



March 17, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
US Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
US Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable Senator Bob Menendez
Chairman, US Senate Committee on Foreign
Relations

The Honorable Senator James E. Risch
Ranking Member, US Senate Committee on
Foreign Relations

The Honorable Senator Amy Klobuchar
Chairman, US Senate Committee on Rules &
Administration

The Honorable Senator Roy Blunt
Ranking Member, US Senate Committee on
Rules & Administration

Re: Establishing the Senate Human Rights Commission

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Republican Leader McConnell, Senator Menendez, Senator Risch, Senator Klobuchar, and Senator Blunt,

We, the undersigned Catholic Religious Organizations, members of the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN), write to encourage you to support the Resolution Establishing the Senate Human Rights Commission (S.Res. 80) introduced on March 1st, 2021 by Senators Chris Coons, Thom Tillis, and colleagues. The global leadership of the United States is enhanced not through the proliferation of its armaments, but when it engages in solidarity with communities oppressed by their own governments, non-state actors or unscrupulous elites. As an Africa-focused organization, we see great value in establishing this commission.

The Commission, if and when established, could be a partner to civil society organizations dedicated to advancing Human Rights in Africa, like AFJN. As a faith-based organization whose members are missionaries in many African countries, we are always concerned about the gross abuses of people's rights perpetrated by governments, businesses, and individuals. In partnership with the Commission, our advocacy on critical issues like better education conditions in Khalwa Schools, in Nigeria and Sudan, known for restraining students with iron chains and other physical and emotional abuses of children, would be more effective. The concern and support of the US Senate for better conditions in Kalwa school would inspire children's rights reforms. The BBC

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News Premiered a documentary on this issue called [“Sudan khalwas: Undercover in the schools that chain boys”](#) on October 19, 2020 which is worth watching to learn more.

The Commission would also be a great tool in advancing democracy globally, especially in Africa. Many African Heads-of-State are reluctant and refuse to leave office; many times killing those who dare to remind them about term limits or elections integrity as written in their nations’ Constitutions. In a living democracy, freedom of speech is necessary. Opponents of a particular party have rights to speak out and not live in fear of death. The Senate Human Right Commission, will inspire social change by lending its voice to those whose right to speak has been stolen from them. In order for Africa to develop, it is essential that freedom is guaranteed for all, not just the elite few.

The United States has a unique role to play in the global arena, especially in this particular moment in history, to serve as a leading voice for Human Rights and true democracy. The creation of this Commission would serve as a signal to human rights abusers around the world that the US is very serious about protecting them. They would live in fear that at any moment their abuses would be exposed and they would be brought to justice. Those who have been fighting for human rights, unsupported for years, would find hope in the Commission, that they are not alone because now they have the example of the US Senate, in the creation of the Commission. We urge you, Majority Leader Schumer, Republican Leader McConnell, Senator Menendez, Senator Risch, Senator Klobuchar, and Senator Blunt, to support this resolution.

We thank you for your consideration and are happy to discuss this matter further with you.

Sincerely,

Africa Faith and Justice Network

Cc:

The Honorable Feinstein, Dianne (CA)
The Honorable Schumer, Charles E. (NY)
The Honorable Warner, Mark R. (VA)
The Honorable Leahy, Patrick J. (VT)
The Honorable King, Angus S. (ME)
The Honorable Merkley, Jeff (OR)
The Honorable Padilla, Alex (CA)
The Honorable Ossoff, Jon (GA)

The Honorable Shelby, Richard C. (AL)
The Honorable Cruz, Ted (TX)
The Honorable Capito, Shelley Moore (WV)
The Honorable Wicker, Roger F. (MS)
The Honorable Fischer, Deb (NE)
The Honorable Hyde-Smith, Cindy (MS)
The Honorable Hagerty, Bill (TN)

The Honorable Van Hollen, Chris (MD)
The Honorable Cardin, Benjamin L. (MD)
The Honorable Shaheen, Jeanne (NH)
The Honorable Coons, Christopher A. (DE)
The Honorable Murphy, Christopher (CT)
The Honorable Kaine, Tim (VA)
The Honorable Markey, Edward J. (MA)
The Honorable Merkley, Jeff (OR)
The Honorable Booker, Cory A. (NJ)
The Honorable Schatz, Brian (HI)

The Honorable Rubio, Marco (FL)
The Honorable Johnson, Ron (WI)
The Honorable Romney, Mitt (UT)
The Honorable Portman, Rob (OH)
The Honorable Paul, Rand (KY)
The Honorable Young, Todd (IN)
The Honorable Barrasso, John (WY)
The Honorable Cruz, Ted (TX)
The Honorable Rounds, Mike (SD)
The Honorable Hagerty, Bill (TN)

Africa Faith and Justice Network Organizational Members:

1. *Adorers of the Blood of Christ*
2. *Archdiocese of Cincinnati Mission Office*
3. *Comboni Missionaries*
4. *Congregation of Holy Cross Sisters*
5. *Congregation of the Holy Spirit*
6. *Dominican Sisters of Peace*
7. *Holy Cross Fathers*
8. *Marianist Province of the United States*
9. *Maryknoll Society*
10. *Medical Mission Sisters*
11. *Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate*
12. *Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa*
13. *Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit*
14. *Missionhurst*
15. *Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ*
16. *Priests of the Sacred Heart*
17. *Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary*
18. *School Sisters of Notre Dame: Central Pacific Province*
19. *Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati*
20. *Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth*
21. *Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus*
22. *Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus & Mary*
23. *Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur*
24. *Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*
25. *Society of African Missions*
26. *Society of Missionaries of Africa*
27. *Society of the Divine Word*
28. *Xaverian Brothers*
29. *Xaverian Missionaries*