



*Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515*

June 28, 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.

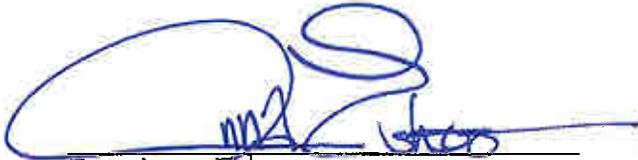
As a small minority within the Iraqi population, Iraqi Christians have neither a strong voice in Iraqi national politics nor the resources necessary to deter the constant harassment and violence perpetrated by radicalized ethno-religious factions surrounding them. This persistent state of insecurity 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 and other religious minority populations.

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

Sincerely,



Rep. Anna Eshoo
Member of Congress



Rep. Joe Knollenberg
Member of Congress



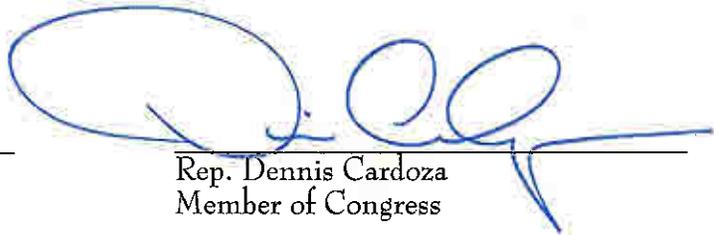
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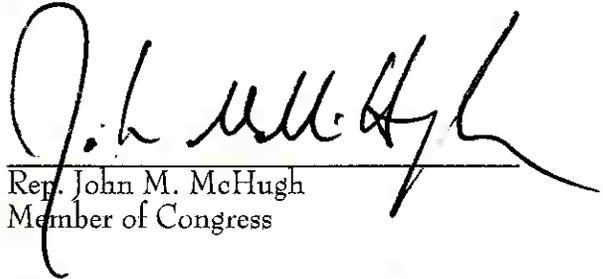
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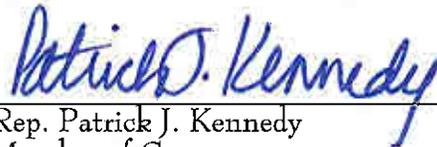
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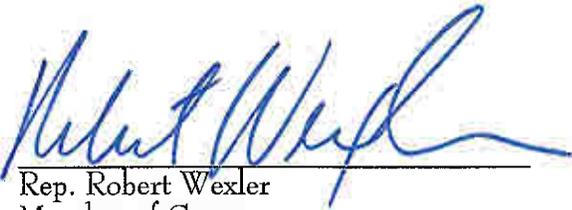
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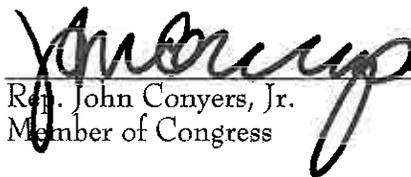
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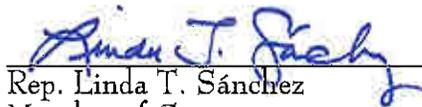
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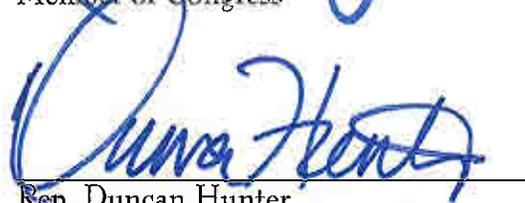
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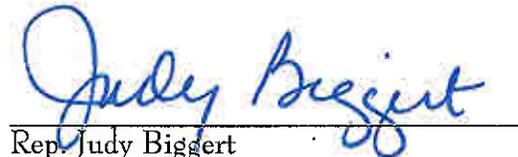
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