

October 18, 2012

Thorbjørn Jagland  
Chairman  
Nobel Prize Committee  
Henrik Ibsens gate 51  
0255 OSLO, NORWAY

Dear Chairman Jagland and Nobel Peace Prize Committee members:

In the midst of the present global economic crisis, tensions between nations and peoples have all-too-frequently erupted in horrific violence. Much of this violence has emanated from those who have sought to justify their atrocities by means of theology. They advance their dark agendas under the false pretext of divine mandate, the fulfillment of “End Times” eschatology, neo-“Crusader” aspirations, or a twisted and falsified conception of the sacred Islamic duty of “Jihad.” U.S. Air Force Academy honor graduate Michael L. “Mikey” Weinstein initially founded the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF; [www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org](http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org)) in 2005 to fight back against religious discrimination within the United States Armed Forces. Weinstein’s overriding goal focuses on the protection of the “wall” separating church and state in the U.S. military, a legal barrier with foundations in the United States Constitution which is being worn away through a process of attrition by homegrown religious extremists. The discrimination faced by Weinstein, as well as that faced by his military academy graduate children, is the clear result of an ever-expanding Christian Fundamentalist hegemonic foothold within the U.S. military.

Mikey Weinstein’s fearlessly outspoken approach has resulted in MRFF standing as the sole beacon of civil rights protection for servicemembers who have encountered pervasive prejudice, bigotry, and related horrid civil rights abuses against their religious liberties resulting from their expressed religious faith (or lack thereof). These incidents have included forced attendance at Christian prayer ceremonies and events, hazing on religious grounds, and persecution that has run the gamut from routine belittlement to forms of “witch-hunting.” These incidents are horrifyingly redolent of the darkest periods in the history of the United States. In a shocking testament to this intolerable and unjust environment, over 30,000 active duty United States marines, sailors, airmen, soldiers, veterans, and civilian personnel have swollen the ranks of MRFF’s clientele. This shockingly-large roster of clients includes all individuals who have contacted or retained the services of the foundation. Eleven of these clients have been Killed in Action, as was a valued core MRFF Advisory Board Member. Among these tens of thousands of aggrieved servicemembers, the vast majority – nearly 96% – are Christians (Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox) who face persecution on account of their perceived lack of fundamentalist evangelical zeal.

The trauma of prolonged warfare is taking a heavy toll on troop morale, leading to devastating suicide rates among active duty service members and veterans of foreign conflicts. These stresses constitute an all-too-common consequence of all war, and are hardly isolated to servicemembers and veterans alone. However, this trauma also has a deleterious effect among civilians, and leads to the deterioration of families. In September 2012, the U.S. Army even held its first “Stand-

down” to address the suicide epidemic. Shockingly, soldiers were then forced to undergo a coerced mass Christian prayer ceremony. Needless to say, this is a manner of proselytizing that is perniciously predatory, and deals grievous blows to the health of American society as a whole.

What Weinstein and MRFF are fighting against is nothing less than an evangelical fundamentalist coup within the United States Armed Forces. This Christian extremist fifth column has its roots in a Cold War-era alliance between the U.S. Department of Defense and militant outfits such as the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade and the Church of the Christian Crusade. However, successive generations of military leadership have preserved this alliance far beyond its original Cold War/anti-communist shelf life. The result has been a U.S. military that is steeped in a highly caustic brew of sectarianism, domineering religious bigotry, and an arrogant, dehumanizing attitude towards the civilian populations of the regions where the U.S. finds itself militarily engaged.

The United States’ proclaimed goals of facilitating dialogue between civilizations and cultures, while securing global peace in the process, are starkly undermined by a culture within its armed forces that equates implements of death and mass destruction with the “soul-saving” tools of Christian missionaries. This ultra-nationalist, deluded undercurrent within the armed forces is precisely what Mr. Weinstein and MRFF have committed to fighting. MRFF utilizes all manners of media tools as well as federal and state litigation to forthrightly confront every manifestation of “Dominionism” that has arisen from within the ranks of the U.S. military, as well as its halls of academia.

Indeed, MRFF, with Mr. Weinstein at its helm, has uncovered the unabashed, brazen display of militant religious regalia and iconography within the United States military. In many cases, MRFF has halted their usage after shining a bright constitutional spotlight on the dubious legality of associating church with state.

Such was the case when, in this past Spring of 2012, Beaufort, South Carolina-based Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 122 (VMFA-122) changed its name from the “Werewolves” to the “Crusaders.” Squadron Commander Lt. Col. Wade Wiegel showed his astounding historical ignorance when stating that “The name change is a reflection of our heritage... [it is] not politically incorrect”! As far as the “political correctness” of such an inflammatory move is concerned, we’ll leave that up to others to judge. However, any criteria for “correctness” should take into account the fact that in the Arab and Muslim collective memory, “Crusader” is no meaningless appellation. To Arabs and Muslims, “Crusader” is synonymous with a genocidal campaign of colonial banditry, occupation, and mass slaughter initiated by Christians from the West. As Mikey Weinstein correctly noted at the time, “The Crusades serve as a hideous testament to the noxious danger embodied by the foreboding alloy of weaponized theology.” What purpose could such a provocation serve, besides circulating this “weaponized theology” throughout the U.S. military?

“Weaponized theology” is an apt description of the so-called “Jesus Rifles” and “Jesus Nukes,” phrases which conflict with the true gospel of Christ as understood by countless generations of faithful Christians. However, under the auspices of highly ranked evangelical fundamentalist Christians within the top echelons of the U.S. military, both Jesus Rifles and Jesus Nukes have

become an absurd reality. In January 2010, MRFF uncovered the fact that military contractor Trijicon was branding its scopes with New Testament Biblical citations. MRFF pressure led to the provision of kits by the Department of Defense meant to scrub off the engravings. Unfortunately, as of October 2012, many of these rifle scopes still carry the citations. This travesty sends a clear message to the United States' ostensible allies in the Muslim world that a nontrivial number of U.S. service personnel indeed see their tools of death as a means to advance a missionary agenda. In July 2011, MRFF exposed decades-old official USAF presentation materials used to train countless Air Force nuclear missile launch officers on the ethics of nuclear warfare by citing New Testament verses and Christian "Just War" theory. These wretched presentations, known colloquially within the Air Force as the "Jesus Loves Nukes" speech, were swiftly pulled from USAF curriculum within days of their worldwide exposure by MRFF, and a complete audit of other training materials was ordered. However, it is unknown how many active-duty Air Force officers, having been entrusted with the most destructive weapons known to humankind, believe that their fundamentalist Christian faith must guide whether they launch a nuclear missile or not.

There have been countless other examples where MRFF advocacy has played a crucial role in stemming the tide of evangelical fundamentalist zeal within and throughout the U.S. military. From the unconstitutional endorsement of Islamophobic, warmongering, so-called "charities" such as Rev. Franklin Graham's Operation Christmas Child to the extension of invitations to dyed-in-the-wool Christian militarists like Gen. "Jerry" Boykin, Mr. Weinstein and MRFF have ceaselessly struggled to regain the footing of a U.S. military that seems positively spellbound by belligerent religiosity. MRFF also managed to successfully have the official insignia of the four service branches removed from so-called "Military Bibles" filled with fundamentalist addenda. For this reason, Mr. Weinstein, his family, and MRFF are almost daily in receipt of vile hate mail and death threats, many of which cite the same "fire and brimstone" imprecatory curses and biblical citations.

Mikey Weinstein's fervent commitment has led to concrete results, including the introduction of guidelines meant to rein in the rampant abuse of commission that comes in the form of Christian fundamentalist agitation in the ranks of the armed forces. MRFF pressure, and a string of embarrassing incidents uncovered by the Foundation, directly culminated in the issuance of Air Force Instruction 1-1 Standards of Conduct. This AFI 1-1 document requires total mandatory compliance on penalty of potential adverse criminal action, including courts martial, under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The document requires non-chaplain officers and supervisors to "avoid the actual or apparent use of their position to promote their personal religious beliefs to their subordinates or to extend preferential treatment for any religion." This new Air Force directive gives teeth to the explicit constitutional proscription of unauthorized proselytization or endorsements of religious organizations.

Mr. Weinstein has received numerous honors for his efforts to advance MRFF's humanitarian civil rights cause. The foremost Jewish publication, *The Forward*, named Weinstein one of 2006's "Forward 50" for his contributions in the sphere of "Ideas & Activism." Weinstein has also received the prestigious honor of the Jews for Racial and Economic Justice's Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer Risk-Taker Award in 2008. In 2010, Weinstein received the Anne Froehlich Political Courage Award from the Pacific Palisades Democratic Club in Los Angeles, California,

joining the prestigious ranks of past awardees such as Ambassador Joseph Wilson IV, former talk show host Phil Donahue, and Daniel Ellsberg of “Pentagon Papers” fame. MRFF has received four total nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize, for award years 2010, 2011, and 2012. Mr. Weinstein’s list of honors was capped in November of 2011 when he received the inaugural “Person of the Year” award from Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

The ongoing efforts of Mr. Weinstein’s organization have earned MRFF acclaim as a trusted go-to source for aggrieved servicemembers seeking redress for the affronts they’ve been forced to tolerate in silence. MRFF is the only civil rights organization dealing solely with issues of religious freedom, tolerance, and respect within the U.S. military for both “faith” and “no faith” adherents.

The United States Armed Forces possesses the largest arsenals of both conventional and unconventional weaponry known to mankind, and is ominously more than capable of bringing about the “end times” level of destruction that many evangelical fundamentalist Christians excitedly await. Furthermore, considering the United States military's global presence and ability to project force, issues that affect the U.S. military truly concern the entire world. The Military Religious Freedom Foundation's ongoing vital work to prevent religious extremism from turning our military into a nuclear weapons-fueled 21<sup>st</sup> century Crusade continues to concretely advance the cause of universal world peace, and promote a universal fraternity between nations.

In consideration of the innumerable accomplishments and important ongoing tasks that this civil rights organization has undertaken to guard against religious extremism and ensure the basic human right of religious freedom in the U.S. Armed Forces, both domestically and in all nations where they are present, it is my honor and privilege to hereby submit my nomination of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation for the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize.

Sincerely,

[Name redacted]  
[Title redacted]