

Human Security Centre

71-75 Shelton Street
Covent Garden
London WC2H 9JQ
United Kingdom



The Rt Hon David Cameron MP

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London WC2H 9JQ

13 August 2014

Dear Prime Minister,

Sub: Request to recall Parliament

On behalf of the Human Security Centre, and the Parliamentarians, academics, media associates and community leaders who share our concerns, we are writing to request you to recall Parliament and to convene a wider debate about the UK's response to the current humanitarian crisis in Iraq.

For nearly two months now, Islamic State (IS) militants have been systematically targeting religious and ethnic minorities in IS-occupied territories in Iraq and Syria. It has repeatedly shown that it is determined to force those whom it views as irreligious or apostate into obscurity, be this by expulsion or execution.

The brutality of IS has seen increasing coverage more recently, but little has been done by the UK to stop their murderous campaign, now encompassing Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. Numerous reports have emerged of civilians being executed and buried alive en masse; children being beheaded or sawed into halves; women being raped, stoned and killed; and men being shot in the head, beheaded, hung, crucified or subject to other extreme forms of torture. Often, IS militants themselves have shared images and videos of public crucifixions, beheadings, and the display of heads on spikes and on parade, as a matter of pride and means of intimidation.

Those who were not killed by IS militants have been left to an uncertain fate. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been forcibly displaced, with the province of Nineveh systematically cleansed of its Christian communities that have enriched its history for nearly two millennia. Hundreds of Yazidis are believed to have died of starvation and dehydration, while trapped on Mount Sinjar, unarmed, under siege and without sufficient food or water. Reports emerge of mothers spitting into their children's mouths to sustain them with some fluid. Then, it is not just Christians and Yazidis, but also Shia Muslim Turkmen and Shabaks, as well as Sunni tribesmen, who have come under the axe of terror.

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In the face of these shocking and appalling mass atrocity crimes, which range from crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing to forthright genocide, and which still continue, we cannot understand how just a humanitarian aid operation, comprising of air drops, could be deemed a suitable response by a Western power so involved in the history and politics of the region. What we also do not understand is why a Prime Minister who has so wonderfully and boldly spoken up in the past for the ‘orphaned right’ – that of the freedom of thought, conscience and religion – should shy away from adequately defending it in the face of such a serious threat.

While we welcome with gladness the current humanitarian aid operation, we urge you to listen to your colleagues in Parliament and your constituents that the current response is simply not sufficient. When a state (the Iraqi government) is so completely unable to fulfil its responsibility of protecting its civilians from well-funded and heavily-armed militias who are overrunning much of its territory, air drops of aid supplies can hardly achieve the levels of civilian protection that the UK should be seeking. That is why we urge you to recall Parliament: at the very least, there must be a wider debate on how the UK best supports the Iraqi government to discharge its ‘responsibility to protect’, whether or not this leads to military intervention. Having said that:

- i) We recommend that the UK should be willing to keep joint military intervention with the US, Australia and NATO allies on the table as an available option, not least because the Iraqi government has already put forward a request for international assistance.
- ii) While we recommend military intervention, we suggest that the UK considers precision air strikes, but not ground operations just as yet, so as to prevent the possibility of another long-term entanglement from which retrieving itself would prove difficult.
- iii) While we do not wish for long-term entanglement in internecine politics, we encourage long-term and geographically-widespread engagement that seriously weakens the heart and heads of the IS hydra, including measures such as limiting its access to funding.
- iv) We recommend that the UK, without undermining Iraq’s sovereignty, supports the US in defending the Kurdistan region (home to hundreds of thousands of refugees) and works in full coordination with Baghdad to transfer to the Kurds the arms vital for resistance.
- v) We recommend that the UK, while considering the dangers of rendering citizens who join foreign militias stateless, takes measures to ensure that British citizens fighting with IS cannot return to the UK under regular procedures, due to national security considerations.
- vi) We recommend that the UK places checks on IS-inspired radicalisation within the UK and restricts the capacity of British citizens to join IS and other such militias overseas.
- vii) We recommend that the UK offers asylum to Iraqi Christian and Yazidi refugees fleeing persecution in Iraq.

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We hope that you will consider these recommendations, recall Parliament and convene the necessary debates promptly, not just to bolster the UK's national security, but also to address the current threats to the security of vulnerable peoples in Iraq effectively. If the UK truly seeks to develop an international society wherein people may live free from fear, free from want and free from indignity, the very least it could do is to take a stronger stand against mass atrocity crimes.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Dwayne Ryan Menezes, Director, Human Security Centre

Julie Lenarz, Director, Human Security Centre

Daniel Wand, Director, Human Security Centre

Co-signatories:

The Prince Tahseen Saeed Beg (Leader of the Yazidis in Iraq and around the world)

Breen Tahseen (Iraqi diplomat in Manchester and British Yazidi leader)

General The Lord Dannatt

The Lord Jones of Cheltenham

The Lord Alton of Liverpool

Mike Gapes MP

Jeremy Lefroy MP

Prof. Robert P. George (Professor at Princeton; Vice-Chair at USCIRF)

Dr. James D. Boys (Senior Visiting Research Fellow at King's College London)

Shahid Khan (Vice-Chair, Global Minorities Alliance)

Matthew Sinclair (Sr. Consultant, Europe Economics; fr. Chief Exec., The TaxPayer's Alliance)

John McTernan (Former Pol. Secretary to Tony Blair, Comm. Director to Julia Gillard)

Glen Oglaza (Former political correspondent, Sky News, ITN)

James Bloodworth (Editor, Left Foot Forward)