

With religious persecution on the rise, US Commission on International Religious Freedom needed now, more than ever

Over 100 National groups, religious scholars, and human rights activists urge Congress to support religious freedom commission

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, October 31, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Church of Scientology's](#) National Affairs Office joined such diverse groups as the Baptist World Alliance, Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union, and the Atheist Alliance of America in urging the U.S. Senate to reauthorize the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to help fight increasing religious persecution around the world.



International Religious Freedom Roundtable meeting

A 2019 [Pew Research](#) study shows that globally restrictions and hostilities involving religion have risen significantly over the past decade. Pew reports, "The latest data shows that 52 governments – including some in very populous countries like China, Indonesia, and Russia – impose either "high" or "very high" levels of restrictions on religion, up from 40 in 2007."

“

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Rev. Susan Taylor

A coalition of 106 widely diverse organizations and individuals signed onto a letter urging the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to “continue to work together and hope that a bill will soon be passed thus ensuring the continued mission of USCIRF.” The group’s letter supports USCIRF saying, “From our various experiences, the Commission has played a vital role in supporting those

around the world who suffer for their beliefs, conscience, or religion.”

Rev. Susan Taylor, signing the letter on behalf of the Church of Scientology National Affairs Office, remarked, “It is vital that we stand together as a community of believers and non-believers, united in the belief that no one should be tortured, imprisoned, or killed due to their beliefs. We recognize the importance of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom in supporting those victims of religious persecution. We are calling upon Congress to help the Commission become an even stronger voice in protecting religious freedom around the world.”

Periodically, as part of the annual budget conference, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, originally established by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998,

must be reauthorized and funded.

The Commission is very active in supporting prisoners of conscience, protection of places of worship, and exposing [human rights](#) abuses committed due to religion throughout the world. Many prisoners, including Americans such as Pastor Andrew Brunson, have been freed after USCIRF took up their cause and advocated for their release. Pastor Brunson is an American pastor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church who spent two years in jail in Turkey before the international appeal for his release lead to his release last year.

In light of the increased restrictions and repression of individuals simply for their religious faith or lack of faith, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is needed now more than ever.

END

Letter:

October 28, 2019
The Honorable James Risch
The Honorable Bob Menendez
Chairman
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
United States Senate
483 Russell Senate Office Building
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
The Honorable Marco Rubio
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
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The Honorable Richard Durbin
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
CC:

The Honorable Mitch McConnell The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader Minority Leader
United States Senate United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building 322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510 Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators,

We write as an informal group of 106 organizations and individuals who are scholars, religious and secular leaders, human rights advocates and practitioners to express our gratitude for the

time and attention paid to the reauthorization of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) by you and your staff members.

From our various experiences, the Commission has played a vital role in supporting those around the world who suffer for their beliefs, conscience, or religion. Robust reporting products, advocating for prisoners of conscience, and resources such as prisoner lists are essential tools used often by civil society to advance this fundamental human right, which is a foreign policy priority of the United States as defined by Congress in the IRF Act of 1998.

Additionally, the value to a person who has been persecuted of being heard and respected by an official of the United States Government and then to have their story told in official documents cannot be overstated. It encourages them, supports recovery, and helps them become even greater advocates for those who are still harmed.

While some of the organizations and individuals who have signed have concerns about the legislation as it was introduced, we all hope that Congress will work together to find a way forward. We are encouraged that your teams continue to work together and hope that a bill will soon be passed thus ensuring the continued mission of USCIRF.

Signed:

ORGANIZATIONS

21Wilberforce
Advocates International
American Atheists
American Humanist Association
Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain
Asociacion Civil Esalcu
Atheist Alliance of America
Baha'is of the United States
Baptist World Alliance
Barzani Charity Foundation, USA
Bitter Winter
Bruderhof
Center for Inquiry
Center for Pluralism
CESNUR, Center for Studies on New Religions
China Aid Association
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Churches for Middle East Peace
Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations
Coptic Solidarity
Federation of Indian American Christian organizations
Free Yezidi Foundation
Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc.
Freethought Society
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Global Peace Foundation
Great Truth
HSLDA
Indefense of Christians
Indigenous Ministries International
Indian American Muslim Council
International Buddhist Information Bureau
International Campaign for the Rohingya
International Christian Concern

International Religious Liberty Program, Institute on Religion and Democracy

IRF for Horn of Africa

Jubilee Campaign USA

LifeStyle 74 Radio (Europe) RADIO 74 INTERNATIONALE (USA)

Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers

Northwest Religious Liberty Association (NRLA)

Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, Church of the Brethren

ORLIR (International Observatory of Religious Freedom of Refugees)

REDEEM!

Religious Freedom Roundtable Seoul Korea

Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church of America

Save the Persecuted Christians

Secular Coalition for America

Sikh Dharma

Society for Humanistic Judaism

TAF - Tahrir Alnisa Foundation

The Church of Almighty God

The Council of The Ethnic Peoples and Religions of Vietnam

The Nazarene Fund

Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam

Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union

Unitarian Universalist Humanist Association

United Pakistani American Christian Community, NY

Vietnam Committee on Human Rights

Vietnamese American Coalition

West Papua Human Rights Center

Yazda

INDIVIUALS (Organizations listed for identification purposes only)

Abdillahi Abib (President, IRF for Horn of Africa)

Ibrahim Anli (Advisor, Rumi Forum)

Delovan Barwari (Country Rep, Barzani Charity Foundation, USA)

Dwijen Bhattacharjya (Lecturer in bengali, Columbia University)

Simon Billenness (Executive Director, International Campaign for the Rohingya)

Elijah Brown (General Secretary, Baptist World Alliance)

Ann Buwalda (Executive Director, Jubilee Campaign USA)

Dr. Vinh Cam (CEO, Vietnamese American Coalition)

Jeff Chen (VP of Advocacy, Falun Dafa Association of Washington DC)

Ransom Cho (Assist Secretary, Justice for the Peoples of British Southern Cameroons unto Independence

- USA)

Kyle Cristofalo (Gov Relations, Churches for Middle East Peace)

Rachel Deitch (Legislative and Social Justice Manager, American Humanist Association)

William Devlin (Director, REDEEM!)

Michael Donnelly (Senior Counsel, HSLDA)

Amal Eltayeb (Activist & Policy Economist, Sudanese American Activist.)

Penelope Faulkner (International Relations Officer, International Buddhist Information Bureau)

Zeno Gamble (Operations Manager, The Nazarene Fund)

Mike Ghouse (President, Center for Pluralism)

Gregory W. Hamilton (President, Northwest Religious Liberty Association (NRLA))

Nathan Hosler (Rev. Dr., Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, Church of the Brethren)

Johann Huleatt (Outreach Director, Bruderhof)

Pari Ibrahim (Executive Director, Free Yezidi Foundation)

Massimo Introvigne (Director, Center for Studies on New Religions)

Bettina Krause (Director, Government Affairs, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists)

Dede Laugesen (Executive Director, Save the Persecuted Christians)

Jason Lemieux (Gov Relations, Center for Inquiry)
Greg Mitchell (Chair, International Religious Freedom Roundtable)
Faith McDonnell (Director, International Religious Liberty Program, Institute on Religion and Democracy)
Scott Morgan (Red Eagle Enterprises)
Paul Murray (Vice President, Global Peace Foundation)
Ronald Myers (Founder, Journalist, LifeStyle 74 Radio (Europe) RADIO 74 INTERNATIONALE (USA))
Satoshi Nishihata (Happy Science USA Washington Bureau)
Patrice Pederson (President, First Freedom Foundation)
Matias Perttula (Director of Advocacy, International Christian Concern)
John Prabhudoss (Federation of Indian American Christian organizations)
Tariq Rehmat (President, United Pakistani American Christian Community, NY)
William Rogers (Associate Pastor, Pentecostal Church of God.)
Mariyah Sohahngpurwala (Dawat-e-Hadiyah America)
Simran Stuelpnagel (Secretary, Religious Liberty, Sikh Dharma)
Susan Taylor (National Public Affairs Director, Church of Scientology National Affairs Office)
Dr. Quoc-Hung Tran (President, Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam)
Vo Van Ai (President, Vietnam Committee on Human Rights)
Anthony Vance (Director of Public Affairs, Baha'is of the United States)
Herman Wainggai (Executive Director, West Papua Human Rights Center)
Lily Zhang (Director of Government and Advocacy, Falun Dafa Association of Washington D.C.)

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