

Religious Freedom is a Fundamental Right for All

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November 12, 2022

Keynote Address -- Conference Of Hope For The Realization Of A Heavenly Unified World

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Well, thank you for allowing me to join you today on this very important occasion and discussion.

I want to say a particular thanks at the outset to the Washington Times Foundation, to UPF and Dr. Moon for their efforts for peace and religious freedom around the world. This Rally of Hope to stand for religious freedom is central to the future of democracies and it's central to the future of each of our countries and having a society that can interact with one another.

He [Reverend Moon] was at one time imprisoned in North Korea. And so, the persecution continues. But that means our fight continues. And that means we've got to continue to fight and to stand up and particularly, I want to highlight religious freedom. And that's what we're here today to talk about.

Religious freedom is a hallmark of an open society in a democracy. The United States, Japan, South Korea, key democracies that must stand for religious freedom for everybody everywhere all the time. And I want to say too at this point in time, this is not one of those rights where you want to confuse it with theology. We're not talking about theology.

This was in the 1948 UN Charter of Human Rights that the United States, Japan, South Korea, and virtually every country around the world signed on to religious freedom as a hallmark of these human rights. The right for you to do with your own soul as you see fit or to change what direction you may choose with your own soul. And now, it really is the cornerstone to democracy and a cornerstone to the other human rights. With religious freedom you can build the other human rights off of, build the freedom of speech, build the freedom of assembly. Most people around the world claim a faith of some type, about 80% of the world's population claim some sort of religious adherence.

So, you've got a large population, a large majority of the people around the world that seek and want religious freedom to practice their own faith the way they see fit. And yet you have governments and authoritarian regimes pushing the other way, and in ways that are new, and I think frankly, diabolical.

Faith is the one institution that has the strength to bring down a government. Faith is the one institution that has enough loyalty from its adherents to stand up to a government.

Faith is the one institution that we can build freedom around, human rights and freedom around, of all these other factors.

When the Pope went to Poland and he said to the Polish people, "Be not afraid." And when he said those words, the people weren't afraid. The Communists were. They knew what could happen if the people themselves decided that there was something beyond the state. And they did decide there was something beyond the state. And now Poland is free. And people are free to pursue with their own souls what they see fit. And this can and will happen in China.

I want to say, particularly to the democracies, that I'm speaking at people that live in democracies today: the United States, Japan, South Korea, and others. This has got to be something we stand firmly for. And if we walk away from any piece of religious freedom, the Chinese will pounce right back and say, "look at your hypocrisy. You may say you have religious freedom, but you don't have it for this particular group." They're going to push back aggressively on this if we don't stand full throated for it.

And again, we all don't agree on theology. There are many different views of how one should seek or pursue God or what their theological bent should be. And that's not the issue. The issue is freedom, the freedom to pursue, and with this, this is one of the strongest weapons that democracy has.

So, stand firm, don't fall back and don't fall for traps of saying, "well we don't agree with this group theologically or that group and everybody else is fine." The system doesn't work that way. The only way the system works is if everybody is guaranteed religious freedom, it's religious freedom for everybody. Everywhere. All the time. Stand firm, stand strong. Keep fighting for it. It's critically, critically important. Thank you.