

Washington, DC (August 3, 2012) – Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and the International Religious Freedom Caucus, introduced H.Res. 763 on Thursday that condemns the targeting of vulnerable religious minorities in Syria and calls on the United States to predicate future conversations and policies on the importance of the safety and security of these communities.

"The violence in Syria has affected the entire country, with accusations of torture and extrajudicial killings committed by both the Assad government and rebel forces. Members of religious minority communities including Christians, Ezidis, and Mandaean are caught in the middle of this violence. These communities lack a means to protect themselves and are susceptible to pressure from all sides of the conflict, as well as targeted retaliatory attacks and displacements," Bilirakis said.

"This resolution highlights the religious diversity in Syria and the ancient and indigenous ties that these vulnerable minority communities have to the region. It calls for future aid to be preconditioned on the Syrian Government's fulfillment of its obligation to protect religious minorities and human rights. It also calls upon the U.S. Secretary of State to prioritize the safety and security of these vulnerable minorities and to work with the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom to ensure that our policies moving forward will promote a Syria where religious freedom for all is obtained."

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