WASHINGTON, D.C.—Congressman Jeff Fortenberry on Friday led a group of Members of Congress in urging President Obama to discuss in the State of the Union Address the recent international wave of violence against religious minorities.

In recent months, violent religiously-motivated attacks in Nigeria, Egypt, and Iraq, including the October 31 siege of Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad and the New Year's Day bombing attack on a church in Alexandria, Egypt, have left hundreds dead.

Fortenberry, with Congressmen Robert Aderholt, Gus Bilirakis, Trent Franks, and Frank Wolf, stated the following concerning the violence against religious minority communities in the Middle East, South Asia, and parts of Africa:

"As part of the broader ongoing effort to prevent violent attacks on civilians in Iraq, we urge you to call on the community of nations to join the United States to help secure vulnerable minority faith communities and end the climate of impunity that fosters a vicious cycle of violence aimed at innocent civilians.

"…We can only begin to imagine what it must be like for families struggling each day to pursue their livelihoods in a climate of unrelenting hostility. As victims of violence are left to fend for themselves, perpetrators celebrate their crimes while sympathetic onlookers retreat behind a veil of fear and intimidation.

"We thank you for speaking out for the innocents massacred recently in Egypt by violent jihadists as they were peacefully concluding the celebration of Mass on New Year's Eve. Now more than ever, both persecuted populations and perpetrators must know that the United States is actively working to reverse this insidious encroachment of ideologically-motivated brutality.

"As we continue this new year, already tinged with so many heinous affronts to human dignity, we must give hope to beleaguered communities that fervently desire and rightfully deserve justice and peace."

Fortenberry is a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

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