



STAND TOGETHER TO DEFEND INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

April 3, 2019
10:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
U.S. Embassy to the Holy See

Presented by



U.S. Embassy
to the Holy See



Program

- 10:00 am **Welcome**
Theodore Diehl
Public Affairs Officer
- 10:05 am **U.S. Commitment to International Religious Freedom**
Callista L. Gingrich
U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See
- 10:15 am **Video Presentations**
The U.S. Embassy to the Holy See and StandTogether
- 10:25 am **Panel Discussion I**
Media Strategies to Highlight Religious Persecution

Mr. Roberto Fontolan
Chairman, StandTogether Project

Mr. Alessandro Monteduro
Director, Aid to the Church in Need (Italy)

Mr. Paolo Ruffini
Prefect, Dicastery for Communications, Holy See
- 11:05 am **Break**
- 11:20 am **Panel Discussion II**
Collaborative Approaches to Advance Religious Freedom

Monsignor Khaled Akasheh
Secretary, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Dr. Silvio Ferrari
Professor of Law & Religion, University of Milan

Sister Clare Jardine
General Councilor, Congregation of Our Lady of Sion
- 12:00 pm **Closing Remarks**
Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, Holy See

A Message from Ambassador Gingrich



On behalf of the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See, welcome to “Stand Together to Defend International Religious Freedom.” I thank the StandTogether Project for partnering with us on this symposium.

Our program is dedicated to advancing and defending the universal human right of religious freedom, and recognizing that for millions around the world, this right is currently under threat or restricted entirely.

The United States cares deeply about promoting religious liberty for all. America’s forefathers understood religious freedom not as the state’s creation, but as a gift from God to every person, and a critical part of a flourishing society.

Beyond the moral imperative to safeguard religious freedom, history has shown that when governments and societies champion this right, they are safer, more prosperous, and secure.

Where fundamental freedoms of religion, expression, and peaceful assembly are under attack, we often find conflict, instability, and terrorism.

Under President Trump’s leadership, America’s proud heritage of protecting and advancing international religious freedom will remain steadfast.

Protecting religious freedom is also one of the top priorities of our diplomatic relationship with the Holy See. The United States and the Vatican wholeheartedly agree that religious freedom is a universal human right.

It speaks to our shared commitment to this cause that this symposium is the first official program marking our 35th anniversary of formal diplomatic relations with the Holy See.

As you can see from our agenda, our embassy works closely with the Vatican to support not just Christian minorities, but all religious minorities persecuted simply for professing their faith.

But this cause is not ours alone. No religious community is immune from repression and discrimination.

It is only by working together that governments, faith groups, media organizations, and civil society can create a world where all may freely worship.

Speakers



Callista L. Gingrich U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See

Callista L. Gingrich is the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See. She was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on October 16, 2017, sworn in by President Trump and Vice President Pence on October 24, 2017, and credentialed by Pope Francis on December 22, 2017. Ambassador Gingrich is a *New York Times* bestselling author and former President and CEO of Gingrich Productions, a multimedia production and consulting company. She is the author of the “Ellis the Elephant” children’s American history series and co-author of “Rediscovering God in America.” Mrs. Gingrich is also the producer of several historical documentary films including, “Nine Days that Changed the World” and “Ronald Reagan: Rendezvous with Destiny”. In 2018 Ambassador Gingrich was awarded an honorary doctorate from Ave Maria School of Law in Naples, Florida. Previously, Mrs. Gingrich served as a congressional aide in the U.S. House of Representatives and as the President of The Gingrich Foundation. She is married to former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and 2012 presidential candidate Newt Gingrich.



Pietro Cardinal Parolin Vatican Secretary of State

Cardinal Pietro Parolin was ordained a priest in 1980. In 1983 he entered the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy and entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See in 1986. In 1986 he obtained a degree in canon law at the Pontifical Gregorian University. In 2002 he was appointed Undersecretary of the Section of the Secretariat of State for Relations with States. On several occasions he has acted as spokesman for the Apostolic See expressing its wish to work with international organizations to safeguard the basic rights of the person, including religious freedom. In 2009 he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Venezuela and was elevated to dignity of Archbishop. In 2013 Pope Francis appointed him Secretary of State. He is a member of the Council of Cardinals established to advise Pope Francis in the government of the universal Church and was elevated to the rank of Cardinal by Pope Francis in 2014.

Panelists



Msgr. Khaled Akasheh

Secretary
Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Msgr. Akasheh has served as vicar in the Latin parish of Madaba (Jordan), taught at Latin Patriarchal Seminary, and worked on his doctoral thesis in Rome, obtaining a Ph.D. in Biblical Theology. He also obtained a licentiate from the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, where he later taught Islamic Law. In 1994 he was asked to join the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (Vatican City) to work in the section for dialogue with Muslims where he later became the Bureau Chief for Islam. He is also the Secretary of the Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims at the same Council.



Dr. Silvio Ferrari

Professor
University of Milan

Dr. Ferrari is a professor of Law and Religion at the University of Milan. An expert on the legal status of Islam in Europe, Ferrari is also honorary life president of the International Consortium for Law and Religious Studies and vice-president of the European Academy of Religion. In the past, he has served as a visiting professor in London, Leuven, Strasbourg, Paris, Berkeley, and Princeton and worked for numerous international organizations, including the European Union and the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe.



Mr. Roberto Fontolan

Chairman
StandTogether Project

Mr. Fontolan is the Chairman of the #StandTogether project, digital platform created to give voice to Christians who are discriminated or persecuted, especially in the Middle East. He graduated in Modern Literature in Milan and has a Master in Journalism. Currently, he is Director of the International Center of Communion and Liberation and is a Professor at the Catholic University of Milan. Before co-founding #StandTogether he was the Vice-Director of the news on RAI television and has worked with different newspapers and radio stations in Italy.

Panelists



Sr. Clare Jardine

General Councilor
Congregation of Our Lady of Sion

Sister Jardine is a member of the Congregation of Notre Dame de Sion currently serving as a General Councilor. She is also a member of the European Council of Religious Leaders for Peace and the Secretary for USG/UISG Commission for Dialogue. Sister Clare received her Master's in Jewish Studies at Leo Baeck College, Open University, London.



Mr. Alessandro Monteduro

Director
Aid to the Church in Need-Italy

Mr. Monteduro is the Director of the Pontifical Foundation Aid to the Church in Need (Italy). He has a graduate degree in Economics and worked at the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs for ten years. Currently, he is member of the Observatory of Religious Freedom at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Italy.



Mr. Paolo Ruffini

Prefect
Vatican Dicastery for Communication

Mr. Ruffini is the Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication in the Vatican. Before that he served as the Director of TV2000, the television station of the Italian Bishops Conference. He has a degree in Jurisprudence and has been working as a journalist since 1979 for various newspapers, radio stations and television.



Mr. Knox Thames

**Special Advisor for Religious Minorities
U.S. Department of State**

Mr. Thames currently serves as the Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Near East and South/Central Asia at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, DC. The first to serve in this capacity, he received a civil service appointment in September 2015 and leads State Department efforts to address the situation of religious minorities in these regions.

For over a decade and a half, Mr. Thames has worked in various U.S. government capacities, including at two different U.S. government foreign policy commissions, and is an expert on a range of international affairs issues, including human rights, religious freedom, counter extremism, and international organizations. His country expertise covers the Middle East and South and Central Asia. Before joining the State Department, he was the Director of Policy and Research at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Prior to that, he served in the Office of International Religious Freedom at the State Department and was Counsel for six years at the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (the Helsinki Commission). In addition, the U.S. Army War College appointed him as an Adjunct Professor from 2013-2016 and the State Department appointed him from 2004-2012 to the OSCE Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Mr. Thames holds a Bachelors of Arts from Georgetown College, a Juris Doctorate from American University's Washington College of Law, and a Masters in International Affairs from American University's School of International Service. He also studied at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. An author of numerous articles, his writing has been featured in the Yale Journal of International Affairs, ForeignPolicy.com, and Small Wars Journal. He has been interviewed by the Associated Press, Agence France Presse, the Christian Science Monitor, CNN, FOX News, and the Washington Post.

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