

# Genocide or Not, Civilians Need Protection from ISIS

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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**Whatever the outcome of the State Department's latest deliberations, protecting civilians through safe zones or other initiatives must have a more prominent place in the coalition's strategy.**

**T**he Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) engages in a wide array of extreme violence targeting civilians, including men, women and children; ethnic and religious minorities; and even fellow Sunni Muslims who do not accept the group's radical and totalitarian ideology. Now the Department of State is about to determine if ISIS violence amounts to acts of genocide.

Buried in the omnibus spending bill Congress passed in December is a provision demanding that "the Secretary of State...shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees an evaluation of the persecution of, including attacks against, Christians and people of other religions in the Middle East by violent Islamic extremists...including whether either situation constitutes mass atrocities or genocide." The bill mandated that the secretary of state's finding be provided to Congress by March 17.

On the same day, the House Foreign Affairs Committee passed a resolution signed by over 200 lawmakers from both sides of the aisle, expressing the sense of Congress that ISIS's actions against Christians, Yazidis, Turkmen and others amount to "committing 'war crimes,' 'crimes against humanity,' and 'genocide.'" Beyond the debate over the term "genocide" itself, some worry that an affirmative answer could force the administration's hand and require it to take action -- either against ISIS, or in defense of minority groups and civilian populations, or both -- that it would otherwise prefer to avoid. In point of fact, given the widely acknowledged concept of a "responsibility to protect," world powers should be doing much more to protect civilians in Syria and Iraq, whatever the secretary of state's

determination on the applicability of the term "genocide"...

**[Read the full article on the Hill website. \(http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international/272648-genocide-or-not-civilians-need-protection-from-isis\)](http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international/272648-genocide-or-not-civilians-need-protection-from-isis)** ❖

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