

Christian Coalition Challenges Trump With Urgent Request

Save the Persecuted Christians (STPC), a bipartisan, multi-faith coalition of nearly 200 civil society, faith and community leaders who advocate for more than 300 million persecuted Christians globally, yesterday delivered an open letter to President Donald Trump to call on his administration to “speak boldly and specifically about the global persecution of Christians.”

The letter, signed by 88 organizations and over 500 individuals, begins:

“We write as people of faith to express our deep appreciation for all that you do to stand with religious believers and to counter those who restrict or deny the practice of their faith. No administration in modern times has done more than yours to safeguard this foundational liberty.”

Unfortunately, while many faith communities suffer persecution, none are being more systematically and massively subjected to it all over the world than Christians. Mounting evidence suggests that followers of Jesus are being persecuted in *growing numbers*, causing Save the Persecuted Christians and other advocates to redouble efforts on their behalf.

“Today we were encouraged that President Trump indeed spoke boldly and specifically about protecting the world’s Christian minorities at the National Prayer Breakfast this morning,” said Dede Laugesen, Save the Persecuted Christians executive director.

The letter continues that last year a U.K. government-sponsored report by the Bishop of Truro Philip Mounstephen

found that anti-Christian persecution is “coming close to genocide.” Open Doors USA’s 2020 World Watch List estimates 260 million Christians globally are being heavily persecuted for their faith. This number, immense as it is, represents but a fraction of those suffering in Christ’s name when those less violently persecuted are included. Aid to the Church in Need assesses an even larger population—327 million followers of Jesus—or about the same number of men, women and children currently living in the United States.

“There are many steps that can be taken to help address this horrific outrage taking place, not in the distant past, but in our time,” the letter-signers implored. “You have, for instance, demonstrated the effectiveness of holding persecutors accountable and imposing costs for their crimes against humanity in connection with your successful effort to free Pastor Andrew Brunson. We believe more of that kind of pressure is in order and urgently needed now.

“In the meantime, there is an action that you and your subordinates could readily take that would make a material difference to the hundreds of millions of Christians suffering for their faith: You can give them hope and even some protection by making their plight a special focus of your administration’s public and private diplomacy.

“Making a special point of the enormity of the crisis afflicting Christians need not diminish your administration’s concern about other religious minorities—and more than your rightly focusing on egregious Iranian terrorism lessens our opposition to that perpetrated by others, or your singling out China’s comprehensively predatory trade practices detracts from the administration’s successful efforts to correct other unfair bilateral and multilateral trade relationships.

“Unfortunately, of late it seems that anti-Christian persecution is increasingly addressed in official communications, if at all, as just one of numerous examples of

disregard for religious freedom. Often, anti-Muslim persecution, for example by the Chinese or Burmese governments, is accorded far greater attention. Unacceptable as such oppression is—and for that matter, persecution of anyone for their religious beliefs—such focus ignores the proverbial elephant in the room: the vastly larger number of Christians being imprisoned, tortured, raped, banished or killed simply because they follow Jesus.

“Subordinating the immense persecution of Christians to a more generic focus on religious freedom has another risk. It can have the effect of affording certain communities the latitude to assert that, since their faith is superior to all others, their exercise of religious liberty entitles them to restrict its practice by others. This is not a hypothetical concern. Such religious supremacism is estimated to be the proximate cause of at least eighty percent of the persecution of Christians taking place around the world. It must be called out and opposed, not in any way enabled, however unintentionally.

“We are gratified that the United Kingdom has just moved to accept in full the Bishop of Truro’s recommendations for addressing the nightmare of anti-Christian persecution. It offers a template for action by our own government. We urge you in addition to begin immediately to build on your extraordinary record of care and engagement on behalf of religious believers by using your ‘bully pulpit’ and other vehicles available to your administration boldly to call attention to the uniquely horrific persecution facing followers of Christ.”

Besides Save the Persecuted Christians leaders Laugesen; Frank J. Gaffney, president and CEO; Rev. Kevin Jessip, chairman; Ann Schockett, director; and all STPC board members, signers to the letter include: David A. Keene, *The Washington Times*; Sara C. Ballenger, Capitol Hill Prayer Partners; Roxann Moss, Christians In Crisis; Kris Kubal, Intercessors for America;

Faith McDonnell, Institute on Religion and Democracy; Ann Buwalda, Jubilee Campaign USA; Eric Metaxas, "The Eric Metaxas Show"; Evelyn Deleon, Embassy of United Chaplains; William J. Murray, Religious Freedom Coalition; Stephen Enada, International Committee on Nigeria; Jeffrey Daly, National Day of Repentance; Gloria Puldu, Leah Foundation; among many others.