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USA | Letter Calls for Strengthened Policies on Freedom of Religion or Belief

The US-based International Religious Freedom (IRF) Roundtable, a multi-faith network of organizations and individuals advocating for freedom of religion or belief, will publish a letter on June 27 calling on the US government to further protect and promote international religious freedom.

The letter will be published following the second annual IRF event on Capitol Hill, co-hosted by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), and expresses the IRF Roundtable's concern "regarding the current state of international religious freedom, which is one of deepening crisis." The letter includes recommendations "on how the United States can strengthen its IRF policy such that freedom of religion, conscience, and belief—the foundation of human dignity—is protected and promoted, resulting in reduced persecution and repression, as well as greater security and stability worldwide."

While the IRF Roundtable welcomes the fact that "Secretary Kerry has extended the Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group of his Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society, a non-partisan, religiously diverse advisory committee that presents recommendations to the State Department in response to its expressed need for improved engagement with religious communities and understanding of religious dynamics worldwide," it reiterates that "it is not enough."

The recommendations include measures to strengthen the mechanisms of the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), which "have been allowed to wither and atrophy, IRF policy has not been integrated into US foreign policy and national security, and we have not had a significant impact on other governments."

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "Together with the IRF Roundtable, we urge the US government to engage fully with the recommendations in this letter. In the week when the EU published new [Guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief](#), affirming its commitment to addressing violations of this right, we encourage the US government to strengthen its policies in

order to ensure a systematic, coordinated approach to the defense and promotion of this right worldwide.”