



## *Committee on International Justice and Peace*

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July 25, 2014

Ambassador Susan E. Rice  
National Security Advisor  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ambassador Rice:

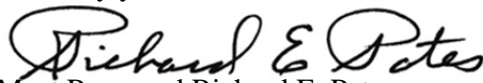
Last month I wrote to you about the escalating violence in Iraq that targets Christians and other religious communities. I asked that the U.S. government urge Iraqi political leaders to form an inclusive government representative of all ethnic and religious groups, thus reversing the exclusion that has been exploited by extremists. Only in this way can the rule of law be restored and the common good of all be served.

Sadly the situation in Iraq has only deteriorated in the past month. The Islamic State has taken control of large swaths of territory in northern Iraq, leaving a trail of destruction, burning and looting ancient churches and mosques, homes and businesses. ISIS issued an ultimatum to Christians and others who do not convert to their extremist brand of Islam or pay a tax, threatening their lives. Thousands have fled with little more than the clothes on their backs, often being robbed of their few personal possessions as they ran.

On July 22, 2014, the bishops of Iraq, representing the Chaldean Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic and Armenian Churches, appealed to the Iraqi government for: “full protection” of the rights of Christians and other minorities; “financial support for the displaced families” including payment of civil servant salaries; and compensation for material losses and provision of housing, social services and education as the crisis continues. In addition, they pleaded with “all people of conscience in Iraq and around the world to put pressure on those extremists to stop destroying the churches, monasteries, and other Christian monuments which constitute an invaluable part of our Iraqi and universal heritage.” An unofficial translation of their statement is attached.

U.S. humanitarian assistance is urgently needed to help these beleaguered people, especially Christians. This aid should go directly to the minority communities through trusted NGOs, otherwise past experience has shown that aid is diverted. In a country riven by political factions, each jockeying for resources to gain power, only NGOs with a proven track record of delivering humanitarian assistance can be relied upon to actually help those most in need. I ask the U.S. government to do all that it can to provide this critical assistance to those in desperate straits and to work with other governments in an effort to stop the violence. As Pope Francis prayed regarding the persecution in Iraq, “violence is defeated with peace.”

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates

Bishop of Des Moines

Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

cc: Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator

Encl: July 22, 2014 Statement by Iraqi Bishops (unofficial translation)

# Statement

(Unofficial Translation)

**July 22, 2014**

We, the Archbishops of Mosul, with all our brother Bishops assembled in Erbil-Einkawa, led by His Beatitude Patriarch Mar Louis Raphael Sako, express our shock, worry and pain for what happened to the innocent Christians in Mosul. U.N. Secretary-General **Ban Ki-moon** has described this as “crime against humanity” and the Arab League Secretary-General Dr. **Nabil Elaraby** has called it “a stain of shame”. We denounce and condemn this crime and discrimination. We can’t understand how innocent civilians can be forced from their homes and robbed of their money and possessions, nor how churches and monasteries, dating from before the arrival of Islam, can be burnt to the ground. Is this not a humanitarian catastrophe and a tragic loss of heritage?

We are proud to be Christian and can’t imagine giving up our faith for any reason or in the face of any devilish act. As native citizens, we request the following from our national government:

- 1- Full protection of our rights and those of other minorities.
- 2- Financial support for the displaced families who have lost everything, in addition to paying and sustaining civil servant salaries, as soon as possible.
- 3- Compensation for damages and losses suffered by Christians. Also, if the crisis endures, the provision of shelter and educational facilities so that displaced students can continue their studies.

We call on all people of conscience in Iraq and around the world to put pressure on those extremists to stop destroying the churches, monasteries and other Christian monuments which constitute an invaluable part of our Iraqi and Universal heritage.

Rumors of an agreement between those extremists and the church are fictitious; their crimes cannot be denied nor justified.

We await practical actions to assure our people, not merely expressions of condemnation.

On this occasion, we greatly value and appreciate the Kurdish Region Government KRG’s welcome and support of our displaced people during this crisis. Consequently, we propose the formation of a joint committee of KRG government, and Christian representatives to follow up on the situation of those displaced to improve their living condition and reduce their suffering.

We pray to God to shorten this difficult time and return security and peace to all Iraqi lands.