

February 1, 2017

405 North Washington Street Suite 300 Falls Church, VA 22046 571.297.3177 21wilberforce.org

President Donald Trump The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W. Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write as a group of individuals who are religious leaders, educators and scholars, business professionals and human rights advocates representing thousands of citizens, faith communities, universities, schools, businesses, and non-governmental organizations. We stand in solidarity with the many religious and ethnic minorities around the world facing severe persecution for their deeply held religious beliefs or commitment to no belief. At a time when according to the Pew Research Center, 74% of the world lives in places with high or very high persecution, we urge you to demonstrate your sincere commitment to these individuals and faith communities with the following action:

Nominating in your first 100 days an Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom

People of all faiths – Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus included – face persecution that at times manifests itself both as heavy-handed government restrictions that try to control people and violent social hostilities that undermine the rule of law. Just a few examples:

- Continuing genocide of Christians, Yazidis and others who are forced to the edge of extinction by the Islamic State
- Increasing anti-Semitism across Europe
- Blasphemy laws used as a tactic to silence and settle scores among people, such as Asia Bibi in Pakistan
- Tightening control over Tibetan Buddhists, over 100 of whom have self-immolated in protest
- Attacks and murder of secular bloggers in Bangladesh
- Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar being actively displaced and denied citizenship in their own country
- Nigerian families facing a Level 5 famine and Boko Haram, one of the world's most lethal terrorist organizations

By nominating an Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom in your first 100 days you can signal your commitment to people of faith and freedom of conscience, in a way that requires no new taxes and no new legislation while strengthening highly effective offices.

As the first nation to constitutionally guarantee religious freedom, the United States has a great history of standing for this "first freedom" around the world, a right closely tied to other human rights, economics, and security. Your swift action in this regard would extend American leadership in this most critical of issues at this most pressing of times.

Sincerely,

Dr. Randel Everett

President, 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative



(Select titles included for representative identification purposes only) | N | T | A T

Rolando Aguirre
President, Hispanic Convention of
Texas, San Antonio, TX

Tim Ahlen Pastor, Forest Meadow Baptist Church, Dallas, TX

Mustafa Akhwand Executive Director, Shia Rights Watch Inc., Washington, DC

Connie Anderson Adjunct Professor, Concordia University, Chicago, IL

Gary Anthony Associate Pastor, First Baptist Church Temple, TX

Randall Babin Director of Missions, Soda Lake Baptist Association, Marshall, TX

Jim Baucom Pastor, Columbia Baptist, Falls Church, VA

Jennifer Bashaw Assistant Professor of Religion, East Texas Baptist University, Marshall, TX

Stephen Baskerville Professor of Government, Patrick Henry College, Purcellville, VA

Blair Blackburn President, East Texas Baptist University, Marshall, TX

Catherine Boyle Intern Minister, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond, VA James Brewer Youth Pastor, First Baptist Church Hallsville, TX

Elijah Brown General Secretary, North American Baptist Fellowship, Falls Church, VA

Patrick Brown Pastor, Northlake Baptist Church, Dallas, TX

Travis Bundrick
Director, Strategic Church
Solutions, Georgetown, TX

Jared Burt
Pastor, Taylor's Valley Baptist
Church, Temple, TX

R. Clark Butts President, BCCK Engineering, Midland, TX

Ann Buwalda Executive Director, Jubilee Campaign, Fairfax, VA

Jeff Byrd President, Denison Forum, Dallas, TX

Daniel Calingaert Acting President, Freedom House, Washington, DC

Kenneth Camp Managing Editor, Baptist Standard, Plano, TX

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon Executive Director, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), Washington, DC Todd Chasteen Vice President of Public Policy, Samaritan's Purse, Boone, NC

John Chowning
Executive Assistant to the
President, Campbellsville
University, Campbellsville, KY

Robert Cochran Executive Director & Minister, D.C. Baptist Convention, Washington, DC

Michael Connor Pastor, Immanuel Bible Church, Springfield, VA

Mike Corb Pastor, First Baptist Church Granbury, Texas

Taylor Cruse Founder, Logsdon Freedom Initiative, Abilene, TX

Randy Dale Assistant Bell County Attorney, Belton, TX

Michael De Dora Director of Government Affairs, Center for Inquiry, Washington, DC

Jim Denison CEO, Denison Forum, Dallas, TX

Dr. John Diamond Director, Peacemakers Outreach, Corry, PA

David Dockery President, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL



Blake Dover Minister of Students, Crossroads Baptist Church, Marshall, TX

Evan Duncan College Pastor, First Baptist Church Temple, TX

Dr. Enoch Dusingizimana Bishop, CECA Harvest Baptist Community, Rwanda

Mohamed Elsanousi Director, The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, Helsinki, Finland

Neil Everett Pastor First Baptist Church Calhoun, LA

Tim Everett Pastor, Open Door Fellowship, Springhill, LA

Don Fawcett Network Missionary, Heart of Texas Baptist Network Resource Center, Early, TX

Rev. Dr. Brian W. Ford Executive Director, Churchnet, Jefferson City, MO

Robert Fowler President, Brown, Fowler & Alsup, Houston, TX

Jeremy Franks
Pastor, Fellowship Baptist
Church, Belton, TX

Getaneh Getaneh Bishop, Watch and Pray Ministries, Midland, TX Mike Ghouse President, Center for Pluralism, Washington, DC

Lela Gilbert Fellow, Hudson Institute, Washington, DC

James Gray Pastor, First Baptist Church of Ore City, TX

Julio Guarneri Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, McAllen, TX

Corey Gummelt Minister to Students, Parkwayhills Baptist church, Plano, TX

Lynn Harper II Pastor, Promised Land Missionary Baptist Church, Dallas, TX

Gabe Hatch Pastor, Irving Baptist Fellowship, Irving, TX

Leonard Hatcher Pastor, Oasis Baptist Church, Lancaster, TX

James Hill Executive Director, Churchnet, Jefferson City, MO

Phil Hodson Pastor, Christ the King Presbyterian Church (OPC), Longview, TX

Jeph Holloway Professor of Theology and Ethics, East Texas Baptist University, Marshall, TX Jon Holstine President, Holstine and Associates, Alexandria, VA

James Houston Pastor, Fairview Baptist Church, Marshall, TX

Anna Hyvärinen Human Rights Specialist, Finnish Ecumenical Council, Finland

Karen Jackson Executive Director, Faith Inclusion Network, Norfolk, VA

Ryan Jespersen Director of Urban Mission, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, TX

Kevin Jessip President, Global Strategic Alliance, Wellington, FL

Rick Johnson Professor, East Texas Baptist University, Marshall, TX

Bill Jones Executive Director, Texas Baptists Committed, Houston, TX

Joseph T. Kassab Founder and CEO, Iraqi Christians Advocacy and Empowerment Institute (ICAE), West Bloomfield Township, MI

Brian Kaylor Editor & President, Word&Way, Jefferson City, MO

Tyler Keese Youth Minister, Carpenter's Cross Baptist Church, Tyler, TX



Amjad Khan National Director of Public Affairs, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA, Silver Spring, MD

Hazhar Khdir Hardwired, Richmond, VA

Brad Kimbrough Vice President of Infrastructure McLane, Belton, TX

Marv Knox Editor, Baptist Standard, Plano, TX

Kathy Kuhl CEO, Learn Differently LLC, Herndon, VA

Patty Lane
Director of Intercultural
Ministries, Baptist General
Convention of Texas, Dallas, TX

Aaron Lee Disaster Relief Coordinator, Baptist General Association of Virginia, Richmond, VA

John Lee Academic Dean, John Leland Center for Theological Studies, Arlington, VA

Howard Levin Executive Director, OneHeartDC, Washington, DC

Gregory Loewer Pastor for Missions, Columbia Baptist Church, Falls Church, VA Patrick Luecke Youth and Children's Minister, First Baptist Forney En Espanol, Forney, TX

Michael MacCaughelty Assistant Pastor, Altadena Valley Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, AL

Arturo Malacara Pastor, Iglesia La Ciudad, Dallas, TX

J. Morgan Malone Executive Director, Denton Baptist Association, Corinth, TX

Trisha Miller Manari Executive Coordinator, Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Falls Church, VA

Doug Marsceau Pastor, Antioch Christian Church, Greenville, SC

Molly Marshall President, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Shawnee, KS

Terence Mayo Associate Pastor, Kingdom Worship Center, Upper Marlboro, MD

Gary McCaleb Pastor, Kessler Park Baptist Church, Dallas, TX

Rick McClatchy Field Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Texas, San Antonio, TX Kevin McMahan Pastor, Journey Church North Little Rock, AR

David Michelson Assistant Professor, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

Louay Mikhael Head of Foreign Relations, The Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council

Dean Miller Mission Development, Baptist General Association of Virginia, Richmond, VA

Robert Miller Pastor, First Baptist Church Texas City, TX

Greg Mitchell Co-Chair, International Religious Freedom Roundtable, Stone Ridge, VA

Scott Morgan President, Red Eagle Enterprises, Washington, DC

Kyle Morton Pastor, Seven Locks Baptist Church, Potomac, MD

Sam Moseley Attorney & former Reagan and Bush 41 Appointee, Marshall, TX

Mark Neeley Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Mineola, Texas

David Nelson President, SIG Partners LLC, Dallas, TX



Elizabeth Newman Professor of Theology and Ethics, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, VA

Thang Nguyen CEO & President, Boat People SOS, Falls Church, VA

Robert Nicholson President, The Philos Project, New York City, NY

Kristina Olney
Director of Government
Relations, In Defense of
Christians, Washington, DC

Paul Oluleye Associate Pastor, Living Faith Baptist Church, Irving, TX

Greg Oppenhuis
Pastor, Big Springs Baptist
Church, Garland, TX

Dennis Parrish
President & Founder, Parrish
Productions LLC, Grand Prairie,
TX

Suzii Paynter Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Decatur, GA

Curtis Ramsey-Lucas Executive Editor, The Christian Citizen, American Baptist Home Mission Societies, Valley Forge, PA

Melissa Reid Director, North American Religious Liberty Association, Riverside, CA David Rice Pastor, Crossroads Baptist Church, Marshall, TX

Robert Riley Principal, KickStart Specialists, LLC, Richmond, VA

Judith Rood Professor of History and Middle East Studies, Biola University, La Mirada, CA

Dennis Roser Pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church, Beloit, WI

Donald Sewell
Director, Faith in Action
Initiatives, Baylor Scott & White
Health, Temple, TX

Ann-Lewise Shaw Executive Director, Good Samaritan Advocates, McLean, VA

Scott Shelton Senior Pastor, Heritage Baptist Church, Annapolis, MD

Bill Skaar Pastor, First Baptist Church, Grand Prairie, TX

Kristine Slate
Director, LeTourneau University,
Longview, TX

Walter Snyder
Pastor, Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod, St. Louis, MO

Gregory Stanton President, Genocide Watch, Washington, DC Todd Still Dean and Professor, Baylor University, Waco, TX

Tommy Stogner
Pastor, Oakville Baptist Church,
Oakville, TX

Stephen Stookey Professor of Religion, Church History &Theology, Director of Online Religion Programs, Wayland Baptist University, Plainview, TX

William Tetreault President, Alliance for Family Leadership, Freeport, NY

Mervyn Thomas Chief Executive, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Surrey, United Kingdom

Allan Thompson Director of Missions, Mountain State Baptist Association, Princeton, WV

Bill Tillman Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, TX

William Watkins Senior Pastor, retired, Central Baptist Church, Marshall, Texas

Michael Westbury Pastor, First Baptist Church, North Houston, TX

Dee Whitten Executive Director, NorthStar Church Network, Annandale, VA



Cindy Wiles Executive Director, Restore Hope, Arlington, TX

Calvin Williams Lead Pastor, Christ's Mercy Church, Katy, TX

Ralph Wood Professor of Theology and Literature, Baylor University, Waco, TX

Mark Yoakum Director of Church Ministries, Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, Grapevine, TX



Brianna Anding James Bender Jermaca Brown

Victor Abayomi Nancy Bennett Jeri Brown

Derrick Adams Kevin Bennie Carolyn Brustad

Laura Adams Debbie Benson Jerry Buccola

Mubarik Ahmad Jerry Benson Zea Bud

Naseer Ahmad Margaret Berg William Burchard

Ton Alcantara Verlyn Bergen Marilyn Burns

Tania Alonzo Ashley Berner Sara Burt

Sarah Amick Jill Berry Abigail Bush

Michele Amorosof John Best Caleb Bush

Melanie Anderson Leigh Bielkiewicz Charles Byrd

Kayla Andrews Bob Billups Debra Camp

Duby Ariaz Adrian Bird Kevin Campbell

Elizabeth Armas Yvonne Black-Hughes Rhonda Carden

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Thomas Bakke Laura Bramon Sandy Chapman

Rachel Barkley Linda Brashears Sandra Chapman

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Nathaniel Bass Linda Brian Gary Charwin

Ryan Bates Julian Bridges Alicia Chesser

Payton Beggs Amy Brown Nolan Chumbley

Steve Beggs Kevin Brown Richard Clapsaddle



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Susan King



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Rebecca Niven Miia Perkola Ehsan Rehan Angela Nobles Jen Permenter Sarah Renfro Lawrence Ressler Walter Norris Robert Perry Raymond Ochoa Bruce Peterson Patsy Rhoden Jo Reina Rhodes Deborah O'Connor Erin Phelps Alba Rice Nicholas O'Connor Patricia Pickens **Brian Odom** Megan Pike Mary Ricks Larry Pittman Linda Ringler Austin Odom Jacqueline Ritchey Patricia Oertli Meagan Pitts Dayo Ojebisi Wanda Plouet Mary Roberts Elizabeth Ponder James Roberts Odiraa Okala Matthew Porter Kevin Robertson **Uriel Olguin Judy Oliver Bradley Porter** Travelle Robinson Shelby Robinson Dan Potter Larry Oliver Michael Olmsted Sara Robinson Marquita Potter Curt Olson **Gerald Potts** Erin Rodewald Stella Powell Susan Rodgers Jennifer Ortiz Susan Prokosch Frank Rodriguez Patricia Osborne Randolph Rudy Pulido Jose Rodriguez Lou Ozan Benjamin Rogers Danny Pullen Carol Packard Rhonda Roscoe James Palmer Kim Pyle Victoria Rusinko Henriika Palola **Charles Quigley** Mikayla Russell **Robert Quiring** Paula Parker Elizabeth Russell Adam Pate Caroline Ragsdale **Holly Ryals** Micah Raies Heather Pate Gail Ryberg Mary Anne Ramirez Mary Ann Patterson Linda Salazar Virginia Patton Jacqueline Ramos John Rasmussen Lawk Salih Joe Paul Lee Ann Rathbun **David Sawyer** Virp Paulanto Deke Sawyer David Pearcy Anthony Ray

Danielle Rayyan

Rhonda Penning

Beth Scaer



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Nick Turner

Sarah Ueckert

Matt Upshaw

David Stoltzfus

Virginia Stoops

Amanda Stracener

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Chad Widmer

Daniel Williams



Lillian Williams

Quantel Williams

Bob Wilson

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Casey Winn

Betty Witherspoon

Edward Wolf

Marylynn Wolf

Caitlin Wood

Beth Wood

Pamela Woodberry

Matthew Workman

Ted Wrenn

Jonathan Wright

Irene Wright

Gary Yates

Ryan Yezak

Shino Yokotsuka

John Young

Heather Youngblood

Allen Yount

Ann Zernial

Ed اه Hafiz Fayyaz