



**Religious Action Center**  
*of Reform Judaism*

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**Statement of Rabbi David Saperstein,  
Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism,  
at a Press Conference Concerning the “Faithful But Forsaken” Report on  
the Real ID Act and its Implication for Victims of Religious Persecution**

*The Religious Action Center  
pursues social justice  
and religious liberty  
by mobilizing the American  
Jewish community and  
serving as its advocate  
in the nation’s capital.*

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*The Religious Action Center  
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Action of Reform Judaism, a  
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Women of Reform Judaism*

**Capitol Hill  
Washington DC  
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In just two weeks, Jews around the world will come together around our *Seder* tables and retell the Passover story. It is an annual reminder of the oppression from which we were delivered, and of the oppression that others still suffer today. The pages of Exodus vividly demonstrate the universal and eternal right of all people to live free from oppression and tyranny.

The story of the search for freedom is an ancient one, but not only an ancient one. At this very minute, around the globe, men, women and children are being persecuted because of their religious beliefs. They are unable to pray and practice their faith as they wish. In the Sudan, in China, in Myanmar, and in North Korea people of faith are imprisoned, tortured, and murdered for worshiping as they choose. For many of these individuals, asylum in the United States is literally their and their family’s actual hope for survival. To fulfill the legacy of the Passover story, to protect innocent lives, indeed, to preserve the very ethical fabric that allows us to call ourselves a free people, we must maintain an asylum system that is secure, fair, and welcoming. How can we truly celebrate our freedom if we stand idly by while others remain oppressed? How can we advocate for freedom and democracy around the world if we are unwilling to protect the very people who resist the tyranny we try so hard to eliminate.

The “Faithful but Forsaken” report should open our eyes to the real and dangerous consequences of the asylum provisions in the *REAL ID Act* (H.R. 418). Raising extra hurdles for asylum seekers will not keep Americans safer from terrorism. But by punishing those seeking asylum—often the very people resisting the regimes that mean us harm—we endanger the lives of those whom our country should to protect. Asylum seekers from religious persecution are individuals suffering under undemocratic, restrictive societies; the ones tortured for having the courage to worship their God and practice their religion; the Buddhist Monk from Tibet, the *Falun Gong* practitioner from China, the moderate Buddhist in Myanmar.

As people of faith, let us not only raise our voice against Pharaoh, but work to keep his victims safe from his reach, safe from his torture, murder, and enslavement. And soon, God willing, may all of us be liberated from the shadow of oppression.

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**The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism** is the Washington office of the **Union for Reform Judaism**, whose more than **900 congregations** across North America encompass **1.5 million Reform Jews**, and the **Central Conference of American Rabbis**, whose membership includes more than **1800 Reform rabbis**.