



22 December 2017

VIA OVERNIGHT DELIVERY SERVICE

HE Prime Minister Theresa May
10 Downing Street
London, England
SW1A 2AA

*RE: Efforts to Mobilise the International Community to Assist as Needed in
Protecting, Aiding and Resettling the Victims of Islamic State Genocide*

Your Excellency:

By way of reminder, the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is an international not-for-profit law firm located in Strasbourg, France, dedicated to protecting human rights and religious freedom in Europe and around the world. The ECLJ holds Special Consultative Status as an NGO before the United Nations (U.N.). The ECLJ has submitted both written and oral statements to the United Nations Human Rights Council on this very subject. The ECLJ submits this correspondence on behalf of itself and its members – as well as over 585,000 persons, including persons residing in 191 nations and territories – who urge the international community to end the ongoing Islamic State (commonly referred to as ISIS, ISIL, and Daesh) genocide and protect the victims.

In a previous letter we sent you dated 24 July 2017, we respectfully and solemnly urged you to recognise the atrocities being carried out against Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria as genocide and to work with the international community to hold those responsible for these atrocities accountable. We thank you for your response in which you acknowledged the dire situation in Iraq and Syria, and stressed the importance of “[p]roviding humanitarian assistance to all those who need it, including minority communities and consistently underlining with the region’s political leaders the importance of upholding freedom of religion and belief¹.

We also thank you for working with the Iraqi government and the instrumental role you played in crafting Resolution 2379, which calls for the creation of an Investigative Team headed by a Special Adviser for the purpose of “collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide committed by the terrorist group ISIL (Da’esh) in Iraq”². As you well know, such evidence will then be used to hold Islamic State members “accountable for their crimes in Iraq”³.

¹Letter from The Right Honorable Alistair Burt, MP, Minister of State for the Middle East & North Africa, to Jay Alan Sekulow & Robert W. Ash, American Center for Law & Justice (14 Aug. 2017), *available at* http://media.aclj.org/pdf/LTR-UKgovernment_Redacted.pdf.

²S.C. Res. 2379, ¶ 2 (21 Sept. 2017).

³*Id.*

This is a vital step in providing the relief that Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq so desperately need and the justice they most assuredly deserve. It is also a crucial step in sending the message that such barbaric behaviour will not be tolerated by the international community.

Collecting the evidence and bringing the perpetrators of genocide to justice is critical, but it will also take time. During that process, it is likewise important that steps be taken to provide meaningful interim and permanent resettlement opportunities for the displaced victims. For example, Iraqi Christians have already begun to return home to northern Iraq following the victory over Islamic State fighters, only to have to turn around and leave once again because of continued conflict in the area⁴ or other reasons. The reports on the ground are bleak:

“The reality is we cannot stay without the U.S. or the U.N. helping to protect Nineveh directly,” Father Afram al-Khoury Benyamen told Fox News after Sunday mass recently at St. George Cathedral, a 133-year-old church. “With international protection maybe we can remain, but if it doesn’t come soon . . . we go”⁵.

“ISIS is not finished in Mosul and still they can come straight here,” the priest said. “We expect more attacks. It is like staring into the darkness”⁶. He continued, “We are the original people, the indigenous people here in Iraq and the government should want us to stay. Instead there is nothing”⁷. And he explained the living conditions in his hometown this way: “The village is dirty and there is no electricity. No water coming, no markets. All of our people are thinking to immigrate and leave”⁸.

Information we are receiving from those providing aid and recovery assistance confirms this reality and demonstrates that, in addition to safety and security concerns, and the need for basic necessities, IDPs seeking to return home are facing barriers that require access to legal assistance. For example, we are hearing that many IDPs need legal assistance in establishing their identities and obtaining new personal identification documents. Further, attention has been called to their need for help in obtaining documents helping them to prove ownership of their former residences, and in obtaining relief items from U.N. agencies. Clearly, these legal barriers must also be addressed when aiding IDPs in their efforts to return home.

As has been demonstrated, continued conflict in the area poses a hindrance to the expeditious resettlement of Iraqi IDPs. Thus, the international community must take intermediate measures to aid and protect them. We advocate for the prioritisation of international aid and assistance to create and maintain safe in-region relocation options. The creation of “safe zones” helps to ensure the safety and security of IDPs who, so far, have not been able to return home, IDPs who have returned home, or survivors who perhaps never left.

⁴Perry Chiamonte & Hollie McKay, *Iraqi Christians Forced to Flee Homes Again After Skirmishes Between Kurds and Central Government*, (24 Oct. 2017), <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/10/24/iraqi-christians-forced-to-flee-homes-again-after-skirmishes-between-kurds-and-central-government.html>.

⁵Hollie McKay, *Life after ISIS: Christians Say They Can't Go Home Without International Protection*, Fox News (5 Dec. 2017), <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/12/05/life-after-isis-christians-say-cant-go-home-without-international-protection.html>.

⁶*Id.*

⁷*Id.*

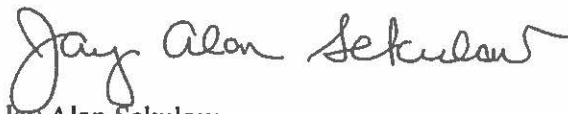
⁸*Id.*

It is imperative that those seeking to return have both safety and assistance and the international community is key to ensuring that safety and assistance. We must stand against the evils of the ongoing genocide and, in addition to the above-mentioned assistance, we must use all available options to stop the genocide and protect the victims. This is possible by implementing appropriate penal tribunals, coordinating a more effective use of coalition military force, administering a more efficient delivery of aid, and provide meaningful in-region protection for victims.

Your Excellency, as a prominent leader in the international community, you play a pivotal role in providing current and future relief for and facilitating the ultimate and lasting resettlement of the victims of the Islamic State's atrocities, including those who survive survivor the genocide. We respectfully urge you to communicate with all appropriate offices and to mobilise the international community to take swift and decisive action.

Additionally, we request that you provide to us suggestions on ways we may assist Iraq and the international community to end the horrific and deadly acts of genocide and to aid, protect and resettle the victims. And finally, we would be pleased to put you in touch with people on the ground who can provide the evidence and testimony needed to hold Islamic State actors responsible for their heinous crimes. We are aware that there is much to be done and we stand ready to work with you to assist in any way possible.

Respectfully submitted,



Jay Alan Sekulow
Chief Counsel



Robert W. Ash
Senior Counsel