



March 1, 2017

VIA OVERNIGHT DELIVERY SERVICE

Ambassador Nikki R. Haley
Permanent Representative of the United States
of America to the United Nations

RE: Islamic State's Genocide Against Christians and Other Religious Minorities

Dear Ambassador Haley:

Congratulations on your appointment as Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations. We are excited that you will be representing the United States on the world's stage to ensure that we continue to stand with Israel and our allies while we project strength and leadership to stop the enemies of freedom around the world.

By way of introduction, the American Center for Law & Justice (ACLJ) is an organization dedicated to the defense of constitutional liberties secured by law. ACLJ attorneys have argued before the Supreme Court of the United States and other federal and state courts in a number of significant cases involving the freedoms of speech and religion. The ACLJ and its international affiliates — including the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ), which is credentialed as an NGO before the United Nations — defend human rights and religious liberty around the world.

As you are aware, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (also known as ISIS or the Islamic State) is currently committing genocidal acts intended to destroy and obliterate Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere in the region. The purpose of this correspondence is to bring the plight of these groups to your attention as the newly confirmed U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations. We submit this correspondence to you on behalf of our organization and more than 277,000 Americans from all 50 states who have signed our Petition calling for a committed, meaningful response to the ISIS genocide.



As the Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, you can play a critical role in advocating that the United Nations formally recognize and declare that the acts committed by ISIS are genocide against Christians and other religious minorities and that the international community mobilize for action to halt this genocide without delay. Since March 17, 2016, it has been the official position of the United States that ISIS is committing genocide against Christians and other religious minorities, and we urge you to further that official United States policy at the United Nations.

It is imperative that the United Nations formally recognize that the ongoing atrocities committed by ISIS against Christians, Yazidis, and other religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere constitute genocide for purposes of implicating the obligations of the international community pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide¹ and the well-established responsibility to protect the victims of genocide.² While we call for swift and decisive action by the international community to stop the genocide and protect the victims, we are also aware that the first step is for the United Nations to formally *recognize* that the atrocities constitute genocide and to recognize *all* those victimized thereby, including Christians.

ISIS's systematic pattern of widespread murder and sexual abuse has forced thousands of Christians and other religious minorities to flee from Iraq and Syria. These acts are leading to the wholesale destruction of Christians as a group in the region. The growing body of evidence demonstrates that the inhuman violence at issue is, in fact, genocide as defined by the Convention—a genocide targeting Christians. In the summer of 2014, ISIS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, self-proclaimed to be “Caliph Ibrahim,” declared the creation of an Islamic caliphate under his leadership. Since Al-Baghdadi declared the creation of his caliphate, ISIS has systematically killed Christians, Yazidis, and other non-Muslim as well as Muslim minorities who do not adhere to ISIS's ideology. *ISIS members have killed Christians and Yazidis by the thousands, have enslaved and raped thousands more because of their religion, and have destroyed their places of worship, their homes, and their livelihoods.*³

The Christian population in both Syria and Iraq has been decimated. In fact, hundreds of thousands of Christians have fled Syria and Iraq since the rise of ISIS.⁴ The Islamic State's religion-targeted abuses in Iraq include beheadings, burning victims alive in caskets, and other barbaric “killings, rape, kidnapping, enslavement, theft . . . destruction of religious sites . . . sexual slavery, forced conversion, ransom demands, property

¹Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, art. II, Dec. 9, 1948, 78 U.N.T.S. 277 [hereinafter Genocide Convention].

²*The Responsibility to Protect*, OFF. OF THE SPECIAL ADVISER ON THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE, <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml> (last visited Nov. 22, 2016).

³GENOCIDE AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS AND IN DEFENSE OF CHRISTIANS (Mar. 9, 2016), <http://indefenseofchristians.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Genocide-report.pdf>.

⁴*Id.*; see also BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, H.R. AND LAB., U.S. DEPT OF STATE, SYRIA 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT 1–2 (2014) [hereinafter SYRIA REPORT].

seizures, and forced business closures.”⁵ In Syria, ISIS has beheaded and stoned men, women, and children for blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy.⁶ At times, ISIS has also demanded that religious minorities pay a tax (called *jizya*), or flee — punishing by death those who fail to comply.⁷

It is vital that the United Nations stand against the evils of the ongoing genocide and use all available options to halt the genocide and protect the victims — by implementing appropriate penal tribunals, coordinating a more effective use of coalition military force, administering a more efficient delivery of aid, and providing meaningful in-region protection for victims such as the establishment of safe-zones. The Charter of the United Nations demands no less, and through the organs of the United Nations, equipped and empowered by the Genocide Convention, the United Nations has the unique capability to end the genocide and protect the Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities victimized thereby.

We, therefore, respectfully and solemnly urge you to call for the United Nations to recognize and declare that the ongoing atrocities committed by the Islamic State and associated groups constitute genocide and that Christians are among those victimized thereby, and to communicate with all appropriate offices of the United Nations accordingly to mobilize the international community to take swift and decisive action.

The United Nations Human Rights Council’s 34th Session which has just begun presents a perfect opportunity for your office to signal the United States’ newfound resolve to stop ISIS’s genocide once and for all, and to call upon the United Nations to do its part to protect the Christian and other religious minority victims of these atrocities.

Again, on behalf of over 277,000 Americans, we thank you for your attention to this crisis.

Sincerely,



Jay Alan Sekulow
Chief Counsel



Robert W. Ash
Senior Counsel

⁵BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, H.R. AND LAB., U.S. DEP’T OF STATE, IRAQ 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT 1-2 (2014).

⁶SYRIA REPORT, *supra* note 4, at 1.

⁷*Id.*