



One Hundred Fourteenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
[www.foreignaffairs.house.gov](http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov)

July 27, 2015

Dear Foreign Affairs Committee Colleague:

I write to you regarding an issue that is of growing interest to many in the field of foreign policy: **the link between a nation's growth and stability and the status of its women and girls.** We have all seen the horrifying headlines – Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by terrorists, Iranian women doused with acid, an Afghan woman lynched by a crazed mob for allegedly insulting her religion.

Tragically, these shocking stories are just the tip of the iceberg. In sub-Saharan Africa, 1 in every 7 girls is forced into marriage before the age of 15. In Asia, millions of women and girls are ensnared in human trafficking networks and subjected to the horrors of modern-day slavery. And polling in the Middle East shows that boys *and girls* believe it is acceptable for men to beat their wives for “burning food.”

These are clearly serious human rights concerns. But women's insecurity and absence from public life also harms men, boys, communities and institutions. *An emerging body of research points to the subjugation of women and girls as perhaps the greatest predictor of a state's instability* – more so than even its style of governance, level of wealth, or other factors. And studies aside, *common sense* tells us that no state can expect economic progress or political security when half its population is repressed.

**That is why I am pleased to announce that, beginning this week, the Committee will take an in-depth look at the challenges facing women around the globe.** Through a series of hearings and briefings, we will focus on understanding the scope of the problem – the physical, legal and societal constraints that women and girls face, how communities and states stand to benefit from these restrictions being lifted, and what we can do through our political and diplomatic engagement to bring about positive change.

The Committee will begin this series by looking at women living under the despotic rule of the so-called “Islamic State,” or “ISIS.” ISIS has engaged in a brutal campaign of violence against women in the territory it controls, from the widespread rape and trafficking of religious minorities, to the forced marriage and oppressive regulations heaped upon Muslim women. This hearing will explore the rationale for ISIS's heinous violence against women and its alarming efforts to recruit female fighters to join its ranks. ***Women under ISIS Rule: From Brutalization to Recruitment* will take place on Wednesday, June 29 at 10 am in 2170 Rayburn.**

I urge your participation in the first of this important series of Committee hearings, and look forward to working with you – and receiving your input – on future events.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "ER Royce".

EDWARD R. ROYCE  
Chairman