



11.10.14

## **GLOBAL | CSW Welcomes International Coalition of Parliamentarians for Religious Freedom**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomes the **launch** on Nov. 8 of an international coalition of parliamentarians committed to combating religious persecution and protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief worldwide.

The International Coalition of Parliamentarians Committed to Religious Freedom was initiated by Baroness Elizabeth Berridge, who leads the All Parties Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Freedom of Religion or Belief in the UK parliament, and the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

Parliamentarians from a diverse array of countries including Brazil, Burma, Canada, Germany, Nepal, Norway, South Africa, Tanzania, Turkey, United Kingdom and Uruguay attended the **launch**, as did the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Dr. Heiner Bielefeldt. Attendees signed the Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief, which laid out the core commitments of the group; namely, the full application of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, guaranteeing the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Parliamentarians attended the launch and signed the charter in an individual capacity and not as formal representatives of their respective governments.

Mervyn Thomas, CSW's Chief Executive and Chairman of the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP), said, "CSW warmly welcomes this global coalition of parliamentarians committed to advancing and defending the right to freedom of religion or belief worldwide. It is especially encouraging to see so many parliamentarians from developing nations joining the coalition, and we exhort them to vigorously defend this right both at home, where many nations have extensive protections for religious freedom in their constitutions which are not be applied consistently, and abroad, as their nations become increasingly influential in regional and international forums. We hope that these parliamentarians will use their positions as policymakers and legislators to be passionate advocates for freedom of religion or belief in their respective countries and regions."