

**Suspend the Rules And Agree to the Resolution, H.Res. 944 with  
Amendments**

**(The amendments consist of a new preamble, a substitute text, and  
an amendment to the title)**

111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. RES. 944

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives on religious minorities  
in Iraq.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 3, 2009

Mr. PETERS (for himself, Mr. WOLF, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. DINGELL, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. CARDOZA, Mr. KIRK, Mr. FILNER, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. SCHOCK, Mr. OLVER, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. INGLIS, Ms. WATSON, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. SHULER, Mr. MURPHY of New York, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. WATT, Mr. MAFFEI, Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, Ms. RICHARDSON, Ms. KILROY, Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. ANDREWS, Mr. ADLER of New Jersey, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. KLEIN of Florida, Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan, Mr. MEEKS of New York, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. SIRES, Mr. MCMAHON, Ms. WOOLSEY, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, and Ms. BERKLEY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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# RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives on  
religious minorities in Iraq.

Whereas threats against members of even the smallest religious and ethnic minority communities in Iraq could

jeopardize the future of Iraq as a diverse, pluralistic, and free society;

Whereas according to the Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report, violent acts continue to pose a significant threat to members of the country's vulnerable non-Muslim religious minority communities, including documented attacks against Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, and other Christians, Sabeen Mandeans, and Yazidis, and "very few of the perpetrators of violence committed against Christians and other religious minorities in the country have been punished";

Whereas according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, there are grave threats to religious freedom in Iraq, particularly for members of the smallest, most vulnerable religious minority communities in Iraq, including Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, and other Christians, Sabeen Mandeans, and Yazidis;

Whereas the February 2009 Country Report on Human Rights Practices issued by the Department of State identifies on-going "misappropriation of official authority by sectarian, criminal, and extremist groups" as among the significant and continuing human rights problems in Iraq;

Whereas in recent years, there have been alarming numbers of religiously motivated killings, abductions, beatings, rapes, threats, intimidation, forced conversions, marriages, and displacement from homes and businesses, and attacks on religious leaders, pilgrims, and holy sites, in Iraq, with the smallest, non-Muslim religious minorities in Iraq having been among the most vulnerable, although Iraqis from many religious communities, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, have suffered in this violence;

Whereas the Assyrian International News Agency reports that 59 churches were bombed in Iraq between June 2004 and July 2009;

Whereas persecution and violence in Iraq have extended to church leaders as well, such as the March 2008 kidnap for ransom and killing of 65-year-old Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho;

Whereas many members of non-Muslim religious minority communities in Iraq reportedly do not receive adequate official protection, and are legally, politically, and economically marginalized;

Whereas control of several ethnically and religiously mixed areas, including the Nineveh and Tamim (Kirkuk) governorates, is disputed between the Kurdistan regional government and the Government of Iraq, and Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, and other Christians, Sabeen Mandeans, Yazidis, and Muslim ethnic minorities Shabak and Turkomans are caught in the middle of this struggle for control and have been targeted for abuses and discrimination as a result;

Whereas many members of vulnerable non-Muslim religious minority communities in Iraq have fled to other areas in Iraq or to other countries;

Whereas the flight of such refugees has substantially diminished their numbers in Iraq;

Whereas approximately 1,400,000 Christians were estimated to have lived in Iraq as of 2003, including Chaldean Catholics, Assyrian Orthodox, Assyrian Church of the East, Syriac Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, Armenians (Catholic and Orthodox), Protestants, Evangelicals, and others;

Whereas it is widely reported that only 500,000 to 700,000 indigenous Christians remained in Iraq as of 2009;

Whereas since 2003, the Sabean Mandaean community has found itself targeted by both Sunni and Shia Islamic extremists, and by criminal gangs who use religion to justify their attacks;

Whereas the Sabean Mandaean community in Iraq reports that almost 90 percent of the members of that community either fled Iraq or have been killed, leaving only about 3,500 to 5,000 Mandeans in Iraq as of 2009;

Whereas in August 2007 a series of bombings targeted the Yazidi community of Iraq resulting in an estimated 200 deaths and more than 200 injuries;

Whereas at least 20 people were killed and 30 wounded in a double suicide bombing in August 2009 which targeted the Yazidi minority in northern Iraq;

Whereas the Yazidi community in Iraq reportedly now numbers about 500,000, a decrease from about 700,000 in 2005;

Whereas the Baha'i faith, estimated to have only 2,000 adherents in Iraq, remains prohibited in Iraq under a 1970 law;

Whereas the ancient and once-large Jewish community in Iraq now numbers fewer than 10, and they essentially live in hiding;

Whereas in 2008, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that approximately 221,000 Iraqis returned to their areas of origin in Iraq, the vast majority of whom settled into neighborhoods or governorates controlled by members of their own religious community;

Whereas many of these returnees reported returning because of difficult economic conditions in their countries of asylum, principally Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon; and

Whereas many members of vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities are not believed to be represented in more than negligible numbers among these returnees: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-  
2       resentatives that—

3               (1) the United States remains deeply concerned  
4       about the plight of members of the vulnerable reli-  
5       gious and ethnic minority communities of Iraq;

6               (2) the Secretary of State should develop and  
7       report to Congress on a comprehensive strategy to  
8       encourage the protection of the rights of members of  
9       vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities  
10      in Iraq;

11              (3) the United States Government should urge  
12      the Government of Iraq to enhance security at  
13      places of worship in Iraq, particularly where mem-  
14      bers of vulnerable religious minority communities  
15      are known to be at risk;

16              (4) the United States Government should con-  
17      tinue to work with the Government of Iraq to inte-  
18      grate religious and ethnic minorities into the govern-  
19      ment in general, and the Iraqi Security Forces, in

1 particular, with the goal of ensuring that members  
2 of such communities—

3 (A) suffer no discrimination in recruit-  
4 ment, employment, or advancement in govern-  
5 ment positions, in general, and the Iraqi police  
6 and security forces, in particular; and

7 (B) while employed in the Iraqi police and  
8 security forces, be initially assigned, in reason-  
9 able numbers, to their locations of origin, rath-  
10 er than being transferred to other areas;

11 (5) the Government of Iraq should, with the as-  
12 sistance of the United States Government—

13 (A) ensure that the upcoming national  
14 elections in Iraq are safe, fair, and free of in-  
15 timidation and violence so that all Iraqis, in-  
16 cluding members of vulnerable religious and  
17 ethnic minority communities, can participate in  
18 the elections; and

19 (B) permit and facilitate election moni-  
20 toring by experts from local and international  
21 nongovernmental organizations, the inter-  
22 national community, and the United Nations,  
23 particularly in ethnic and religious minority  
24 areas;

1           (6) the United States Government should en-  
2           courage the Government of Iraq to work with mem-  
3           bers of vulnerable religious and ethnic minority com-  
4           munities to develop and implement tangible, effective  
5           measures to protect their rights and measures to re-  
6           verse the legal, political, and economic  
7           marginalization of religious minorities in Iraq;

8           (7) in providing assistance to Iraq, the United  
9           States Government should continue to take into ac-  
10          count the needs of vulnerable members of religious  
11          and ethnic minority communities and expand upon  
12          efforts to work with local organizations that serve  
13          those communities;

14          (8) the United States Government should con-  
15          tinue to fund capacity-building programs for the  
16          Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights, the independent  
17          national Human Rights Commission, and the newly-  
18          created independent minorities committee whose  
19          membership is selected by members of vulnerable re-  
20          ligious and ethnic minority communities of Iraq;

21          (9) the United States Government should  
22          strongly encourage the Government of Iraq to direct  
23          the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights to investigate  
24          and issue a public report on abuses against and the  
25          marginalization of members of vulnerable religious

1       and ethnic minority communities in Iraq and make  
2       recommendations to address such abuses; and

3               (10) the Government of Iraq should, with the  
4       assistance of the United States Government and  
5       international organizations, help ensure that dis-  
6       placed Iraqis considering return to Iraq have the  
7       proper information needed to make informed deci-  
8       sions regarding such return.

Amend the title so as to read: “Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives on the protection of members of vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities in Iraq.”.