



Office of the President

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Cardinal Francis George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago
President

November 9, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The October 31 attack on the Syrian Catholic cathedral in Baghdad that killed 58 and wounded 75, together with the recent wave of bombings in Iraq's capital, are grim evidence of the savage violence and lack of security that has plagued the Iraqi people, especially Christians and other minorities, for over seven years. Some reports even indicate that the October 31 attack may have been more extensive and the failures of security more egregious than originally thought. Enclosed you will find a press release by the Most Reverend Yousif Habash, Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Deliverance of Newark for Syrian Catholics.

In the recent Synod of Bishops on the Middle East in Rome, the bishops from Iraq spoke of the terrifying situation facing Christians and other minorities in that country. They recalled murders, kidnappings, bombings, and naked threats that have forced many Christians from their homes and businesses. Ironically, just two weeks before the October 31 attack, Archbishop Athanase Matti Shaba Matoka of the Syrian Catholic Church in Iraq, whose cathedral was the site of the October 31 attack, addressed the Synod: "The invasion of Iraq by America and its allies brought to Iraq in general, and especially to its Christians, destruction and ruin on all levels. ... Seven years have passed and Christianity is still bleeding. Where is the world conscience? All the world remains a spectator before what is happening in Iraq, especially with regards to Christians."

Archbishop Matoka's strong words remind us of the moral responsibility that the United States bears for working effectively with the Iraqi government to stem the violence. Prior to the war, our Conference of Bishops raised grave moral questions regarding the possibility of U.S. military intervention in Iraq and warned of "unpredictable consequences." The decimation of the Christian community in Iraq and the continuing violence that threatens all Iraqis are among those tragic consequences.

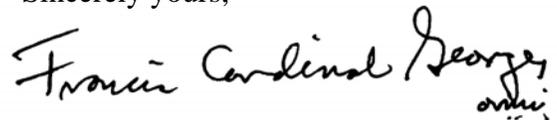
Our troops have served with bravery and distinction, and we welcome the end of U.S.-led combat in Iraq; however, the United States has so far failed in helping Iraqis to develop the political will needed to deploy effective strategies to protect the lives of all citizens, especially

Christians and other vulnerable minorities. More must be done to help ensure that refugees and displaced persons are able to return to their homes safely. Having invaded Iraq, our nation has a moral obligation not to abandon those Iraqis who cannot defend themselves.

The murderous attack on innocent Christians gathered for worship witnesses to the need for the United States to redouble its efforts to assist Iraq as our engagement enters a new phase. At a minimum, our country must strengthen its work with Iraqis and the international community to: enable the Iraqi government to function for the common good of all Iraqis; build the capacity of Iraq's military and police to provide security for all citizens, including minorities; improve the judicial system and rule of law; promote reconciliation and the protection of human rights, especially religious freedom; rebuild Iraq's shattered economy so that Iraqis can support their families; and assist refugees and internally displaced Iraqis.

To meet its moral obligations to the Iraqi people, it is critically important that the United States take additional steps now to help Iraq protect its citizens, especially Christians and others who are victims of organized attacks. Thank you for your kind consideration of this urgent request.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis Cardinal George" with a small flourish at the end.

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago
President

Encl.



**Our Lady of Deliverance
Syriac Catholic Diocese
in The United States and Canada**

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

November 3, 2010

Press Release – Savage attack on Our Church in Iraq

With deep sorrow and distress we communicate to you the passing away of two of our brother priests Rev. Fr. Tha'ir Saad and Rev. Fr. Boutros Wasim in the tragic and savage attack on Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Cathedral in Bagdad, Iraq on October 31st, during the celebration of The Holy Mass this past Sunday. The Very Reverend Chorbishop Rafael Kotaymi, Rector of the Cathedral, was also hit and remains in critical condition.

In a total disregard of life and of holy place of worship, terrorists stormed our Cathedral in Iraq, violated the sanctity of the place and murdered innocent worshipers. Among the victims were several infants and children, almost seventy people were martyred, eighty were injured.

In the past ten years, we have witnessed an escalation to the attacks against the Christians in Iraq. Sixty two churches were destroyed; hundreds of victims lost their lives because they were Christians. Our communities in The Middle-East live this horror and pain on a daily basis.

We are witnessing an ongoing genocide and a forced exodus of our people because they are Christians and only because of their faith. Unfortunately, the world does not seem to care for the innocent and the poor. Our pleas for more security to our Churches have failed. We feel violently threatened and targeted. No matter what, the Iraqi Christians are holding on their faith for consolation and their resolve in our Lord Jesus Christ is their hope and joy.

We plead to the United Nations, to the United States Administration, the Iraqi government and all countries to condemn this savage attack and to quickly restore security and peace to the people of Iraq and all Christians of the Middle-East. We hope that an immediate action be taken to preserve human life and dignity and freedom of worship.

Let us stand united in solidarity and prayer against this violence. Let all people of good will defend the rights of the innocent. Please remember all our martyrs fallen because of their faith so that their blood may not be shed in vain. Those who died in Christ shall be raised in Christ.

+ Mar Barnaba Yousif Habash
Bishop of Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Diocese
in the United States and Canada