

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1604

December 4, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Secretary Kerry:

I urge you to include Christians in the State Department's impending designation regarding ISIS' genocidal activity. Under international law, genocide is defined as an act committed with the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part," an "entire ethnic, racial, or religious group." This "intent to destroy," which ISIS manifests against the Yazidis, is the same "intent to destroy" ISIS manifests in its merciless pursuit of Christians. Given recent reports that indicate that the United States is going to officially recognize ISIS' persecution of the Yazidis as genocide, it is critical that the United States also recognize ISIS' persecution of Christians. We must take this important step of including both groups in order to put an end to this urgent human rights crisis.

Since launching its caliphate, ISIS has executed, enslaved, abducted, displaced, and forcibly converted thousands of Christians. In areas that ISIS controls, Christians face three stark choices: pay the ruinous *jizya* tax, convert to Islam, or be murdered. Worse still, even Christians who pay this tax are eventually stripped of their property and killed. ISIS has also institutionalized the *sabaya*, or sexual enslavement, of young Christian women and girls. Further, as part of its effort to systematically eliminate Christian culture in the Middle East, ISIS plunders churches, chapels, and sanctuaries and assassinates church leaders.

On the basis of ISIS' campaign in Iraq's Nineveh province, a recent U.S. Holocaust Museum report labeled the systematic attacks against the Yazidis, but not Christians, as genocide. Classifying these crimes against humanity in terms of the nation-state in which they occur is too narrow an approach. ISIS targets Christians on the basis of their religious identity, without regard to where they are located. It is imperative that the State Department approach its decision for genocide designation in terms of which religious minorities are being persecuted, rather than where they live.

Without an official designation from the State Department, the United States is not bound under the Genocide Convention to suppress, or even to help prevent, the systematic destruction of Christians by ISIS. A designation of genocide is central to helping end the violent ISIS

campaign against Christians and other religious minorities across the Middle East. If the decision is made not include Christians in this designation, please provide a detailed overview as to why this is the appropriate choice given facts on the ground.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Pompeo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "P".

Mike Pompeo
Member of Congress