

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Lawrence J. Goodrich, Communications Director, (202) 523-3240, ext. 27

WASHINGTON - On January 28 the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent government agency advising the Administration and Congress, wrote to Secretary of State Colin L. Powell recommending the United States seek to regain its seat on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

"The Commission believes that it is extremely important that the United States serve as an active member of the Commission," wrote Chairman Michael K. Young. "The U.S. stands virtually alone in striving to focus world attention on actual violations of human rights...." The text of the letter follows:

January 28, 2002

Dear Secretary Powell:

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom understands that the U.S. Government will shortly be deciding whether to seek this year to regain its seat on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

The Commission believes that it is extremely important that the United States serve as an active member of the Commission. The U.S. stands virtually alone in striving to focus world attention on actual violations of human rights, including the victims and the specific perpetrating governments.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for considering the Commission's recommendation in this important matter.

Respectfully yours,

Michael K. Young

Chair

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Michael K. Young

- Felice D. Gaer Firuz Kazemzadeh Richard D. Land Bishop William Francis Murphy Leila Nadya