



# **IRAQI MINORITY REFUGEES IN KURDISTAN**

**A BRIEF BY**

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PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF  
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**SUBMITTED TO**

**THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH (R-NJ), CHAIRMAN**

**SEPTEMBER 10, 2014**

## **I. Introduction**

One Free World International (OFWI) is honoured to present this brief to the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs and to present herein the findings of our recent fact-finding mission to northern Iraq and the Kurdish autonomous region.

The OFWI delegation was led by Rev. Majed El Shafie, Founder and President of One Free World International, and included three Canadian members of parliament participating as observers, Brad Butt, Russ Hiebert, and Leon Benoit, as well as religious representatives from Canada and the United States. The purpose of the mission was to assess in person the situation caused by the brutal advance of ISIS (also known as ISIL or IS) and to meet with refugees and Kurdistan government officials to encourage those who have lost everything and to discuss ways that we can help in the current crisis.

We have all seen the news reports with images of thousands of people belonging to ancient Iraqi religious minorities fleeing before advancing ISIS forces or besieged on a rocky desert mountain. The minorities in Iraq are facing what can only be described as the beginning of a genocide. ISIS forces are systematically eliminating all religious minorities from areas under their control – whether by expulsion, forced conversion, slavery, or killing. If the international community does not take action immediately there is no long- or even short-term future for minorities in Iraq and the implications for minorities in the broader region are similarly ominous. On the other hand, the prospects for a vastly destabilized region and the impacts such destabilization will have on the international community, including vital interests of the United States, demand an immediate and effective response.

Iraqi minorities and the international community urgently need to see United States leadership in addressing both the immediate needs of the situation, primarily humanitarian aid for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees<sup>1</sup> and support for local military efforts against ISIS, and the long-term needs, including resettlement of IDPs and refugees and support for a Kurdish entity that will be capable of providing a stabilizing force in the region.

## **II. About One Free World International**

OFWI is a Toronto-based international human rights organization that focuses on protecting the rights of religious minorities and educating the public and decision-makers about violations of religious freedom around the world. Rev. El Shafie was himself detained and severely tortured by Egyptian authorities after he converted from Islam to Christianity and began pursuing equal rights for Egyptian Christians. After he was sentenced to death, he was able to escape from Egypt and finally settled in Canada where he established OFWI to share a message of freedom, hope, and tolerance for religious differences and to promote human rights in this area through advocacy, humanitarian aid, and public education.

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<sup>1</sup> While the Iraqi minorities in Kurdistan are technically IDPs, this brief uses the term “refugees” interchangeably with “IDPs” for ease of reference, except where otherwise evident from the context.

OFWI has advocated on behalf of religious minorities and individuals regardless of creed, including Christians, Jews, Ahmadiyya and Uyghur Muslims, Falun Gong, and Bahá'í's, among others. Rev. El Shafie has also led delegations on fact-finding missions to countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Cuba, Israel, India, and Bangladesh, among others, where he has met personally and addressed these issues with government and opposition leaders and local human rights advocates.

Rev. El Shafie has appeared several times before parliamentary bodies in Canada, and before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Committee of the United States Congress. He has also provided expert testimony for numerous courts and tribunals on behalf of individuals seeking protection in Canada and the United States. He has developed relationships with members in the Canadian Parliament and the American Congress and addressed these issues directly with cabinet ministers and officials in the Canadian government, including the Prime Minister's Office, in order to help educate decision-makers about the on-going issue of religious persecution around the world. Further information about his background and work can be found in Appendix A.

### **III. Religious Freedom**

#### **1. Freedom of Religion as a Human Right and in International Law**

Freedom of religion is a fundamental, universal right that speaks to the very core of what it means to be human. The basic freedom to believe in (or not believe) and to practice the religion of one's choice (or equally to refrain from any religious practice) forms the very basis of human dignity and is a pre-requisite for true equality under the law. After all, our ability to observe such beliefs about who we are in this universe is unique to humans among the living beings on this planet. As a result, the right to religious freedom is recognized both by U.S. and international law as foundational and intrinsic to any truly free society, and without freedom of religion, experience has shown there can be no democracy, peace, or security.

Recognition of the rights of individuals and nations, minorities and majorities, is basic. Ultimately everyone is in some respect or at some time or place a member of a minority and one need only consider one's own position but for a moment in order to see the importance of respecting the rights of others and the universal nature of this principle, known in the Christian tradition as the Golden Rule, or "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you".

Human beings have learned this painful lesson the hard way over thousands of years of violations of this foundational principle. In fact, the United States of America was built to a large extent on the hopes of those who fled Europe centuries ago in order to be able to worship freely, and much of the unique character of the American culture, way of life, and legal institutions is based on this very foundation. Over the last century, communities and humanity as a whole have joined together to seek ways to promote respect for these painful lessons by enshrining this principle in constitutions and international documents such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR).

The UDHR, while not in itself binding, is considered by international law experts to reflect customary international law which in turn is binding on states. The UDHR states in Article 18 that,

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.<sup>2</sup>

Thus we have a moral and legal right to religious freedom and consequently an obligation to respect and protect the rights of others in this area. This obligation is primarily entrusted to sovereign states but where a state is unwilling or incapable of meeting its responsibilities in this area, the international community must step in to secure this fundamental right.

## 2. Religious Freedom in U.S. Foreign Policy

Religious freedom cannot be separated from the more ‘traditional’ focuses of diplomacy and international relations – such as peace, security, and, more recently, fostering democracy. Such an approach is not only morally untenable, but also fundamentally flawed, especially in a highly religious area such as the Middle East. Despite the best efforts and predictions of western secular humanist academics and prognosticators that “God is dead”, religion holds an enduring and even increasing relevance in our 21<sup>st</sup>-century world. In these circumstances, the absence of religious freedom has far-reaching implications that must be taken into account in the formulation of foreign policy. Even if one solitary individual in a remote part of the world was denied his or her right to their beliefs and practices, we ought to treat it as an assault on the humanity of each and every one of us – all the more so when the lack of religious freedom affects entire communities and societies.

Even a cursory review of history shows that societies that restrict religious freedom are far more likely to experience profound social upheaval that jeopardizes the long-term survival of democracy as well as international peace and security and the freedom of every human being. Moreover, the foundational role played by religious freedom in the United States is eloquently expressed in the preamble of the *International Religious Freedom Act of 1998* (IRFA), where Congress stated that:

The right to freedom of religion undergirds the very origin and existence of the United States. Many of our Nation’s founders fled religious persecution abroad, cherishing in their hearts and minds the ideal of religious freedom. They established in law, as a fundamental right and as a pillar of our Nation, the right to freedom of religion. From its birth to this day, the United States has prized this legacy of religious freedom and honored this heritage by standing for religious freedom and offering refuge to those suffering religious persecution.<sup>3</sup>

(emphasis added)

Promoting religious freedom is one area where the United States must not give in to the challenges of its role as the world’s leading power. Rather it must vigorously, but tactfully,

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<sup>2</sup> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, GA Res. 217(III), UN GAOR, 3d Sess., Supp. No. 13, UN Doc. A/810 (1948).

<sup>3</sup> U.S., Bill H.R. 2431, *International Religious Freedom Act of 1998*, 105th Cong., 1998, § 2(a)(1) (enacted).

pursue the establishment of conditions in which every member of the human community can pursue their religious beliefs and identity with only their conscience as their guide and not the dictates of the state or oppressive religious leaders. This is a critical determinant not only for peace and security in far-flung countries around the world, but ultimately for the peace and security of American citizens in their homes across the United States.

At the same time, freedom of religion in Iraq must not be viewed as merely a ‘means to an end,’ as this will inevitably lead to the compromising of the ‘means’ (religious freedom) for the sake of the ‘ends’ (national security). Religious freedom is an end in itself. Any diplomatic initiatives on behalf of religious freedom must be premised on a commitment to its intrinsic value as an inalienable right vested in individuals on the basis of their humanity alone.

In order for the United States to live up to its responsibilities as the ‘leader of the free world,’ it is not enough that the American government respect the rights and freedoms of its citizens within U.S. borders. It must ensure that its foreign policy is consistent with the fundamental values that form the basis of American society and identity. There is no question that freedom of religion is one of these fundamental values.

Freedom of religion is absolutely intrinsic to the broader system of rights and freedoms that underpin the United States as a society and a nation. President Obama acknowledged as much in his 2009 Cairo speech when he stated, “[f]reedom in America is indivisible from the freedom to practice one’s religion.”<sup>4</sup> Thus for U.S. foreign policy approach to ISIS to be truly ‘American’ it must be reflective of and consistent with core American values, including the centrality of freedom of religion. Overlooking violations of religious freedom is to legitimize those actions and undermine the very principles that underlie American identity and society.

For all these reasons, the United States is obligated, morally, legally, and out of its own national security and self-interest, to take every measure within its power to ensure that religious minorities in Iraq are able to exercise their full rights as human beings and citizens and, in particular, able to hold to and observe their religious beliefs and practices without fear.

#### **IV. ISIS, Iraq, and Religious Freedom**

The recent OFWI delegation to northern Iraq met with leaders of the Christian and Yazidi communities in order to show them our support and to hear their most urgent needs in this time of crisis. Both of these communities have roots in the region that predate the existence of Islam yet today they face regional extinction. Christians have been present since the earliest days of Christianity some 2,000 years ago, and while the Yazidi religion is newer and incorporates Islamic influences, it also traces its roots back to ancient Zoroastrian and early Christian influences. The plight of the Yazidis in particular has captured the imagination of the western public, perhaps due to their insular, exotic image and unusual beliefs, which have garnered

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<sup>4</sup> “Remarks by the President on a New Beginning at Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt”, 4 June 2009, online: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>> accessed 12 November 2011 [“A New Beginning”] (emphasis added).

accusations of devil-worship, particularly from Islamic extremists.<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting, however, that while Christians and Yazidis have been the most obviously affected by ISIS, other minorities have also been affected together with Shia Muslims in the face of the brutal violence of Sunni-based ISIS.

Our delegation visited several refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region, where minorities have fled the advance of ISIS with little more than the clothes on their back, and witnessed unspeakable pain and suffering. OFWI's conversations with refugees on the ground confirmed reports of the horrific savagery of the ISIS fighters. Children are being butchered, women raped and killed, men hanged or crucified. We met with children who had lost their parents; husbands who had lost their wives and daughters; families with loved ones who were missing and presumed captured by ISIS. We heard consistent reports of widespread sexual violence against minority women and girls (some as young as two and a half years old), who were being taken from their family and abused by ISIS fighters. OFWI also heard reports of minority women and girls being sold as slaves – at times for as little as 20 USD each.

There is evidence that ISIS, with an estimated force of 1,500-1,800, did not and could not have made its remarkable advances in Iraq without assistance and support from Iraqi Sunni tribal leaders disillusioned by Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki's sectarian-based policies. The result has been an exceptional humanitarian catastrophe as hundreds of thousands have been forced from their homes and thousands are missing or dead. According to one Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) official, there are at least 1.6 million refugees and IDPs in the Kurdistan region. An estimated 90,000 families of refugees (approximately 700,000 people) have sought refuge in the city of Duhok alone since the start of the ISIS crisis – 250,000 of whom arrived on the same day. In one camp OFWI visited there were 500 children under the age of 3.

## **V. Recommendations for U.S. Policy Regarding ISIS in Iraq**

Iraqi minorities have suffered enough. For over ten years, since the United States invasion in 2003, they have found themselves in the crossfire of the ensuing Sunni/Shia conflict, both as general casualties and being targeted directly by extremists on either side of the conflict. With ISIS the situation is only getting worse and the United States must use all foreign policy tools at its disposal both to address the on-going brutality and to ensure long-term protection of the rights of religious minorities. As history has shown, diplomatic engagement and political dialogue – however sustained and constructive – is often insufficient. In order for United States policy in Iraq to be effective, diplomatic efforts must be backed by a demonstrable commitment to take substantive policy measures and stand behind diplomatic measures with concrete action.

In this regard, OFWI fully supports providing aid directly to the KRG or to Kurdish partners rather than through the central government of Iraq. This was reinforced in our conversations with refugees and community leaders, where it was very clear that the people have lost confidence in Baghdad. The Kurdish authorities, however, are in desperate need of assistance.

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<sup>5</sup> Yazidis revere several angels charged by God as caretakers of the earth and led by Malak-Taus, also known as the Peacock Angel, who is equated by many outsiders with Satan of Christian and Islamic traditions due to certain similarities in their stories.

## 1. Humanitarian Aid

The sheer volume of refugees has overwhelmed the resources of the KRG, with a population numbering only from five to six million. These people have urgent need of all the basic necessities of life – clean water, food, and shelter. KRG health officials also reported to OFWI that there is a desperate shortage of medication to treat the sick and wounded. The urgency of the situation is underscored by the fact that winter is only little over a month away. Contrary to popular perception, winter nights in Iraq (particularly in the north) are bitterly cold and the refugees, many of whom left their homes with nothing but the clothes on their back, are living in hastily assembled camps in schools, churches, and abandoned or unfinished office buildings and warehouses.

The KRG's efforts to provide for the needs of the IDPs are commendable, but this humanitarian crisis is too vast for the KRG to face on its own. OFWI would like to thank the Canadian and United States governments for their support so far through both military and humanitarian aid. However, much more is needed – and it is needed now. OFWI calls on the United States and the international community to take urgent steps to address the basic needs of the religious minorities in northern Iraq.

## 2. Military Support

Due to the tragic recent history of Iraq, many of these refugees are on the run for the second or third time. Some fled their homes in southern Iraq over the last ten years for the relative safety of the north and now have been forced to flee yet again. This fact underscores the desperate need of these displaced minorities for basic security. Providing humanitarian aid is necessary and even critical, but without security such aid may end up a futile effort if ISIS or other religious extremists continue to pursue these people. As a result, OFWI calls on the United States and the international community to urgently provide military aid to local forces fighting to protect the areas not yet targeted by ISIS and to regain and secure those areas that have already been overrun.

The need for international troops is critical. After facing more than ten years of official indifference or outright hostility and seeing the ineffectiveness of Iraqi forces against ISIS, the religious minorities have no confidence in the willingness or ability of Iraqi forces to protect them. In fact, KRG forces (and specifically the Peshmerga) have proven to be the only effective fighting force against ISIS, mostly due to self-interest in their desire to preserve and defend their homes, independence, and way of life. However, even Peshmerga withdrew from some minority areas ahead of ISIS advances without warning the people, leaving some of the minorities (particularly the Yazidis) feeling abandoned by the Kurdish authorities.

In light of these circumstances, it is absolutely critical that international troops be mobilized to protect the minorities and to restore a peaceful and secure environment in which the refugees can return and begin to re-build their lives without having to fear ISIS. It must be noted, however, that due to the support of local Sunni tribes for ISIS and the work needed to change the conditions that have led to that support, there is no quick fix for this situation. We must be

prepared to engage for the long haul to ensure that this problem is solved and not left to fester and cause further problems in the future.

### 3. Refugee Resettlement

In the interim, the international community also has a responsibility to help resettle refugees who have no prospect of returning home in the foreseeable future. Kurdish authorities can only do so much and a population of a few million simply cannot absorb nor support an indigent mass of over one million. The international community must help the Kurdish and other regional authorities to resettle as many of these unfortunate people locally as they can and to resettle others internationally. The sooner these people can be resettled and given the opportunity to regain their dignity by being contributing members of society, the better the chances that they will be able to contribute to a lasting solution once the current threat is resolved.

### 4. Support for an Independent, Secular Kurdistan

During our recent mission, the OFWI delegation also met with officials from the KRG to determine the most immediate needs that the international community can help address. Our goal was to show OFWI's support for Kurdish authorities in light of the challenges they face and the way in which they have, on the whole, met those challenges to date. However, we also emphasized that our support is premised on the importance of ensuring that minorities are protected and not left behind during this crisis or in future, no matter what the circumstances.

As stated above, OFWI believes that any immediate assistance must go through Kurdish and other local sources, which obviously provides an opening for the Kurdish people to realize their aspirations for independence. In saying this we are aware that both the history and current actions of Kurdish authorities are not without blemish. However, of all the actors in this unfolding drama, a Kurdistan that has the support of the international community based on a firm commitment of all parties to the basic importance of secularism has the potential to provide a stable future for its people and to serve as an anchor of stability for the surrounding region.

OFWI believes it is important to support the independence of the KRG for several reasons. First of all, the Iraqi central government has been governed by sectarian interests while innocent, marginalized minorities have paid the price. On the other hand, even with its limited resources and a majority Muslim population, the KRG has demonstrated it can be a safe-haven for minorities and has potential to be a moderate and tolerant state that is welcoming to minorities. The reported failures of Peshmerga troops notwithstanding, the KRG has opened its territory to over 1.6 million IDPs – according to official government sources – and done its best to provide humanitarian aid in the circumstances. Such a demonstration of responsibility on the part of Kurdish authorities deserves consideration from the international community.

The KRG is proving the most reliable partner in this crisis; however, support for an emerging Kurdish state must not be unconditional nor can such a state be given *carte blanche*. In addition to concerns over the actions of some of the Peshmerga, there is a history of discrimination in the KRG with Christians, for instance, reporting that some officials have told them they “do not belong” in the KRG because they are not Muslim. There are concerns a Kurdish government

might set itself up as a Muslim state, which would be contrary to the interests of minorities and stability in the region.

In our meetings with KRG officials we heard a commitment toward creating a state that was inclusive and respected the rights of minorities. However, even if one accepts the stated good intentions of the current leadership, any state that is not based on the clear separation between church and state creates the potential for abuse, discrimination, and persecution of religious minorities. Thus a Kurdish constitution must create a secular state that affirms the separation of religion and state, and the international community must not support the creation of a Muslim state even with constitutional guarantees of religious freedom. As we have seen in other countries (including the current Iraqi constitution), setting Islam as the state religion effectively renders any guarantees of religious freedom meaningless.

A Kurdish constitution must provide for robust and meaningful protections of the rights of religious minorities. It must not contain discriminatory provisions or confer rights on the majority that are not granted to all minorities. Moreover, the new state must make a firm commitment to keep its borders open to religious minorities seeking refuge from ISIS or other religious extremists. It must become a party to the Refugee Convention and work with the UNHCR to promote and facilitate the resettlement of refugees when there is no reasonable prospect of them returning to their homes. Moreover, any long-term aid and trade relations with the new Kurdistan must be explicitly made conditional on respecting the rights of minorities.

In the meantime, a Kurdish state does not solve the crisis in Iraq. The policies and conditions that fostered Sunni support for ISIS must be reversed, ISIS defeated, and an environment created that enables Iraqi religious minorities to return to their homes and begin to rebuild their lives and contribute to a prosperous, peaceful Iraq where minorities are treated equally and with respect.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Every member of the international community has undertaken a sacred trust to uphold fundamental human rights. There is no right more fundamental to human dignity and to truly free and inclusive societies than freedom of religion. In light of the horrific abuses of this basic right being perpetrated by ISIS in northern Iraq today, the United States and the international community are morally and legally obligated to step in to protect religious minorities in Iraq and to help secure the conditions for a safe and prosperous Iraq for all Iraqis regardless of their religious beliefs.

It is in times of crisis that one discovers who their friends truly are. OFWI travelled to Iraq in a time of crisis to show that we are standing with the minorities and will not leave them behind. We hope that the United States government will choose to be a true friend to the minorities of Iraq by providing refugee support through humanitarian aid and resettlement, guaranteeing their physical security through military aid and defeating ISIS, and supporting the Kurdish authorities to create a secular, inclusive state. Today, on behalf of Iraqi minorities, will the United States and the rest of the international community choose to be part of the problem or the heart of the solution?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### – SUMMARY –

OFWI urges the United States government to take immediate and effective action to create a lasting solution to enable the religious minorities of Iraq to live in peace, harmony, and equality with their Muslim neighbours in their ancient homeland. Action needed includes:

#### 1. Humanitarian Aid

- Kurdish authorities are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of refugees
- there is an urgent need for clean water, food, and shelter and a desperate shortage of medication to treat the sick and wounded
- Iraqi winter is little over a month away increasing the urgency of the situation

#### 2. Military Support for Kurdish Authorities

- physical security is essential to ensure that Iraqi minorities do not need to stay on the run
- without a guarantee of security, humanitarian efforts will have limited prospects
- the areas not yet targeted must be protected and those overrun by ISIS must be freed
- international troops are needed because of the minorities' lack of trust in local forces, whether Iraqi or Kurdish
- any military intervention will require a long-term commitment to establishing the conditions necessary for minorities to be able to begin re-building their lives in a secure environment

#### 3. Refugee Resettlement

- resolving the crisis with ISIS is a long-term effort and in the interim the minorities need to regain their dignity by being settled where they can be contributing members of society
- doing so will enhance their ability to contribute to a lasting solution when the current crisis has been resolved
- Kurdish authorities are not able to absorb or support such a mass of people and regional and international action is needed

#### 4. Supporting an Independent, Secular Kurdistan

- the KRG's responsible actions in the current crisis demand consideration
- the Iraqi government has pursued sectarian policies which fostered local Sunni support for ISIS and for which religious minorities have paid the price; these policies must be reversed
- an independent, secular Kurdish state has the potential to prove a moderate, tolerant state and a stabilizing influence in the region
- any support for an emerging Kurdish state must be conditional on its being a secular state that protects and respects its minorities and commits to providing a safe-haven for minority refugees
- future relations with such a state must be explicitly conditional on the its continued commitment to secularism, human rights, and the protection of its minorities

## **Appendix A**

### **BIOGRAPHY OF REV. MAJED EL SHAFIE** FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT ONE FREE WORLD INTERNATIONAL

Rev. Majed El Shafie is a human rights advocate and founder of One Free World International (OFWI). His human rights journey started in his native Egypt that he was later forced to flee after he was severely tortured and sentenced to death for his conversion to Christianity and bringing awareness to human rights violations related to religious persecution. Belonging to a very prominent legal and political family in Egypt, Rev. El Shafie had tried to work within the Egyptian system to reform the country's human rights regime. Between the challenges he faced in these efforts, his firsthand experience as a survivor of religious persecution, the work he has engaged in since advocating for religious freedom, confronting governments that violate this fundamental right, and conducting fact-finding missions and humanitarian/rescue operations, he has obtained significant knowledge and insight into the dynamics of persecution of religious minorities by religious extremists and totalitarian governments alike.

Rev. El Shafie has established two effective human rights organizations including One Free World International (OFWI) which is one of the leading organizations advocating for religious minorities globally and has 28 branches around the world. He has organized and led delegations of parliamentarians and religious leaders to address minority rights and humanitarian issues with government leaders, including several cabinet ministers and other high-level officials, opposition leaders, and religious leaders among others in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Cuba, India, and Bangladesh. Rev. El Shafie has developed excellent relationships with members of the Canadian House of Commons, Senate, and Cabinet, and has built bridges with the US Congress in order to educate decision-makers about violations of religious freedom around the world. He has had the opportunity to testify four times before the Subcommittee for International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, three times before United States Congressional subcommittees and commissions, and before the Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism in Canada. He has advocated on behalf of Christians, Falun Gong, Jews, Bahá'í's, Ahmadiyya Muslims, and China's Uyghur Muslims, among others. Leading North American and international news media have featured his work which has also been the subject of an award-winning feature-length documentary.

#### **HONOURS AND AWARDS**

2012            Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal

#### **HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTISE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Provided expert testimony of conditions facing religious minorities.
- Relied on in numerous cases in the Refugee Protection Division (Ontario) and Immigration Board (Florida).
- Created an underground human rights organization to pursue equal rights for Egyptian minorities and built organization to 24,000 members in just two years.

- Created and developed one of North America’s most effective international human rights organizations focused on the rights of religious minorities around the world.
- Conducted fact-finding missions, rescue operations, and humanitarian interventions in countries where religious minorities are being persecuted and intervene directly through in-person meetings with high-level politicians and government officials regarding human rights concerns.
- Organized conferences and human rights events that attract thousands of participants every year to educate the public about religious persecution and human rights issues.

## **PARLIAMENTARY AND CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY**

Testified by invitation before parliamentary committees in Canada and congressional committees in the United States on issues related to minority rights, including:

- 25/6/2013     *Joint Session of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs*  
Religious Minorities in Syria: Caught in the Middle
- 21/3/2012     *The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, United States Congress*  
Religious Freedom in Afghanistan and Pakistan
- 22/11/2011     *The Sub-Committee on International Human Rights (SDIR, previously SDEV) of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Parliament of Canada*  
Religious Freedom in Egypt and Iraq
- 17/11/2011     *The Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs*  
Religious Freedom in Egypt and Iraq
- 30/11/2010     *SDIR, Parliament of Canada*  
Recommendations with Respect to Certain Issues Pertaining to the Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan
- 30/11/2009     *Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism in Canada, Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism*
- 16/6/2008     *SDIR, Parliament of Canada*  
Canadian Policy Regarding Religious Minorities with a Focus on Iraq, Egypt, and Pakistan
- 2/12/2004     *SDEV, Parliament of Canada*  
The Persecution of People of Faith

## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

Television: Whistleblower (CTV National News), W5, Canada AM, The Arena, The Source, and others  
Radio: CBC Radio and others  
Print: National Post, Ottawa Citizen, Toronto Star, Toronto Sun, and others  
International: Israel (Haaretz, Jerusalem Post, Maariv, Yediot Aharonot), Denmark, Germany, France

### Feature Documentary:

C. Atkins (Dir.), (2012) *Freedom Fighter* [Documentary], United States: Destiny Image.

M. Himel (Prod.), *Persecuted Christians* [Television Broadcast], March 14, 2012, Toronto: VisionTV.

### Television:

K. Tomlinson, “Christian fears persecution if sent back to Egypt”, on *CTV National News: Whistleblower*, March 16, 2006, Toronto: CTV.

K. Tomlinson, “Man claims torture in Egypt after refugee claim turned down”, on *CTV National News: Whistleblower*, December 14, 2006, Toronto: CTV.

E. Levant, “Iran Irony” on *The Source*, August 12, 2011, online: SunNews <<http://www.sunnewsnetwork.ca/video/iran-irony/1108134934001>>, accessed July 29, 2012.

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M. Coren, “Persecution of Christians” on *The Arena*, December 14, 2011, online: SunNews <<http://www.sunnewsnetwork.ca/video/search/majed/persecution-of-christians/1328192026001>>, accessed July 29, 2012.

E. Stakelbeck, “Egyptian Dissident Warns of Brotherhood's Rise” on *CBN News*, February 16, 2012, online: CBN News <<http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2012/February/Egyptian-Dissident-Warns-of-Brotherhoods-Rise/>>, accessed July 22, 2012.

M. Coren, “Par for the Course” on *The Arena*, July 25, 2012, online: SunNews <<http://www.sunnewsnetwork.ca/video/search/all/par-for-the-course/1754368754001>>, accessed July 29, 2012.

E. Levant, “Beyond a Youtube Video” on *The Source*, September 13, 2012, online: The Source <<http://www.sunnewsnetwork.ca/video/featured/prime-time/867432237001/beyond-a-youtube-video/1839021026001/page/2>>, accessed September 15, 2012.

M. Coren, “US Ambassador to Libya Killed” on *The Arena*, September 11, 2012, online: SunNews <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fWd4gEuDt4>>, accessed October 1, 2012.

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