

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 17, 2014

Mr. Brett McGurk
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq and Iran
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. McGurk:

We are writing in regard to the status of the Iraqi Jewish Archives (IJA) and the ongoing discussions about its future. As you recall, a letter for Secretary of State John Kerry was personally handed to you at a hearing convened by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa on November 13, 2013. That letter, signed by nearly 50 Members of Congress, expressed concern over the fate of the Iraqi Jewish Archives and urged the State Department to facilitate the return of these artifacts to their rightful owners and not to the Government of Iraq – ensuring justice for the Iraqi Jewish community and their descendants.

During the hearing, several Members also questioned you about the status of the archives, and what activities the State Department was engaged in to see a mutually acceptable resolution to this issue for all parties involved. After being questioned by Members on this topic, you stated: “all I can say is that we have an agreement with the Iraqi ambassador here to begin a conversation about longer term loans here in the United States to make sure the people can view them. But that will be an ongoing course of discussion” and that “we are open to discussion about discussing the disposition of these archives and I know the ambassador agrees with that. And I am happy to discuss that further.” On November 20, 2013, the State Department responded to our letter and stated that Iraqi Ambassador Faily suggested he would be open to discussions with interested parties to address the return of the IJA to Baghdad.

Bearing that information in mind, we respectfully request an update on the status of these discussions. Specifically:

- What progress has been made on finding a mutually acceptable solution to the disposition of the IJA?
- Can you describe the level at which these discussions are taking place? Are these a set of informal concurrent bilateral discussions, or are all interested parties involved in the same negotiation in an official capacity?
- Who are the parties that are engaged in these discussions – does the Iraqi Jewish community have representation in these discussions? Do the other Jewish groups that have a vested interest in the IJA?

- What have been some options that have been presented and discussed? Has State presented, or been actively involved in formulating any viable options, or is it leaving those decisions up to the Iraqi's and the other parties?
- After all options are exhausted and if no mutually acceptable agreement can be made, what assurances has the Government of Iraq given that they can properly maintain, protect and preserve the IJA, and that the Iraqi Jewish community can have unfettered access to their artifacts?

We would appreciate your immediate attention to this matter, and we look forward to hearing what progress has been made in the ongoing discussions on the future of the Iraqi Jewish Archives.

Sincerely,



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Member of Congress

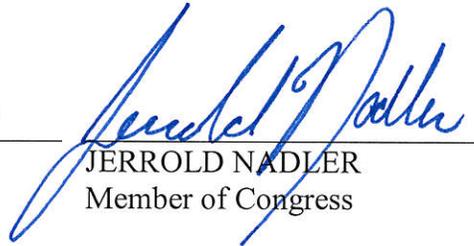
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