

May 9, 2011

Dear Colleague,

I write to urge you to cosponsor my legislation to protect religious minority rights and freedoms in the Arab world. On April 14, 2011, I introduced S. Res. 150, a resolution that seeks to protect religious minority freedoms and rights, and advocates the repeal of existing blasphemy laws.

In recent months the freedom to worship by minority religious communities in various Arab nations has come under repeated and deadly attack. These attacks have come at a time of revolution, a symbolic 'Arab Spring', where recently oppressed citizens have gained freedoms of speech, press and assembly. In light of these acquired freedoms, it is imperative that the religious minorities represented in the Arab world are guaranteed the freedom to practice and worship their chosen faith without fear.

The ongoing violent attacks have not ceased. On May 7, 2011 more than 180 were wounded in clashes in Cairo, Egypt after conservative Muslims attacked a church in the Imbaba area (see photo and story below). Twelve individuals were killed. And, on March 2, 2011, Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's only Christian cabinet member, was assassinated by multiple gunmen after he publicly advocated the repeal of his country's blasphemy laws.

To honor the framework of freedoms that our country was built upon, we must take a stand and recognize, in this spirit of Arab Spring revolution, that religious minority freedoms and rights must be protected. We also must urge in the strongest terms that the United States Government lead the international effort to repeal existing blasphemy laws.

Please contact Kiersten Powers (Kiersten_Powers@inchofe.senate.gov) if you would like to become a cosponsor. Thank You.