



Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

February 29, 2024

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I urge Congress to pass S. 3764, The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Reauthorization Act of 2024. USCIRF has a proven track record of serving as an independent and bipartisan organization dedicated to defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad. USCIRF's current authorization expires on September 30, 2024. This bill would extend USCIRF's mandate for another two years, allowing USCIRF to continue its important work of reviewing religious freedom violations and making policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress. It is my hope that this legislation will be swiftly adopted so that our nation can continue to prioritize the advancement of this basic human right around the world.

The Catholic Church has long viewed religious freedom as a basic human right since it is rooted in the dignity of the human person and is critical to the health of societies. Over the years, USCCB has advocated strongly for the mission of USCIRF because of its critical role in promoting human rights around the world by monitoring and promoting religious freedom. At a time when international religious freedom is increasingly imperiled, it is vital that USCIRF be reauthorized so that it can continue to highlight the need to protect those who are discriminated against, harassed, and even killed for their faith.

In his address to the VII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions on September 14, 2022, Pope Francis said, "Religious freedom is a basic, primary and inalienable right needed to be promoted everywhere." And in 2015, during his apostolic visit to the United States, he affirmed, "In a world where various forms of modern tyranny seek to suppress religious freedom, or try to reduce it to a subculture without right to a voice in the public square, or to use religion as a pretext for hatred and brutality, it is imperative that the followers of the various religions join their voices in calling for peace, tolerance and respect for the dignity and rights of others."

I ask you to call for the protection of international religious freedom by supporting S. 3764 and working towards its quick passage.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan, M.L.M.
Bishop of Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace



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February 29, 2024

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I urge Congress to pass H.R. 7025, The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Reauthorization Act of 2024. USCIRF has a proven track record of serving as an independent and bipartisan organization dedicated to defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad. USCIRF's current authorization expires on September 30, 2024. This bill would extend USCIRF's mandate for another two years, allowing USCIRF to continue its important work of reviewing religious freedom violations and making policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress. It is my hope that this legislation will be swiftly adopted so that our nation can continue to prioritize the advancement of this basic human right around the world.

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I ask you to call for the protection of international religious freedom by supporting H.R. 7025 and working towards its quick passage.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan, M.L.M.
Bishop of Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace