

August 26, 2014

Dear President Obama,

We are leaders of faith communities who are watching the escalating crisis in northern Iraq with mounting alarm. The Islamic State poses a serious genocidal threat to religious minorities in northern Iraq as well as Sunni and Shia Muslims that reject the Islamic State's barbaric killings and violation of Islamic beliefs. Territorial gains by the Islamic State have been followed swiftly by its deeply rooted exclusionary ideology – and a policy requiring non-Muslim civilians to “convert or die” and Sunni and Shia Muslims to “submit or die” that has resulted in brutal massacres.

We are deeply troubled by the immediate crisis facing tens of thousands of Yazidi civilians in this region, who face threat of extermination by the Islamic State simply because of their religious beliefs. We commend your Administration's decision to defend the Yazidis, and strongly support your authorization of food drops for the Yazidi population and airstrikes against the Islamic State forces holding them under siege. These actions provided a small window for thousands of Yazidi civilians to escape the siege on Mt. Sinjar, where they had remained trapped without food or water and in dire conditions.

While your Administration has acted admirably in response to this threat against civilian life, the danger posed by the Islamic State is far from over and much more remains to be done. In particular, we note that reports by an assessment team sent by your Administration that the siege on Mt. Sinjar is effectively over has been fiercely contradicted by Yazidi leaders, relief agencies and UN officials. These leaders claim that tens of thousands of Yazidi lives still hang precariously in the balance on the southern flank of the mountain, missed by your assessment team.

Just this Sunday, August 17, at least 80 Yazidi men were executed by the Islamic State for refusing to convert to Islam. More than 1000 women and girls were kidnapped by Islamic State forces, ostensibly with the intent of forcing conversion and “marrying” them to Islamic State fighters and sympathizers.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the Islamic State executed 700 Sunni members of the al-Sheitat tribe in Syria over the past two weeks because of their refusal to accept Islamic State rule. In June, virtually all Christian families in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul were forced to flee after the Islamic State threatened to exterminate them, marking all Christian households with red paint. ISIS has also killed hundreds of Christians in both Iraq and Syria, with reports of beheadings and crucifixions.

We ask you to continue and strengthen your actions in defense of Yazidi, Christians, religious minorities and oppressed Sunni and Shia Muslims in northern Iraq.

We also note that the immediate threat to Yazidis, Christians, religious minorities and oppressed Muslims is taking place in a larger context of instability in Iraq and the region. Other recent attacks have displaced over 200,000 people bringing the total number of internally displaced persons in Iraq to 1.4 million in 2014. As you have noted, these broader challenges will require long term approaches.

We welcomed the launch of a massive UN relief mission and the unified position of the UN Security Council in adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2170 introducing sanctions aimed to stem financing of the Islamic State and other groups causing instability in the region. We urge you to continue to work with the Iraqi government and multilaterally with the United Nations to address these broader challenges, even as you remain prepared to act to protect civilians from immediate mass slaughter.

As leaders of different faiths we strongly believe in the protection of civilians of any faith from mass slaughter based on their beliefs. We have seen your willingness to act swiftly and with compassion to protect religious minorities under threat in northern Iraq. As we join together, we urge you to join with world leaders to continue to protect those in Iraq who remain at risk of atrocities.

Sincerely,

**National Movements and Institutions:**

Gideon Aronoff  
*Chief Executive Officer, Ameinu (Our People)*

The Rt. Rev. David C. Anderson  
*President and Chairman of the Board, American Anglican Council*

The Rev. Canon J. Philip Ashe  
*Chief Executive Officer, American Anglican Council*

Rabbi Mark Borovitz  
*Head Rabbi, Beit TShuvah*

Rev. Jul Medenblik  
*President, Calvin Theological Seminary*

Rev. Heidi McGinness  
*Director of Outreach, Christian Solidarity International - USA*

Harold Smith  
*President and CEO, Christianity Today International*

Pesach Housfater  
*Chairman, Combat Genocide Association (Israel)*

Robert S. McCaw  
*Government Affairs Manager, Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)*

Richard Young  
*Co-Chair, Darfur Interfaith Network*

Richard Mouw  
*Professor of Faith and Public Life and President Emeritus, Fuller Theological Seminary*

Dr. Thomas Farr

*Director, Religious Freedom Project, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University*

Mark Hetfield

*President and CEO, HIAS*

Faith McDonnell

*Director - Religious Liberty Program, Institute on Religion and Democracy*

Mark D. Tooley

*President, Institute on Religion and Democracy*

Ethan Felson

*Senior Vice President, Jewish Council for Public Affairs*

Rabbi Steve Gutow

*President, Jewish Council for Public Affairs*

Rita Freedman

*Acting Executive Director, Jewish Labor Committee*

Rabbi Yitz Greenberg

*Founding President (ret.), Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation*

Janice Kamenir-Reznik

*Co-Founder and President, Jewish World Watch*

Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis

*Co-Founder, Jewish World Watch*

Leith Anderson

*President, National Association of Evangelicals*

Nancy K. Kaufman

*CEO, National Council of Jewish Women*

Tahil Sharma

*Executive Director, La Verne Coalition for Compassion*

*Youth Representative, Parliament of the World's Religions, United Nations*

Rabbi Julie Schonfeld  
*Executive Vice President, Rabbinical Assembly*

Rabbi Mordechai Liebling  
*Director, Tikkun Olam Commission, RRC/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities*

Irit Kohn  
*President, The International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists*

Rabbi Steven Wernick  
*CEO, The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism*

Rev. Dr. William Schulz  
*President and Chief Executive Officer, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee*

Hon. Thomas H. Andrews  
*President and CEO, United to End Genocide*

Rabbi Ari Hart  
*Co-Founder, Uri L'Tzedek*

Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz  
*Founder & President, Uri L'Tzedek*

**Regional Institutions:**

Rabbi Adam Greenwald  
*Director, Miller Introduction to Judaism Program, American Jewish University*

The Rt. Rev'd Stephen D. Wood  
*Bishop, Diocese of the Carolinas, Anglican Church in North America*

The Most Rev'd Dr. Foley Beach  
*Archbishop and Primate, Anglican Church in North America  
Bishop, Anglican Diocese of the South*

Bishop Stewart E. Ruch III  
*Rector, Church of the Resurrection  
Bishop, Anglican Diocese of the Upper Midwest*

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian  
*Primate, Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America*

H.E. Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian  
*Prelate, Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America*

Cailey Locklair Tolle  
*Deputy Executive Director, Baltimore Jewish Council*

Rabbi Jonathan Bernhard  
*President, Board of Rabbis of Southern California*

Yehuda Mirsky  
*Associate Professor of the Practice of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, Brandeis University*

Rt. Rev. Julian M Dobbs  
*Missionary Bishop, Convocation of Anglicans in North America*

Rabbi Stephen Einstein  
*Rabbi Emeritus Congregation B'nai Tzedek  
Huntington Beach Interfaith Council*

Alanna Kleinman  
*Community Engagement Fellow , Institute of Southern Jewish Life*

Courtney Mellblom  
*Interim Executive Director, Jewish Community Center Federation of San Luis Obispo County*

Jon-Erik Storm  
*President, Jewish Community Center Federation of San Luis Obispo County*

Matthew L. Goldberg  
*Director of Community Relations and Development Director, Jewish Community of Louisville, Inc*

Rabbi Joshua Ratner  
*Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater New Haven*

Steve Hunegs  
*Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas*

Sammy Schulman  
*Board Chair, Jewish Federation of Broward County*

Eric B. Stillman  
*President and CEO, Jewish Federation of Broward County*

Joy Kurland  
*Director, Jewish Community Relations Council, Jewish Federation of Northern New Jersey*

Pat Kalmans  
*Chair, Community Relations Council, Jewish Federation of San Antonio*

Judy Lackritz  
*Director, Community Relations Council, Jewish Federation of San Antonio*

Josephine Gon Datz  
*Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Springfield, Illinois*

Rabbi Rosalin Mandelberg  
*Ohel Sholom Temple, Norfolk, VA*  
*President, Board of Rabbis and Cantors of Hampton Roads*

Rabbi Drew Kaplan  
*Southern California Jewish Student Services*

Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller  
*Executive Director, UCLA Hillel*

Dean Varun Soni  
*Office of Religious Life, University of Southern California*

**Individual Faith Leaders and Institutions:**

Reverend Kasereka Kasomo  
*African Christian Community Church of Southern California (ACCCSC), Los Angeles, CA*

Carol McFall  
*Christian Science Practitioner, Atascadero, CA*

Janith W. Mason  
*Lynnwood Reformed Church, Schenectady, NY*

Tyler Thompson  
*Associate Pastor, Oaks Bible Church, Santa Barbara, CA*

The Rev. Carlton B. Turner  
*Associate Priest, St. Benedict's Episcopal Church, Los Osos, CA*

The Reverend Dr. Gwynne Guibord

Rabbi Deborah Silver  
*Assistant Rabbi, Adat Ari El, Valley Village, CA*

Jill Eisen  
*Director, Hebrew School in Your Neighborhood, Beth El Congregation, Baltimore, MD*

Rabbi Neil Comess-Daniels  
*Beth Shir Shalom, Santa Monica, CA*

Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky  
*B'nai David Judea Congregation, Los Angeles, CA*

Rabbi Linda Bertenthal  
*Congregation Beth David, San Luis Obispo, CA*

Rabbi David N. Young  
*Congregation B'nai Tzedek, Fountain Valley, CA*

Rabbi Janice Mehring  
*Congregation Ohr Tzafon, Atascadero CA*

Rabbi David Vorspan  
*Congregation Shir Ami, West Hills, California*

Rabbi Sharon Brous  
*Spiritual Leader, IKAR, Los Angeles, CA*

Rosh Kehilah Dina Najman  
*Spiritual Leader, Kehilah Synagogue, Riverdale, NY*

Rabbi Amy Bernstein  
*Senior Rabbi, Kehillat Israel Reconstructionist Congregation, Pacific Palisades, CA*

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben, PhD  
*Rabbi Emeritus, Kehillat Israel Reconstructionist Congregation, Pacific Palisades, CA*

Rabbi Judith HaLevy  
*Malibu Jewish Center and Synagogue, Malibu, CA*

Itai Gal  
*Resident Organizer, Moishe Kavod Jewish Social Justice House*

Rabbi Yonah Bookstein  
*Co-Founder, Pico Shul, Los Angeles, CA*

Rabbi David Wolpe  
*Sinai Temple, Los Angeles, CA*

Rabbi Ron Stern  
*Stephen S. Wise Temple, Los Angeles, CA*

Rabbi Rebecca L. Dubowe  
*Temple Adat Elohim, Thousand Oaks, CA*

Rabbi Peter S. Levi  
*Temple Beth El of South Orange County, Aliso Viejo, CA*

Rabbi K'vod Wieder  
*Temple Beth El of South Orange County, Aliso Viejo, CA*

Rabbi Arielle Hanien  
*Temple Beth Israel of Highland Park and Eagle Rock, Los Angeles, CA*

Mark Strunin and the Board of Directors  
*Temple Beth Israel of Highland Park and Eagle Rock, Los Angeles, CA*

Rabbi Jonathan Kupetz  
*Temple Beth Israel, Pomona, CA*

Rabbi David A Cantor  
*Temple Beth Shalom of Long Beach, Long Beach, CA*

Rabbi Jonathan Aaron  
*Senior Rabbi, Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills, Beverly Hills, CA*

Rabbi Sarah Bassin  
*Assistant Rabbi, Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills, Beverly Hills, CA*



Rabbi Laura Geller  
*Senior Rabbi, Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills, Beverly Hills, CA*

Rabbi Dara Frimmer  
*Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles, CA*

Rabbi Zoë Klein  
*Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles, CA*

Rabbi John L. Rosove  
*Senior Rabbi, Temple Israel of Hollywood, Los Angeles, CA*

Rabbi Joshua M Aaronson  
*Temple Judea, Tarzana, CA*

Rav Ahud Sela  
*Rabbi, Temple Ramat Zion, Northridge, CA*

Rabbi Arnold Rachlis  
*University Synagogue, Irvine, CA*

Rabbi Morley T. Feinstein  
*University Synagogue, Los Angeles, CA*

Rabbi Joel Thal Simonds  
*University Synagogue, Los Angeles, CA*

Rabbi Edward M Feinstein  
*Valley Beth Shalom, Encino, CA*

Rabbi Joshua Hoffman  
*Valley Beth Shalom, Encino, CA*

Rabbi Ron Li-Paz  
*Valley Outreach Synagogue, Chatsworth, CA*

Rabbi David Baum  
*Boca Raton, FL*