

# Phares: How to create safe havens for the returning refugees?

## Condemning the Genocide of Minorities in the Middle East



Washington, D.C. – Congressman Steve King and TAG Secretary General Dr. Walid Phares hosted a panel commemorating of the 1-year anniversary of the U.S. Department of State Declaration that ISIS is Committing Genocide Against Minority Groups, including Christians, Yezidis and against moderate Shia and Sunni Muslims in the Middle East. The panel took place on Thursday, March 16, 2017 at 4:00PM ET in the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Room. Congressmen Louie Gohmert and Trent Franks addressed the briefing audience.

The panel included Juliana Taimoorazi from the Iraq Christian Relief, John Hajjar from the MECHRIC Middle East Christian Committee, Caroline Doss from Coptic Solidarity, Khalid Haidar from Yazidi Voice of Right, Reverend Andre Mehanna from the Maronite Church, Nehren Anweya from the Assyrian community and NGO leader Ibrahim Ahmad el Beja from Sudan.



Congressman King opened the panel by stressing the necessity of “insuring that we, as the US, have a policy to support these endangered minorities.” Congressman Gohmert asked the Administration to direct some of the support Washington sends to the UN and international entities to directly support the communities threatened by ISIS. And Congressman Franks insisted that the US can and should do more to help these communities that are endangered by ISIS and need action immediately.



Introducing the panel Dr. Phares said “while we are commemorating the first anniversary of the US State Department declaration of Genocide against Minorities in the Middle East, including Yazidis, Christians and moderate Muslims,” it is important to look at the following realities.

One, civil societies in majorities have also been severely assaulted by ISIS and the Jihadists. Arab Sunni tribes were decimated in Syria and Iraq by ISIS. Kurds have been viciously attacked by the latter as well. Two, Christian communities have been targeted in the region including Copts slaughtered in Libya, their churches burned inside Egypt and threatened by ISIS affiliates in the Sinai. In Lebanon, Christians and Muslims have been killed by ISIS and other Jihadists and also by Hezbollah. Three, the highest dangers have been in Syria and Iraq. In Hassaka province in Syria, ISIS seized villages and kidnapped civilians, Syriacs and Assyrians.



The worse violence has taken place in Northern Iraq as of 2014 when ISIS invaded the Nineveh plain and the Sinjar district. Thousands of Yazidis and Assyrians were killed and hundreds of thousands fled to Iraqi Kurdistan. Among the horrible practices by the ISIS Caliphate were the kidnapping and enslavement of thousands of Yazidi women and girls, still in captivity."





Dr. Phares with a Yazidi victim of ISIS

Phares asked the panel to help answer the most important questions now: "What can the Trump Administration and the US Congress do at this point? Is it to establish safe zones in Syria and in Iraq? If so when and how? For even though all civil societies are threatened by ISIS, the smallest and weakest ones are in a danger of disappearance from their ancestral homelands. An urgent action is needed to bring the refugees back to their lands and homes and enable them to live and defend themselves. But the question is how to implement such complex policies. How to insure that lands taken from ISIS would be reverted to these populations, how to work on plans to enable refugees to go back to Nineveh, Sinjar and some areas in northeast Syria?"