

Trump's Religious Freedom Nominee Blocked

President Donald Trump is urging the Senate to confirm his nominee for Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, former Rep. Mark Walker (R-NC), amid rising global persecution of Christians. The nomination, stalled for eight months, has yet to receive a hearing from Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) Chairman Jim Risch (R-ID).

In a statement to Breitbart News, White House Deputy Press Secretary Anna Kelly confirmed that President Trump views the position as urgent. "President Trump has focused on promoting religious freedom and fighting antisemitism in a historic way. He wants all of his nominees confirmed as quickly as possible, including Mark Walker," Kelly said.

Despite this, Risch claimed Walker's nomination is not a White House priority and lacks sufficient support in the Senate. However, sources familiar with the process say otherwise. According to insiders, Walker would likely receive unanimous support from the SFRC if brought to a vote and has near-unanimous backing among Senate Republicans, with only possible hesitation from Sen. Ted Budd (R-NC).

The impasse has drawn criticism from religious leaders. Pastor Andrew Brunson, who was imprisoned in Turkey for two years until President Trump secured his release, sent a letter to Risch pressing for immediate action. Brunson warned of an escalating crisis: over 380 million Christians face high levels of persecution worldwide, including in China, Nigeria and Iran.

“This is not a marginal issue; it is one of the greatest human-rights crises of our time,” Brunson wrote. He stressed that the ambassador-at-large role is “not ceremonial” but a vital voice for the persecuted church.

Brunson emphasized the consequences of inaction. “Without this ambassador, the U.S. is without its most visible and authoritative voice speaking up for imprisoned pastors in Nicaragua, for villages burned in Nigeria, [and] for house-church leaders disappeared in China.”

Walker, a former Baptist pastor and congressman, has long championed religious freedom and Christian causes. His confirmation would renew focus on America’s role in defending the rights of believers around the globe.

As the 119th Congress nears its end, pressure is mounting on Senate leadership to stop obstructing this critical nomination and act on behalf of persecuted Christians.

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