

# INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ROUNDTABLE

January 31, 2020

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600 Australia

Re: Inquiry into whether Australia should enact legislation comparable to the United States Global Magnitsky Act

Dear Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade,

We, the undersigned individuals and organizations, are writing to applaud the Australian Parliament's inquiry into whether Australia should enact legislation comparable to the United States Global Magnitsky Act. We humbly ask the Australian Parliament to follow up this inquiry by introducing and passing legislation on targeted sanctions against government officials and other actors for having committed gross human rights violations or acts of high-level corruption.

Many of us are participants in the U.S.-based International Religious Freedom (IRF) Roundtable. With ten years of continuous operations, the IRF Roundtable is an informal group of individuals from non-governmental organizations who gather regularly to discuss the most pressing issues facing communities and individuals of all faiths and no faith, when they have their right to religious freedom violated. Further, the IRF Roundtable is a multifaith venue for collaboration to advance the right to religious freedom, which is a fundamental human right for everyone, no matter his or her specific faith. Members of the IRF Roundtable and its Justice and Accountability Working Group have recommended cases to the U.S. government for sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Act.

Religious freedom has come under increasing attack over the past decade. According to the Pew Research Center's latest annual study on global restrictions on religion, 83% of the world's population lived in countries with high or very high levels of restrictions and/or hostilities in 2017, up from 79% in 2015, 74% in 2014; and 68% in 2007. We recommend that the Joint Standing Committee give special consideration to severe violations of freedom of religion or belief as defined in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Specifically, we recommend that the Joint Standing Committee follow the examples of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and other countries, and provide a mechanism for sanctioning government officials and other actors who are responsible for or complicit in "extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights" or "acts of significant corruption." It is especially important for Australia to pass such a law given its import and influence throughout the Indo-Pacific region, where gross human rights and religious freedom violations continue, and in many cases, are increasing.

# INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM R O U N D T A B L E

We further recommend that the Global Magnitsky Act incorporate, as part of its enforcement, a mechanism for regular consultation between the implementing agencies and human rights advocates, civil society organizations and victim witnesses both in Australia and in countries of concern. From our experience, such regular consultation is key to the effective implementation of the Global Magnitsky Act and other sanctions and human rights monitoring regimes in the United States and globally.

Finally, it is imperative that the Global Magnitsky Act include measures to protect individuals who report rights violations from reprisal by those being reported. One possible measure would be to mandate that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs publish an annual “reprisals” report that lists specific incidents of reprisal and the identity of those responsible for each act of reprisal.

We again applaud the Australian Parliament’s intention to enact legislation comparable to the U.S. Global Magnitsky Act.

Respectfully Yours,

Greg Mitchell, International Religious Freedom Roundtable  
Sean Nelson, ADF International (Co-Chair, Justice and Accountability Working Group)  
Sylvia Stanard, Church of Scientology National Affairs Office (Co-Chair, Justice and Accountability Working Group)

## ORGANIZATIONS

21Wilberforce

ADF International

Advocates International

ALTSEAN

Association Against Religious Persecution

Association for the Advancement of Freedom of Religion or Belief in Vietnam

Boat People SOS - Religious Freedom Project

Buddhist Solidarity Association

Campaign to Abolish Torture in Vietnam

Church of Almighty God

Church of Scientology National Affairs Office

# INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM R O U N D T A B L E

Citizen Power Initiatives for China

Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam

Con Dau Parishioners Association

Coptic Solidarity

CSW UK

Human Rights Without Frontiers

Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam

Independent Old Catholic Church

Institute for Global Engagement

International Center for Rights and Justice

International Christian Concern

International Christian Foundation for Democracy

Islamic Renaissance Front

Minh Van Foundation

Open Dialogue Foundation

Open Doors USA

Religious Freedom Institute

Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church of America

Safeguard Defenders

Save the Persecuted Christians

Stefanus Alliance International

Tahrir Alnisa Foundation

# INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM R O U N D T A B L E

Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, Office of External Affairs

Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union

Uyghur Human Rights Project

Vietnam Coalition Against Torture

Vietnamese Women for Human Rights

## Individuals

*With title and organization for identification purposes*

Jeff Chen

VP of Advocacy, Falun Dafa (Falun Gong) Association of Washington, D.C.

Louisa Greve

Chair, U.S. Committee, Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China

Scott Morgan

Red Eagle Enterprises

Iffat Rahman

African Bar Association

Dr. Jianli Yang

Citizen Power Initiatives for China