



INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
ROUNDTABLE

The Honorable Abdoulaye Diop  
Foreign Minister of Mali  
% the Embassy of Mali  
2130 R St NW  
Washington, DC 20008

25 January, 2021

Your Excellency,

We, the undersigned, are a group of individuals and organizations that advocate for human rights and religious freedom around the world. We represent diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds but are united in our goal of promoting freedom of religion or belief for all. We are writing to you to express our concern regarding the safety of US citizen Jeffery Ray Woodke, who was kidnapped in Niger.

Mr. Woodke, an American Missionary from California who has more than two decades of experience working in Niger, was kidnapped by unknown gunmen who were suspected of being Islamic Militants on the evening of October 14, 2016. Villagers trailed the kidnapers and reported that they were near the border with Mali at last report.

Mr. Woodke is one of the 66 Americans who are currently being held against their will in 16 countries around the world.<sup>1</sup> Needless to say we are concerned about the welfare of this gentleman.

Recent information provided to his family suggests that he may be in the custody of Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) which is a known affiliate of al-Qaeda operating in West Africa specifically in Mali. We appreciate the efforts by the Government of Mali to have the main Islamic body begin negotiations<sup>2</sup> with JNIM to bring peace to the country.

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<sup>1</sup> Patteson, Callie. "Families of US Hostages, Detainees Urge Biden to Take Action." *New York Post*, New York Post, 25 Oct. 2021, <https://nypost.com/2021/10/25/families-of-us-hostages-detainees-urge-biden-to-take-action/>.

<sup>2</sup> Al Jazeera. "Mali Asks Islamic Body to Open Negotiations with Al-Qaeda." *Al, Al Jazeera*, 19 Oct. 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/19/mali-asks-islamic-body-to-open-negotiations-with-al-qaeda>.

Therefore, we urge that proof of Mr. Woodke's mental and physical condition be demanded and determined before any negotiations begin. We also urge that his release be unconditional. We ask that updates be provided to both the United States Government and to the Woodke family.

We look forward to hearing back from you.

Respectfully,

UNDERSIGNED

### **Organizations**

Buddhist Solidarity Association  
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office  
Frontline Missions International  
International Christian Concern  
Jubilee Campaign  
LEAH Foundation  
Parity  
Prayer Pioneers  
Religious Freedom Coalition  
Save the Persecuted Christians  
Set My People Free  
United Macedonian Diaspora

### **Individuals**

Dr. S. Bryan Hickox  
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Lauren B. Homer  
*President*  
Law and Liberty International

John K. Hutcheson  
*Field Director*

Dede Laugesen  
*Executive Director*  
Save the Persecuted Christians

Htoi Jan Maran  
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