

June 29, 2020

The Honorable John Barsa
Acting Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington D.C. 20523-1000

Dear Acting Administrator Barsa,

We are writing to denounce the appointment of Mark Kevin Lloyd as the USAID Religious Freedom Adviser and call for his immediate removal from this position.

USAID, the country's lead agency to assist the world's poorest countries, espouses a clear commitment to religious freedom as part of its mission. As a key component of its Democracy, Human Rights and Governance office, USAID lauds religious freedom as a core human right and assures that the agency "aims to protect and vigorously promote religious liberty."¹ USAID further recognizes the freedom from discrimination as a corollary right intrinsically linked to the freedom of religion.²

The appointment of Mr. Lloyd as the USAID Religious Freedom Adviser is antithetical to the USAID mission of global development and religious freedom. Mr. Lloyd has demonstrated a historical pattern of prejudice against the Islamic faith and the Muslim population. Using personal social media platforms, Mr. Lloyd's offenses range from calling Islam a "barbaric cult"³ to making the vulgar suggestion that, following a 2016 mass shooting in Orlando, people should be forced to eat bacon before they can purchase firearms.⁴ Similarly, Mr. Lloyd posted articles that endorsed the Chinese government's suppression of the Uyghur Muslim minority,⁵ one of the most painful modern examples of religious discrimination by a state. The repression of Uyghurs - which the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum has determined may amount to crimes against humanity⁶ - has drawn widespread bipartisan condemnation, including from Secretary Pompeo.

Far from an isolated incident of poor judgement, Mr. Lloyd's behavior openly and frequently displays his contempt for a religion that counts nearly two billion followers, and constitutes the second largest religion in the world.⁷ Still, today, Mr. Lloyd's Facebook account has posts that

¹ See, <https://www.usaid.gov/democracy/religious-freedom>

² Id.

³ Mariam Fam, Elana Schor, "New USAID Adviser Sparks Furor Over Past Anti-Islam Comments," Associated Press, May 29, 2020.

⁴ Id.

⁵ Murtaza Hussain, "USAID Faces Mounting Pressure to Remove Latest Trump Appointee with History of Islamophobic Remarks," The Intercept, May 30, 2020.

⁶ See, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Country Case Studies, China, 2020.

⁷ C.L. Illsley, World Atlas, September 10, 2018.

assert a link between President Barack Obama and the Muslim Brotherhood and notes that people who believe Islam is a peaceful religion fail to understand history.⁸

Yet, USAID does not deny Mr. Lloyd's avowed prejudices. Instead USAID has responded to only one of Mr. Lloyd's comments, excusing his reference to Islam as a barbaric cult as a remark that "was made four years ago" and concerned only "radical Islam."⁹ This reaction is woefully inadequate and plays on harmful stereotypes. The government, in proper stance, has previously rejected language that equates an entire religion with the actions of an extremist few.

One of USAID's roles is to represent the American promise of liberty and religious freedom through strategic programming that supports and defends these rights in developing countries. Of the approximately 122 countries that USAID currently provides assistance, nearly 32% are comprised of Muslim majority countries.¹⁰ Scores of other countries that receive assistance also host significant Muslim populations.

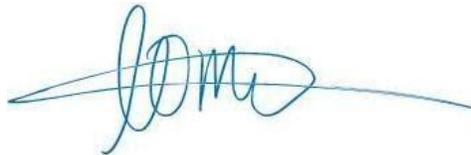
Given the scope of USAID's reach and the priority it has placed on religious freedom, USAID's program development will necessarily involve planning with Muslim countries or populations. Any USAID senior leader that cannot serve the world's multi-faith society is unable to assist in fairly administering these assistance programs. Mr. Lloyd's discriminatory posture disqualifies him for the position. His continued tenure as USAID's Religious Freedom Adviser undermines our commitment to help poor countries around the world. The longer-term consequences of failing to remove Mr. Lloyd from office will weaken our country's ability to cultivate democratic institutions and allies abroad, which could seriously damage U.S. national security interests.

For these reasons, we insist that you immediately remove Mr. Lloyd from his position as USAID's Religious Freedom Adviser. He does not represent the values of our country, and he should not be in a position to betray our nation's constitutional promise of religious freedom.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Ilhan Omar
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

⁸ Josh Rogin, "New USAID Religious-Freedom Adviser Has History of Anti-Islam Comments," The Washington Post, May 27, 2020.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/PSE?fiscal_year=2020&implementing_agency_id=1&measure=D [isbursements](#); Nations Online Project, "Islamic World," ceiling Pew Research Center, BBC Sunnis & Shia, The World Fact Book and Wikipedia.

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