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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

July 11, 2012

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The Honorable James Webb  
248 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Jim:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim".

As you know, last summer the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed bipartisan legislation (H.R.440) to create a special envoy at the State Department charged with focusing exclusively on the plight of religious minorities in the Middle East and South Central Asia, including Pakistan and Afghanistan. Senators Roy Blunt and Carl Levin introduced companion legislation, S. 1245. But nearly a year later, both this bill and the House-passed legislation are languishing in the Senate.

I introduced the special envoy bill along with Democrat Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, in January 2011 following a Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing during which we heard sobering testimony about the challenges facing religious minorities in Iraq and Egypt in particular. These realities were all the more troubling given the historic roots of the faith communities in those two countries — amazingly many Iraqi Christians today still speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus.

The hearing pre-dated the so-called “Arab Spring.” But arguably, the dramatic changes in the region have only made these communities more vulnerable. As such a special envoy has never been more needed.

I learned several months ago that you had a hold on the legislation, and were blocking it from moving forward. I cannot understand why. More importantly, I would venture that the Coptic Christians, Baha’is, Chaldo-Assyrians, Ahmadis, small remaining Jewish population and countless other religious minorities throughout the Middle East and South Central Asia who face daily persecution, hardship, violence, instability and even death would be hard-pressed to see your objection to this straight-forward, bipartisan legislation.

Will a special envoy guarantee these communities’ survival — and even flourishing — in the lands they have inhabited for centuries? I do not know. But I am certain, that to do nothing is not an option — lest on this administration’s and this Congress’ watch we witness a Middle East emptied of ancient faith communities, foremost among them the beleaguered Christian community.

The Honorable James Webb

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There is an historic precedent for effective special envoys advancing seemingly intractable issues. Consider former Sudan Special Envoy John Danforth. His laser beam focus on the peace process, high-level access to the White House and undivided attention to his mission was incredibly effective. If I believed that religious minorities, especially in these strategic regions, were getting the attention warranted at the State Department, I would cease in pressing for passage of this legislation. Sadly, that is far from being the case. We must act now.

I once again urge you, on behalf of those whose voices have been silenced, to reconsider your position. Time is running out.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress

FRW:ea

THIS IS SO IMPORTANT.

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