

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 16, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We write to encourage you to take expeditious action to protect Christians and other vulnerable religious minorities from the unprecedented level of violence in Iraq and Syria.

The creation of a Priority 2 (P-2) group under the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) for religious minorities from Iraq and Syria would provide a structured process for Christians, Alawites, Druze, Yazidis, and others to be considered for resettlement in the United States. This designation has been used for groups of humanitarian concern, including religious minorities from the former Soviet Union, Cuba, and Iran. Although the Administration has announced that it will create more places for Syrian refugees, we have not stated that religious minorities such as Christians will be considered for admission to the United States.

Religious minorities also have difficulty accessing humanitarian assistance due to the hostility and discrimination that they face from other citizens, including other refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has acknowledged that religious minorities avoid camps for this reason. As such, we encourage you to direct the U.S. Agency for International Development to ensure that religious minorities have sufficient access to the nearly \$2 billion in aid that the United States has pledged for humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq and Syria.

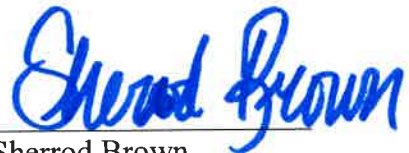
Religious cleansing has reached historic levels in the Middle East. Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria in 2011, President Bashar al-Assad, Syrian rebels, and terrorist groups have targeted religious minorities for violence. In Iraq, Christians, Yazidis, and Mandeans have lived in fear of terrorist groups for the last decade. Now, the brutal Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has openly vowed to end the existence of religious minorities in the Middle East. Accordingly, we urge you to act swiftly to help protect religious minorities in Iraq and Syria.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker  
U.S. Senator



Sherrod Brown  
U.S. Senator



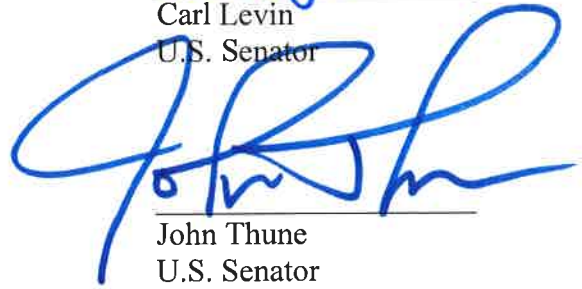
Dan Coats  
U.S. Senator



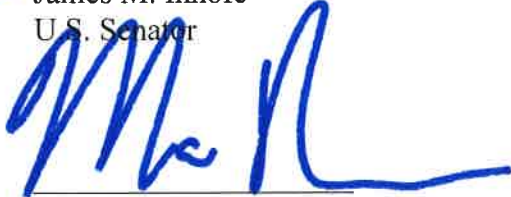
Carl Levin  
U.S. Senator



James M. Inhofe  
U.S. Senator



John Thune  
U.S. Senator



Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator



Rob Portman  
U.S. Senator



Mark Kirk  
U.S. Senator