



**Congress of the United States**  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-2209

June 8, 2020

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler  
Chairman  
House Committee on Judiciary  
2141 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim Jordan  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Judiciary  
2141 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren  
Chairwoman  
House Subcommittee on Immigration  
2141 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ken Buck  
Ranking Member  
House Subcommittee on Immigration  
2141 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Jordan, Chairwoman Lofgren and Ranking Member Buck:

Thank you for your steady leadership on the House Committee on Judiciary and Subcommittee on Immigration. We respectfully request that the Committee on the Judiciary schedule a hearing on the issue of Iraqi deportations and take up H.R. 2537, the Deferred Removal for Iraqi Nationals Including Minorities Act, reported to the Subcommittee on Immigration on May 31, 2019.

In June 2017, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) threatened to deport approximately 1,400 Iraqis with final orders of removal. A court order in the *Hamama v. Adducci* case protected this group from deportation unless individuals were willing to return to Iraq. Between then and December 2018, approximately 400 individuals from that group who were set to be deported had their cases reopened. Of those who have had their cases heard, many have won relief – including not just withholding or deferral of removal under the Immigration and Nationality Act or Convention Against Torture, but reinstatement of their green cards and even naturalization. In December 2018, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the District Court’s stay of removal, and the order preventing removal remained temporarily in effect during the Court’s consideration of a rehearing. With the Circuit Court’s April 2, 2019 denial to grant a rehearing, an estimated 1,000 individuals, including hundreds of Chaldean Christians, were put at immediate risk of deportation.

These individuals came to the United States under varying circumstances; many were refugees and lawful permanent residents. They were ordered removed years, even decades, ago at a time when those removal orders meant very little, because Iraq was not allowing repatriations. Conditions in Iraq have changed dramatically since their removal orders were entered, and it would be not only unfair, but dangerous, to deport Iraqis without ensuring that their cases are considered individually based on current country conditions.

The threats to religious minorities in Iraq are well-documented and of particular concern. The State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 detail numerous examples of discrimination faced by Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities.<sup>1</sup> Secretary of State Mike Pompeo personally acknowledged the dangers religious minorities in Iraq have faced during his July 26, 2018 remarks at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom.<sup>2</sup> We are gravely concerned that, if deported, individuals could face torture or murder due to their religion or ethnicity.

The risks of deportation are not unique to members of religious or ethnic minorities. Many individuals have known no home other than America, and they speak little or no Arabic, which puts them in danger in Iraq regardless of religion or ethnicity. On August 6, 2019, Jimmy Aldaoud, a Chaldean resident of Oakland County, Michigan, died of a diabetic crisis after his deportation to Iraq. Jimmy had never been to Iraq, had no legal, government-recognized identification, had no family, had no knowledge of geography or customs, did not speak the language and, ultimately, had no access to medical care that could have saved his life. We are determined to prevent any further injustices like those that led to Jimmy's death.

These Iraqis facing deportation have deep roots, family, and employment ties in the United States and share one key commonality: they deserve to be fully and fairly considered on an individualized, case-by-case basis. They cannot and should not be treated, detained, or deported as a monolith.

We have taken several bipartisan actions to seek immediate assistance from the Administration to prevent the detention and deportation of these individuals:

- On April 5, 2019, we led a [letter](#) to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and ICE signed by more than 20 bipartisan lawmakers requesting deferral of detention and deportation of affected Iraqi nationals.
- On April 10, 2019, Congressman Levin, Congressman Moolenaar, Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin and Congressman Jeff Fortenberry sent a [letter](#) to Vice President Mike Pence

---

<sup>1</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practice for 2019: Iraq." U.S. Department of State. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/iraq/>.

<sup>2</sup> "I'm pleased to announce today the department is providing an additional \$17 million of additional demining efforts in the Nineveh region in Iraq. (Applause.) This is on top of the 90 million we have provided countrywide in this year alone. The additional funding will help us make more progress in clearing mines from areas with a large population of religious minorities who were subject to ISIS genocide." Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State. Remarks at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom. July 26, 2018. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/07/284550.htm>.

requesting intervention on this issue following the announcement that the heads of DHS and ICE were departing.

- On June 24, 2019, Congressman Levin and Congressman Moolenaar sent a [letter](#) to Secretary of State Pompeo requesting assistance to prevent the detention and deportation of Iraqi nationals living in the United States.

It has become apparent that a legislative solution is necessary to provide the time and opportunity for impacted individuals to seek reopening on their immigration proceedings. The bipartisan H.R. 2537, Deferred Removal for Iraqi Nationals Including Minorities Act, would ensure this urgent relief by deferring the removal of these Iraqi nationals for a two-year period. We have discussed this legislation at length with your staff and are amenable to discussing any modifications that you believe are prudent.

H.R. 2537 has bipartisan support and, we believe, would be received favorably by President Trump. On January 20, 2020, during a visit to Warren, Michigan, President Trump said, “We’re going to make sure that we do everything we can to keep people who have been good to this country out of harm’s way. When I get back, we’re going to give those who need it an extension to stay in our country”.<sup>3</sup> We were encouraged to hear of the President’s concern and stand ready to work with you on this legislative solution.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your prompt action and response.

Sincerely,



ANDY LEVIN  
Member of Congress



JOHN R. MOOLENAAR  
Member of Congress

BRENDA L. LAWRENCE  
Member of Congress

JUSTIN AMASH  
Member of Congress

DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress

BILL HUIZENGA  
Member of Congress

DANIEL T. KILDEE  
Member of Congress

FRED UPTON  
Member of Congress

---

<sup>3</sup> “Trump promises to stop deportation of Iraqi Christians in Michigan”. January 30, 2020. *Washington Times*. Available at: <https://m.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/jan/30/donald-trump-promises-stop-deportation-chaldeans-i/>

HALEY M. STEVENS  
Member of Congress

RASHIDA TLAIB  
Member of Congress

JACK BERGMAN  
Member of Congress

TIM WALBERG  
Member of Congress

ELISSA SLOTKIN  
Member of Congress