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## NEWS RELEASE

June 13, 2011  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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The First Freedom Center and The Federalist Society  
*present*

“MINORITY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AT RISK”  
A Panel Discussion

*at*

The National Press Club, Lisagor Room  
529 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington DC 20045  
12:00 Noon, Wednesday, June 15, 2011

*featuring*

REP. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH (NEW JERSEY), CO-CHAIRMAN,  
HELSINKI COMMISSION

AMBASSADOR RANDOLPH BELL, PRESIDENT, FIRST FREEDOM CENTER

*and*

TAD STAHNKE, DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND PROGRAMS, HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST

*with*

INTRODUCTIONS BY MODERATOR, WILLIAM L. SAUNDERS, JR.,  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, AMERICANS UNITED FOR LIFE

Many commentators assert that there is no better measure of the human rights climate in any country than the treatment its authorities accord their minority religious communities. These small, sometimes ancient, sometimes immigrant, sometimes newly converted communities are the “cacaries in the coal mine” of human rights. Attempting to exercise

the freedoms of the individual human conscience guaranteed in universally recognized and detailed international covenants, Egyptian Copts, Venezuelan Jews, Ahmadiyya Muslims, Pentecostal Christians, Bahai, humanist non-believers, and numerous others in many lands suffer imprisonment, intimidation, denial of sustenance and employment, and death. Conflicts arise over the treatment of minorities: conflict prevention and conflict resolution often turn upon the credible redress of their grievances. Our panel of experts will discuss this and other issues.

**Rep. Christopher H. Smith** (New Jersey), who held hearings June 4 concerning pending legislation to strengthen the United States government's handling of religious freedom matters, is Co-Chair of the Helsinki Commission, Congress' premier, bi-cameral forum for monitoring and advancing human rights. Rep. Smith has headed and been a member of many United States delegations to international organizations and conferences dealing with religious freedom and human rights and has held and participated in a wide variety of hearings on religious freedom subjects. He is Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Sub-Committee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights and co-chairs Congressional caucuses on Bosnia, Human Trafficking, Uganda, Vietnam, and Cuba Democracy.

**Ambassador Randolph Bell**, President of the First Freedom Center, served for thirty-one years in the U.S. Foreign Service, concentrating on Soviet, East European, and West European affairs in the areas of security and human rights. With Rep. Smith, he served on the U.S. delegation to the 2003 Vienna Specialized meeting of the OSCE on Combating Anti-Semitism, Racism, and Xenophobia. He served as Special envoy for Holocaust Issues. The First Freedom Center is a non-profit, non-sectarian, and non-partisan organization which advances the fundamental human rights of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Its January 2011 Report on *Minority Religious Communities at Risk* called attention to the plight of religious minorities and to the urgent need for strengthening the rule of law in abusive countries.

**Tad Stahnke** joined Human Rights First in January 2008 as director of the Fighting Discrimination program, and currently serves as director of Policy and Programs. Prior to joining Human Rights First, Tad worked at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom from 2000 to 2007, where he served as Deputy Executive Director for Policy, as well as Acting Executive Director in 2002 and 2007. Mr. Stahnke led the Commission's effort to strengthen U.S. foreign policy to advance the right to freedom of religion and belief. He participated in fact-finding missions in Asia, the Middle East and Europe, and served on official U.S. delegations to human rights conferences of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations. Mr. Stahnke has also served as an expert in international human rights law in training officials from the Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security. Mr. Stahnke has worked as a research fellow and

lecturer at Columbia Law School and as an associate at Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton in New York. Tad has authored and coauthored numerous scholarly publications, including “Religion-State Issues and the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Comparative Textual Analysis of the Constitutions of Predominantly Muslim States, “Religious Diversity in the European Union: an International Human Rights Perspective, “The Right to Engage in Religious Persuasion, and *Religion and Human Rights: Basic Documents*, amongst others.

**William L. Saunders, Jr.** is Senior Vice President of Legal Affairs at Americans United for Life (AUL). He oversees all of AUL’s legal work and is directly responsible for its international project. For the past decade, he served as Senior Fellow in Bioethics and Human Rights Counsel at the Family Research Council. Mr. Saunders served on the United States delegation to the UN Special Session on Children in 2001/02. In 2004, he served on the NGO Working Committee in connection with the Doha Intergovernmental Conference for the Family. He served on the organizing committee for the conferences of the World Congress of Families in Mexico City (2004), in Poland (2007), in Amsterdam (2009), and is a member of that organization’s Management Committee.

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