

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 10, 2020

CONTACT

Madeline Ingram

madeline.ingram@pinkston.co

(571) 326-3090

Paige Collins

OpenDoors@iconmediagroup.com

(615) 934-4162

Startling New Report Reveals 90% Reduction in Christian Refugee Resettlement from Countries with Persecution

Leaders of the country's largest Christian traditions respond with alarm as World Relief and Open Doors USA release "Closed Doors" report on religious freedom impact of changes to immigration and asylum policy

BALTIMORE – World Relief, a global Christian humanitarian organization that serves refugees and other displaced people, and Open Doors USA, an international religious freedom watchdog group, published a joint report revealing a surprising 90% reduction since 2015 in the number of Christians resettled from countries where the church faces persecution. Resettlement for other religious minorities -- Jewish refugees from Iran, Yezidi refugees from Iraq, Muslim refugees from Burma and others -- are all also on track to end 2020 down more than 90% from 2015.

The report drew responses from leaders within the largest streams of American Christianity, including from the National Association of Evangelicals, the Southern Baptist Convention and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, institutions which represent more than 90,000 congregations in the United States.

“As Christians, we’re concerned about the wellbeing of all people who have faced persecution, including the many who are persecuted for their Christian faith,” said **Scott Arbeiter, president of World Relief**. “While we can and should do all we can to advance religious liberty abroad, we must also continue to offer refuge to those who have felt they had no choice but to flee. We must not close our nation’s doors on the persecuted.”

These saddening numbers are the consequence of major changes to our nation’s historical approach to refugee resettlement. Last November, the refugee cap was reduced to 18,000 – the lowest level in U.S. history. Of these slots, 5,000 are reserved for those whose designation as a refugee is based on their religious tradition.

Data from prior years demonstrates that these policy changes do not result from a lack of administrative capacity. In 2015, the U.S. admitted more than 18,000 Christians from the 50

countries on the [Open Doors USA 2020 World Watch List](#) for the persecution of Christians. Midway through this year, we have admitted fewer than 950.

“The global reality is that more people than ever before are facing discrimination, violence, and even death because of their choice to practice their faith. Religious persecution is not an isolated problem: it overlaps with an array of issues that together impact Christians,” **said Open Doors USA CEO David Curry.**

The report also draws attention to the harm that new proposed asylum regulations would have on the ability for persecuted Christians and others persecuted for their faith to receive asylum in the U.S.

“Our intent is to recognize, prevent, and address these issues by engaging on each point at which religious minorities are suffering. We’re glad to partner with World Relief in calling on people of faith in the U.S. to support and advocate for their brothers and sisters in every country so that we do not see their suffering magnified in our own backyard,” Curry said.

“In their shocking report ‘Closed Doors: Persecuted Christians and the U.S. Refugee Resettlement and Asylum Processes,’ World Relief and Open Doors USA document the tragic persecution of Christians whose only crime is belief in Jesus,” **said Walter Kim, president of the National Association of Evangelicals.** “Even more shocking is the revelation that the United States, long a beacon of hope for those fleeing religious persecution, has closed its doors to virtually everyone seeking our protection, including persecuted Christians. We must change this policy and remain a leader for religious freedom.”

“We are living in what St. John Paul II called a ‘new age of martyrdom’, where many worldwide face persecution for their faith,” **said Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington and Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration.** “As this report documents, there are dramatic decreases in the ability of those fleeing for their lives to access protection. I pray our nation will reverse course and once again stand with refugees and asylum seekers, including those escaping religious persecution. Catholic and evangelical leaders have formally asked the Administration to consider refugees fleeing persecution at this time.”

Dr. Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation’s largest Protestant denomination, added: “As Christians, we recognize the pain of persecuted people fleeing for their lives. From our ancestors in Egypt to our Lord Jesus himself to many of our brothers and sisters around the world right now, this is part of our story. And as Americans, we recognize our country’s history of providing a safe harbor for those yearning to breathe free. In recent years, changes in our country’s refugee policies have had negative consequences for many looking to the United States for help. This report details how these matters affect persecuted Christians, and other religious minorities, in need of our aid. We should pay careful attention to these findings. As Americans, we should live up to our history. And, as the church, we should recommit ourselves to ministering to all of those in our communities, and around the world, who are fearful for their very lives.”



The report encourages American Christians to both pray and advocate for those persecuted for their faith. They echo calls from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to restore the level of refugee resettlement to the historical norm of 95,000 refugees per year. They also invite Christians to voice concerns about proposed new asylum regulations that, if finalized after the completion of a 30-day public comment period that ends on July 15, 2020, would significantly restrict asylum eligibility for persecuted Christians and others.

For more information about the report, please visit OpenDoorsUSA.org/ClosedDoorsReport.

###

About World Relief:

World Relief is a global Christian humanitarian organization that seeks to overcome violence, poverty and injustice. Through love in action, we bring hope, healing and restoration to millions of the world's most vulnerable women, men and children through vital and sustainable programs in disaster response, health and child development, economic development and peacebuilding, as well as refugee and immigration services in the U.S. For 75 years, we've partnered with churches and communities, currently across more than 20 countries, to provide relief from suffering and help people rebuild their lives.

Learn more at worldrelief.org.

About Open Doors USA:

For more than 60 years, Open Doors USA has worked in the world's most oppressive and restrictive countries for Christians. Open Doors works to equip and encourage Christians living in dangerous circumstances with the threat of persecution and equips the Western church to advocate for the persecuted. Christians are one of the most persecuted religious groups in the world and are oppressed in at least 60 countries.

For more information, visit OpenDoorsUSA.org.