian Katulis  
Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress

Rev. Benedict Kiely  
Founder, [www.Nasarean.org](http://www.Nasarean.org)

The Very Reverend James A. Kowalski  
Dean of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine

Most Reverend Gregory Mansour  
Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

R. Albert Mohler Jr.  
President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

Rev. Johnnie Moore  
President, The KAIROS Company  
Author, *Defying ISIS*

Russell Moore  
President, Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

Mark L. Movsesian  
Frederick A. Whitney Professor and Director, Center for Law and Religion  
St. John's University School of Law

Archbishop Oshagan  
Prelate, Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Eastern)

Dr. Elizabeth H. Prodromou  
Assoc. Prof. of Conflict Resolution, The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Tufts University

Rev. Bob Roberts, Jr.  
Senior Pastor, NorthWood Church, Keller, TX

Rev. Dr. Samuel Rodriguez  
President, NHCLC/CONELA, Hispanic Evangelical Association

Nina Shea  
Director and Senior Scholar, Center for Religious Freedom, Hudson Institute

Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett  
President, Lantos Foundation

Very Rev. Nathanael Symeonides  
Ecumenical & Interfaith Officer, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Frank Wolf  
Distinguished Senior Fellow of the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative;  
Wilson Chair in Religious Freedom, Baylor University

Dr. George O. Wood  
General Superintendent, Assemblies of God, USA

Cardinal Donald Wuerl  
Archbishop of Washington

Attachment (1): Point of contact information.

cc: Hon. Anthony Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State  
Hon. Sarah Sewall, Undersecretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights  
Hon. Elizabeth Bagley, Senior Advisor for Special Initiatives to the Secretary  
Hon. David Saperstein, Ambassador for International Religious Freedom  
Hon. Ira Forman, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism  
Dr. Shaun Casey, Special Advisor for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

ATTACHMENT 1

Point of Contact Information:

Nina Shea	shea@hudson.org
Andrew Walther	andrew.walther@kofc.org

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Anderson.  
And our final, Mr. Gottschalk.

**STATEMENT OF MR. NOAH GOTTSCHALK, SENIOR POLICY  
ADVISOR FOR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE, OXFAM AMERICA**

Mr. GOTTSCHALK. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass and members of the subcommittee. It is an honor to be here today to testify on the humanitarian situation in Syria and Iraq and on what we can do to better assist victims of the ongoing conflict in both countries.

My testimony is drawn from several months spent over the last few years speaking to civilians caught up in these conflicts as well as from the ongoing work of my Oxfam colleagues in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey where they are on the ground providing aid to nearly 1.7 million people.

In my testimony today I will highlight some of the humanitarian challenges facing the people of Syria and Iraq and what the U.S. can do to better assist them. Oxfam is calling for urgent and immediate action by the U.S. and the international community to deal with this deepening crisis, first, by fully funding the aid response in Syria, Iraq and the region; second, by ensuring humanitarian access to those in need of aid and offering refuge to those who have fled their country; and third, by reviving concerted efforts toward a resolution of these crises.

The statistics in Syria paints a deeply grim picture. I have included more detail in my written statement but is worth highlighting here that indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks are being committed by all parties to the conflict including through the use of barrel bombs, mortar attacks, and other explosive weapons in populated areas. These types of attacks remain by far the primary cause of civilian deaths and injuries. Well over half the entire pre-war population of Syria has been forced to flee their homes, making Syria the largest displacement crisis in the world today.

As the number of people in need grows, aid from humanitarian agencies however is being drastically reduced due to funding shortages. The U.S. remains the largest single donor to the Syria humanitarian crisis, providing more than \$4.5 billion since the start of the conflict. Yet according to Oxfam's analysis, the U.S. is still not meeting its fair share of aid to the Syria crisis based on our gross national income. This year we have reached approximately 72 percent of our fair share. The U.S. must continue to lead by example and encourage our allies to follow suit.

And I will note that I have included in my written testimony some of the specifics of other countries and what percentages of their fair share that they have met for comparison. In Iraq, the U.S. is also the leading donor having provided over \$½ million to the humanitarian response over the last two fiscal years. However, as in Syria, the scale of need is far outpacing aid contributions with Iraq's humanitarian appeal only about two-thirds funded. The U.N. now estimates that 11 million Iraqis will require some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016.

The humanitarian crisis in Iraq is a protection crisis above all else. Today, on the second to last day of the 16 days of action against gender violence, we must remember that 1.4 million Iraqi

women remain displaced. And while it is an honor to be testifying here amongst such distinguished witnesses, I do think it is unfortunate that no women are testifying today, particularly to speak on the impact of the conflict on women and girls. As we have seen in our work on the ground, gender-based violence is one of the most significant features of this crisis and has a major impact on the ability of women and girls in particular to recover from the trauma of conflict.

The challenges for the people of Syria and Iraq extend beyond funding shortages. Inside both countries insufficient international aid contributions are compounded by the difficulties that far too many civilians have in accessing the assistance that is present. In Syria, shifting conflict lines, the rise of extremist groups such as ISIS, and restrictions imposed by the government on aid agencies have impeded humanitarian access. Indeed, as Chairman Smith recognized at the start, the United Nations estimates now that more than 4.8 million people in Syria in need of humanitarian assistance are in hard to reach and besieged locations.

In Iraq, the ability of people to flee to safety is a major problem. On my last visit to the country earlier this year, I stood on the side of the road with a group of several hundred Iraqi children, women and men who had been forced to flee their homes in Ramadi. Horrified by the brutality they had witnessed, frightened for their friends and neighbors from Christian and other minority communities and terrified that they themselves would be swept up in the violence, they were now trying to find safety, first in Baghdad where they were rejected and then in the north of their country.

One man spoke of his brother being killed and his barbershop being burned to the ground. Now with his children and wife in tow, he was trying to find refuge with his family in the Kurdistan region of Iraq where had grown up and studied. But because he is a Sunni Muslim, the authorities were not allowing him and many others to enter the region for fear that he might be associated with the very extremists who attacked his family and destroyed his livelihood.

Without clear guarantees of safety and enhanced humanitarian space, Iraqi families like his will have little option but to turn back to areas held by the same extremists they seek to escape. No humanitarian efforts, however well intentioned, can take the place of an end to conflicts. In Syria, far too many powers are fueling conflict rather than undertaking earnest efforts to bring it to an end. In Iraq, any efforts to restore stability and return populations must be accompanied by the provision of genuine physical protection to all at-risk communities. Now this includes Sunni Arab populations in areas currently occupied by ISIS or communities who have fled violence and face risk of reprisal killings, threats to safety and further displacement.

While the persecution of minorities has been the most visible and systemic, on all sides of the conflict, civilians have been targeted on the basis of group identity—the Yazidis, Christians, Turkmen, and even Sunni Arabs. Iraq's social fabric has been torn apart. In attempting to help put it back together we must make sure that we do not inadvertently stigmatize communities which still consider themselves, first and foremost, Iraqi. A lasting political solu-

tion in both countries will enable the return and reintegration of the displaced, but this will require a meaningful process of reconciliation and genuine safety for all of Syria's and Iraq's citizens.

Finally, no discussion of the ways to assist Syrians and Iraqis would be complete without reference to refugee resettlement. Although it will ultimately benefit just a tiny fraction of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, America's well established, secure and successful resettlement program is literally a life and death matter for persecuted women, men, and children who have no other means of survival. It is also a fundamental expression of our values as Americans to offer safe haven to the persecuted, and allows us to show the suffering and oppressed around the world the best of who we are as a people. Thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gottschalk follows:]



**U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations  
9 December 2015**

**"Fulfilling the Humanitarian Imperative: Assisting Victims of ISIS Violence"**

**Written Testimony by**

**Noah Gottschalk  
Senior Humanitarian Policy Advisor, Oxfam America**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the humanitarian situation in Syria and Iraq and on what we can do to better assist victims of the ongoing violence in both countries. My testimony is drawn from several months spent over the last few years speaking to the civilians caught up in these conflicts, as well as from the ongoing work of my Oxfam colleagues in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Oxfam America is a global organization working to right the wrongs of poverty, hunger, and injustice. We save lives, develop long-term solutions to poverty, and campaign for social change. As one of 17 members of the international Oxfam confederation, we work with people in more than 90 countries to create lasting solutions. Our sister organizations, Oxfam Great Britain, Oxfam Netherlands (Novib), and Oxfam Italy are working on the ground in the region, providing aid to more than 1.5 million people in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan with programmes for the provision of clean water, sanitation, and hygiene, as well as livelihoods, gender justice, and protection programming. In Iraq, Oxfam is providing access to clean water, safe hygiene, and livelihood opportunities to more than 120,000 people. In my testimony today, I will highlight some of the humanitarian challenges facing the people of Syria and Iraq, and what the US can do to better assist them.

The arrival of tens of thousands of Syrians and Iraqis to Europe's borders and the shocking deaths of women, children, and men on their perilous journey is a daily reminder to the international community of the tragedy engulfing the people of the region. Syrians, Iraqis, and other refugees put themselves and their families at so much risk only out of sheer desperation. Unfortunately, the international community is failing to address the spiraling catastrophe in

OXFAM AMERICA  
1101 17TH STREET NW, SUITE 1300  
WASHINGTON, DC 20036  
USA  
TEL +1 (202) 496 1180 FAX +1 (202) 496 1190  
[www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)

Syria, Iraq's own crisis, and their impact on the entire region.

Accordingly, Oxfam is calling for urgent and immediate action by the international community to deal with this deepening crisis, by 1) fully funding the aid response in Syria, Iraq, and refugee-hosting countries, 2) ensuring humanitarian access to those in need of aid and offering refuge to those who have fled the country, and 3) reviving concerted efforts towards a resolution of the crises.

#### The Syrian Humanitarian Crisis and Funding Gaps

In Syria, the statistics paint a grim picture. Since 2011, more than 250,000 people have been killed and more than one million injured. Indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks are being committed by all parties to the conflict, including through the use of barrel bombs, mortar attacks and other explosive weapons in populated areas. These types of attacks remain by far the primary cause of civilian deaths and injuries.<sup>i</sup> Ten million people in the country do not have enough to eat. More than half of Syria's hospitals have been destroyed or badly damaged, and Syria's human development indices have been rolled back 38 years.<sup>ii</sup> The water supply has decreased to less than 50 percent of its pre-crisis levels and is increasingly being used as a weapon of war by all parties to the conflict.<sup>iii</sup>

Well over half the entire pre-crisis population of Syria has been forced to flee their homes, making Syria the largest displacement crisis in the world today. 7.6 million people are internally displaced and more than 4.2 million people have fled the country. As the number of people in need grows, however, aid from humanitarian agencies is being drastically reduced due to funding shortages, and the violence in Syria remains endemic and all-encompassing. Neighboring countries have shown extraordinary hospitality in hosting refugees from Syria, but they have seen their resources and infrastructure overstretched, leading to increasingly restrictive government policies aiming to stem the flow of asylum seekers. For example, maintaining valid residency papers and registration, or being allowed to work and have an income, has become ever more challenging for refugees, increasing the risk of being fined, arrested or even deported. Most refugee crises last more than a decade,<sup>iv</sup> and sadly the Syria crisis is proving to be no exception. As the conflict continues, more and more refugees are being pushed to make desperate choices. Children are forced to leave school and work illegally, girls are forced into marriage before their time, and many have little option but to risk their lives on dangerous boat journeys in the hope of reaching Europe.

Major gaps in the humanitarian response are a significant source of misery for Syrians throughout the region. The Syria Humanitarian Appeal is only 40% funded for aid inside of the country. The regional response for refugees and host communities in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt is just about half funded. The US is the largest single donor to the Syria humanitarian crisis – providing more than 4.5 billion dollars since the start of the crisis. Yet according to Oxfam's analysis, the US is still not meeting its fair share based on our Gross National Income. This year, we've reached approximately 72% of our fair share. By comparison, Canada has provided 80% of its fair share, the UK has provided 229% of its fair share, and Kuwait 538%. Other Gulf Countries are lagging far behind, however, providing far less than in previous years. Saudi Arabia has only contributed 6 percent of its fair share, Qatar 17 percent and the United Arab Emirates 38 percent (compared with 98 percent, 186 percent and 121 percent



respectively a year ago). Our allies elsewhere in the world have not managed much better: France ranks at 22 percent compared with 33 percent last year and Japan has contributed only 24 percent. For its part, Russia remains at 1 percent. We must continue to lead by example, and encourage our allies to follow suit.

#### The Iraqi Humanitarian Crisis

In Iraq, the US is also the leading donor, having provided over half a million dollars to the humanitarian response over the last two fiscal years. However, as in Syria, the scale of need is outpacing aid contributions, with Iraq's 700 million dollar humanitarian appeal only about two-thirds funded. The UN now estimates that 11 million people will require some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016, including 3.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Displaced families are currently living in more than 3,000 locations throughout the country; more than 90 percent are living outside of camps, hosted by communities who have done their best to protect and provide for them. The Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government are providing support, yet about half of all displaced people need urgent assistance to secure shelter, as many are surviving in unfinished and abandoned buildings, makeshift collective centers, and spontaneous settlements.

Meanwhile, over 500,000 people have begun to return to their communities to rebuild their homes, restart livelihoods, and recover from the trauma of conflict. They are returning to businesses that have been looted and homes that have been severely damaged, and this trend of return is expected to increase throughout 2016.

The humanitarian crisis in Iraq is a protection crisis above all else. Even for those civilians who manage to reach proximity to safety, there are consistent reports that they face access restrictions at governorate and district borders. This poses serious restrictions to the freedom of movement of IDPs across the country as they are impeded by security screening, sponsorship requirements, and inconsistent and non-transparent procedures at checkpoints. Additionally, access is often only granted on a conditional basis, such as moving into camps where working to provide for themselves and their families is difficult if not impossible. Conditions for entry into neighboring governorates continue to be severely affected by sectarian and partisan politics, as well as by tensions between IDPs and host communities. Restrictions on entry are evident in the fact that since April 2015, half a million people have been displaced from or within Anbar Governorate, yet nearly half of these people remain within the governorate in proximity to areas of active conflict.

#### Humanitarian Access in Iraq and Syria

Quantity of aid is important, but so is access. Inside both Syria and Iraq, aid shortages are compounded by the difficulties that far too many civilians have in reaching the assistance that is present. In Syria, shifting conflict lines, the rise of extremist groups such as ISIS, and restrictions imposed by the government on aid agencies have impeded humanitarian access. Indeed, the United Nations estimates that more than 4.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in hard to reach and besieged locations.

This week the UN confirmed that there are more than 12,000 displaced Syrians stranded at the Jordanian border without access to sufficient assistance and living in poor sanitary conditions. With temperatures dropping in the region, a lack of resolution to the situation could mean possible deaths, particularly amongst children and elderly. Syrian asylum seekers have faced restrictions accessing safety in neighboring countries for more than a year, particularly Palestine refugees from Syria who faced additional restrictions by neighboring countries for the past several years.

On my last visit to Iraq earlier this year, I stood on the side of the road with a group of several hundred Iraqi children, women, and men who had been forced to flee their homes in Ramadi. Horrified by the brutality they'd witnessed, frightened for their friends and neighbors from Christian and other minority communities, and terrified that they themselves would be swept up in the violence, they were now trying to find safety first in Baghdad, then in the north of their country. One man spoke of his brother being killed and his barber shop being burned to the ground. Now, with his children and wife in tow, he was trying to find refuge with friends in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq where he'd grown up and studied. But, because he is a Sunni Muslim, the authorities were not allowing him and many others to enter the region for fear that he might be associated with the very extremists who attacked his family and destroyed his livelihood. Without clear guarantees of safety and enhanced humanitarian space, families will have little option but turn to back to areas held by the same extremists they seek to escape.

With regional countries hosting more than 4.2 million Syrian refugees and nearly 400,000 Iraqi refugees, the strains are mounting. With the right help from international donors, however, these countries can and should develop policies that allow refugees to better support themselves financially without the risk of arrest by authorities. This would also allow refugees to contribute to the economy of the communities hosting them and to live in dignity until they are eventually able to return home. Rather than viewing refugees as a burden, we should be focusing on the benefits they can bring to host economies through their skills and experience. But all of this takes careful investment and support from countries like the US.

#### Political Solutions

None of these humanitarian efforts, however well intentioned, can take the place of an end to the conflicts. In Syria, far too many foreign powers are fueling conflict rather than undertaking earnest efforts to bring it to an end. In Iraq, any efforts to restore stability and return populations must be accompanied by the provision of genuine physical protection to all at-risk communities; this includes Sunni Arab populations in areas currently occupied by ISIS or communities who have fled violence and face risk of reprisal killings, threats to safety and further displacement. While the persecution of minorities has perhaps been the most visible and systemic, on all sides of the conflict, civilians have been targeted based on group identity – Yazidis, Christians, Turkmen, and even Sunni Arabs. Iraq's social fabric has been torn apart; in singling out particular groups along identity lines, we risk stigmatizing communities which still consider themselves first and foremost Iraqi. A lasting political solution in both countries will enable the return and reintegration of the displaced, but this will require a meaningful process of reconciliation and genuine safety for all of Syria and Iraq's citizens.

### The Role of Refugee Resettlement

Finally, no discussion of the ways to assist Syrian and Iraqis would be complete without reference to refugee resettlement. Although it will ultimately benefit just a tiny fraction of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, America's well-established, secure, and successful resettlement program is literally a life-and-death matter for persecuted women, men, and children who have no other means of survival. It is also a fundamental expression of our values as Americans to offer safe haven to the persecuted, and allows us to show the suffering and oppressed around the best of who we are as a people.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Security Council (2015), "Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165(2014) and 2191 (2014), August 2015", [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/698](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/698)

<sup>11</sup> "Syria's war economy", European Council on Foreign Relations, April 2014, [http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR97\\_SYRIA\\_BRIEF\\_AW.pdf](http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR97_SYRIA_BRIEF_AW.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> "Severe Water Shortages Compound the Misery of Millions in War-Torn Syria", [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_82980.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_82980.html)

<sup>13</sup> Crawford, Cosgrave, Haysome and Walicki, 'Protracted Displacement: Uncertain paths to self-reliance in exile', Overseas Development Institute, September 2015, p.5, <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9851.pdf>, last accessed 8 December 2015

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Mr. SMITH. Thank you for your testimony. I would just point out that we had planned on Yazidi women testifying today and they couldn't get their visas in time.

This has not been the first hearing that I have chaired on this and it won't be the last. As a matter of fact, we will have the administration, or request that they come and provide an accounting. Hopefully it will be a positive one where they have indeed declared that Christians and other minority faiths have been designated the subject of genocide. Yes, the Yazidis absolutely, but also these others, and we will hold the administration to account.

When I got word of this about 3 weeks ago myself from someone inside the State Department, I immediately put out a press release and a statement and tried to contact folks there to convey my utter disbelief that this egregious abandonment was about to happen. And it was, as Dr. Stanton pointed out, eerily reminiscent to what happened in Rwanda when there was this foolishness of the greatest degree and unwillingness to call what was happening, 800,000-plus dead in Rwanda, a genocide.

And we saw similar actions by the international community, including the United States, occur. It was so bad that when Kofi Annan went to Rwanda, members of their Parliament stood up and turned their backs on him, and a similar sense of disgust also was leveled against Bill Clinton. And as you point out, Dr. Stanton, we had a hearing on the famous facts where Kofi Annan was advised that the genocide was about to occur he ignored it. He was head of peacekeeping at the time. And General Dallaire suffered immensely emotionally, because he probably could have mitigated if not ended that completely.

So just for the record I would like to include in the record a very heartbreaking, but a story, "Unconquered: Christians Martyred by the Islamic State" that just came out in the December 12 issue of World Magazine. They have named these unbelievably brave Christians faithful to the end as their "Daniels of the Year." So without objection that will be made a part of the record.

Just a few questions because your testimonies were brilliant, I believe. They have really laid out and anticipated much of what I and perhaps others might have asked.

But again, Obama and the administration seem to be on the verge of getting it wrong. I think the letter that you provided as an addendum as part of your testimony, Mr. Anderson, laid it out very clearly, and others have done so as well as to how that would be a mistake of monumental proportions to exclude a group of people who have been targeted for extinction. It is not even in part, it is whole. And whole or in part, and even the threat of whole in part is the boilerplate language of the Genocide Convention. So, I mean, this fits that definition, sadly, to a T.

The abandonment, perhaps some of you or any of you might want to speak to the why of it. I can't get my arms around this lack of acceptance of reality on the ground that has been documented time and time again. Two years ago I introduced a resolution and tried to get the administration, I wrote on behalf of it in the Washington Post, to create a Syrian war crimes tribunal to hold all sides to account for atrocities. This was before the emergence of ISIS, Sep-

tember 13th, and put in a resolution that would do the exact same thing.

I have asked Secretary Kerry. We know that the International Criminal Court has been very flawed in prosecuting anyone—one conviction in over a dozen years. Great idea, but it just doesn't have the horsepower or the capabilities to do what is right. We had the former chief prosecutor of Sierra Leone war crimes tribunal, David Crane, testify, and others who gave riveting testimony why a regional court would make all the difference in the world. And we are losing, as was mentioned, vital information and testimony that bleeds out as people move on or die or don't have the recollection they might have if it is done sooner rather than later.

I am asking again that the administration work within the United Nations Security Council to convene such a war crimes tribunal. ICC, they haven't done it. They have one person in the DR Congo, a lower-level person that they were able to convict. They will look into it, they will issue a report, they will go after two people and that will be the end of it. And they will never get those two people. Bashir remains in Khartoum despite his crimes in Darfur and South Sudan.

So anyone who might want to hazard a guess as to if this is an idea whose time has come? Dr. Stanton indicated that already. Carl Anderson, I think you brought up an issue that just is beguiling and it begs immediate correction, and that is that the UNHCR itself has not been able to provide the protection inside the camps, so a place that ought to be the place of welcoming becomes a place of continued horror for Christians. I promise we will use this subcommittee to look into that and push that to the *n*th degree. The administration should be doing the same.

And I think your point about sole reliance on referrals from the UNHCR is an excellent point that needs to be embraced immediately because of all this exclusion again of the Christians. And of course designation of genocide against Christians, like Yazidis and other minority faiths, will make the processing of their refugee appeals happen that much sooner rather than later. And maybe it might not have happened at all without it.

So those couple of thoughts I can't get my arms around, maybe you can, why the exclusion of Christians. It just is mind boggling. If anybody wants to hazard a guess, otherwise I will yield to my distinguished colleagues.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Again, thank you for the leadership. Let me just note in my 28 years in Congress whenever there has been an issue that calls for a moral stand by the United States of America, Chris Smith has always led the way and I have always been honored to follow him as he led the way. And this is, I think, one of those instances of historical significance that demands people of a certain moral fortitude to step forward and make their moral convictions known on a major contention of the day.

How many, let me just ask the panel. We are talking about Christians and Yazidis now, but there are other groups as we know that are facing slaughter. But if we don't do what is right, if we have an administration in charge of our Government now that refuses to recognize that Christians are targeted as the Jews were in World War II, how many people is the world going to lose? How

many Christians? Are we talking about millions of people? What is the Christian population of this part of the Middle East, and what can we expect if those people are not given refuge?

Mr. STANTON. About 1.5 million in Iraq alone, Christians, were there before the second Iraq war. We now have, I think, under what, about 100,000 or so.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. And that is just Iraq.

Mr. STANTON. And that is only, they are in refugees camps in Kurdistan, and that is just Iraq.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay, and in Syria and throughout in different places.

Mr. STANTON. Syria, you had 10 percent of the population is Christian and they have had to basically flee wherever they can go, because not only ISIS has targeted them, but of course the Assad regime has bombed so many parts of Syria that they have had to flee to Turkey or Jordan.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So do you have some guesses in terms of, or I say educated guesses? So we are talking about over 1 million or—

Mr. STANTON. Yes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER [continuing]. One million people dead unless we step forward. Is that maybe 2 million people dead?

Mr. STANTON. Possible.

Bishop KALABAT. It is also very important to understand that ISIS isn't just targeting people in that region. Their ultimate aim is the United States, Vatican, Europe. It is the world. In establishing an Islamic State right now, that Islamic State needs to grow until they can rule the world. So this isn't just an isolated group.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So what we are talking about in the short term is that there are maybe 1 million or 2 million people who are in danger right now, but what you are saying is unless we step up to this part of the challenge—

Bishop KALABAT. Paris—

Mr. ROHRABACHER [continuing]. There is going to be many more millions of people.

Bishop KALABAT [continuing]. I mean, what we just went through just not too long ago.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Yes. Let me note that I worked in the White House. God blessed me with the opportunity of working for Ronald Reagan as one of his speechwriters for 7 years, and I remember when Ronald Reagan declared that the Soviet Union was the focus of evil in the modern era. And let me say, Mr. Chairman, that I think that we need to make sure that we declare that this Islamic terrorist threat of killing people for their faith is now the focus of evil in our era, and call upon all good people of every faith to step forward and say this will not be tolerated by civilization.

Just as Communism, which was trying to use terror and brutality and the same kind of Stalinist obliteration of peoples' lives in order to terrorize the population into an atheistic dictatorship, we defeated that evil and we must defeat this evil as well. As we all know Ronald Reagan did not declare war on Russia and send our military to attack Russia. We did not do that. Everybody assumed that that is what would happen, that is how we will defeat

the Soviet Union. That is not what we did. Ronald Reagan mobilized the people of the world and especially reached out to those people who were struggling against Communism and worked with them and helped them not just provide safe haven, but the means to help secure themselves from that evil at that day. We need to do that here.

But let me note, just like Ronald Reagan was really criticized for calling the Soviet Union the evil empire, and he was being, it was I can remember very clearly, oh my God, what did you speechwriters give him; what is going on there? And actually Reagan was very much part of the whole effort and he knew what he was saying. And the bottom line is by labeling this something that people could understand and by mobilizing behind it, we were able to destroy the Soviet Union which was an evil empire of atheist dictatorship. We were able to eliminate that without a war.

And this President's inability to use the words "Islamic terrorist" in the same sentence and/or to use the word "Christian" when we are talking about genocidal movements that are going on this world today does not give me faith that we are going to solve this problem.

So it is up to us, the U.S., by the way, U.S., United States. U.S. is us and what we represent, what does the United States represent? Hopefully, we represent every race, religion, and ethnic group in the world standing together for higher values than those values they had when they left their homeland.

So I thank you all for being with us today. Thank you, Chris Smith, for your wonderful leadership on this issue. And let me just remind everybody I have H.R. 4017, and I would hope that all religious groups get behind this. It says basically that if in those areas where we have this genocide taking place that those people who are targeted for genocide, particularly the Christians and the Yazidis that they will be given a priority status for immigration and for refugee status by our Government.

And I do not believe that this is discriminatory against anyone. It is simply recognizing that they are the most in danger and those are the ones we should focus on first. And just as when the Jews came here in 1939 and we turned them away, we should not have turned them away saying you are not going to get any special favors from us. No, that was horrible and we know what happened. Well, now we need to pay particular attention to those in danger and to focus on helping them. Anybody who can support my legislation, I will be very happy to have that too. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Gentleman Rohrabacher, thank you very much and thank you for your leadership. And added to that Jackson-Vanik, most favored nation status vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, was predicated on singling out Jewish refuseniks, those men and women who were denied and treated harshly by the Soviet regime. So it is not a religious test. That is absurd talk.

Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. I wanted to know if you could talk about the refugees that have gone to Europe and what their status is. I have been very concerned about that knowing that some have been returned back. But I wanted to know if you could speak about that. And then also the ones that are wanting to come to the United States,

where are they now? Are they in Germany? Are they in Greece? Where are they now and what is their plight? And I open that up to anyone.

Mr. ISMAIL. Well, our Yazidi refugees are mostly in Turkey and Syria. They are United Nations refugees. But also most of the abducted ones are in Iraq, and we hope that the U.S. can do something to help those innocents. The U.S. has more than like 300 million-plus people. I think they are able to provide help and support to those innocent people, both Yazidi, Christian and other minorities who are facing the genocide.

Ms. BASS. How many people did you say it is?

Mr. ISMAIL. The Yazidi have more than 30,000 in Syria and Turkey. But in northern Iraq there are many who are unable to prove their identity with passports or other documents, because they were attacked in the middle of the night and were running for their lives.

Ms. BASS. How are they faring in Turkey?

Mr. ISMAIL. They are not good.

Ms. BASS. Are they in refugee camps?

Mr. ISMAIL. Yes, in June, thousands of them tried to cross the Bulgarian border on foot. Many of them were beaten by the Turkish Government, but when they came close they did not let them come in. They stayed more than 2 weeks outside. They were sleeping outside in the streets. So the Yazidis had nothing to bring with them. So if you have nothing, you are only relying on the donations that the world, the international community is providing.

And the other problem, when it goes to the Iraqi Government or Kurdish Government, unfortunately that aid does not reach the needy people. And we cannot say that in Iraq. If you say it, your family is going to face real consequences by the authority based there. Many of those abducted women and girls I spoke to, they were afraid to tell me the truth.

Ms. BASS. They what, I am sorry?

Mr. ISMAIL. They were afraid to tell the truth.

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. ISMAIL. When they came they were taught what to say and how to say. And also, because they saw people from different groups who joined up with ISIS who raped them, who tortured them, who kidnapped them, who sold them into sexual slavery, many of them they were their neighbors. They were beheaded and put in a bakery oven by their neighbors. So it is a very difficult situation.

When that delegation visits Iraq, it is accompanied by the authorities. They provide what they call the security for them. So when there are four or five armed men behind you and then you ask me a question and how you want me to answer your question, why I cannot say anything.

Ms. BASS. So what is your thought about what the U.S. should do? Should the U.S. bring over, how many, and do you have—

Mr. ISMAIL. Whatever the possibility we hope that you can bring, especially as I said, those abducted women who were able to escape on their own, and with their families to provide social-psycho help so that they can go back to their normal life.



Ms. BASS. Do you have relationships here like with religious organizations or particular states that would receive the people? Where would they go?

Mr. ISMAIL. Well, the Yazidis are very easy in integration, and I think Bishop knows like we have been together for thousands of years. That is like brothers and sisters. The Yazidis are not against any people, just say we are human beings. We are human beings. God created us and we should respect God's works.

Ms. BASS. Yes, I just wondered if there were organizations here you were affiliated with that if we were able to bring people—

Mr. ISMAIL. But we have at least about probably 350 to 400 Yazidi families here. They are all willing to help.

Ms. BASS. Where are they, everywhere?

Mr. ISMAIL. In Lincoln, Nebraska, in New York, in Houston, Texas, and some are based in DC area.

Ms. BASS. And they have been here for a while?

Mr. ISMAIL. Yes.

Ms. BASS. And they would be willing to receive people?

Mr. ISMAIL. There are many of them that were the victims of Saddam's attack in 1991.

Ms. BASS. I see, okay.

Mr. ISMAIL. So they sat in a refugee camp probably for about, many of them more than 10 years. We have many who were sponsored by U.S. Government. So we hope that you could provide the same help in bringing these needy people.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

Mr. Gottschalk?

Mr. GOTTSCHALK. Thank you very much. I just wanted to respond to your two questions. First, I had the opportunity to travel to Serbia last month and spent some time talking to the people who were traveling. Most had come from Turkey via Greece, Macedonia, were heading to Serbia, passing through on their way to Croatia and then further afield. The people in that were probably some of the nicest, friendliest people I have ever met in the many years I have been involved in humanitarian work, and none of them that I spoke to had any interest in going to the U.S. They were looking to go to Austria, Germany, Sweden, and Belgium.

UNHCR actually came out with an interesting study today or yesterday, I believe, that highlights the percentage, the very large percentage of those who are moving to Europe who are actually students. And a lot of the people that I met were looking to continue their education. I met people who were marketing majors at University in Damascus, people who just wanted to find some way of resuming their studies and resuming a normal life as best they could.

On the question about the people who do want to come to the U.S., I think it is really important to highlight that the vast majority of the 4.2 million refugees from Syria who are being hosted in the region are actually staying outside of camps. Those people who are registered with the UNHCR are eligible for resettlement. They are able to go through that process irrespective of being in the camp or not.

One of the things that we are advocating for is for more opportunities for livelihoods for those people to be opened up in the coun-

tries where they are. We have seen that the average refugee crisis now lasts about 10 years and it seems that Syria will be likely to certainly not be an exception and perhaps stretch that amount even longer. It is really important that aid gets to people where they are and not just focusing on the camps, and that people can be able to work for themselves to provide for their own families and really have that dignity that through working comes in being able to take care of yourself.

The process of resettlement as I said is available to people who are outside of the camps. Most of them though are in Jordan and Turkey. There is not a processing facility as far as I know, as the last I checked, available in Erbil for the U.S. to process people there, and there has been really a lot of delays due to space in the Embassy in Beirut for there to be interviews conducted in Lebanon. So we are seeing the majority of people who are being processed happening in Jordan and Turkey.

It is worth again noting that the process is incredibly expensive. It takes usually 2 to 3 years. We unfortunately just heard the really tragic news that one of the families that we were working with who were undergoing this process, they are a family of seven from Syria. They are living in northern Jordan. They have five children, three of whom have very serious medical conditions. We just received the word that the youngest of their children, a 1-year-old boy who really required open heart surgery died just a few days ago. They have already gone through two interviews at the Embassy. They are in this very expensive——

Ms. BASS. Why did he not get the medical treatment or he died in the process of receiving the treatment?

Mr. GOTTSCHALK. He wasn't able to have the surgery that he needed, and their hopes were really pinned on coming to the U.S. They have been through I don't know how many months of screening process, two interviews which of course requires——

Ms. BASS. When a situation like that where there is a life-threatening disease we don't expedite?

Mr. GOTTSCHALK. I don't think there are that many opportunities. Certainly on the security side those processes do take a long time. And I think this is one of the reasons that our response to some calls for a pause to the resettlement process——

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. GOTTSCHALK [continuing]. To observe it, we wanted to really educate people and particularly Members of Congress that the dangers that that kind of pause could bring. It sounds very reasonable and something that might give us an opportunity to reassess.

But the way their system works is that people who are in the midst of the process who have various processes, steps, have checks and screening processes, those checks will expire and they will have to start again from scratch. And people like that family would have to restart if we were to pause that process. So what we are trying to emphasize is——

Ms. BASS. Oh, wait a minute, if we were to pause the process then they would have to go back?

Mr. GOTTSCHALK. In all likelihood, yes.

Bishop KALABAT. If I may also continue with what Mr. Gottschalk was saying that in Turkey, I was there in April and vis-

ited, was able to celebrate Easter with many of the refugees. In a minimum of 10 to 12 different regions in Turkey, when you register with the United Nations as a refugee your first interview in 2022. That is interview, that is not——

Ms. BASS. You register today?

Bishop KALABAT. If you register today, actually those who registered had already been registered in June—I am sorry, in April of this year. Their first appointment is in 2022, 2023.

Ms. BASS. Why did we say it was a 2-year process then?

Bishop KALABAT. I do know of refugees that have been there for 7, 8, 9 years. I do know that also Homeland Security have gotten cases where everything is ready, everything is done, and in many cases, and we have proof and we have the files where it has been 9 years, 10 years, 11 years, 13 years.

Ms. BASS. So you have seen what legislation we have been discussing in passing over the last few days? Well——

Bishop KALABAT. I have not seen the legislation, no. I am a little behind that to be honest. But I can say——

Ms. BASS. But we are making it slower.

Bishop KALABAT. Well—yes.

Ms. BASS. What did we do yesterday?

Bishop KALABAT. I think we froze it for a while.

Ms. BASS. Oh, visa waiver. A couple of weeks ago, or was it a week ago that we slowed it up?

Bishop KALABAT. The case with Homeland Security, these are cases that are already done that just need to do—I mean, there has been no response. If it is denied, it is denied. It is not even a denial, it is cases that are lost in some cases in some issues. And to be able to deal with people and countries that are hosting them such as Jordan and Lebanon, they are overwhelmed, Turkey as well.

Ms. BASS. Oh, I know. I know, especially Jordan too.

Bishop KALABAT. So processing centers are extremely important to have. I am working with the United Nations trying to get processing centers. And also allowing different countries who have avowed to say, you know what, we will take an X amount of refugees from these particular situations, and if they are not processed then there is nothing that can be done.

Ms. BASS. So Mr. Ismail, you are proposing that we kind of fast forward all that, right? I mean, the 30,000 people you are talking about——

Mr. ISMAIL. Yes, we are not saying that the U.S. should bring all of them——

Ms. BASS. Oh, I am sorry, did you want——

Bishop KALABAT. No, no. I am good.

Ms. BASS. Oh, okay.

Mr. ISMAIL [continuing]. But just could help them, many of those families that lost just more than half of their family members, and there is just no way that they can go back to Iraq because——

Ms. BASS. Yes, but given this process, I guess I am asking——

Mr. ISMAIL. It is the same thing, where they provide their UNHCR PAPER. And they have many of those. They give them like 7 years, 8 years. And also we have some sponsored by a private group. There are other people, they have an interview in less

than 6 months. So there is something going on that is not right. They don't get equal treatment. And there are many of those that especially in dealing with for the kind of easy cases, I don't know how many they have in Canada. They give them like, probably the soonest one they give like more than 5 years.

Ms. BASS. Okay.

Mr. ISMAIL. So I think 5 years, how they are going to survive.

Ms. BASS. Right. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Ms. Bass.

Let me just ask a question about disproportionality of those who are Christian who come here. Over the last 5 years the estimates are that there has been one Yazidi, 53 Syrian Christians, and that 2.6 percent of the 2,003 Syrian refugees that have come to the United States are Christian from Syria, so disproportionate to the need.

Mr. Anderson, you spoke very eloquently to the issue of how there is a discrimination that happens starting in the camps, or at least those under protection of the UNHCR. That seems to be an area ripe for reform. One Yazidi, 53 Syrian Christians in 5 years. That is outrageous, I believe. And very few Jews, Baha'is, or Zoroastrians as well, like 10 total.

Maybe, Mr. Anderson, you might want to expound a little bit on what needs to be done on the refugee side. And secondly, in the letter that was signed by you and many other people of faith, leaders, where there is a call for a limited review, when you exclude or narrow what it is that you are looking at so unnecessarily, which I think has happened or is happening at State, it is like a fireman entering just one room in a burning building and concluding that one room of that building is on fire while the whole building is ablaze.

And so my question would be why the limited review?

Again going back to Dr. Stanton who just showed the connectivity over the years to this false reliance on terms like "ethnic cleansing" which have no legal definition and it was used extensively at the U.N. and here during Bosnia as well as in Croatia.

So if you could, what could we do to get it right immediately so that these refugees—and follow-up to Ms. Bass, there has been a vote on pausing but it is not law. Nothing precludes the person who was so sick getting that help right now from this administration, and why haven't they? I mean that is what my colleagues and I often do with case work, we try to find someone who is really, really being hurt, whether it is a health issue or whatever, in trying to find a way through the bureaucracy to mitigate that pain.

So Mr. Anderson, did you want to touch on that and any others, because we are going to have to conclude in a minute because there are five votes on the floor.

Mr. ANDERSON. Well, then let me just say quickly I think that it is very clear that the religious minorities are not welcome and do not feel safe in the camps. And therefore if the process hinges on being in the camps, we have to find alternative mechanisms to get out and register these people outside of the camps and that requires an extra effort. I think that is why the designation of genocide is so important because it gives priority to these vulnerable minorities who, as Mr. Ismail said, cannot go back to their commu-

nities. Their homes are destroyed or occupied by other individuals. They have no opportunity. We are talking about 5 or 10 years to get a visa and immigrate to another country. It may be that amount of time before they could go back to their own communities, but by that time what are those communities going to look like? They are going to be totally populated by people who are not just going to move away and say come back to your homes that you left 10 years ago or 5 years ago. So I think the designation of genocide is essential to prioritize these minority communities that have no alternative in the region.

Mr. STANTON. Just to reiterate that our conclusion as genocide scholars is that when lesser terms, weaker terms, are used it is a sure indicator of an unwillingness to act. In other words it is a sure indicator of lack of political will. And in this case what we have got is a lack of political will to accept Christians on a preferential basis as the refugees that we will accept in this country.

I think there is a general view that there should be no preferences at all. In fact, I think President Obama has said such, almost exactly that. And our view is that in fact certain groups are being targeted, and let's call what that means. Let's call out the right name and that is called genocide. And that is why we think what is going on when they are making these selective determinations is an expression of lack of political will.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, Mr. Gottschalk.

Mr. GOTTSCHALK. If I could just have, Mr. Chairman, in response to your point about and Mr. Anderson's point about expanding the referral process, I think that is something we would absolutely agree with, and just want to let you know that there is in fact precedent for that. I believe at present there is one NGO that has been authorized to conduct referrals to the U.S. for resettlement. There is, I think it is a short curriculum that NGOs would have to go through in order to, or any contractor would have to go through, to be able to learn what criteria the U.S. is looking for, and it is something that we would very much like to see. It would be really a way of expanding the reach of resettlement referrals across the region.

And also just finally to add, the funding shortages that you made the subject of this hearing and that I testified about and others have mentioned has directly resulted in many, many refugee families really falling through the cracks. Because these appeals are so underfunded, 40 percent inside Syria, about 50 percent in the regional response, the prioritization is given to lifesaving services, which means that social services and the types of activities that are really about protection and making sure that communities and refugees who are living in host communities where the majority are can be safe and can resolve some of their own challenges—those type of programs just aren't being funded.

They are the very types of programs that would identify vulnerable people, get them to where they could get referred for resettlement or for treatment or whatever they might need in the host community if that was in fact the case, but those very programs are the ones that are really first on the chopping block when it comes to funding shortages.

Mr. SMITH. Well, thank you. And that was an eye opener for many of us at the hearing I chaired in September just how underfunded it is, so your point is very well taken. And we are pushing the administration to do more, and our allies too. We have asked them to give us the list of those who have not come forward with the pledges at least, and what diplomatic efforts are being done by the administration to say to Saudi Arabia—I asked the Saudi Ambassador when he was here a week ago. He was claiming that they were giving 2.5 million Syrians refuge and that they had spent \$1 billion last year, I think \$1 billion was the total; it was approximately \$1 billion.

So your point is well taken and I agree with you wholeheartedly. We have got to push, and I said even if it is seen as a bridge, we try to get the others to come up with the money, but this is a short-term tourniquet that is needed because people, and he himself, Shelly Pitterman said, that the trigger for the mass exodus to Europe was undoubtedly the funding shortfall for humanitarianism exacerbated by the World Food Programme's 30 percent cut. They said they don't care, we are off, we are leaving. And it was a very, it was a point well taken. We had PRM's Assistant Secretary here and asked what could be done. We are still trying to work with them, so I agree wholeheartedly on that.

Mr. GOTTSCHALK. If I might as you wait for the list from the administration, we, Oxfam, actually has a list of major countries and what they have donated according to their fair share. According to our statistics, Saudi Arabia has only contributed 6 percent of their fair share this year; Qatar 17 percent; United Arab Emirates 38 percent.

Mr. SMITH. Wish I had that last week, but I follow—

Mr. GOTTSCHALK. I will pass it on to your office.

Mr. SMITH. Let's make it a part of the record, if you don't mind.

Mr. GOTTSCHALK. Absolutely.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Mr. GOTTSCHALK. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Any other comments before we conclude? There is a vote and I am going to have to run. I do thank you so very much. I think the President got it wrong when he said that we don't want a religion test. This has to do with who is being targeted. It is a whole different issue than a religious test.

And I again underscore my first trip on human rights issues was to Moscow and Leningrad, 1982, during my first term on behalf of Soviet Jews, and I was very happy that our country was wholeheartedly using its policies, Jackson-Vanik in particular, to protect Jewish people who were being put into psychiatric prisons or worse, killed.

Yes, Mr. Ismail?

Mr. ISMAIL. Two important points, we hope that for the short term solution, you can bring as many as possible of those needy refugees, especially those traumatized ones, whether they are in Syria, in northern Iraq, in Jordan, or in Turkey. And for the long term solution, we hope that you could work with the Iraqi Government and the Kurdish Government to create a safe haven for the Yazidis and other minorities.

Mr. SMITH. You had that in there as your number three point, I saw that.

Mr. ISMAIL. So that these people can survive in an ancient homeland where we survived for thousands of years. Yes, there are many people who because of fear, they want to get out, but there are also thousands of people who say we are ready to die, but we are not ready to leave our homeland.

Mr. SMITH. If that is done it has to be better than what we have done before. When Srebrenica and other safe haven areas were designated they became mustering areas for killing.

Mr. ISMAIL. Now most of these, if you ask, they are going to tell you this is the end of Yazidis in the Middle East because no action has been taken actually to save them, to provide safety and security for them, this could be the end of the Yazidi people in the Middle East. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. The meeting is adjourned and I thank you all so very much.

[Whereupon, at 4:21 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]





## A P P E N D I X

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MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International  
Organizations  
Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ), Chairman**

December 9, 2015

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in Room 2255 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

**DATE:** Wednesday, December 9, 2015

**TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

**SUBJECT:** Fulfilling the Humanitarian Imperative: Assisting Victims of ISIS Violence

**WITNESSES:** Gregory H. Stanton, Ph.D.  
President  
Genocide Watch

The Most Reverend Bishop Francis Kalabat  
Chaldean Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle in America

Mr. Mirza Ismail  
Founder and Chairman  
Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International

Mr. Carl A. Anderson  
Supreme Knight  
Knights of Columbus

Mr. Noah Gottschalk  
Senior Policy Advisor for Humanitarian Response  
Oxfam America

**By Direction of the Chairman**

*The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.*



# COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations* HEARING

Day Wednesday Date December 9, 2015 Room 2255 Rayburn HOB

Starting Time 2:06 p.m. Ending Time 4:21 p.m.

Recesses 1 (2:39 to 3:08) ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to )

Presiding Member(s)

*Rep. Chris Smith*

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

*Fulfilling the Humanitarian Imperative: Assisting Victims of ISIS Violence*

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*Rep. Karen Bass, Rep. Scott DesJarlais, Rep. Mark Meadows*

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an \* if they are not members of full committee.)

*Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, Rep. Trent Franks\**

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

*World Magazine article -Unconquered: Christians Martyred by the Islamic State, submitted by Rep. Chris Smith*

*Oxfam Briefing Note - Solidarity with Syrians, submitted by Rep. Chris Smith*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or

TIME ADJOURNED 4:21 p.m.

*Gregory B. Jenkins*  
Subcommittee Staff Director

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH,  
A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AND CHAIRMAN,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTER-  
NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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## WORLD

### Persecution

#### Unconquered

**DANIEL OF THE YEAR** | As Islamic terrorists cut down victims from Palmyra to Paris, 21 Christians on a Libyan beach briefly represented WORLD's 2015 Danlets of the Year: Christians martyred by the Islamic State

by Jamie Dean  
Vol. 36, No. 25 - December 12, 2015  
Posted on Wednesday, November 25, 2015, at 1:00 am

On a warm winter morning in early February, a series of grainy video images from a Libyan beach stunned an entire Egyptian village and devastated dozens of impoverished families.

The eerie images showed a line of towering, black-clad men gripping a line of 21 prisoners in the bright orange jumpsuits now the trademark execution garb for Islamic State captives.



Still from ISIS video, artistically enhanced by Kristig Barrie  
Christian prisoners, including Matthew Ayariga of Ghana, prior to execution by ISIS militants.



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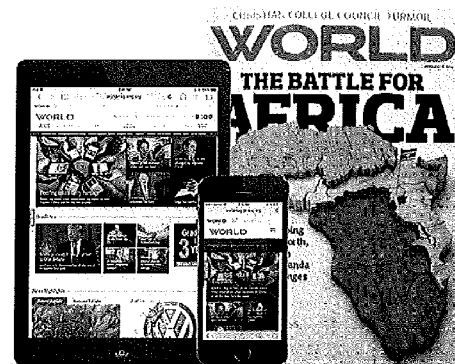
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American journalist James Foley had appeared in the same orange gear in summer 2014 as Islamic State thugs brutally beheaded him in a Syrian desert. A month later, fellow American reporter Steven Sotloff's execution video surfaced online as well.

But the Egyptians on the Libyan beach carried two distinctions: Here were the first captives outside Syria and Iraq that Islamic State terrorists would behead publicly. And here were Christians who would die proclaiming the faith in Christ their captors condemned.

On the cloudy beach, each somber man knelt before a hooded terrorist, as each executioner gripped a prisoner's shoulder with one hand and clutched a knife in the other. A caption scrolled across the screen: "People of the cross, followers of the hostile Egyptian church."

One of the terrorists unleashed a rambling diatribe: "Recently you have seen us on the hills of al-Sham and on Dabiq's plain, chopping off the heads that have been carrying the cross delusion for a long time...."

"O crusaders, safety for you will be only wishes.... The sea you have hidden shall be Osama bin Laden's body in—we swear to Allah we will mix it with your blood."

Moments later, the executioners wielded their knives against the necks of their captives.

The victims were calm: No outbursts. No cries. Instead, the men gazed up, and prayers tumbled out in whispered final words: "Ya Rabbi Yisou." Translation: "My Lord Jesus."

In the final images, the Mediterranean Sea appeared to turn red with their blood.

**HUNDREDS OF MILES EAST**, in the small Egyptian village of Al Our, the cries were more piercing.

As television stations began showing parts of the video footage posted online, the implications were horrifying: Thirteen of the slain Coptic Christians came from this single village.

Some experts suggested elements of the footage—the militants' striking height, the beach background, the bloody water—had been digitally manipulated. But they didn't dispute the beheadings were real.

The men had left for Libya months or even years earlier, seeking work to support their families in the impoverished village 150 miles south of Cairo. In January, Islamic State militants kidnapped the men from a boardinghouse in Libya. A surviving witness said the invading terrorists demanded others show them the rooms of the Christians.

The militants posted photos online of the 13 captured men and eight others they had kidnapped in December. Seven were from other villages in Egypt. One was from Ghana.

In Al Our, families agonized and waited. When news arrived of the mass execution, the February day grew wrenching: A local priest told reporters that screams poured from every house and every street.

A few days later, at a mass funeral without coffins, families displayed pictures of their slain relatives, and hundreds of villagers mourned. One father cried, "I'm very sorry, my son, because I did not have enough money to keep you from going to this place."

Another father recounted how his son went to Libya to earn enough money to start a family but met a different outcome: "He left to marry heaven, where he'll meet Christ."

Malak Shoukry said he watched his brother, Yousef, die in the video. "I heard him calling, 'O Jesus,' as he was beheaded," Shoukry told NPR. "I'm proud of him. He is a martyr for Christ."

Meanwhile, a Coptic bishop from the United Kingdom sent written condolences to the grieving families and a biblical reminder to all those staring down the threats of the Islamic State: "Life is but a vapor."

**EVER SINCE THE ISLAMIC STATE**, also called ISIS or ISIL, burst onto the international scene last year, the extremists have murdered thousands of people in Iraq and Syria while driving out whole populations of Christians and other religious minorities from ancient homelands. They've abducted women and young girls, raping and brutally enslaving them.

In October, Islamic State terrorists claimed responsibility for downing a plane filled with Russian tourists leaving an Egyptian resort, calling it retaliation for Russian airstrikes in Syria. On Nov. 13, the group boasted of its deadliest operation outside the Middle East or Africa: the massacre of 130 people in Paris.

The extremists have slaughtered Muslims refusing to pledge allegiance to the terror group and Parisians enjoying a night on the town. But they've specifically targeted Christians for extinction.

Indeed, a month after the Egyptian executions, ISIS militants replicated the horrifying scene: Terrorists released a video showing the shooting and beheading of at least 50 Ethiopian Christians held captive in Libya. The footage addressed "the nation of the cross," and a narrator declared: "We swear to Allah, the one who disgraced you by our hands, you will not have safety, even in your dreams, until you embrace Islam."

The terrorists have warned that Christians must submit to their rule—and pay their tax—or convert to Islam. The penalty for refusal is death. In reality, for those who can't flee, sometimes the only options are conversion or execution.

The videotaped beheading of 21 men in orange jumpsuits on a Libyan beach in February—and 30 more a month later—served as gruesome demonstrations of the Islamic State's aspirations to extinguish "the people of the cross," and as a warning to those who defy them.

The Christians' willingness to embrace death rather than deny Christ served as a glorious display of the courage of many who have faced the lions' den and held fast until the end.

For their courage, even unto death, WORLD recognizes all Christians martyred by the Islamic State as our 2015 Daniels of the Year.

**IN THE RURAL VILLAGE OF ALOUR**, becoming a martyr was once a distant concern to Egyptian men desperate for work.

Over the last decade, Libya attracted more than a million migrants seeking jobs in the depressed region. Many came from Egypt, where a series of political revolutions and a languishing economy drove impoverished citizens to search for work in oil-rich Libya.

That dynamic collapsed in 2011, as Libyans ousted former dictator Muammar Qaddafi, and the country splintered. Thousands fled as terrorist groups gained power and territory, but as many as 150,000 migrant workers remained in the war-torn nation.

Among the remnant: the 21 men who would be kidnapped by ISIS terrorists and never return home. But long before their abductions, these men already were acquainted with grief.

Christians have long faced oppression and discrimination in Egypt, especially low-wage workers who face difficulties finding jobs. Most of the men hailed from poor villages in Minya—the same province that endured Islamist riots after the ouster of President Mohamed Morsi in August 2013.

During a rampage of Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers, rioters burned dozens of Coptic and evangelical churches and businesses in Minya, including the storefront of the Bible Society of Egypt.

For the executed men, providing for their families remained a driving ambition, even if it drove them to Libya.

Take 40-year-old Majid Suayman Shihata: The oldest of the beheaded captives had traveled to Libya to earn money to provide for his elderly mother and three children, according to an Egyptian newspaper, *Al-Yawm Al-Sabi*.

Luqa Najati, 24, was a newlywed working to build a life for his family in Egypt. Najati didn't know his wife was pregnant when he left to search for work. He never met his infant daughter.

Bishoy and Samuel Stephanos—two brothers—were saving for their weddings. Twenty-six-year-old Samih Salah Shawqi left behind a wife and baby daughter.

The mother of Yousef Shoukry, 24, begged him not to go to Libya, fearing the increasing dangers. But he was determined to work. His mother told the Huffington Post her son's faith gave him courage, and remembered him saying: "I have one God—He is the same here and there."

Copts are one of the most ancient branches of Christianity in the Middle East. And though they historically have had significant doctrinal differences with Roman Catholics and Protestants, many of the martyrs' families testified of their faith in Christ.

Though it's impossible to know the doctrinal views of all the executed men, it's clear that ISIS militants targeted them for their Christian identity. In the end, the men refused to recant Christ and called on Him in their moments of death.

In at least one case, faith may have come in the final moments. Mathew Ayairga was the lone non-Egyptian among the 21 captives. Middle East Christian News identified Ayairga as a construction worker from Ghana.

The persecution news agency BosNewsLife reported the execution video showed militants asking Ayairga: "Do you reject Christ?" Ayairga replied: "Their God is my God."

**ACROSS EGYPT**, responses in Christian villages ranged from rage to reconciliation.

Some relatives called for swift justice against the attackers, and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi ordered airstrikes against militant targets in Libya. The Muslim president declared seven days of mourning in Egypt and visited the Coptic cathedral in Cairo to express his condolences.

U.S. President Barack Obama condemned the executions, but didn't acknowledge the religious nature of the attacks on the men he called "Egyptian citizens" instead of Egyptian Christians.

The omission followed a long-standing pattern of the Obama administration downplaying the radical Islamist agenda of jihadi terrorists wreaking havoc across the Middle East.

Daniel Philpott, a political science professor at the University of Notre Dame, told *The New York Times*: "When ISIS is no longer said to have religious motivations nor the minorities it attacks to have religious identities, the Obama administration's caution about religion becomes excessive."

Back in the village of Al Our, some bereaved families focused on both grief and gratitude.

Beshir Kamel, who lost two brothers in the beheadings, appeared on an Arabic Christian television station, thanking the militants for not editing out the men calling on Christ at the moment of their deaths.

"Since the Roman era, Christians have been martyred and have learned to handle everything that comes our way," Kamel told the host. "This only makes us stronger in our faith because the Bible told us to love our enemies and bless those who curse us."

Meanwhile, Christians from surrounding towns and cities looked for ways to bless the grieving families in Minya.

Ramez Attallah of the Bible Society of Egypt said staffers joined with other Christian groups to perform service projects in the affected villages. They built homes for families in need and provided vocational training so villagers wouldn't have to travel abroad for work.

The Bible Society also distributed tracts with Scripture passages, including verses from Romans Chapter 8: "As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

Samuel Tados, a Coptic Christian and a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C., said the martyrs' deaths had brought encouragement to Egyptian Christians living all over the world.

He noted the men had lived simple lives of poverty and would have been unlikely to be remembered in other circumstances. "But at the moment of truth they stood to the challenge," said Tados. "And they stood tall."

#### In the shadow of death

"I am Assyrian Christian Ashur Abraham, from the village of Tel Tamer, Jazira."

"I am Assyrian Christian Basam Essa Michael, born in 1976, from the village of Tel Shamiram, Tel Tamer."

"I am Assyrian Christian Abdolmasih Enwiya, born in 1997, from the village of Jazira district of Tel Tamer."

The three men knelt, facing the camera, each reciting his name and place of birth. As they did, their hair and orange jumpsuits rustled in a stiff breeze, the wind causing the video to blur for seconds. But the scene came back into focus as three militants wearing black hoods stood behind each of them, raised a pistol, and shot simultaneously, killing each man with a bullet in the head.

The trio fell forward, collapsing. With the dead men's blood spreading in dark red pools over the dry ground, three more Assyrian Christians appeared behind them, also kneeling. This time each recited his name as the others had done, but the last, Martin Tamraz, ended this way:

"We are here and there are dozens of us. Our fate is the same as these," and he paused, pointing at the three dead Assyrians lying in front of him while staring at the camera. "If you do not take proper procedure for our release, we realize the inevitable fate."

The killings took place Sept. 23, seven months after Islamic State terrorists captured the men, along with about 250 other Christians. All were taken in late February during overnight raids of their villages along Syria's Khabur River. The terrorists released some of the hostages—the latest a group of 37 mostly older men and women, set free on Nov. 7. Reportedly, their families or Assyrian leaders paid a ransom.

But ISIS militants continue to hold 168 Khabur River residents, in addition to hundreds of other kidnapped Syrians. The three in jumpsuits were the first to be shown publicly executed, but Christians have been facing death at the hands of ISIS and its militant affiliates since the Syrian civil war began in 2011. Today's captives may be tomorrow's martyrs, and those still living display courage by refusing to renounce their faith in order to obtain earthly relief.

When Islamic State fighters overran Mosul and Nineveh Plains in Iraq in mid-2014, more than 120,000 Christians fled their homes. In 2015, with the militants controlling at times a third of Syria (including nearly all of Hasakah province, where the villages are located) and nearly a third of Iraq, what's perhaps most startling about the Khabur River residents and others like them is their determination to stay—that dozens of Assyrian villages remain inhabited by Christians at all. Months after ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared a new Islamic caliphate with the June 2014 takeover of Iraq's city of Mosul, why would any Christians want to remain?

"I was born there," one of the Khabur River residents said when I asked him that question a few days after the raids. "My father, my grandfather too. It is our place, where we live, where we have our churches, our life."

"Kory," who asked not to be identified to protect his family and neighbors, escaped the Feb. 23 raids with his wife and three children, along with his brother and his wife and their two children. ISIS fighters captured Kory's sister, 38, and her whole family. They also captured a cousin and the cousin's whole family. When Kory tried to reach him by calling his cell phone, an ISIS militant answered, told him never to call again, and hung up.

On the night of the raids, Kory and his family watched as ISIS militants tried to blow up a bridge across the Khabur River and shot at policemen who attempted to stop them. When the sounds of trucks and gunfire retreated with the early dawn light, the family escaped with only the clothes they were wearing, taking taxis from town to town until they reached the Iraqi border. They crossed the border on foot and found refuge in Dohuk, one of the northernmost cities in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Kory owned a restaurant in Tel Tamer, but it had been closed for three years, since the start of the war. "Now everyone is gone," he said. When I asked if he hoped to go back one day, his wife, seated beside him on the sofa, shuddered and clutched her shoulders, shaking her head. "It is safe here, but we do not know what comes after," Kory said.

In 2010 before the war, there were 75,000 Christian families living in the Aleppo and Hasakah provinces near Syria's border with Turkey. By 2013, their numbers had dropped to 50,000. As of 2015, according to Syrian Orthodox Church leaders, only 1,900 Christian families remain in the region.

In May two Islamic State militants kidnapped Catholic priest Jacques Murad, the prior of Mar Elian, a fourth-century monastery near the Syrian town of Qaryatayn. Murad had housed at Mar Elian hundreds of displaced Syrians, including 100 children under age 10. In August the terrorists returned, attacking Mar Elian and other churches and taking 260 Assyrian Christians hostage. They bulldozed the monastery.

The Qaryatayn captives were held in an underground dormitory along with Murad. Every day the militants pressured the Christians to convert, but none did, Murad told Fides News Agency.

"The Christians were often questioned about their faith and about the Christian doctrine, and they did not convert to Islam despite much pressure," he said. "This experience of trial strengthened the faith of everyone, including my faith as a priest. It is as if I have been born again." The militants released Murad on Oct. 11 but continue to hold the other Qaryatayn captives.

#### Lifetime achievement: Armando Valladares

I used to conclude each journalism history course at the University of Texas by reading a speech Armando Valladares gave in 1988 when he was Ronald Reagan's Ambassador to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Valladares spoke of Fernando López Toro, a Cuban political prisoner who killed himself because "total ignorance and indifference from the rest of the world" made him think "our sacrifice was useless." My point to students: Fidel Castro put López Toro in prison, but American journalists who defended or at least ignored Castro's evil kept him there.

Valladares, now 78, knew that evil firsthand. From 1960 to 1982 Valladares suffered through—as he later said in speeches and in his memoir, *Against All Hope*—"eight thousand days of hunger, of systematic beatings, of hard labor, of solitary confinement, of cells with steel-planked windows and doors, of solitude. Eight thousand days of struggling to prove that I was a human being. ... Eight thousand days of testing my religious convictions, my faith, of fighting the hate my atheist jailers were trying to instill in me with each bayonet thrust."

Those jailers were killers. Night after night during the 1960s, Valladares in prison heard the last words of those whom Che Guevara ordered to Execution Wall: "Viva Christo Rey." Long live King Jesus, they shouted, before bullets silenced them. The jailers were also brutal toward the living. After Valladares had three broken bones, guards beat him with thick twisted electric cables, which felt "as if they were branding me with a red-hot branding iron, but then I experienced the most intense, unbearable, and brutal pain of my life. One of the guards had jumped with all his weight on my broken, throbbing leg."

When I interviewed Valladares in Miami on Nov. 6—see "Armando Valladares: Mind games"—he said, "I never asked God to take me out of jail. I asked him for the strength to be able to go through this. I never asked God to take me out because I knew there was a purpose for it. I started seeking God more and each time came out stronger than ever. I never remember being in solitary confinement alone. I always felt God's presence." Valladares is also grateful to his wife Marta, who led what became an international campaign for his release.

Each year for the past 18 we've awarded our Daniel of the Year award to a person (or several) who glorified God by sacrificing fame, fortune, and sometimes life itself. But Hollywood hands out both annual Oscars and Lifetime Achievement Awards, and this year so does WORLD. We honor Valladares for standing up for Christ and also giving us words of warning: "America is founded on the principle that rights come from God. They precede the state and they cannot be usurped. If America begins to erode that principle, it will be signing its own death certificate."

Valladares ended *Against All Hope* by quoting Fidel Castro's claim in 1983 that Cuba has "no human rights problem ... no tortures here. ... In 25 years of revolution ... a crime has never been committed." Leading U.S. journalists generally accepted this, and at one party those who never would have worn a swastika took turns joyfully putting on a Cuban army cap. Some later excused their behavior by saying Castro had overturned a previous dictatorship, that of Fulgencio Batista, but Valladares exposes that equation: "In the history of the world there has never been a more horrific dictatorship than the dictatorship of communism. Think of two bank robbers: One has robbed five banks, and the other 40 banks."

Recognizing Valladares seems particularly appropriate in a year when, to use Valladares' words, "Pope Francis received tyrant Raúl Castro in an ambience of mutual smiles and cordiality, shaking his bloodstained hands and asking the communist chieftain for prayers. This is a chilling and appalling scene before God and history, and one that will indelibly mark the current pontificate." Valladares also criticized President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry for offering the Castro brothers hugs rather than treating them as thugs.

*Listen to Jamie Dean discuss this year's Daniels of the Year on The World and Everything in It.*

#### Jamie Dean

Jamie lives and works in North Carolina, where she covers the political beat and other topics as national editor for WORLD Magazine.

This article may be accessed at:

<https://world.wng.org/2015/11/unconquered#>



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OXFAM BRIEFING NOTE

OCTOBER 2015



Jemaa Al Halsey, 35, holds his two-year-old daughter Amina, outside the tent in which they now live in an informal settlement for Syrian refugees in north Bekaa Valley in Lebanon on September 10 2015. Photo: Sam Tarling/Oxfam

## SOLIDARITY WITH SYRIANS

Action needed on aid, refuge, and to end the bloodshed

The arrival of tens of thousands of Syrians to Europe's borders and the shocking deaths of women, children and men on their perilous journey has been a sharp reminder to the international community of the tragedy engulfing the people of Syria. Syrians put themselves and their families at so much risk only out of sheer desperation.

The international community has failed so far to address the spiralling catastrophe in Syria. Oxfam is calling for urgent and immediate action by the international community to deal with this deepening crisis: to fully fund the aid response, to offer refuge to those who have fled the country including through resettlement of a fair share of the refugee population, to halt the transfer of arms and ammunition and to revive concerted efforts towards a resolution of the crisis.

[www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)



OXFAM

**Table 1: Funding fair share analysis**

This chart details funding committed to the Syria crisis response up to 29 September 2015. Based on an estimated total need of \$ 8.9bn, the analysis shows that only 44 percent of the funding needed has been received.

The estimated total needs are calculated by adding the combined UN appeals on the Syria crisis for 2015, as well as those by the ICRC and IFRC.

Country	2015 contributions (\$m) (Incl. CERF/ECHO share)	Fair share (\$m)	% Fair share contributed
Australia	44.3	119.2	
Austria	10.7	46.7	
Belgium	25.5	56	
Canada	146.3	181.8	80%
Czech Republic	6.6	34.1	
Denmark	37.4	30.6	122%
Finland	22.4	26.4	85%
France	67.9	308.8	
Germany	334.7	446.3	75%
Greece	7	34.4	
Iceland	0.1	1.6	
Ireland	15.3	21.9	70%
Italy	55.1	256	
Japan	138.0	584	
Korea, Republic of	4.4	203.8	
Kuwait	304.7	56.6	538%
Luxembourg	8.4	3.8	220%
Netherlands	214.9	94.6	227%
New Zealand	1.8	16.5	
Norway	76.3	41	186%
Poland	9.2	106.6	
Portugal	8.3	33.2	
Qatar	9.4	57.1	
Russia	6.9	683.6	
Saudi Arabia	18.5	317.6	
Slovakia	1.6	17.1	
Spain	41.9	185.1	
Sweden	52.7	54.3	97%
Switzerland	62.1	58.1	107%
UAE	42.5	113.2	
United Kingdom	679	296.8	229%
United States	1483.3	2062.3	72%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3944</b>		<b>n/a</b>

Key



Note: The analysis includes members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and high-income non-DAC countries. Each country's fair share is calculated as a percentage of total need based on each country's share of total, combined gross national income (GNI). Each country's contributions include both bilateral and imputed multilateral funding. Information is drawn from publicly available sources including EDRIS and FTS and checked with government representatives where possible.

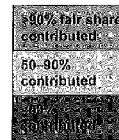
**Table 2: Resettlement and humanitarian admissions**

Oxfam is calling for 10 percent of the population of refugees registered in neighbouring countries, equivalent to 408,806 people, to be resettled or offered humanitarian admission in rich countries that have signed the UN Refugee Convention by the end of 2016.

This chart looks at admissions and pledges from these countries since 2013 against a fair share calculated on the basis of the size of their economy. To date, only 96,787 places have been pledged by the world's richest governments, some in an unclear timeframe.

Country	Number of places pledged	Fair share (no. of persons) (rounded up to the nearest whole number)	% of fair share contributed
Australia	11,124	8,968	126%
Austria	1,500	3,406	44%
Belgium	475	4,054	12%
Canada	11,300	13,551	83%
Czech Republic	70	2,374	3%
Denmark	390	2,209	2%
Finland	1,150	1,909	60%
France	1,000	22,034	5%
Germany	35,000	31,321	112%
Greece	0	2,621	0%
Iceland	0	100	0%
Ireland	721	1,507	48%
Italy	350	18,281	2%
Japan	0	42,279	0%
Korea, Republic of	0	14,145	0%
Luxembourg	60	320	20%
Netherlands	500	6,675	8%
New Zealand	500	1,205	42%
Norway	9,000	3,068	293%
Poland	100	7,451	1%
Portugal	93	2,383	4%
Russia	0	29,778	0%
Slovakia	0	1,224	0%
Spain	260	13,624	2%
Sweden	2,700	3,835	70%
Switzerland	3,500	4,109	85%
United Kingdom	5,571	21,295	26%
United States	11,423	145,080	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96,787</b>	<b>408,806</b>	<b>n/a</b>

Key



Note: Information is drawn from publicly available sources including the UNHCR and checked with government representatives where possible.

**Australia:** Oxfam has assumed that the government's pledge in September 2015 to resettle 12,000 Iraqi and Syrian refugees will be split 50/50 between both nationalities.

**The UK:** This number includes a notional figure of 5,355 to take account of the UK's commitment, announced in September, to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by the end of the current Parliament in 2020, as well as those already resettled via the Vulnerable Relocations Scheme.

**The USA** has pledged to accept at least 10,000 Syrian refugees in fiscal year 2016 within an overall admission ceiling of 85,000 refugees. The US is the world's largest resettlement country, and this annual cap will rise to 100,000 in fiscal year 2017. The USA arrival numbers are accurate as of August 2015.

The complete version of this document may be accessed at:

[https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/bn-solidarity-with-syrians-fair-shares-071015-en.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bn-solidarity-with-syrians-fair-shares-071015-en.pdf)