



The Honorable Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

May 6, 2009

Dear Secretary Clinton,

Thank you for addressing the Iraqi refugee crisis on your recent visit to Baghdad.

Your commitment to “work hard to see that we support helping people return” is encouraging. These words will raise the hopes of 4.7 million Iraqis who have been displaced by violence since 2003, two million of which live as refugees in neighboring countries.

All of Iraq’s religious and ethnic communities number among the displaced. But, as President Obama wrote to your predecessor shortly before his election to the Presidency:

“Catholic Chaldeans, Syriac Orthodox, Assyrian, Armenian and Protestant Christians, as well as smaller Yezidi and Sabeian Mandeian communities, have paid a heavy price as a result of the conflict in Iraq and continue to face a high level of threat and abuse. Moreover, Christians and other non-Muslim religious minorities continue to constitute a disproportionately high percentage of the Iraqi refugee population.” (Sen. Obama to Secretary Rice, September 26, 2008)

Failure to create conditions to enable these minorities to return to their homes will condemn them to the tragic fate of Iraq’s once thriving Jewish community, now a remnant of less than 10 people.

Without adequate security the displaced will not return to their homes. While levels of violence have declined dramatically over the past 18 months, religious minorities continue to be targeted for assassination. During the past two months another six Christians and three Mandeians were murdered in Baghdad and Kirkuk.

Notwithstanding the continuation of the terrorist threat, there are parts of the country where peace prevails. For example, conditions in the Nineveh Plain appear to be suitable for development as a safe haven for displaced Christians, Yezidis and Shabakhs.

I urge you to ask Ambassador Hill to liaise with Iraq’s Ministry for Displacement and Migration, UNHCR, former Minister for Migration and Displacement Pascale Warda, and civil society organizations on the ground to produce a plan for the timely return of refugees to secure areas, especially to locations where they can be received and supported by their own communal institutions.

Thank you again for your commitment to work hard to address the Iraqi refugee crisis and the special problems faced by the endangered minority communities. Christians Solidarity International will be working with you to get the refugees home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'John Eibner'.

Dr. John Eibner
CEO

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