

August 6, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

So many people advocate today in the name of “human rights” that social goals are often confused with God-given fundamental or unalienable rights, a problem leading to less individual freedom, not more. Clarification of human rights is the first step in an effective strategy to protect human rights around the world. For this reason, we welcome your announcement of the U.S. Commission on Unalienable Rights which will ground U.S. foreign policy on human rights in America’s founding principles of individual dignity and freedoms, later reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As America’s founders state in the Declaration of Independence, unalienable rights are based in natural law and include “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” Rights like freedom of conscience, speech, and belief are “natural” or “God-given” because they’re inherent to all human beings—we are born with them. These rights are to be *protected* by the government, not given by the government, as demonstrated in the U.S. Bill of Rights.

In like manner, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognizes man’s inherent dignity and that “the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” Human rights are the foundation of our common dignity, and when we protect this foundation, we then have the freedom to advocate for our goals, ideologies, and political preferences.

However, the foundation of human rights is being watered-down by activists around the world promoting political ideology and identity group goals as “human rights.” Examples of this type of activism include: [the right to a clean environment](#), the right to [free university education](#), the right to [internet access](#), the right of [access to abortion as healthcare](#), and even the [right to not be offended](#) (in direct conflict with the clear right to freedom of expression). This dilution undermines fundamental principles, including the fact that *all* people are equal and have common dignity. While many such activists are busy furthering their policy preferences as “rights,” they ignore clear and expressed human rights like that protected by Article 18 of the UDHR—the right to choose and change one’s faith—which is still heavily suppressed in far too many countries around the world.

Ideological activism presented as “rights” distracts from the fundamental purposes of protecting human rights. This critically undercuts the focus on the *real* victims of human rights abuse such as—a pregnant [Sudanese woman imprisoned for her Christian faith](#) and forced to give birth with her legs in shackles, men in Syria and Iraq being [thrown off buildings](#) to their death, a girl being

[shot in the head](#) for simply wanting to go to school, and the millions [of Uyghur Muslims detained, imprisoned, and oppressed](#) because of their faith.

A diluted human rights narrative allows totalitarian and authoritarian governments the [guise](#) of promoting social or economic benefits as “human rights,” while simultaneously becoming egregious violators of fundamental human rights themselves as they censor freedom of the press, oppress religious minorities, or imprison political dissidents. The UDHR called for “the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear ...”

Fundamental human rights are for all people—regardless of their background, socio-economic status, or beliefs, and we believe the U.S. Commission on Unalienable Rights can bring focus back to protecting needful victims of human rights abuse. For these reasons everyone—including the most prominent human rights organizations—should get squarely behind this commission.

We applaud you and your staff for your “fresh thinking” approach to U.S. foreign policy. Thank you for committing the time, resources, and effort to protecting the fundamental human rights of all people.

The U.S. Commission on Unalienable Rights can do more than clarify and help remedy human rights abuses; it has the potential to reassert the *right* kind of American leadership on the world stage. We have seen this before: Eleanor Roosevelt led and chaired the Universal Declaration of Human Rights drafting committee. We are grateful for your leadership in creating the U.S. Commission on Unalienable Rights to continue America’s legacy in defending universal human rights around the world.

The world is better and freer when America leads.

Sincerely,

Penny Nance
CEO and President
Concerned Women for America

Kay Coles James
President
The Heritage Foundation

Tony Perkins
President
Family Research Council

Gary L. Bauer
President
American Values

Carrie Lukas
President
Independent Women’s Forum

Ralph Reed
Founder and Chairman
Faith & Freedom Coalition

The Honorable J. Kenneth Blackwell
Former, U.S. Ambassador
United Nations Human Rights Commission

Anne Schlafly Cori
Chairman
Eagle Forum

William L. Walton
President
Council for National Policy

Mr. Kelly Shackelford, Esq.
President, CEO & Chief Counsel
First Liberty

Mark Tooley
President
Institute on Religion and Democracy

Heather R. Higgins
CEO
Independent Women's Voice

Wendy Wright
President
Christian Freedom International

Gary Marx
Former E.D.
Faith & Freedom Coalition

Rabbi Pesach Lerner
President
Coalition for Jewish Values

Peter Zoehrer
Executive Director
Forum for Religious Freedom-Europe
(FOREF)

Fr. Frank Pavone
National Director
Priests for Life

Art Ally
President
Timothy Partners, Ltd.

John Stemberger
President & General Counsel
Florida Family Policy Council

Frank Wright, Ph.D.
President & CEO
D. James Kennedy Ministries

Catherine Glenn Foster
President and CEO
Americans United for Life

James Bopp, Jr.
General Counsel
James Madison Center for Free Speech

Austin Ruse
President
C-Fam

David Nammo
CEO & Executive Director
Christian Legal Society

Eunie Smith
President
Eagle Forum

Mark Fitzgibbons
President of Corporate Affairs
American Target Advertising, Inc.

Janet Morana
Co-Founder
Silent No More Awareness Campaign

Dran Reese
President
The Salt & Light Council

Steve Berger
Sr. Pastor
Grace Chapel

Marlo Tucker
State Director, California
Concerned Women for America

Ruth Smith
Area Director, California
Concerned Women for America

Terri Johannessen
State Director, Florida
Concerned Women for America

Barbara Ferraro
State Director, Hawaii
Concerned Women for America

Tanya Ditty
State Director, Georgia
Concerned Women for America

Deborah Leininger
State Director, Illinois
Concerned Women for America

Tamara Scott
State Director, Iowa
Concerned Women for America

Barbara Saldivar
State Director, Kansas
Concerned Women for America

Penny Morrell
State Director, Maine
Concerned Women for America

Haven Howard
Area Director, Missouri
Concerned Women for America

Jill Coward
State Director, North Carolina
Concerned Women for America

Linda Thorson
State Director, North Dakota
Concerned Women for America

Linda Schauer
State Director, South Dakota
Concerned Women for America

Kori Peterson
Area Director, Texas
Concerned Women for America

Beverly Roberts
Area Director, Texas
Concerned Women for America

Toni DeLancey
State Director, Virginia
Concerned Women for America

Maureen Richardson
State Director, Washington
Concerned Women for America

cc: Senate Foreign Relations Committee
House Foreign Affairs Committee