

# Why These Prominent Believers Are Ecstatic Over Pompeo's Nomination

International religious freedom advocates are welcoming President Trump's nomination of CIA Director Mike Pompeo as secretary of state.

"I'm hoping Mr. Pompeo will focus on the centrality of religious liberty in our international relationships because this is a central issue that keeps popping up in all the big crisis' around the world," David Curry, president of Open Doors USA, told CBN News.

For more than 60 years, Curry's group has put a spotlight on the plight of millions of people who routinely endure persecution for their faith around the world.

In a statement welcoming Pompeo's nomination, Curry said America needs "a chief diplomat who grasps the vital importance of protecting freedom of faith around the world, recognizing that so often conflict and instability are linked to the denial and attack of fundamental freedoms."

As examples, Curry pointed to the ongoing situations in Nigeria, Myanmar and across the Middle East as evidence of a direct correlation between attacks on religious freedom and political upheavals in these regions.

"Whether it is in northern Nigeria, or dealing with the Rohingya's in Myanmar or ISIS, you have extremist groups, dictators and countries that are restricting the religious freedom of their participants," Curry said. "I'm hopeful, I'm very hopeful, Secretary Pompeo will stand up for American citizens and our values of freedom of religious expression and freedom of conscience."

Curry says these issues should play a more prominent role when the United States decides to make major business and political deals with countries that have a poor track record of protecting their citizen's right to religious freedom and freedom of speech.

"For example, we have countries like India and Saudi Arabia that in the last year we've made significant deals with and yet they are key persecutors of Christians," Curry noted. "India is No 11 on the World Watch List of places where it is most difficult for people to practice their faith and Saudi Arabia is also right up there, and yet we do billions and billions of trade and other agreements with these countries."

Curry and others insist that while this shouldn't prevent the United States from entering into various agreements, it is important to discuss values and principles that are important to us as Americans. He believes Mr. Pompeo's past statements indicate that he understands the importance of sharing those values abroad.

"Mr. Pompeo's past statements seem to indicate that he really does understand how important religious liberty is to national security {and} to the heart and spirit of what America is all about."

Ann Buwalda, executive director of Jubilee Campaign USA, is equally encouraged by Pompeo's nomination.

"I think that the choice of CIA Director Pompeo for secretary of state will be very positive for the cause of international religious freedom," Buwalda told *CBN News* in a statement.

Like Open Doors, Jubilee Campaign advocates for persecuted religious minorities around the world.

Buwalda says Pompeo understands the numerous international security threats facing the country and has a track record of addressing them head-on.

"CIA Director Pompeo has taken a strong stance on dealing with Iran, a major persecutor of its own non-Muslim citizens," Buwalda said. "I am hopeful that as secretary of state, Pompeo will do more to address countries which persecute their religious minorities such as Iran and others."

If confirmed, Pompeo will become fellow Kansas Republican Sam Brownback's new boss. In February, the former Kansas governor was tapped to be Trump's U.S. ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom, a key position within the State Department that monitors religious freedom issues.

The two reportedly are close political confidants.

"They have a great relationship," David Kensinger, Brownback's former chief of staff, said in a text message to the *Kansas City Star* shortly after Pompeo's nomination was made public.

Buwalda believes that relationship could play a significant role in shaping issues related to international religious freedom.

"The fact that both men are from Kansas where religious freedom is cherished, promises a good working relationship concerning this issue," Buwalda told CBN News. "The combination of Ambassador Brownback and Secretary Pompeo—should he be confirmed as secretary of state—is very promising indeed for making progress on countering religious-based persecution around the world." {eo}

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