

Opening Statement
“Atrocities in Iraq and Syria: Relief for Survivors and Accountability for Perpetrators”

U.S. Helsinki Commission, September 22, 2016

Senator Roger Wicker

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this hearing on atrocities in Iraq and Syria.

The oppression of Christians and other religious communities in Syria and Iraq has led to an unspeakable humanitarian crisis. Hundreds of thousands of them have had to flee their homes to seek sanctuary from the Islamic State — whose savage treatment of these people is well-documented. The United States has historically protected minorities facing similar circumstances, and we should do so again now.

I am delighted to see Chris Engels, from the great state of Mississippi, testifying this morning about the heroic and dangerous work he and his colleagues at the Commission for International Justice and Accountability are doing to investigate perpetrators of atrocities in Iraq and Syria. I hope that the U.S. government will support these vital criminal investigations.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on this and other key aspects of the proposed legislation. Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing and for your proposals to help address the ongoing human tragedy in Iraq and Syria.