



**Press Release**  
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## **CSI Urges President Obama to Send Christmas Message of Hope to Iraq's Persecuted Christians**

*(Washington, December 24, 2009)* Christian Solidarity International (CSI) has called on President Barack Obama to deliver a Christmas message of hope to Iraq's Christians and other persecuted religious minorities. Writing today to President Obama, the CEO of CSI's U.S. affiliate, Dr. John Eibner stated:

“This Christmas, many Iraqi churches will yet again stand empty and forlorn because church attendance carries with it the risk of losing one's life. The inability of the faithful to celebrate Christmas without fear from jihad-terror reflects the crisis of survival facing Iraq's ancient Christian community.”

This month, five bombs in Baghdad killed 123 people and injured another 500, while three bomb explosions damaged churches and killed six people in Mosul. Since the commencement of Operation Freedom Iraq in 2003, over 500 Christians, including bishops and priests, have been killed and 59 churches have been bombed. These acts of terror, combined with kidnappings, death threats, extortion, and non-violent anti-Christian social discrimination have prompted nearly half of Iraq's one million Christians to flee the country and seek refuge abroad. Many of those who remain in Iraq are internally displaced. Other Iraqi non-Muslim minorities experience similar persecution.

Dr. Eibner commended to the President the Resolutions of the 1st Iraqi Christian Leadership Conference on Refugees and IDPs, held in Baghdad on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12th of this month. This CSI/Hammurabi Human Rights Organization-sponsored summit called for:

- 1) The provision of security to the population throughout the country.
- 2) The elimination of all extra-legal militias.
- 3) The effective use of funds intended to help Iraqi refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) return to their homes.
- 4) The development of infrastructure in secure parts of Iraq, such as the Christian villages in the Nineveh Province, to enable them to accommodate refugees who cannot return to their own homes in insecure parts of Iraq.
- 5) Equality for all Iraqi citizens on the basis of common citizenship and credible action to eliminate all forms of religious bigotry and intolerance in society.
- 6) Bestowal of asylum status on all genuinely qualified Iraqi refugees in accordance with international instruments and discouragement of the mass emigration of Christians and other minorities to the West.

Eibner also urged President Obama to signal his approval of Congressional initiatives on Iraqi Religious Minorities, Senate Resolution 322, proposed by Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) and House of Representatives Resolution 944, proposed by Congressman Gary Peters (D-MI).

Shortly before the 2008 Presidential election, then Sen. Barack Obama expressed “concern about the safety and well-being of Iraq's Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities”, declaring that they “have paid a heavy price as a result of conflict in Iraq and continue to face a high level of threat and abuse.” (Sen. Obama to Secretary Condoleezza Rice, September 26, 2008).

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