

**Evangelical
Immigration
Table**

Council for Christian Colleges
and Universities

Ethics and Religious Liberty
Commission of the Southern
Baptist Convention

Korean Churches for
Community Development

National Association of
Evangelicals

National Hispanic Christian
Leadership Conference

The Wesleyan Church

World Relief

June 19, 2017

John F. Kelly
U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Secretary Kelly,

We write urgently and with grave concern that Christians will be removed from the United States to face potential persecution, and even death, in the Middle East.

The United States has officially recognized that Christians and other religious minorities are the victims of genocide in Iraq yet the United States is reportedly in the process of deporting several individuals who come from these persecuted religious minority groups to Iraq. Over the span of generations, the Christian community in Iraq has faced persecution from dictatorial regimes and violent extremists. The horrors facing Christians in Iraq are well documented. As Vice President Mike Pence recently noted in his remarks at the World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians, “in Iraq, at the hands of extremists, we’ve actually seen monasteries demolished, priests and monks beheaded, and the two-millennia-old Christian tradition in Mosul virtually extinguished overnight.”

For decades, many of these Christians sought legal refuge in the United States. Like other refugees from various countries of origins, they have become integrated into the fabric of American society.

Recent reports, however, indicate that a number of these Chaldean Christians face an immediate threat of deportation back to Iraq, a country where, as a result of their faith, they are likely to face oppression, persecution, and possibly even death at the hands of extremists. We do not minimize the serious criminal offenses of which some of these individuals have been convicted; it is entirely appropriate that they be punished for their offenses. However, having served their sentences, we must seriously consider whether it is just to deport a person who poses little risk to the American public to a situation where they are likely to experience significant harm because of their faith.

We are heartened that the Administration has emphasized the importance of standing up for the rights of religious minorities around the world. To that end, we would ask that the Administration exercise the discretion available under law to defer the deportation of Chaldeans who pose no threat to U.S. public safety to Iraq until such time as the situation in Iraq stabilizes and its government proves willing and capable of protecting the rights of religious minorities. We would urge you to take the same approach to any individual, regardless of whether they share our Christian faith or not, who does not pose a threat to the safety of Americans

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and for whom deportation would be likely to result in persecution, torture, or death.

Sincerely,

Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals

Scott Arbeiter, President, World Relief

Shirley V. Hoogstra, President, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Hyepin Im, President & CEO, Korean Churches for Community Development

Jo Anne Lyon, Ambassador, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church

Russell Moore, President, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Samuel Rodriguez, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference