

June 23, 2016

President Massoud Barzani
Kurdistan Region
Diwan
P.O. Box 60
Iraqi Kurdistan
Erbil, Iraq

Dear President Barzani:

I write regarding troubling reports of alleged mistreatment of Christian Assyrians by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). For over fifteen years, I have had the privilege of representing the Assyrian community of Illinois in the U.S. House of Representatives and the United States Senate, many of whom regularly communicate with family and friends in Iraq. They recently expressed their concerns to me regarding the KRG's treatment of their community in the Nineveh Plains region. I request that you please provide clarification on the matters detailed below.

Allegations include the denial of basic services, the appropriation of Assyrian lands with no recourse to fair treatment and resolution by the courts, the KRG Constitution Drafting Committee's lack of meaningful consideration of Assyrian constitutional objectives, and increased restrictions on their right to organize and openly protest. I am further troubled by reports of Peshmerga forces confiscating weapons held by Christian Assyrians that were needed to defend themselves against ISIS, and of emerging KRG territorial claims encompassing all lands in the Nineveh Plains and beyond.

Christian Assyrians and other vulnerable minorities have suffered immensely at the hands of ISIS. Despite their unimaginable suffering, these communities still resolutely claim their place in the tapestry of Iraq. As such, they deserve the same basic rights and civil liberties enjoyed by the Kurdish people and other citizens in northern Iraq. The strong partnership between the United States and the KRG is built on shared values and mutual respect for all peoples. It is imperative to continue this tradition in the face of adversity.

I am grateful for the friendship and alliance between the United States and the KRG. I welcome the recent U.S. commitment to provide a further \$480 million in aid and military equipment toward the effort to defeat and destroy ISIS. However, if we fail to protect all who are in ISIS's crosshairs, we risk neutralizing current and future gains.

Thank you for your attention to my letter. I look forward to hearing from you and continuing my support for the KRG as it fights to protect its territory and secure a future for the Kurdistan Region and all who live within it.

Sincerely,



Mark Kirk
United States Senator