

April 27, 2020

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Cc: Commission on Unalienable Rights

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write as leaders of religions, faiths and traditions, representing millions of people of faith around the world, who are committed to the protection of human rights and gender equality. Although we come from different traditions, we are united in our belief that human rights are inherent to all human beings regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, religion, ethnicity, nationality, or language. We submit to you our objections to the creation and convening of the Commission on Unalienable Rights because of its intention to use “religious freedom” as a tool to dismantle human rights protections for some of the most vulnerable people across the globe.

We are concerned about the Commission’s prioritization of religion or belief over the enjoyment of other human rights. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and subsequent human rights treaties make clear, human rights are interdependent, interrelated, and equal in importance.

The creed of social justice shared by many of our faith traditions calls us to protect, defend and answer the needs of the most vulnerable of our society. This fundamental value fits hand in glove with the human rights we strive to advance. Respect for each person’s dignity and autonomy is also an essential value our faiths share and cannot be extricated from the human rights each person inherently possesses and that which we must seek to safeguard. The principle that all rights are equal is a product of the indivisibility of human rights and a principle that should be elevated in our U.S. foreign policy, not diminished or discarded.

We are also deeply troubled that you and a number of commissioners have justified the Commission’s work by arguing that a so-called “proliferation” of human rights claims has undermined “fundamental” individual rights, namely freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. This argument is deeply misguided, and supports widespread concerns

among people of faith and tradition that the Commission's work will be used to support policies that would limit human rights, including those of women, girls, and LGBTQI individuals, and others who are already discriminated against.

As religious and faith leaders, we faithfully reject the use of "religious freedom" as a cause to discriminate against women, LGBTQI persons and other minorities and to deny sexual and reproductive health and rights. As organizations and communities committed to the protection of religious freedom for every individual, we both expect respect for our own sincerely held beliefs and believe it is wrong to impose those beliefs on others. We are deeply troubled by the Trump administration's misinterpretation of the foundational principle of religious liberty to mean only that which protects one narrow set of religious beliefs. We strongly believe, as people of faith, that it is wrong to allow the imposition of one set of beliefs on society as a whole. Genuine religious freedom must encompass both freedom of religious expression and the freedom from any one set of religious beliefs being encoded into public law or practice, particularly when those beliefs violate the human rights of others.

During this time of a global pandemic that is exposing vast inequalities, human rights are more important than ever.

As faith leaders, we ask that you immediately disband the Commission on Unalienable Rights and cease to release any report from its members.

In Faith,

A Critical Mass:Women Celebrating Eucharist
Oakland, CA

ADL (Anti-Defamation League)
New York, NY

African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas
Philadelphia, PA

American Friends Service Committee
Philadelphia, PA

American Jewish World Service
New York, NY

Birmingham Unitarian Church
Troy, MI

Catholics for Choice
Washington, DC

Chapel Street Congregational Church
Lincoln, RI

Congregation Kol Ami
West Hollywood, California

DignityUSA
Medford, MA

Estuary Space
La Mirada, CA

First Presbyterian Church
Santa Fe, NM

**Friends Committee on National
Legislation**
Washington, DC

Global Justice Institute
New York, NY

HaMakom
Santa Fe, NM

Reproductive Justice Task Force
Detroit, MI

Jewish Women International
Washington, DC

Metropolitan Community Church
Albuquerque, NM

Muslims for Progressive Values
Los Angeles, CA

**Detroit Metropolitan Association United
Church of Christ Social Justice Team**
Detroit, MI

Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance
Indianapolis, IN

Faith in Public Life
Washington, DC

**Florida Interfaith Coalition for
Reproductive Health and Justice**
Osprey, FL

**Friends Meeting Of Washington Peace
and Social Concerns Committee**
Washington, DC

Metropolitan Community Churches
Albuquerque, NM

Interfaith Leaders of Greater Lafayette
West Lafayette, IN

Interfaith Worker Justice - New Mexico
Santa Fe, NM

Keshet
Boston, MA

**Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social
Justice Network (MUUSJN)**
Royal Oak, MI

National Council of Churches
Washington, DC

**National Council of Jewish Women,
Michigan**
Southfield, Michigan

New Ways Ministry
Mount Rainier, MD

**Ohio Religious Coalition for
Reproductive Choice**
Columbus, OH

Planned Parenthood Religious Coalition
Providence, RI

Religious Institute
Washington, DC

**Religious Coalition for Reproductive
Choice**
Washington, DC

Room for All
Des Moines, IA

Rising Sun Christian Community
Albuquerque, NM

St. Peter's Episcopal Church
Milford, CT

The Global Justice Institute
New York, NY

(un)common good collective
Chicago, IL

**UURISE - Unitarian Universalist Refugee
& Immigrant Services & Education**
Vista, CA

National LGBTQ Task Force
Washington, DC

**NM Religious Coalition for Reproductive
Rights**
Albuquerque, NM

**PA Religious Coalition for Reproductive
Justice**
Harrisburg, PA

Presbyterian Church USA
Washington, DC

Reconstructing Judaism
Philadelphia, PA

**Rhode Island Religious Coalition for
Reproductive Freedom**
Providence, RI

**The United Methodist Church – General
Board of Church and Society**
Washington, DC

**The United Methodist Church – General
Board of Church and Society**
Washington, DC

Unitarian Church of Hinsdale
Hinsdale, IL

Women's Ordination Conference
Washington, DC

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Congregation B'nai Israel
Little Rock, AR

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Temple Emanuel of Tempe
Tempe, AZ

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Kehilla Synagogue
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Congregational Leader Julie Batz Chochmat
HaLevBerkeley, CA

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Riverside, CA

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AJRCA
Los Angeles, CA

Rabbi Borukh Goldberg
Santa Cruz, CA

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Kehilla Community Synagogue
Piedmont, CA

Rabbi David J. Cooper
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Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Berkeley, CA

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La Crescenta, CA

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Alameda, CA

Rabbi Denise Eger
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Riverside, CA

The Reverend Julie Kelly
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University of San Francisco
San Francisco, CA

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Rabbi RBO Bat-Or
Los Angeles, CA

Rabbi Allen Bennett
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Rabbi Allan Berkowitz
San Jose, CA

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Temple Beth Emet
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Rabbi Sara Goodman
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Rabbi Mel Gottlieb
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Rabbi Ilana Zietman/
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Reclaiming Judaism
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Rabbi Rafael Goldstein
Miami, FL

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Rabbi Dr. Analia Bortz
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Rabbi Joshua Lesser
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Congregation Dorshei Tzedek
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Rabbi Howard Mandell
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Life Cycle Outreach
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Rabbi Louis Polisson
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Ahavas Achim
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Chevrei Tzedek
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Bethesda, MD

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Chevy Chase, MD

Rabbi Gil Steinlauf
Kol Shalom
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Rabbi Shalom Kantor
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Cantor Annie Rose
Ann Arbor, MI

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Livingston, NJ

Rabbi Benjamin David
Adath Emanu-El
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Rabbi Lewis Eron
Cherry Hill, NJ

Rabbi Jeremy Fineberg
Closter, NJ

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Rabbi Min Kantrowitz
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Rabbi Shefa Gold
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Rabbi Paul Sidlofsky
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Congregation B'nai Yisrael
Armonk, NY

Rabbi Gordon Tucker
Temple Israel Center
White Plains, NY

Rabbi Burton Visotzky
New York, NY

Rabbi Andrew Warmflash
Hewlett-East Rockaway Jewish Centre
(HERJC)
Hewlett, NY

Rabbi Pamela Wax
White Plains, NY

Rabbi Samuel Weintraub
Brooklyn, NY

Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub
Brooklyn, NY

Rabbi Daniel Wolpe
Flushing Fresh Meadows Jewish
Congregation
Fresh Meadows, NY

Rabbi Sara Zacharia
New York, NY

Rabbi Lina Zerbarini
Kehillath Shalom Synagogue
Cold Spring Harbor, NY

Rabbi Sandy Bogin
The New Jewish Home
Mamaroneck, NY

Clerk David Snyder
Oberlin Friends (Quaker) Meeting
Oberlin, OH

Reverend Leland Platt
PCUSA
Columbus, OH

Rabbi George Barnard
Cincinnati, OH

Rabbi Enid Lader
Beth Israel - The West Temple
Cleveland, OH

Rabbi Miriam Terlinchamp
Temple Sholom
Cincinnati, OH

Moderator Robin Knauerhase
Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance
Portland, OR

Rabbi Hannah Laner
P'nai Or of Portland
Portland, OR

Rabbi Yitzhak Husbands-Hankin
Rabbi Emeritus TBI
Eugene, OR

Cantor Baruch Morris
P'nai Or of Portland
Portland, OR

Rabbi Eve Posen
Congregation Neveh Shalom
Portland, OR

Rabbi Ruhi Rubenstein
Temple Beth Israel
Eugene, OR

Rabbi Joseph Wolf
Havurah Shalom
Portland, OR

Father Martini Shaw
African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Anna Boswell-Levy
Congregation Kol Emet
Yardley, PA

Rabbi Ari Lev Fornari
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Arthur Waskow
The Shalom Center
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Avi Winokur
Society Hill Synagogue
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi David Mlvasair
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
State College, PA

Rabbi Jessica Rosenberg
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Meryl Crean
RRA
Upper Gwynedd, PA

Rabbi Nathan Martin
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Phyllis Berman
ALEPH Ordination Program Spiritual
Director
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Rayna Grossman
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Yaacov Kravitz
Center for Spiritual Intelligence
Elkins Park, PA

Rabbi Yael Levy
Mishkan Shalom
Philadelphia, PA

Reverend Naomi Washington-Leapheart
Philadelphia, PA

Wazir Muttaqi
Blakeslee, PA

Rabbi David Dunn Bauer
Elkins Park, PA

Rabbi Marjorie Berman
Temple Israel of Lehighton
Clarks Summit, PA

Rabbi Phyllis Berman
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell
Congregation Rodeph Shalom
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Aaron Gaber
Congregation Brothers of Israel
Newtown, PA

Cantor Lauren Goodlev
Beth David Reform Congregation
Wynnewood, PA

Rabbi Maurice Harris
Glenside, PA

Rabbi Sharyn Henry
Rodef Shalom Congregation
Pittsburgh, PA

Rabbi Alan Iser
Wynnewood, PA

Rabbi Beth Kalisch
Beth David Reform Congregation
Gladwyne, PA

Rabbi Sarra Lev
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Mordechai Liebling
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Brian Michelson
Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom
Reading, PA

Rabbi Steven Nathan
Bethlehem, PA

Rabbi Michael Singer
Brith Sholom
Bethlehem, PA

Rabbi Robert Tabak
Melrose Park, PA

Rabbi David Teutsch
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Elyse Wechterman
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Abington, PA

Rabbi Jeremy Weisblatt
Pittsburgh, PA

Rabbi Andrea Gouze
Temple Beth Emunah
Providence, RI

Rabbi Sarah Mack
Temple Beth-El
Providence, RI

Pastor Dave Fields
The United Methodist Church
Dorchester, SC

Rabbi Sanford Marcus
Columbia, SC

Reverend Nicole Clade
Vermillion, SD

Pastor Josh Scott
GracePointe Church
Nashville, TN

Rabbi Erin Boxt
Temple Beth El
Knoxville, TN

Rabbi Philip Rice
Congregation Micah
Brentwood, TN

Rabbi Susan Tandler
B'nai Zion
Chattanooga, TN

Reverend Melissa Greene
IMAGINARIUM
Nashville, TN

Reverend Ginger Watson
Central Texas Conference United Methodist
Church
Fort Worth, TX

Reverend Holly Bandel
First United Methodist Church of Dallas
Dallas, TX

Reverend Joy Anderson
United Methodist Church
Dallas, TX

Reverend Katie Newsome
The United Methodist Church
Dallas, TX

Richard Spies
First United Methodist Church of Dallas
Dallas, TX

Cantor Sheri Allen
Fort Worth, TX

Cantor Julie Berlin
Temple Beth-El
San Antonio, TX

Rabbi Amy Cohen
Temple Beth Shalom
Austin, TX

Rabbi Michael Tevya Cohen
Dallas, TX

Rabbi Heidi Coretz
Shir Tikvah
Frisco, TX

Cantor Don Croll
Beth El Binah
Dallas, TX

Rabbi Geoffrey Dennis
Flower Mound, TX

Rabbi Daniel Horwitz
Beth Yeshurun
Houston, TX

Rabbi Nancy Kasten
Faith Commons
Dallas, TX

Rabbi Debra Robbins
Temple Emanu-El
Dallas, TX

Rabbi Marina Yergin
Temple Beth-El
San Antonio, TX

Rev. Debra Peevey
Herndon, VA

Rabbi Daniel Alexander
Congregation Beth Israel
Charlottesville, VA

Rabbi Martin Beifield
Richmond, VA

Rabbi Lizz Goldstein
Congregation Ner Shalom
Woodbridge, VA

Rabbi C. Michelle Greenberg
Falls Church, VA

Rabbi Ellen Jaffe-Gill
Tidewater Chavurah
Virginia Beach, VA

Rabbi Michael Knopf
Temple Beth-El
Richmond, VA

Rabbi Jack Moline
Alexandria, VA

Cantor Scott Buckner
Israel Congregation of Manchester
Manchester Center, VT

Rabbi Lee Moore
Brattleboro Area Jewish Community
Brattleboro, VT

Rabbi Dr. Amy Small
Ohavi Zedek Synagogue
Burlington, VT

Rabbi Dov Taylor
Chavurat Ki-tov
Woodstock, VT

Rabbi Marna Sapsowitz
Olympia, WA

Rabbi David Basior
Kadima Reconstructionist Community
Seattle, WA

Rabbi Jill Borodin
Congregation Beth Shalom
Seattle, WA

Rabbi Avi Fine
Temple De Hirsch Sinai
Bellevue, WA

Rabbi Bruce Kadden
Temple Beth El
Tacoma, WA

Rabbi Marc Berkson
Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun
River Hills, WI

Rabbi Ari Weber
Milwaukee, WI

Bishop William Klusmeyer
Episcopal
Charleston, WV

Father Richard Skaggs
St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
Wheeling, WV

Pastor Sharon Gearing
First Presbyterian Church
South Charleston, WV

Reverend Charles Maurice Pope
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
St Albans, WV

Reverend Kent Higgins
Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia
Charleston, WV

The Rev. Cheryl Winter
Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia
Hurricane, WV

The Reverend Alan Webster
Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia
Charleston, WV

Rabbi Victor Urecki
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Rev. Dr. Stephen Peck
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Parkersburg, WV

Reverend Sarah Allen
United Methodist
Middlebourne, WV

Reverend Doctor Shauna Hyde
United Methodist
Parkersburg, WV