

112TH CONGRESS
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H. RES. 763

Condemning the targeted violence of vulnerable minority faith communities in Syria and calling on the United States Government to prioritize the safety and security of these communities.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 2, 2012

Mr. BILIRAKIS (for himself, Mr. SHULER, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. WOLF, and Mr. WEST) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Condemning the targeted violence of vulnerable minority faith communities in Syria and calling on the United States Government to prioritize the safety and security of these communities.

Whereas unrest in the region following the Arab Spring fueled antigovernment protests in Syria beginning in March 2011;

Whereas these Syrian antigovernment protests have been followed by increasing violence throughout Syria;

Whereas the Strategic Research and Communication Centre estimates that as of July 2012, over 18,000 Syrians have been killed as a result of the unrest since March 2011;

Whereas the United Nations High Commission for Refugees reports that they have registered over 119,000 Syria refugees in neighboring Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq;

Whereas the Syrian Arab Red Crescent estimates that over 1,000,000 people are internally displaced people in Syria;

Whereas the violence in Syria has led to the targeting or massive displacement of religious minorities residing in the large, religiously diverse cities of Aleppo and Damascus, as well as smaller towns in the provinces of Homs and Hama;

Whereas the Syrian population is about 70 percent Sunni and also includes large minorities of Alawites and Christians (including Greek Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, and Eastern Rite Catholics), as well as smaller numbers of Shia (including Ismailis), Druze, Ezidi, Mandaean, and Jewish communities with long standing ancient and indigenous ties to the area;

Whereas the Christian, Jewish, Ezidi, and Mandaean communities, which number about 10 percent of the population, lack their own militias and regional protectors;

Whereas these minority faith communities are vulnerable to pressure from all sides of the conflict and have been the target of retaliatory attacks, displacement, and the threat of ethnic cleansing for suspicion of allying with either side of the violence;

Whereas the majority of the Christian population of Homs has left the city due to threats against their safety;

Whereas in the town of Qusayr, where different religious groups have lived as neighbors for centuries, mosque loudspeakers have repeatedly ordered Christians to leave the town;

Whereas at least 200 al Qaeda operatives are estimated to have entered Syria since December 2011 to fight the Assad regime and those perceived to be regime supporters, sometimes solely by their religious minority identity;

Whereas some of the Christian, Ezidi, and Mandaean communities are already refugees from violence in Iraq; and

Whereas human rights abuses and religiously motivated crimes contribute to regional instability and endanger future peace: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) calls on all parties in the conflict to respect
3 the dignity, human rights, and religious freedom of
4 Syrian citizens, regardless of their religion or eth-
5 nicity;

6 (2) calls on the United States Secretary of
7 State to predicate future discussions with all Syrian
8 groups on their obligation to respect the rights of all
9 Syrians, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, or
10 similar status;

11 (3) calls for future aid to Syria to be
12 preconditioned on the Syrian Government's fulfill-
13 ment of its obligation to protect religious minorities
14 and human rights;

15 (4) calls on the United States Commission on
16 International Religious Freedom to monitor the situ-
17 ation in Syria and report on the status of religious

1 minorities in Homs, Aleppo, and throughout the
2 country; and

3 (5) calls on the United States Commission on
4 International Religious Freedom to meet with the
5 Secretary of State and to offer policy recommenda-
6 tions on how to ensure the protection of religious
7 freedom and human rights for all Syrians, regardless
8 of their religion or ethnicity.

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