

## July 17, 2000: Commission Expresses Regret at Upcoming Resignation of Ambassador Robert Seiple

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Eileen A. Sullivan, Deputy Director of Communications, (202) 523-3240

The Chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Elliott Abrams, today expressed the Commission's regret at the upcoming resignation of Robert Seiple, Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. Mr. Seiple is departing the State Department in September to found a new religious-freedom think tank at Eastern College in suburban Philadelphia. "Ambassador Seiple was the first Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom," Mr. Abrams said. "He started from scratch and built the position into a serious and influential one by force of personality, personal integrity, and a passionate commitment to religious freedom." The IRFA, which was enacted in October 1998 by a unanimous vote of Congress, created an Office of International Religious Freedom at the State Department headed by an ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom. Seiple is the first to fill that position. The ambassador-at-large also serves as an ex officio, non-voting member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an entity created by the IRFA to monitor violations of religious freedom abroad and give independent policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress. "Despite Ambassador Seiple's departure, the work of his fine staff and of the Commission in advancing the cause of religious freedom overseas will go on," Abrams said. "The fact that the work can proceed uninterrupted is due in no small part to Bob Seiple's efforts over the past several years. We will miss him as a colleague, and we congratulate him for his success in making religious freedom a more important factor in U.S. foreign policy."\*

Hon. Elliott Abrams, Chair

- Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh, Vice Chair Rabbi David Saperstein Laila Al-Marayati, M.D. Hon. John R. Bolton Dean Michael K. Young Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick Nina Shea Justice Charles Z. Smith Ambassador Robert Seiple, Ex-Officio Steven T. McFarland, Executive Director