



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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

Dear Ambassador Rice:

Last Sunday, Pope Francis asked for prayers “for the dear Iraqi nation, especially for the victims and for those who most suffer the consequences of the growing violence, in particular the many persons, among whom are so many Christians, who have had to leave their homes.” The urgent situation in Iraq demands both our prayers and action. U.S. humanitarian assistance for the victims of the conflict is critical. In addition, our nation must take diplomatic measures.

Our nation bears a special responsibility toward the people of Iraq. The U.S.-led invasion and occupation unleashed both sectarian conflicts and extremism in Iraq, two tragic unintended consequences that have profound and continuing repercussions for the people of Iraq.

Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphael I Sako has called for a day of “fasting and prayer for the restoration of security and stability in Iraq” on June 18. The Patriarch has said that “the best solution to all these problems is the creation of a government of national unity” to strengthen “the rule of law.”

It is appropriate that the Administration is urging political leaders in Iraq to form an inclusive government. For too long, large elements of Iraqi society have felt disenfranchised. It is critical that all ethnic and religious groups are represented at the table of governance so that the common good of all is served. Extremists have been exploiting the divisions born of exclusion and the weakening of the rule of law.

In addition to seeking a political solution in Iraq, it is critical to do so in neighboring Syria. The United States should work with the international community, including Iran, Russia, and Saudi Arabia, and all responsible parties in Syria. It is critical to obtain a ceasefire, initiate serious negotiations, provide impartial humanitarian assistance, and encourage efforts to build an inclusive society in Syria. These actions will help protect the rights of all citizens, including Christians and other minorities.

In the absence of getting at the root causes exploited by extremists, the conflicts in Syria and Iraq will continue to feed each other and a lasting peace will be elusive.

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates

Bishop of Des Moines

Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace