

Faith Leaders Call On Congress to Halt 'Toxic Rhetoric'

✖ Are you weary of hearing the debates between the left and the right about who's to blame for the Tucson shootings? You are not alone.

Now, more than 50 high-profile faith leaders—including T.J. Jakes, Joel Hunter and Sam Rodriguez—are taking action.

Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders have banded together to pen an open letter to Congress. The letter calls for national "soul searching" and praying for members of Congress after Saturday's shooting spree in Arizona, which left six people dead and Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords critically injured.

The open letter is signed by more than 50 prominent national religious leaders, including heads of evangelical, mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim denominations, congregations, and organizations. The signers urge members of Congress to reject vitriolic and rancorous rhetoric, consider the consequences of their words, and engage political adversaries in a spirit of shared American values of civility and cooperation.

Here is the text of the letter:

Dear Members of Congress,

As Americans and members of the human family, we are grieved by the recent tragedy in Tucson, Arizona. As Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders, we pray together for all those wounded, including Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords as she fights for her life. Our hearts break for those lives lost and for the loved ones left behind. We also stand with you,

our elected officials, as you continue to serve our nation while coping with the trauma of this senseless attack.

This tragedy has spurred a sorely needed time of soul searching and national public dialogue about violent and vitriolic political rhetoric. We strongly support this reflection, as we are deeply troubled that rancor, threats and incivility have become commonplace in our public debates.

We appreciate the sacrifices you make and risks you incur by accepting a call to public service, and we urge you to continue to serve as stewards of our democracy by engaging ideological adversaries not as enemies, but as fellow Americans.

In our communities and congregations, we pledge to foster an environment conducive to the important and difficult debates so crucial to American democracy. In our churches, mosques and synagogues, we come together not as members of a certain political ideology or party, but as children of God and citizens called to build a more perfect union. We pray that you do the same.