

April 6, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned, a diverse coalition of international religious freedom advocates and organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Americans, write to you today in support of the confirmation of Mike Pompeo as Secretary of State. Mr. Pompeo is a strong nominee who will make international religious freedom a foreign policy priority—a matter which is especially important given that we now know religious freedom, long protected for its own sake, is also intricately connected to the security and prosperity of nations themselves.

Over forty years ago, a Jewish dissident in the Soviet Union spoke out against his government on behalf of his fellow citizens, and was imprisoned for doing so. He languished in the gulag, yet stood strong. This dissident enlisted his wife and others in the fight for freedom, and they took his campaign to the West. He was likely only spared from execution because the Soviet government knew that Ronald Reagan knew—and cared—about his imprisonment. On February 11, 1986, after President Reagan applied enough pressure on the Soviets, Natan Sharansky was freed, flown to West Germany, and then emigrated to Israel. Some of the very same people signing this letter knew Mr. Sharansky and assisted in the struggle for his freedom.

This compelling story helps us see why it is just as important today that the United States continue to defend human rights around the world. While Mr. Sharansky needed us then, dissidents in China, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Myanmar, Vietnam, Eritrea, and elsewhere need us now. Just as President Reagan did back then, we, today, should boldly, clearly, and publicly state our support for human rights and religious freedom, and let every nation know we are prepared to defend these ideals. Moreover, realizing they have a friend in the United States encourages those who are fighting their governments for freedom. Promoting religious freedom is simply good foreign policy. Indeed, one of the pillars of our National Security Strategy, recognizing “the hope of every soul to live in freedom,” is to “advance American influence” by “protect[ing] religious freedom and religious minorities.”¹ Due to his security expertise, Mike Pompeo is especially equipped to address this facet of religious freedom policy.

While Soviet-style Communism was the ideological challenge of President Reagan’s time, radical Islam are the problems of our time. Yet guns, bullets, and money alone won’t do the job. Working with willing partners, we must cultivate religious freedom within communities the world over—and all of this helps achieve their security as well as our own security at home. As one scholar has noted, “[t]here is not a single nation in the world that both respects religious freedom and poses a security threat to the United States,” and the “entities engaging in religious

¹ National Security Strategy of the United States of America, Dec. 2017, at 37, 42, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905-2.pdf>.

persecution—both states and nonstates—are on balance more likely to pose a security threat to the U.S.”² We also now know that religious freedom is associated with economic growth. When religious freedom flourishes around the world, corruption is lowered and there is more peace, less harmful regulation, reduced liabilities, and more diversity and economic growth.³ Thus, when Christians, Yezidis, and others driven away by ISIS are restored to their communities in Northern Iraq, we must understand that not only are we working toward cultivating religious freedom in that region, but we are also stabilizing it, leaving one less spot for the next variation of ISIS adherents to plot attacks against the United States. Yet as we engage with foreign officials, we must not excuse their attempts to compromise the notion that everyone, regardless of their faith, has an equal role in civil society, but rather “address this issue forthrightly.”⁴

We will only have sustainable, long-term peace if we actually *make* religious freedom a foreign policy priority. Mike Pompeo understands this and will make it happen, and should be confirmed as Secretary of State.

Sincerely,

Tony Perkins
President
Family Research Council

Gary L. Bauer
President
American Values

Jerry A. Johnson, Ph.D.
President and CEO
National Religious Broadcasters

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President and CEO
Open Doors USA

² William Inboden, *Religious Freedom and National Security*, Hoover Institution Policy Review, Oct. 2, 2012, <https://www.hoover.org/research/religious-freedom-and-national-security>.

³ Brian Grim, *The link between economic and religious freedoms*, World Economic Forum, Dec. 18, 2014, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2014/12/the-link-between-economic-and-religious-freedoms/>.

⁴ Thomas F. Farr, *World of Faith and Freedom*, at 25, Oxford Univ. Press (2008).

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