



December 8, 2015

The Honorable Ed Royce
The Honorable Eliot Engel
Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Royce and Ranking Member Engel:

We are writing in regard to H.R. 1654, legislation your committee is considering this week that would authorize the United States Government to provide military equipment and training directly to the Kurdistan Regional Government for the purpose of combatting Daesh. We strongly believe that Sunni communities in Iraq merit the same consideration, and encourage your committee this week to acknowledge the equal importance of ensuring that Sunni forces seeking to contribute to the defeat of Daesh also have the means to do so.

We and others represent an emerging coalition of Sunni leaders who have constituencies both inside Iraq and among the many who today live in exile from their homeland. We have come together for a simple goal: to achieve a respected voice, an effective role and an enduring stake in our nation's future.

Having been instrumental in the formation of the al-Iraqiya political coalition that successfully competed in Iraq's 2010 parliamentary elections, we have since witnessed the demise of secular governance and the rise of sectarianism in Iraq's political and security establishments. This has had disastrous consequences for the Sunni community. Iraq's leaders have used the judiciary, military and Iranian-backed extrajudicial militias to rid the government of Sunni participation and advance an oppressive sectarian agenda in Sunni provinces. As you know, the result has been a fragmentation of Iraq into ethnic enclaves and severe mistrust of the central government by increasingly marginalized populations – conditions that, along with the instability across the border in Syria, led to the emergence of Daesh, a threat to all who seek peace, security and stability in both our region and beyond.

Given the Iraqi leadership's failure to reverse course, despite requests by the United States and others that it include more Sunnis in our nation's governing structures, security units and prospective National Guard, members of your committee and others have rightly concluded that alternative mechanisms must be established to enable Sunni forces to join in the fight against ISIS and — like the Kurdish people — defend themselves, their communities and their nation. The Sunni Awakening of the last decade, which extinguished the threat posed by al Qaeda in Iraq, stands as a vivid reminder of the successes we can achieve together through resolute action.



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THE OFFICE OF THE ARAB-SUNNI REPRESENTATIVE FOR IRAQ
مكتب العرب السنة الممثل للعراق

We welcome the intent of recently enacted legislation to directly assist both Kurdish and Sunni security forces, but are concerned that this may occur only after a lengthy assessment of the extent to which the Government of Iraq is increasing political inclusiveness, addressing the grievances of ethnic and sectarian groups, and enhancing their integration into Iraq's political and military structures. We look forward to providing information that contributes to this assessment, but already know that under the present circumstances the predicament confronting Iraq's Sunni community – increasingly marginalized by the central government and brutally terrorized by Daesh – will only degrade further in the absence of swift and determined support from the international community. Allowing Daesh more time to subjugate those under its control, undermine the stability of our region, and orchestrate or inspire attacks on innocent civilians in other nations is unacceptable.

It is for these reasons that we request your consideration of measures similar those proposed in H.R. 1654 that will expedite the provision of U.S. equipment and training directly to Sunni forces that are ready today to contribute to the defeat and demise of Daesh. There is no solution to this threat without the active participation of our community. Sunnis, like Kurds, have a rightful role in protecting their homeland and a voice in Iraq's future.

We appreciate your immediate attention to this matter in which the United States and Iraq's Sunni community have a common interest, and stand ready to work with you to achieve our mutual objectives of peace, security and prosperity for our nation and the region.

Sincerely,

Sheikh Khamis Khanjar

Dr. Rafa al-Issawi
Former Deputy Prime Minister

Atheel al-Nujaifi
Former Governor, Nineveh Province

