

Chinese Government Detains 800,000-2 Million Minority Muslims in Internment Camps

A large group of faith and other civil society leaders gathered in Washington, D.C., last week to call on a prominent law firm to stop lobbying for countries and entities involved in the persecution of people of faith.

Forty-six leaders representing Christians, Muslims, Falun Gong practitioners, Buddhists and other persecuted faith communities signed on to a joint letter asking Squire Patton Boggs, LLP, to stop promoting the interests of Communist China, Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—countries known for gross violations of human rights and oppression of religious freedoms.

“We write to you as advocates for religious freedom out of a shared concern that foreign governments represented by your firm are among the world’s most aggressive persecutors of people of faith,” the letter says. “It is deeply troubling to us that your prestigious firm and the many good people it employs are currently associated with and providing legal counsel, representation and other services to such nations.”

At no time in history have religious minorities been more oppressed and systematically persecuted. The U.S. Department of State’s Office of International Religious Freedom reports more than 80% of the world’s population, in a record number of countries, face oppression directly related to belief and religious practices. Among the worst of the perpetrators of such crimes against humanity are regimes represented by Squire Patton Boggs, which includes, in addition to the PRC, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the Palestinian Authority.

For example, at least 800,000 Uyghur Muslims, and by some

estimates 2 million of them, are held in internment camps in China as the Chinese Communist Party continues escalating its assault on all people of faith. Saudi Arabia, in the past month, held mass beheadings of people, including a 16-year-old boy, found guilty of religious violations. Qatar, a country on the Open Doors USA list of the most dangerous places to be a Christian, continues fostering violence toward people of faith through relationships with groups such as ISIS, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. Yet, Squire Patton Boggs lobbies for all of these regimes.

In the course of a May 1 National Press Club press conference held to unveil the civil society groups' joint letter, Frank Gaffney, president of one of the organizers of this initiative, Save the Persecuted Christians, observed:

This reality is being documented by a number of both governmental and private-sector institutions. Thanks to their work, we have a sense of the crimes against humanity that are taking place—truly unspeakable and mind-boggling in character. That reality has prompted our organization ... to believe that it is time for us to do something beyond—important as it is—trying to help alleviate the suffering of the victims of such religious persecution. It is time for us to begin holding those who engage in such persecution accountable for doing so and more to the point, to create costs to them for engaging in this kind of barbaric behavior.

Another participant in the press conference, Frank Wolf—one of the most respected former members of Congress and the author of the International Religious Freedom Act—said:

The world must speak out. And no law firm should represent a country that is taking Uyghur Muslim children and women and putting them in internment camps modeled after what Mao and Stalin did. ... During the Carter administration and during the

Reagan administration, no law firm or public relations group in this city would have ever represented the Soviet Union. There's been a shift.

How could they not know? There's a song by Simon and Garfunkel that says, "A man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest." How can you disregard what's taking place in China to the Uyghurs? ... So, we call on this law firm—and there are many good people in this law firm—we call on them to drop China, to drop Saudi Arabia and to drop Qatar as clients.

Another of the joint letter's signers—Pastor Bob Fu, a former Chinese dissident and president of the watchdog group ChinaAid—described at the press conference China's persecution of Uyghars, Catholics, Protestants, Falun Gong practitioners, Buddhists, Tibetans and other people of faith.

"I want to ask the leaders of Squire Patton Boggs to not be evil," Fu said.

Interestingly, Squire Patton Boggs also represented until recently Sudan, a particularly egregious persecutor of religious minorities. Many of the joint letter's signatories represent that regime's victims, so-called "marginalized people" brutalized by the recently deposed indicted war criminal, Omar Al-Bashir. One of them, Faith McDonnell of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, noted that law firms and public relations firms such as Squire Patton Boggs provide cover and support that allow these regimes to continue committing egregious crimes against people of faith with impunity.

She asked, "Did they fool you, Squire Patton Boggs? Or, did you know what was going on? I would ask that all of us together put pressure on Squire Patton Boggs and put pressure on anyone who is lobbying for evil regimes."

Another press conference participant was Salih Hudayar of the East Turkistan National Awakening Movement, who has at least 100 family members being held in the Chinese Communist Party re-education camps. At the press conference, he held up a recent Foreign Agent Registration Act filing for Squire Patton Boggs.

"It clearly states that Squire Patton Boggs is advising China on human rights," Hudayar said. "Is Squire Patton Boggs advising it is right to subject people to organ harvesting, to torture and to all other means of unimaginable abuses? Is it advising China to engage in genocide? My message to Squire Patton Boggs is this: 'I'm a victim of your business with Communist China, and so too are the millions of innocent people in East Turkistan along with millions of innocent people across China and across the world. What the Chinese Communist Party is doing to the people of occupied East Turkistan is analogous to what the Nazis did to the Jews and other people ... Thus, we call on Squire Patton Boggs to immediately stop representing the criminal, evil, genocidal Chinese Communist regime's interests and to set an example for ethical business practices by upholding American values.'"

Another participant, Father Andre Mahanna, president of St. Rafka's Mission of Hope and Mercy, asked: "Do those lobbies know who they are serving or not? It is my job to tell them. So far, we're giving them the benefit of the doubt telling them, come up and speak to that. Say how are you serving the cause of justice, the cause of mercy. Our hope is to save our Judeo-Christian principles, to stand for the rights of freedom, part of which is the freedom of religion."

Dede Laugesen, executive director of Save the Persecuted Christians, told the press conference: "We're finding out more and more every day about Squire Patton Boggs and these law firms that are providing representation to these countries of persecution, and it is very, very deep. We're eager to take the lid off and help expose this work to the public."

Gaffney added, "We think Squire Patton Boggs must end their relationship with Communist China, with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with Qatar and with the Palestinian Authority. I pray that this will be their response to a letter that we have sent to them, signed by dozens of organizations—46 to be precise—organizations representing people of faith, just about every faith, who are concerned about what Squire Patton Boggs are doing and who are joining forces in this common purpose of getting them to cease and desist in the enabling of the persecution."