

A Demand for Action Opinion, Excerpt
Christmas, 2014

I realized I had underestimated people's willingness to help: Within a few hours, I received hundreds of emails and messages to my Gmail and Facebook accounts. A few weeks later, on July 2nd, we sent an email to 15,000 politicians, NGOs, and media offices in twelve countries. We wanted to remind them of the ethno-religious cleansing that was taking place in Iraq and Syria and that they could turn to us for more information; we had all the evidence—photos, videos, statistics—of the violence being done to the people there. We also wanted the letter to safeguard against potential future denial; those who received it, and read it, couldn't claim ignorance of the genocide against the indigenous communities of Iraq and Syria.

Exactly one month later, hundreds of thousands of people around the world demonstrated for those very communities, chanting our organization's demands as they marched. On September 10th, we held a press conference before the U.S. Congress and met with President Obama's closest advisers. And, in early November, I gave a speech before the European Parliament. Together, we have accomplished this and much more—and all as volunteers.

On November 24th, a week after we received word about the dangerously low temperatures in Iraq, we put out the call to our subscribers for blanket, sleeping bag, and rug donations. In marketing the event, we wrote that we were seeking donations that were gently used but preferably new. The following day, the inventories of home goods stores throughout Stockholm were depleted of these items. By the campaign's second day, several stores contacted us, distressed that we hadn't warned them of the collection. While they may have frustrated a few shopkeepers in Sweden, those who saw our campaign and acted quickly for the people in Iraq provided them with an immediate, if only small, sense of comfort during a very difficult time.