

## UPF USA: International Religious Freedom Summit 2026 Religious - Liberty Advocates Meet

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President, UPF USA



Washington, D.C. United States - The International Religious Freedom Summit 2026 gathered the world's top advocates for religious liberty in Washington, D.C. from February 1-3, 2026. For the third year in a row, Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and The Washington Times Foundation (TWTF) served as title partners for this event. The summit drew over 1600 participants from 87 countries, representing dozens of faiths and beliefs.



Pastor Paula White-Cain, senior adviser at the White House Office of Faith, said in her address to the assembly that religious liberty is a high priority for the U.S. president. "President Trump established the historic first time ever White House Faith Office...faith is so important to him that he elevated it to the highest level possible in his administration."

Pastor White-Cain also stressed the importance of protecting minority religions and groups. "The test of our integrity is whether we will defend the rights of those whose beliefs differ from our own," she said.

Other distinguished speakers included the co-chairs of IRF Summit 2026, Amb. Sam Brownback and Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, as well as Dr. Michael Jenkins, president of UPF-USA and The Washington Times Foundation, and Mr. Thomas McDevitt, chairman of The Washington Times.

UPF and TWTF sponsored a booth, with materials highlighting the rise of religious persecution in Asian democracies that were previously considered protectors of free speech and belief. They also hosted a

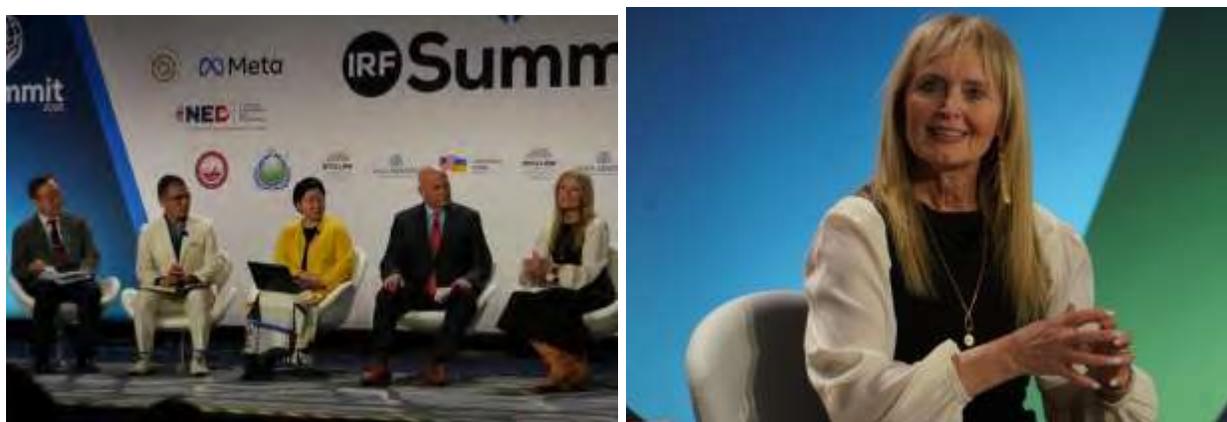
dinner program at Washington Hilton's International Ballroom, attended by more than 500 of the world's leaders in religious freedom advocacy. The event included a panel discussion moderated by Dr. Lantos Swett.



Mr. Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, addressed the meeting in a recorded video. He warned attendees that government attacks on minority religions could be the start of a dangerous crackdown on religious freedom around the globe.



"This is a terrible problem because it goes to the very heart of our system," he said. "We believe that rights come from God, not from bureaucrats, not from lawyers, not from politicians, from God. And if a politician thinks that they have the power to come between God and the people, then you've just undermined the entire process."



The dinner included a symbolic Water Ceremony, presided over by Dr. Achille Acolats, national director of the American Christian Leadership Conference, with members of the world faith community. It concluded with conference participants and faith leaders joining UPF leadership onstage to sign a proclamation in defense of religious freedom and in support of UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han, who is currently facing religious persecution.