

WASHINGTON OFFICE
205 CANNON BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0514
(202) 225-8104
FAX (202) 225-8890

DISTRICT OFFICE
698 EMERSON STREET
PALO ALTO, CA 94301-1609
(650) 323-2984
(408) 245-2339
(831) 335-2020
FAX (650) 323-3498

<http://eshoo.house.gov>

Anna G. Eshoo
14th District, California
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0514

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEES
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND THE INTERNET
HEALTH
PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON
INTELLIGENCE
SUBCOMMITTEES
INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

June 12, 2007

Urge President Bush to Heed the Pope's Advice, Protect Iraq's Christian Population

Dear Colleague:

I'm writing to ask you to join me in sending the attached letter to President Bush urging him to take seriously the deep concerns expressed by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for Iraq's indigenous Christian Population. As a proud Assyrian-American, I trace my heritage to this population which includes Chaldeans, Jacobites, Armenians, Assyrians and Greek Orthodox Christians. Iraq's indigenous Christian population represents the oldest surviving Christian population in the world and one that, without help during this time of great insecurity, could be on the brink of extinction.

While Christians comprise 5% of Iraq's population, they have accounted for nearly 40% of the refugees fleeing Iraq in recent years, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. A recent CRS report estimates there are as many as 2 million refugees who have fled Iraq to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Egypt and the West since 2003, many of whom encounter unwelcoming governments. It is a tragic situation that has brought significant media attention and must be addressed.

Despite the well-documented reports of persecution facing this population, Iraqi Christians continue to be targeted for kidnappings, bombings, assassinations and other acts of violence largely due to their religious practices and beliefs. Pope Benedict highlighted the worsening conditions in his discussions with President Bush, warning that an Iraq is emerging that does not tolerate the Christian religion.

I urge you to join me in writing to President Bush to encourage him to heed Pope Benedict's counsel and work with our allies to protect the welfare of the endangered Iraqi Christian population. For more information, or to sign on, you can contact Tim Carey of my office at 225-8104 or tim.carey@mail.house.gov.

Gratefully,



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

June xx, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush, President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As Members of Congress who share the concerns of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the welfare of Iraq's Christian population, we are writing to express our gratitude for your attention to this critical humanitarian issue, and to urge you heed the Pope's urgent advice and devote increased resources toward ensuring the welfare of the endangered Iraqi Christian population.

In the years since the fall of Saddam Hussein's tyrannical regime, Iraqi Christians, largely residing in the Nineveh Plain of Northern Iraq, have diligently supported U.S. and coalition efforts to develop a democratic, pluralistic state in Iraq. Unfortunately, despite their high level of cooperation, constant reports of unspeakable violence and persecution demonstrate beyond a doubt that the general security and development needs of Iraqi Christians are not being met.

As a small minority within the Iraqi population, Iraqi Christians have neither a strong voice in Iraqi national politics nor the resources necessary to deter the constant harassment and violence perpetrated by radicalized ethno-religious factions surrounding them. This persistent state of insecurity has led to a mass exodus as disproportionately high numbers of Iraqi Christians flee their homes to find safe haven as refugees in foreign lands. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Christians today make up only 3% of Iraq's population, but nearly 40% of the total number of refugees fleeing Iraq. As Pope Benedict cautioned in your recent discussions, we are seeing the birth of an Iraq that does not tolerate the Christian religion.

It's estimated that as many as half the Iraqi Christian population has already left since 2003, with thousands more internally displaced within Iraq. Most often those who leave the country encounter governments not willing to receive them. This is a tragic situation that requires a comprehensive and assertive response, both to resolve the issues myriad facing the displaced, and to adequately provide for the safety of those remaining in Iraq. Without a drastic improvement in the current situation we may well witness the complete loss of the Iraqi indigenous Christian community, a community that has survived in the region for over 2,000 years.

If a fully-functioning and sustainable democracy is to emerge in Iraq it's critical the rights of minority groups are protected. We share Pope Benedict's grave concern, and urge you to increase efforts to work with our allies to improve the welfare and security of Iraq's indigenous Christian population.

Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,