

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AFGHANISTAN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue today endorsed legislation by Rep. Mike Pence calling for religious liberty in Afghanistan:

“The idea that 500 Catholic priests, or Protestant ministers, or Jewish rabbis would assemble at a church or synagogue demanding the murder of a person who abandoned Catholicism, Protestantism or Judaism for Islam is unthinkable. But just yesterday, 500 Muslim clerics assembled at a mosque in Afghanistan calling for the death of Christian convert Abdul Rahman. Moreover, the idea that the U.S. Congress would condemn the release of an Islamic convert is equally unfathomable, yet the Afghan parliament wasted no time blasting Rahman’s release to Italy yesterday. As such, this issue is far from over.

“The Catholic League fully supports House Resolution 736 expressing the will of Congress that religious liberty be respected in Afghanistan. Introduced by Rep. Mike Pence and co-sponsored by Rep. Michael Fitzpatrick, the legislation denounces the unconscionable assault on Abdul Rahman’s religious liberties, and thereby commits American lawmakers to take a more active role in monitoring basic human rights in Afghanistan. To be plain, American troops did not lose their lives in Afghanistan so that Christian converts could be killed by the new government.

“The U.S. has yet to grant asylum status to Rahman, and has instead pretended that this is a parochial concern. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said the other day that the issue of Rahman seeking asylum in the U.S. was ‘being handled as a private matter.’ It’s too late to call this a private matter—it involves American lives and money—and

attempts to do so will be greeted by the American people with derision.

“We are delighted to note the courageous and timely response from Pope Benedict XVI on the matter of Abdul Rahman. The pope is a role model for the leaders of all nations.”