



From the Desk of Dr. John Eibner

November 24, 2008

The Hon. Barack Obama  
Transition Headquarters of the President-elect  
451 6<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington D.C. 20001

Dear President-elect Obama,

Earlier this month I returned from Iraq, where I visited Mosul, towns and villages in Nineveh Province, and Baghdad. I share your deep concern about the safety and well-being of Iraq's Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of September, you stated your concerns to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice::

*“Catholic Chaldeans, Syriac Orthodox, Assyrian, Armenian and Protestant Christians, as well as smaller Yezidi and Sabeian Mandaean 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. In addition to these troubling trends Christians and other non-Muslim religious minorities continue to face considerable difficulty in ensuring that they are adequately represented in Iraqi governmental institutions.”* (Sen. Barack Obama to Condoleezza Rice, September 26, 2008)

Two days after your letter to the Secretary of State, terrorists launched an intensive campaign of violence against Mosul's Christian community, resulting in the murder of 13 people, the bombing of homes and businesses, and the displacement of approximately 13,000 people – nearly half the city's Christian population. After a lull of several weeks, the anti-Christian violence erupted again in Mosul on the 12<sup>th</sup> of this month, with the killing of two Christian women, the wounding of their mother and the destruction of their home.

The evidence gathered by our fact-finding mission points to the struggle between Sunni Arabs and Kurds for control of Nineveh Province and its capital Mosul as the source of the recent upsurge of violence against Christians. Both Sunni Arabs and Kurds have armed forces in the area. These armed forces - including terror cells of the predominantly Sunni Arab insurgency, mutinous Kurdish officers in the Iraqi Army, and Kurdish *peshmerga* units – together with corresponding political organs, abuse their power to intimidate the unarmed minorities. These minorities are caught in a deadly trap between militarized Arab and Kurdish political movements.

The recent campaign of violence against Christians in Mosul comes in the context of a much broader pattern of persecution. Nearly half of Iraq's Christians have been forced to flee their homes for refuge abroad. Many of those who remain in Iraq are internally displaced. If the present trend is not rapidly reversed, Iraq's Christian and other minority communities will soon become extinct, like Iraq's once thriving Jewish community.

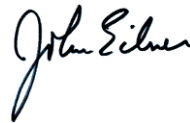
Christian Solidarity International (CSI-USA)  
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I urge you to make clear that your incoming administration is committed to reducing levels of violence and protecting religious minority communities in cooperation with Iraq's Federal Government in Baghdad and the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government.

Fulfillment of these goals is dependent on defeating the Islamic insurgency, eliminating other death squads, securing the withdrawal of occupying Kurdish militias to Kurdistan, and the removal of mutinous elements from the national army. These steps need also to be accompanied by an intensification of investment in the economic infrastructure and in provincial police forces that are accountable to district authorities. Inadequate representation of the religious and ethnic minorities in Iraqi governmental institutions will hinder progress.

I conclude by extending CSI's congratulations for your historic election to the Presidency. We look forward to working together with you and your administration in collective pursuit of respect for freedom of religion and other fundamental liberties enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Eibner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dr. John Eibner  
Chairman and CEO

Enc. CSI Report on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid Visit to Iraq, Oct. 29 to Nov. 7, 2008.