

**GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 2018
ARCHIVES' RESEARCH REPORT**

RESOLUTION NO.: 2018-D063
TITLE: Supporting Christians in Iraq
PROPOSER: Mr. George Vosburgh
TOPIC: Human Rights

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-C055 Condemn Violence Against Christians and Commit to Prayer
2003-D020 Oppose Legal Systems Which Violate Human Rights
1991-D130 Affirm Commitment to Religious Liberty in Middle East
1985-D069 Affirm Guidelines for Working for Religious Liberty

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2009-A041 Urge Attention to Continuing Lessons and Concern Arising from the War in Iraq
2003-C031 End All Forms of Religious Persecution and War
1997-D016 Take Actions to Express Church's Support of Religious Freedom
1988-D024 Support and Pray for Religious Freedom Throughout the World

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1976 through 2015, selecting "direct" resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The "direct" resolutions are attached and "indirect" resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives at 800-525-9329 before Convention or at Convention in the General Convention Secretariat.

D063 Supporting Christians in Iraq

Proposer	Mr. George Vosburgh
Endorsed by	Wendt, Ms. Elizabeth; Mathews, The Very Rev. Dr. Koshy
Sponsored by	
Page numbers	Blue Book: p. N/A; Constitution & Canons: p. N/A
HiA / Leg. Cttee	/
Current Status	Pre-Filed Resolution
Version	Original (as filed)
Review Status	Not yet reviewed

RESOLUTION TEXT

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church hereby express its support for the right of all Christians and other persecuted minorities in Iraq to live their life of faith and develop their communities free of persecution, discrimination and violence; and be it further
- 2 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention also hereby commits The Episcopal Church, working in partnership with the Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, to provide prayers, friendship, and material support as determined by the needs and aspirations of Iraq's Christians, as an expression of our love and recognition of their religious, cultural, and humanitarian inclusion in the sacred Body of Christ.

EXPLANATION

The Christian communities in Iraq are among the oldest continuous Christian populations in the world, some dating back to the 1st century BCE reputedly resulting from the mission of St. Thomas.

-- The historic Christian communities in Iraq are the last on earth speaking and worshipping in Aramaic, the language of Jesus.

-- Historically the Christians in Iraq have periodically been subject to persecutions, massacres and cultural and political discrimination going back centuries.

-- These persecutions reached catastrophic proportions with the rise of Daesh (ISIS) following the U.S. led invasion of 2003. This culminated in 2014 with approximately 120,000 Christians primarily from the capital Baghdad and the Nineveh Plains fleeing into the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan for safety. On March 7, 2016 U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry declared Daesh guilty of genocide against religious minorities in Iraq, following the U.S. Congress unanimously passing a non-binding resolution condemning Daesh atrocities as genocide.

--In 2017/18 Daesh was militarily driven out of Iraq, opening the possibility of Christians returning to their historic homelands to rebuild their communities, churches and cultural and commercial lives.



Resolution Number: 2015-C055
Title: Condemn Violence Against Christians and Commit to Prayer
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church condemns the heinous acts of violence and persecution directed toward our brothers and sisters in Christ and all others throughout the world persecuted for their faith; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention ask the Presiding Bishop to call for a specific Church-wide Day of Prayer in 2016 in remembrance of these contemporary martyrs and in solidarity with persecuted Christians in our own day; and be it further

Resolved, That we commit the Church to continual prayer for the cessation of all violent acts against believers.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), p. 916.



Resolution Number: 2003-D020
Title: Oppose Legal Systems Which Violate Human Rights
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention support the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Anglican leaders who have jointly affirmed with Islamic leaders in various countries our shared desire to honor those teachings in our respective traditions which work to avoid coercion and respect individual liberty; and be it further

Resolved, That in further dialogue, particular attention be paid to vigorously oppose any nation's or other governmental body's imposition or continuation of a legal system which violates fundamental human rights; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention urge the application of these principles by the United States government to the reconstruction underway in Iraq and Afghanistan, in peace negotiations in Sudan, and in ongoing discussions with Nigeria and Indonesia, with particular attention to the rights of religious minorities, women, and those seeking to change their faith.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 677.



Resolution Number: 1991-D130
Title: Affirm Commitment to Religious Liberty in Middle East
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church declare its commitment to the right of all religious believers to the practice of their faith without interference or restriction; and be it further

Resolved, That the Convention extend to its Anglican brothers and sisters, and to all Christian believers in the Middle East and in the Islamic world its commitment to them and to prayer and action on their behalf; and be it further

Resolved, That the Convention urge those Episcopalians and members of the Anglican Communion engaged in inter-religious dialogue, either as official representatives or unofficially, to raise questions and concerns when appropriate about abuses of religious liberty and restraints on Christians in the Middle East and the Islamic world; and be it further

Resolved, That the Washington Office of the Episcopal Church present known religious liberty problems in the Middle East to the U.S. Department of State, to members of Congress and to persons doing business in these lands, and otherwise encourage the U.S. government to stress the importance of religious liberty and human rights in the development and execution of U.S. foreign policy; and be it further

Resolved, That education programs and materials developed within the Episcopal Church on the Middle East give attention to the religious minorities in the region.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 404.



Resolution Number: 1985-D069
Title: Affirm Guidelines for Working for Religious Liberty
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Substituted and Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 68th General Convention affirm its support for religious freedom for all persons by speaking out on behalf of and supporting through advocacy, intercession and prayer all persons deprived or threatened with the loss of their religious liberty; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention affirm the following guidelines in working on behalf of religious liberty and commend them to the ecumenical groups in which the Episcopal Church participates:

We will affirm religious freedom as a goal to be sought in all societies, regardless of their political creeds.

We will encourage forms of governance that guarantee freedom of association, speech, and self-determination, believing them to be the most supportive environment for religious independence and tolerance for all.

We will advocate such other support to the persecuted and their families as is deemed appropriate in order that they may know our concern, love and prayerful support.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 1985* (New York: General Convention, 1986), p. 264.