

Press Release, Steve Oshana, Executive Director
A Demand for Action Gives Voice to Assyrian Nation at Fourth Annual St. Andrews Human Rights and Religious Freedom Reception

Washington, D.C.—Last night in Washington, D.C., A Demand for Action (ADFA) Executive Director Steve Oshana took part in the fourth annual St. Andrews Human Rights and Religious Freedom Reception hosted by Congressman John Sarbanes (D-MD) and the St. Andrews Freedom Forum. The event was co-hosted and attended by several members of Congress who support the Ecumenical Patriarchate in its struggle to promote human rights and religious freedom. Among the distinguished speakers and attendees were Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Eliot Engel (D-NY), and Ted Deutch (D-FL).

The main speaker for the event was Brian Katulis, senior fellow at Center for American Progress (CAP) in Washington, D.C. Mr. Katulis recently returned from a trip to Iraq where CAP is conducting research on the living conditions of communities who are minoritized based on their ethnicity and/or religion. Of Assyrians, Mr. Katulis remarked that they are enduring “some of the worst persecution of Christians we’ve seen in recent decades.” He went on to emphasize that establishing local security forces are not only critical to gaining the trust of the citizens of the Nineveh Plains in the short-term, but that doing so will surely serve as a long-term solution that enables Iraq’s Christians to remain in their homeland.

Mr. Katulis acknowledged that President Obama’s address of the persecution of Christians in his national address of ISIL, as well as in his speech to the UN Security Council, was due to recent ADFA-led initiatives and lobbying. Furthermore, Mr. Katulis highlighted this as a turning point in the administration’s efforts to address the crisis. Additionally, Congressman Bilirakis went so far as to refer to the persecution of Christians in Iraq and the Middle East as “genocide”—a bold step for a Congress that is often hesitant to use such forthright language.

We would like to personally thank Andreas Akaras of the St. Andrews Freedom Forum for inviting us to take part in this event and for his continued advocacy on behalf of religious freedoms, and we look forward to continued cooperation with all partners seeking peace and tolerance in the world.

A Demand for Action is honored to be the voice of our people in Washington and around the world, and with your support we will continue our efforts to bring a just resolution to the suffering of our beloved Nation.