

IS ANYBODY LISTENING?

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's USA Today, columnist Kirsten Powers raised an important question,

QUOTE: "Iraq's Christians are begging the world for help. Is anybody listening?" UNQUOTE.

Mr. Speaker, this is the seventh consecutive legislative day that I have come to House floor to ask that same question:

Is anybody listening?

Less than two weeks ago, on July 19, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, more commonly referred to as ISIS, ordered Christians to convert to Islam, pay taxes levied upon non-Muslims, or be killed.

In the region around Mosul—what we know as Nineveh in the Bible—there is not a single Christian left.

Think about that. There is not one Christian left in the ancient heart of Iraqi Christianity. A 2,000-year presence wiped away before our eyes in just a matter of weeks.

Yet President Obama has said nothing.

And Secretary of State Kerry has said nothing.

ISIS has driven people from their homes, taken their cars as they attempted to leave and stripped them of all their money and possessions.

We have heard accounts of ISIS terrorists cutting the fingers of people to steal their wedding rings.

Yet President Obama has said nothing.

And Secretary of State Kerry has said nothing.

Gruesome videos produced by ISIS are appearing on Internet showing beheadings and public displays of dismembered Christians. I couldn't even watch the video to the end; it was that grotesque.

Yet President Obama has said nothing.

And Secretary of State Kerry has said nothing.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power—who made a name for herself denouncing the U.S. and other governments' failure to act in the face of genocide—also has been silent on these genocidal acts.

What Power famously labeled "A Problem from Hell" is now taking place in Iraq on her watch.

Yet she says nothing in her post at the UN in New York.

Perhaps this lack of action should not be surprising given that her boss, President Obama, has said nothing.

President Obama has had multiple opportunities to use his "bully pulpit" to raise global attention to this genocide.

But we have heard NOT ONE WORD on the situation of the Christians being driven out of Iraq.

Let me lay out what has happened in Iraq just in the last six weeks:

All of Christians in Mosul have fled to the north, to Alqosh, Dohuk and other Assyrian villages.

In nearby Qaraqosh, 50,000 Assyrian Christian residents have fled from fighting between ISIS and Kurds.

All Christian institutions in Mosul—all 45 churches monasteries and cemeteries—have

been looted, destroyed, occupied, converted to mosques or shuttered.

All non-Sunni Muslim groups in Mosul—Shabaks, Yazidis and Turkmen—have been targeted by ISIS. Most have fled.

Water and electricity have been cut off by ISIS. The water shortage in the areas surrounding Mosul is now a full-blown crisis.

Mosul is now governed under Sharia law.

Congress is about to adjourn until after Labor Day. If the events of the last two months are any indication, one can only imagine the horrors that await over the next five weeks.

Absent urgent action what more will be on this list?

We cannot continue to sit back and watch these atrocities unfold.

President Obama, Secretary Kerry, Ambassador Power—before you take your summer vacations, you have a moral obligation to speak up.

Martin Luther King said QUOTE: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." UNQUOTE

President Obama, in your lifetime, books will be written on the end of Christianity in the Middle East.

History will acknowledge you and your administration's lack of will to do something—anything.

You have the power and the pulpit to do something before it is too late.

If you continue to do nothing, your silence will remain heavy on your conscious long after you leave office.

Mr. President, there are a number steps you can take right now that would make a difference—steps that don't require new funds or additional congressional action:

ONE. You can sign the bipartisan legislation approved by the House and Senate to create a special envoy to promote religious freedom in the Middle East that has been sitting on your desk this week. It is just waiting for your signature.

You can name someone to fill this post who can immediately deploy to the region to work with the Kurdish and Iraqi governments.

TWO. You can appoint someone in your administration to be the lead person coordinating all of the U.S. government resources necessary to stop this genocide.

THREE. You can publicly thank the Kurdish authorities for protecting the Christians and other religious minorities who have fled ISIS and found refuge in the Kurdish region;

FOUR. You can work with trusted NGO's—like Catholic Relief, Save the Children, UNICEF and others—who are already on the ground trying to help, but need U.S. assistance and leadership to help more people.

You can make sure they have the food, water, housing and medical resources to help the victims of this genocide; and

FIVE: You can direct the Secretary of State and USAID administrator to reprogram existing funds to provide these resources to trusted NGO's on the ground.

Mr. President, those are five simple steps you can do now and over the next five weeks that would make a difference.

All it takes is your interest and your leadership.

This April marked the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda.

One need only look at President Clinton's continued regret for his failure to act to stop

the Rwandan genocide to see how President Obama and his administration will feel years from now for their failure to act.

Last year, Clinton said "If we'd gone in sooner, I believe we could have saved at least a third of the lives that were lost . . . it had an enduring impact on me."

They would do well to recall the words of Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, who said: QUOTE: "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

Mr. Speaker, I close with the words of German Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who stood up to the tyranny and horror of Nazism, and said, QUOTE: "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

It's time to act, while there are still people left to save.

Listen to the words of Psalm 82:3–4:

Defend the weak and the fatherless; Uphold the cause of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; Deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

Also, in the Old Testament in Ecclesiastes 4:1 it says,

"Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed—and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors—and they have no comforter."

Mr. President, I call on you to be on the side of the oppressed Christians.

SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN
SUPPORT FOR THE CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY IN IRAQ

HON. TRENT FRANKS

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, last month, 55 of my colleagues and I sent a priority letter to President Obama urging him to actively prioritize security and humanitarian support for the Christian community in Iraq. We specifically warned him of the dangers and brutality of the terrorist group ISIS in Iraq who are now rampaging across Iraq and terrorizing the vulnerable Christian population.

In the letter, we specifically pointed out to Mr. Obama that QUOTE, "Parts of Syria and Iraq that have previously fallen under the rule of ISIS have witnessed summary execution, beheadings and even crucifixions." And that QUOTE, "Absent immediate action, we will most certainly witness the annihilation of an ancient faith community from the lands they've inhabited for centuries." UNQUOTE

Tragically, Mr. Speaker, President Obama—who once likened ISIS to a junior varsity basketball team—simply ignored us again, as he has done so many times before. And now ISIS, this "junior varsity basketball team", is beheading their way across Iraq and has declared that there would be QUOTE "nothing for [the Christians] but the sword" if they do not convert." Last week, ISIS torched a 1,800-year-old church in Mosul and ruthlessly destroyed the historic tomb of Jonah. Images of ISIS beheadings, crucifixions, rapes, torture and mass execution are all over the Internet and social media. Just this morning, I met with