U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

November 19, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry, Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20520-0099

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We all hope for a day when there is no longer a need for the term 'genocide' in our lexicon. Sadly, that day has yet to come.

We're witnessing the systematic extermination of Iraq and Syria's entire ethno-religious minority populations and the atrocities perpetrated against each of these vulnerable groups shock the conscience of civilized humanity.

Press reports have indicated, however, that the State Department is considering a less-inclusive designation of the genocide taking place.

As Co-Chairs of the Religious Minorities in the Middle East Caucus, we request that as you consider the designation of genocide, you include in your designation *every* ethno-religious minority group being systematically targeted by ISIS.

Genocide is defined in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(1) killing members of the group;
(2) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
(3) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
(4) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and]
(5) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

The United States must condemn the act of genocide as the most barbaric and criminal act of humankind and must do so for *all* those who are suffering.

This gruesome and ongoing reality must be denounced. In the words of Pope Francis, "In this third world war, waged piecemeal, which we are now experiencing, a form of genocide, and I stress the word genocide taking place, and it must end."

We cannot afford to lose any more of these ancient cultures. We also cannot be selective about persecution and immense suffering. We thank you in advance for your highest consideration, and we look forward to your timely response.

Most gratefully,

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Jeff Fortenberry
Member of Congress