

With Middle East Pastors Targeted for Death, 200 Christian Leaders Demand US Government Intervention

More than 200 Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant leaders, as well as several secular leaders, joined forces to call on the U.S. government to take action to protect Middle East Christians and other minorities under threat from extremism.

"We, as Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant leaders, have come together in this joint pledge to speak up for our fellow Christians and other threatened religious communities in the Middle East," their joint statement says.

The grass-roots campaign, which is not spearheaded by any particular organization, was launched Wednesday by U.S. Reps. Frank Wolf, R-Va., and Anna Eshoo, D-Calif.

"We are compelled to take this action by the grave dangers that confront the churches of Egypt, Iraq and Syria, in particular," the statement says.

"In a siege that has accelerated over the past decade, Egypt, Iraq and Syria—the three Middle Eastern countries with the largest Christian communities remaining—have seen scores of churches deliberately destroyed, many clergy and laypeople targeted for death, kidnapping, intimidation and forcible conversion, and hundreds of thousands of believers driven from their countries," it adds.

The statement also urges the U.S. government to take action in several specific areas, including appointing a special envoy on Middle East religious minorities, reviewing foreign aid and other assistance, and providing direct assistance to refugees

in the Middle East.

“While the fate of Christians in the Middle East is unquestionably important to Christians, it should be emphasized that the continued presence of Christians, along with other religious communities, is in the national interest of that region’s countries and it is in America’s own national interest,” the statement says.

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