



ADVANCING FAITH, FAMILY AND FREEDOM

September 16, 2013

Representative
House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Family Research Council (FRC) and the thousands of families we represent, I urge you to support H.R. 301 as introduced by Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA). H.R. 301 would create a special envoy at the U.S. State Department to promote the religious freedom of religious minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia, which includes key strategic nations like Iraq, Egypt, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Against the backdrop of the Arab Spring and civil unrest, this bipartisan bill would provide for the establishment of a special envoy to raise awareness and voice concern in cases pertaining to religious persecution. Recently in Iraq, over one hundred Catholics were killed by extremists inside parishes or while attending religious services within a period of mere weeks. Coptic Christian men, women, and children became victims of bloody massacres in Egypt where suicide bombers targeted their churches and neighborhoods on multiple occasions. In Syria, Christians caught in the civil war have been harassed and killed, their churches desecrated and burned. While groups in this region voice an 'ethnic-religious cleansing' message, neither local nor international authorities have yet to formulate a strategic response to the growing oppression of religious minorities. Far from being random or isolated events, these actions have instead proven to be a dangerous, growing trend of denying even basic religious tolerance and pluralism among minority sects.

The passage of H.R. 301 will allow the United States to spearhead a proper response to such a crisis. Providing a representative to the Near East and South Central Asia, who focuses exclusively on these issues, is a direct way to communicate that these egregious acts of religious violence are morally unacceptable and at odds with the strategic interests of the United States. Representative Wolf's bill will take steps to help protect vulnerable religious minorities throughout each of these countries.

Again, on behalf of the FRC, we encourage your support. We look forward to working with your office on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

David Christensen
Vice President for Government Affairs