

To:

Mrs Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission
Mr Magnus Brunner, Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration

Brussels, 4 April 2025

Subject: Urgent call to appoint an EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU

Honourable Mrs Von der Leyen,
Honourable Mr Brunner,

We, members of the Intergroup on the Freedom of Religion, Belief or Conscience, would like to repeat our call on you, as European Commission President and as Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, to urgently appoint the EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside of the European Union, with reference to our letter of 18 December 2024.

The right to freedom of religion, belief and conscience is a universal human right, engrained in Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The right to freedom of religion or belief forms the cornerstone of democratic societies as it protects the most fundamental aspects of humanity and human dignity, the right to hold or not to hold a religion or belief, the right to change a religion or belief or to manifest that religion or belief. Freedom of conscience protects one's moral compass, to live accordance one's deeply held beliefs.

We are deeply concerned about the worsening situation for religious communities in the world, including violence against religious groups or non-believers outside of the EU. We refer for example to the horrific beheading of 70 Christians in the DRC by jihadi groups, the anti-conversion laws with under which several Christians are convicted in India, the situation of Uyghurs in the People's Republic of China and Christians and Muslims facing the death penalty under blasphemy laws in Pakistan and Nigeria.

We believe that the designation of a Special Envoy communicates that promoting freedom of religion or belief should be a key part of the EU's foreign policy. Moreover, with appropriate resources, the Special Envoy could ensure that EU policy relating to freedom of belief is as effective and coordinated as possible. We therefore repeat our call and recommend that you, as European Commission President and as Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, execute your mandates fully to fulfil this duty to further strengthen the protection and promotion of the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief through:

1. The timely continuation and appointment of a high-level, fully endowed, and qualified Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the European Union for the remaining part of this Commission's mandate.
2. Providing the Special Envoy is provided with sufficient funding, term-planning and autonomy to execute rigorous work in protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief outside the EU.

Yours sincerely,

Co-chairs of the Intergroup on the Freedom of Religion, Belief and Conscience


Miriam Lexmann MEP


Bert-Jan Ruissen MEP

Supported and co-signed by the following Members of the European Parliament:

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