

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 19, 2004

Her Excellency Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga
President, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
c/o Embassy of Sri Lanka
2148 Wyoming Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20008

Your Excellency:

We would like to commend you on convening the National Advisory Council on Peace and Reconciliation on October 4, 2004. We believe that the promotion of dialogue and debate lends itself to a more stable society through understanding and tolerance, that is, the ability to live and work together despite differences. It is our sincere hope that the forum will prove to be an open one in which political, religious and civil society can come together to express their views and facilitate awareness and reconciliation.

We would also like to express our concern over proposed legislation in Sri Lanka that would restrict religious freedom. The two bills, known as the "Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion" and the "Act for the Protection of Religious Freedom," actually appear to threaten the freedom of individuals in Sri Lanka to choose and/or practice their religion. We are aware that the Sri Lankan Supreme Court declared two major articles of the Jathika Hela Urymaya bill, *i.e.* "Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion," to be in violation of the Sri Lankan Constitution on August 17, 2004. In addition to this decision legal scholars have reported that the language in both bills is somewhat ambiguous and overbroad.

The preservation of fundamental freedoms has been critical to our nation, and we encourage you to continue to cherish them as well. We are concerned because we believe that passage of laws such as the "Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion" would have a chilling effect on individuals who have the right to choose and practice their respective religions freely.

As a voluntary adherent to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Sri Lanka has indicated its respect for such freedoms. We appreciate this commitment to human rights and religious freedom and hope that this commitment will continue.

We urge you and your colleagues to make every effort to stop the proposed legislation from becoming law and to act decisively to prevent violence against religious minorities.

Thank you for your efforts to promote dialogue in the area of religious freedom. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you.

Sincerely,





Franklin

Robert R. Adams

Walter B. Jones

Paul Ryan

Jim Boyl

John Smith

Phil Kern

John Smith

By Hts

Donald M. Payne

John Carter

Paul Gordon

Kevin Ryan

Charles Smith

Phil Carter

Stephanie Public Jones

Chris Cole

Virgil Good

Bob Brown

Ed Scott

John Hostetter

Chris Pichay

John 12:19

James M. Clarke

Sam R. ...

Tom ...

July 2004

Rick ...

Mark ...

Wally ...

Signers

Rep. W. Todd Akin
Rep. Trent Franks
Rep. Robert Anderholt
Rep. Walter B. Jones
Rep. Paul Ryan
Rep. Jim Ryun
Rep. Adam Smith
Rep. Mike Pence
Rep. Joe Crowley
Rep. Joe Pitts
Rep. Don Payne
Rep. John Carter
Rep. Bart Gordon
Rep. Kevin Brady
Rep. Chris Smith
Rep. Eric Cantor
Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones
Rep. Chris Chocola
Rep. Virgil Goode
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Sen. Sam Brownback
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Rep. Tom Tancredo
Rep. Mark Green