



## *Department of Social Development and World Peace*

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March 28, 2006

His Excellency Said Tayeb Jawad  
Ambassador of the Islamic State of Afghanistan  
2341 Wyoming Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20008

**FAX: 202-483-6488**

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

I write to you as the Chairman of the Committee on International Policy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In solidarity with many in this country and throughout the world, including many devout Muslims who have been our dialogue partners, our Conference is relieved that it appears that this trial and possible execution of an Afghan convert to Christianity, Mr. Abdul Rahman, will not go forward. Nevertheless, the idea that this person could be brought to court and charged with a capital crime for his personal decision to embrace Christianity is totally unacceptable.

The Constitution of Afghanistan purports to uphold freedom of religion for all of its citizens. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the deepest roots of our religious traditions support the free assent that each person must make in their search for God. This principle of religious liberty, which we consider the first of all freedoms, is simply incompatible with those aspects of the Afghan constitution and laws that declare a citizen who adopts a faith other than Islam merits execution at the hands of the State. The laws of Afghanistan should fully reflect its constitutional and international commitments to protect religious freedom.

Our Conference also appeals to the spirit of compassion for this man so that the rule of law may be joined to a necessary exercise of mercy and tolerance.

Mr. Ambassador, I would be most grateful if you would transmit to your government these profound concerns of the Catholic Bishops of the United States. I send you my personal greetings and assure you of my prayers for you and your country.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski  
Bishop of Orlando  
Chairman, Committee on International Policy