

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 29, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear President Obama,

We are writing regarding the growing number of Iraqi internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, returnees and stateless persons, and are particularly concerned about the forced displacement and persecution of Iraq's religious minorities. We are specifically requesting, as part of the Administration's humanitarian efforts, that the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security resume in-country Priority-2 processing, under the refugee resettlement priority system, for currently eligible parties and expand access to such processing to Iraq's religious and ethnic minorities targeted and persecuted by the Islamic State (IS).

While we understand the security and logistical constraints facing US personnel working in Iraq, we are concerned about the growing backlog of P-2 applications and the delayed departures of those refugees already deemed eligible for admission into the US. We strongly encourage the Administration to coordinate with the government of Iraq and relevant international humanitarian organizations to take all measures necessary to swiftly and safely resume in-country processing and in-person interviews for refugee applicants in Baghdad.

Additionally, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an estimated 850,000 Iraqis have sought safety in Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan since the beginning of this year. Of those fleeing to Erbil, a majority are religious minorities forced out by IS militants including Yazidis, Chaldean Christians, Assyrian Christians, Shiite Turkmen, and Shabak, Kakais, and Sabeian Mandaeans. A number of international humanitarian organizations have concluded that IS is methodically executing a campaign of sectarian intimidation and violence through a variety of methods including forced conversions to an extreme interpretation of Sunni Islam, mass kidnappings and trafficking of women and children, and brutal executions.

We are therefore requesting the Administration strongly consider working with regional and international partners to evaluate the security and staffing necessary to establish P-2 processing capabilities at the US Consulate in Erbil. We believe this facility is most conducive to refugee processing due to its proximity to internally displaced, vulnerable populations who cannot feasibly or safely make the journey south to Baghdad. The US has the strategic and moral imperative to prevent and protect indigenous, peaceful Iraqi minorities from IS' systemic and barbaric ethnic cleansing crusade.

As part of our effort to lead an international coalition to combat IS and provide humanitarian relief to these vulnerable populations, we must include and prioritize the protection of Iraqi religious minorities by affording them swift access to the US Refugee Admissions Program. We must signal to the international community the US' unwavering commitment to religious freedom by joining allies like Canada, Sweden and Australia whose governments have already made commitments to accept Iraqi religious minorities as refugees.

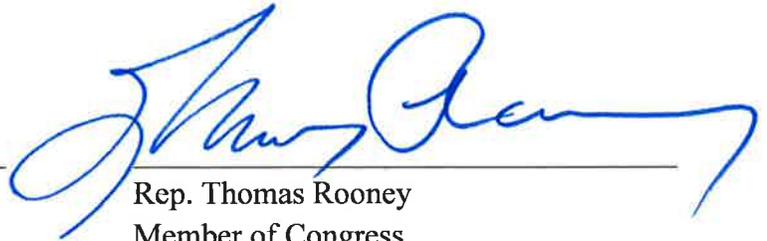
We are committed to providing adequate relief to religious minorities and American-affiliated Iraqis during this ongoing crisis, and hope that the Administration will quickly begin to review our requests. Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue and we look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



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Rep. Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



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Rep. Thomas Rooney  
Member of Congress



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Rep. John Conyers  
Member of Congress



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Rep. Eliot Engel  
Member of Congress



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Rep. Henry Waxman  
Member of Congress



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Rep. Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



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Rep. Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



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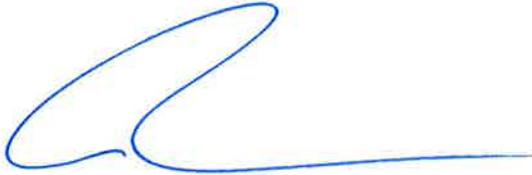
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Rep. Curt Clawson  
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Rep. John Delaney  
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Rep. Sean Duffy  
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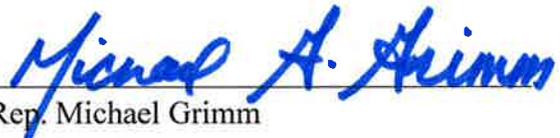
Rep. Trent Franks  
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Rep. Mike Honda  
Member of Congress



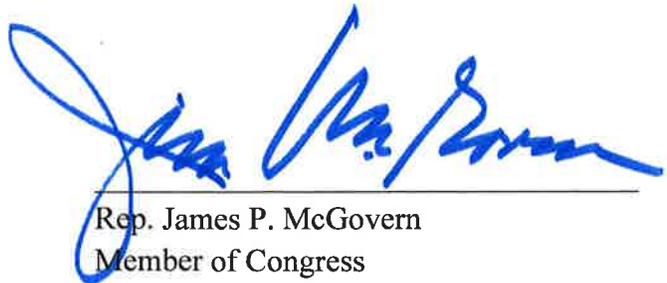
Rep. Duncan Hunter  
Member of Congress



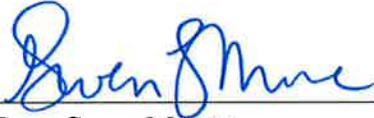
Rep. Michael Grimm  
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Rep. Matt Salmon  
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Rep. Jan Schakowsky  
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