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U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law,

As a public interest law firm dedicated to the cause of religious freedom for people of all religious traditions, we at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty express our support for the current language in the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill with regard to the “material support” issue. This bill corrects policies that have confused victims of terrorism with terrorists, and will instead allow deserving innocents to seek refuge in the United States.

We support necessary security measures to fight terrorism and to keep terrorists out of the United States, but we cannot ignore that terrorist organizations have demanded the support of vulnerable minorities by forcing them to pay ransoms, provide services, and conscript to their militias. Because they have been extorted by terrorists, many of these victims have been denied access to refugee programs in the United States. Thus, it is a great relief that the current language allows for more of these innocent men, women, and children – who pose no danger to the United States – to seek refuge in this country of freedom.

Since its inception, the material support bar to admissions has particularly affected religious minorities who are targeted by terrorist organizations because of their vulnerability in society. Groups like the Assyrian Christians, the Chaldeans, the Chin, the Hmong, the Mandaeans, the Montagnards, and the Yezidis have been barred from admission despite the fact that they face religious persecution at home and are targeted by terrorist groups because of their religious identities.

Finally, U.S. security policies in the war on terror have helped to protect Americans from terrorist threats, but we must remember what is threatened – the very concept of freedom. The civil liberties for which we are fighting should thus be central to our foreign policy. Through this legislation’s establishment of a more accurate and efficient system for determining refugee status, the United States government declares that in fighting terrorism, America has remembered one of the cornerstones of any free society – the right to religious expression without fear of terror.

Thank you for your leadership and your compassionate response to innocent victims of terrorism.

Sincerely,

Angela C. Wu, Esq.
The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty

Angela C. Wu
Acting Executive Director and
International Law Director

1350 Connecticut Ave NW
Suite 605
Washington DC 20036-1735
202-955-0095 Fax: 202-955-0090
www.becketfund.org