

The Trans-Pacific Partnership:

Ignores Religious Persecution, Human Rights Abuses and Humanitarian Crises for Corporate Profits

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is on track to become the largest free trade agreement ever. It's being negotiated in secret among 12 countries: the U.S., Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. It covers 792 million people and accounts for nearly 40 percent of the world's economic activity.

TPP really isn't a trade deal. Of the 29 chapters that make up the trade agreement, just five touch on traditional trade issues. The others focus on guaran-

teeing corporate profits and pursuing State Department initiatives.

Given what we've learned so far about TPP, it's not a surprise that U.S. trade negotiators have tried to keep most of the TPP negotiations a secret. That's why it's so important that Congress reject Fast Track authority for TPP and carry out its responsibilities to amend this deal.

(Continued)



Religious Persecution in Brunei

Brunei, one of the TPP partners, has systemically sanctioned discrimination, abuse and violence against religious minorities.

In 2013, Brunei enacted a new penal code with penalties that include death and stoning. The International Commission of Jurists found that Brunei's "[Shariah] Penal Code Order 2013 is clearly incompatible with international human rights law and standards that prohibit discrimination against women and protection of rights to religious freedom.

The U.S. State Department's own International Religious Freedom Report on Brunei says: "The government restricts the religious freedom of Christians and non-Muslims...the government maintained strict customs controls on importing non-Islamic religious texts such as Bibles, as well as on Islamic religious teaching materials or scriptures intended for sale or distribution. The government routinely censored magazine articles on other faiths, blacking out or removing photographs of crucifixes and other Christian religious symbols."

Open Doors, a watchdog organization that monitors persecution of Christians, says this: "Contact with Christians in other countries is forbidden and the public celebration of Christmas is banned. This past December, restaurants and café owners in the capital were forced to remove their Christmas decorations. Services can be held by the Anglican and Roman Catholic communities, but they are monitored and church officials are under surveillance."

Last year, 119 Members of Congress called on Secretary of State John Kerry and U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman to stop negotiations

with Brunei until that country addresses its human rights violations. They wrote: "Brunei's adoption of the penal code legalizes violence against its citizens, constituting torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment. The United States must make it clear that we will not tolerate such abuses.

International trade partners have much to gain from an economic relationship with the United States, and our trade agreements should insist that participating countries adhere to internationally recognized civil, political, and human rights standards."

Human Rights Abuses and Child Labor in Vietnam

Amnesty International said: "Vietnam is fast turning into one of South East Asia's largest prisons for human rights defenders and other activists... Authorities have arrested, charged, detained or imprisoned hundreds of dissenting voices [including] bloggers, labor and land rights activists, human rights defenders and those calling for peaceful democratic reform. Members of religious groups have also been targeted." (Amnesty International, Nov. 11, 2013)

In July 2013, the U.S. Department of Labor issued a final determination that Vietnam utilizes "forced child labor in garment production." Vietnam is one of only three countries in the world to be placed on the Department of Labor's list of countries that produce garments using child labor and forced labor."

Unless Congress rejects Fast Track and steps in to amend and negotiate TPP, this trade deal will reward countries like Vietnam and Brunei for their gross violation of human rights and persecution of Christians and other religious minorities.