



THE CENTER FOR JUSTICE & ACCOUNTABILITY

Bringing Human Rights Abusers To Justice.

July 30, 2015

To:

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
104 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Keith Ellison
2263 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Cicilline
2244 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support of the FIRST Freedom Act of 2015, S. 1860, H.R. 3194

Dear Senators Leahy and Durbin, and Representatives Ellison and Cicilline:

The First Freedom Act is an important tool to prosecute crimes against humanity, such as religious persecution. The United States should have laws designed to hold accountable perpetrators of atrocities and religious persecution who are living here.


According to the Department of Homeland Security, more than 1,900 perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other atrocities have sought safe haven in the United States. These are just the known leads. The actual number may be much higher. These fugitives come here, hiding among legitimate refugees, because they do not fear being tried for their crimes.

We know this because, for over a decade, the Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) has been tracking down these fugitives, including the former Salvadoran Colonel Innocente Orlando Montano. In 1989, Colonel Montano helped plan the brutal massacre of six Jesuit priests, a housekeeper and her daughter. The priests were murdered after they, as part of their Jesuit mission, advocated for peace talks between rebels and government security forces in El Salvador. In 2013, after CJA discovered Montano living in Boston, he was convicted in federal court – not for murdering priests and unarmed civilians – but for lying on immigration forms. Spain has now requested that the United States extradite Montano to stand trial for these crimes against humanity – charges he could not face in the U.S. because of gaps in our penal code.

Religiously motivated atrocity crimes occur at a sickening rate: Yazidis in Iraq; Muslims in Burma; Christians in Kenya; the list goes on. Religious persecution threatens international stability and core U.S. interests. It should be prohibited under U.S. law.

CJA supports the First Freedom Act and looks forward to the day when all crimes against humanity are defined as crimes under U.S. law.

Sincerely,


C. Dixon Osburn
Executive Director