



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on September 15, 2015

## U.S. Legislators and Public Highlight Persecution of Middle East Christians

As the Christian population of several countries in the Middle East continues to dwindle owing to persecution, several members of Congress, led by Representative Jeff Fortenberry (R-Neb.) introduced a resolution on September 9 stating that those who commit atrocities against Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East are guilty of “war crimes,” “crimes against humanity,” and “genocide.”



The resolution, H. Con. Res. 75, was introduced by Fortenberry and Representatives Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), Trent Franks (R-Ariz.), Daniel Lipinski (D-Ill.), Jeff Denham (R-Calif.), and Juan Vargas (D-Calif.). As of September 11, it had gathered [37 cosponsors](#).

In addition to Christians, the resolution cites the persecution of Yezidis, Turkmen, Sabea-Mandean, Kaka'e, and Kurds — described as other ethnic and religious minorities who have been persecuted.

The resolution noted that these Christians and other minorities “have been murdered, subjugated, forced to emigrate and suffered grievous bodily and psychological harm, including sexual enslavement and abuse, inflicted in a deliberate and calculated manner in violation of the laws of their respective nations, the laws of war, laws and treaties forbidding crimes against humanity, and the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.”

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The most recent atrocities named in the resolution have been perpetrated by ISIS since the terrorist organization occupied much of Iraq and Syria since 2014, but the persecution of Christians in Iraq began soon after Saddam Hussein — who though a tyrant was tolerant of Christians — was forced from power by the U.S. invasion of 2003. As we noted in an article in 2008, five years after Saddam was removed from power, 15 Christians had recently been slain in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. An estimated 4,000 people fled Mosul during the preceding week to escape killings targeting Christians.

In that article, we noted:

Five years ago [2003], there were 800,000 Christians in Iraq, but because of massive emigration following the U.S. led invasion and the subsequent violence against Christians, their number is now down to 250,000. The situation in Mosul is similar. Even before the latest round of violence, the city's Christian population had declined from 20,000 to 10,000. The *Washington Post* noted that “Most Iraqi Christians are Chaldeans, an Eastern Rite denomination that recognizes the Pope's authority. Others belong to the Assyrian Catholic Church or Protestant denominations.”

We observed that even under the repressive secular government of Saddam Hussein, Christians in Iraq enjoyed a fair degree of religious freedom and noted that Hussein's vice president, Tariq Aziz, was a Chaldean Christian.

The rapid growth of ISIS is a result of a continuing series of interventions in the Middle East by the U.S.



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military and covert intelligence operations. In addition to the power vacuum created when Saddam Hussein was removed from power, our government decided that another strongman, Syria's Bashar al-Assad, also had to go. As with Iraq under Saddam Hussein, however, Christians in Syria enjoyed relative freedom of religion. Our government decided to assist the "moderate" jihadist rebels fighting against Assad, but, many of these U.S.-supported "moderate" rebels defected to al-Qaeda's Syrian branch, known as Jabhat al-Nusra, which was allied with ISIS. When these rebels left to join up with ISIS, they reportedly took their heavy U.S.-supplied weapons with them.

In a recent article, former Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas) directly blamed this foreign policy for enabling ISIS to come to power and engage in its current atrocities against Christians and others. He wrote:

The reason so many are fleeing places like Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and Iraq is that US and European interventionist foreign policy has left these countries destabilized with no hopes of economic recovery. This mass migration from the Middle East and beyond is a direct result of the neocon foreign policy of regime change, invasion, and pushing "democracy" at the barrel of a gun.

Paul continued by noting: "There was no ISIS in either Iraq or Syria before the 2003 US invasion of Iraq."

In the *Wall Street Journal* for August 20, journalist Robert R. Reilly compared the persecution of Christians in the Middle East to the persecution of Jews by the Nazis in Europe during the 1940s and noted: "Today's persecuted Christians also have nowhere to go."

Reilly wrote about a project in Britain called the Barnabas Fund, which has pressed Western governments to issue visas to persecuted Christians, on condition that the organization will foot their expenses. Reilly specifically mentioned the U.K. and Poland as places where Christian refugees might be offered a safe haven, but did not say if the Barnabas Fund had made this same proposal to U.S. officials.

The *San Diego Tribune* on September 13 ran an article that two local Middle Eastern Christians were launching efforts to bring "a few hundred" Syrian refugees (some of whom would presumably be Christians) to San Diego County.

One of those proposing such an initiative is Mark Arabo, a spokesman for the San Diego area Iraqi Christian Community and president of the Minority Humanitarian Foundation.

As we noted in a recent article, during a White House press briefing on September 10, Press Secretary Josh Earnest announced the Obama administration's intentions to accept at least 10,000 Syrian refugees in the next fiscal year. However, because our government does not track refugees by religions, it cannot be determined how many of those refugees (if any) might be Christians. The *Tribune* quoted Arabo's e-mailed statement:

The Middle East is in a state of perpetual volatility. Syria is the clearest example of what happens when our dysfunctionality in [Washington, D.C.] leads to crisis elsewhere.

We were unwilling to act from the beginning stages of this crisis, and now we see the product of our negligence.

Arabo's condemnation of our government's unwillingness to act at "the beginning stages of this crisis" apparently refers only to the plight of the displaced refugees, and indicates no knowledge of the U.S. role in destabilizing the governments of Iraq and portions of Syria that enabled ISIS to gain power and



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to engage in its devastating persecution of Christians and others.

The unfortunate refugees fleeing from terrorism are paying the price for our interventionist foreign policy that destabilized their homelands. Their best hope for a better life lies not in more U.S. government intervention, but in the Christian charity of Americans and other Westerners who will offer their generous aid through private charitable organizations.

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