



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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March 1, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

As Chairman of the Committee for International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I urge you to move quickly to appoint an Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and to make that individual an integral part of your leadership team. This appointment would help to demonstrate the Administration's commitment to religious freedom, a fundamental human right that provides a foundation for other rights.

The Catholic Church has long championed concerns about religious freedom around the world. We supported legislation that led to the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, which resulted in the creation of both the Office of International Religious Freedom in your Department as well as the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Over the past 10 years four Catholic bishops have served as Commissioners for USCIRF and other bishops of our Conference would welcome future opportunities to contribute to the work of USCIRF.

From the perspective of the Catholic Church, religious freedom is closely tied to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and forms a foundation for all human rights. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* states: "The effective recognition of the right to freedom of conscience and religious freedom is one of the highest goods and one of the most serious duties of every people that truly wishes to ensure the good of the individual and society." A report just released by the Chicago Council of Global Affairs notes the growing influence of religion and religious actors in governmental affairs and societies around the world. Given the importance of religious freedom to all human rights, we believe the Administration needs to quickly nominate a highly qualified individual to serve as Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom in order to advance its human rights agenda in the 21st century.

In introducing the 2009 Annual Report on Religious Freedom, you spoke of the Administration's commitment to the cause of religious freedom, saying, "That's why we make the issue of religious freedom a priority in our diplomacy." We ask you to act on that priority and appoint a well qualified Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom soon and include the new Ambassador as an integral part of the decision-making process at the State Department.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace