

## **TMYK Column – Standing for religious freedom**

This week, our prayers were answered when the 13 Nicaraguan pastors affiliated with Mountain Gateway Ministries who were imprisoned for sharing the Gospel with their country were released into Guatemala. These pastors and their families can establish new lives free of torture, repression, and fear of reprisal for sharing the Good News.

Late last year, just four weeks after Mountain Gateway held a series of evangelical events, the pastors were jailed on trumped up money laundering and fraud charges and denied legal counsel. These pastors worked across the country leading on disaster recovery and feeding, clothing, and planting churches with the support and assistance of the Nicaraguan government, before their government turned against them.

Their families had not seen or heard from them since their arrests in December.

The arrested and imprisoned people included a young mother of a newborn and a toddler, both of whom are Americans. She was not allowed any contact with her children during the imprisonment.

In March, the pastors were sentenced to 12-15 years in prison and \$80 million each in fines. More than \$5 million worth of their property was seized by the Nicaraguan government.

The Alabama delegation worked alongside the Hancock Family, who founded Mountain Gateway, to push for the pastors' release. In February, I introduced a Congressional resolution alongside Reps. Aderholt, Carl, Palmer, Roy, and Sewell condemning the pastors' imprisonment and calling for their immediate release.

This imprisonment left children without parents and families without income. Heather and I are relieved to know that these pastors are free and safe. Though we celebrate with these families, we mourn with those around the world who continue to be persecuted for their faith.

I will continue to stand for religious freedom across our country and the world. No one should ever have to fear retaliation for practicing their faith. Matthew 5:10 says: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

If you need help from my office with the VA, IRS, or another federal agency, or if we can help you with a government service like processing a passport request, I hope you will reach out to us. We've resolved over 5,300 cases since I took office in 2021. Visit one of my offices in Wetumpka, Dothan, Andalusia, Troy, or Washington, call us at 334-478- 6330, or visit <http://barrymoore.house.gov> to learn how we can help.