



Jubilee Campaign Letters: To the OIC, Egypt, and Afghanistan

Jubilee Campaign wishes a very happy holiday season to you and your family, and we hope that you will find a way to celebrate safely with your loved ones.

In the week leading up to Christmas, we will be updating you on Jubilee Campaign's biggest projects of 2021 and the various successes we made in the realm of international religious freedom. For the first time in over a year, we were able to meet with our colleagues in person at the inaugural IRF Summit in Washington, D.C., where we planned future advocacy initiatives, held an event, and made new friends and partners. We are fully prepared and excited to bring our advocacy plans to fruition in 2022!

To President Biden: Emergency Protection and Evacuation of Afghan Religious Minorities

Prior to the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, Jubilee Campaign signed onto a letter initiative spearheaded by our colleagues at Refugee Council USA. The letter, addressed to President Biden, urged the United States to "urgently welcome Afghans fleeing violence and persecution" through the US Refugee Admissions Program or Humanitarian Parole. In early September following the completion of the US forces' withdrawal from Kabul, Jubilee submitted another sign-on letter to President Biden expressing our concern that minority faith communities, including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Shia Muslims, and others would face persecution under the Taliban. We urged the US to "create evacuation corridors and refugee assembly points" outside of Kabul airport to continue evacuations for vulnerable individuals in the months following.



During the Taliban rule of the late 1990s and early 2000s, Afghan Christians were flogged, forcibly amputated, and publicly executed simply for sharing a belief outside of the ruling fundamental Sunni Islam. At the outset of the Taliban's second takeover this August, there was widespread terror among Christians that they would soon be transported twenty years into the past with a reinstatement of Shariah punishment. As conversion to Christianity is seen as a crime of apostasy according to Sharia, Christians are worried that they will be one of the primary targets of these sinister punishments. Hazaras, one of Afghanistan's largest ethnic groups, predominantly identify as Shi'a Muslims and have a bloody history of being ruthlessly targeted for attacks by the Taliban and Islamic State. In July and August, while the Taliban was securing control over Ghazni and Daykundi provinces, they had killed and tortured at least 20 Hazaras – including one teenage girl shot to death – and mass evicted thousands of others from their homes. Taliban troops broke individuals' limbs one by one, strangled them with scarves, bound their arms and legs, and pulled their hair out, all before shooting them dead. Fortunately, the vast majority of Hindus and Sikhs

evacuated Afghanistan in the days preceding and following the Taliban's 2021 takeover; only some 250 remain. Approximately 140 of these Hindus and Sikhs, however, are not remaining in Afghanistan by choice; they had traveled from their shelter at Gurdwara Dashmesh Pita Sikh temple on 26 August to the Kabul airport only to be restricted from entering the grounds following an earlier suicide bombing. Days earlier, 72 Sikhs and Hindus were stopped by Taliban militants as they were trying to board a flight evacuating civilians; they were told they could not leave as they are citizens of Afghanistan.

To President Biden: Urge Ukraine to Drop False Charges Against Pastor Yaroslav Mysyak

Jubilee Campaign in August sent a letter to President Biden urging him to raise the case of Pastor Yaroslav Mysyak in his meetings with Ukrainian President Zelensky. Pastor Mysyak was falsely convicted for his grandparent's murders in 1999. These charges were made despite the lack of evidence tying Mysyak to the incident and despite that his uncle - who had been living with the grandparents - owed money to a group of violent criminals and attracted their attention. In order to obtain a coerced confession, Pastor Mysyak was physically tortured while in detention and threatened that his wife and daughter would be interrogated. The electric shocks he was subjected to left visible burn marks. Despite that his death sentence was overturned due to Ukraine's moratorium on the death penalty, he remains imprisoned 23 years later.

To Member Nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Abolish the Death Penalty for Apostasy and Blasphemy

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Throughout August and September, member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation condemned the actions of ISIS and have called on the Taliban to protect and respect the "right to life and security and the dignity of the Afghan people, in accordance with human rights treaties". Ironically, however, over ten OIC states themselves continue to enforce the death penalty for apostasy and/or blasphemy, including Brunei, Iran, Maldives, Mauritania, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, United Arab Emirates,

and Yemen. In our letter to OIC Secretary-General Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimen, we highlight this inconsistency and the fact that many OIC members states currently have tens of religious minorities in detention or on death row for apostasy and blasphemy-related charges. We call on all OIC members states to follow Sudan's lead and abolish the death sentence for non-violent conduct.

Whereas state-sanctioned death sentences are rarely carried out, the UN Secretary General has shared that even where a moratorium is in place these laws have a "chilling effect" on freedoms of "religion, expression, association and assembly." The United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has also highlighted that where such laws exist it encourages vigilante mobs or zealots to murder those alleged to have violated those laws even when states themselves do not carry out the death sentence or have a moratorium in place. The laws also justify the prolonged arbitrary detention of those who leave Islam, hold dissenting view or belong to minorities.

In Nigeria authorities continue to detain humanist Mubarak Bala despite a Federal Court ruling calling for his release, Nigerian authorities also detain Sufi singer Yusuf Yahaya on death row. In Pakistan, over 40 individuals languish in prisons under blasphemy charges where they are denied the right to a fair trial, including mentally disabled Stephen Masih,

a Christian man. In Saudi Arabia authorities detain blogger Raif Badawi on charges of apostasy for creating a platform for religious discourse and challenging extremist views. In Yemen, both the Houthi rebels and government authorities have detained individuals on the grounds of their conversion to Christianity. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, police authorities and judges use the death penalty to threaten, harass, and arrest those who leave the state religion, including Christian converts, atheist ex-Muslims, and others; and even execute them covertly under extraneous bogus charges to avoid international attention.

Jubilee Campaign Newsletter: Letters



Letters: Afghanistan, Egypt, and the OIC

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TO PRESIDENT BIDEN: URGE UKRAINE TO DROP FALSE CHARGES AGAINST PASTOR YAROSLAV MYSYAK

Jubilee Campaign in August sent a letter to President Biden urging him to raise the case of Pastor Yaroslav Mysyak in his meetings with Ukrainian President Zelensky. Pastor Mysyak was falsely convicted for his grandparents' murders in 1999. These charges were made despite the lack of evidence tying Mysyak to the incident and despite that his uncle - who had been living with the grandparents - owed money to a group of violent criminals and attracted their attention. In order to obtain a coerced confession, Pastor Mysyak was physically tortured while in detention and threatened that his wife and daughter would be interrogated. The electric shocks he was subjected to left visible burn marks. Despite that his death sentence was overturned due to Ukraine's moratorium on the death penalty, he remains imprisoned 23 years later.



Pictured Above: Hundreds of Afghan citizens waiting outside the Kabul Airport in hopes of a safe evacuation.

TO MEMBER NATIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION: ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY FOR APOSTASY AND BLASPHEMY

Throughout August and September, member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation condemned the actions of ISD and have called on the Taliban to protect and respect the "right to life and security and the dignity of the Afghan people, in accordance with human rights treaties". Ironically, however, over ten OIC states themselves continue to enforce the death penalty for apostasy and/or blasphemy, including Brunei, Iran, Maldives, Mauritania, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. In our letter to OIC Secretary-General Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimen, we highlight this inconsistency and the fact that many OIC members states currently have tens of religious minorities in detention on a death row for apostasy and blasphemy-related charges. We call on all OIC members states to follow Sudan's lead and abolish the death sentence for non-violent conduct.

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Please consider making a Christmas or year-end financial donation to Jubilee Campaign so that we can continue our crucial religious freedom and human rights advocacy in 2022!

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Jubilee Campaign USA | 9689-C Main Street, Fairfax, VA 22030

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