



NEWS RELEASE

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2005 First Freedom Award Recipients Announced

Council for America's First Freedom Honors Three Advocates for Religious Liberty with 11th Annual Prize

RICHMOND, Va. (January 6, 2005) - Recognizing extraordinary contributions in advancing freedom of religion around the world, across the United States and within Virginia (the nation's birthplace of religious liberty), the Council for America's First Freedom today announced the recipients of the 2005 First Freedom Awards presented in three categories.

- **Father Elias Chacour**, a three-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize whose career has been dedicated to advancing reconciliation between Palestinians and Jews in his native Israel, will receive the International First Freedom Award.
- **The Honorable Robert A. Seiple**, the first U.S. Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, founder of the Institute for Global Engagement and former president of World Vision whose quiet diplomacy has helped fashion humanitarian solutions to religious conflicts, is the recipient of the National First Freedom Award.
- **William Lee Miller**, an eminent scholar at the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia and author of the acclaimed book, *The First Liberty: America's Foundation in Religious Freedom*, will receive the Virginia First Freedom Award.

"These three luminaries represent the best of the human spirit," said Tommy Baer, president of the Council for America's First Freedom. "Their passion for religious liberty has been an abiding force in their respective lives, and their life's work has helped to advance tolerance and build bridges among people of different faiths. We are proud to

recognize these distinguished individuals for their contributions to the cause of religious freedom.”

The three honorees will receive their awards at the 2005 First Freedom Awards ceremony on Wednesday, January 19, at the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, Va.

The recipients also will participate in a moderated symposium on Jan. 19 from 9:00-10:30 a.m. hosted by the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond (Jepson Hall, Room 120). The topic to be discussed is: “The Rights and Responsibilities of Religious Freedom: Views from the Front Lines.” This event is free and open to the public, although space is limited.

2005 marks the 11th year the Council for America’s First Freedom has sponsored the First Freedom Awards, in conjunction with National Religious Freedom Day. Past recipients include Prime Minister Tony Blair of Great Britain; Lawrence Eagleburger, former Secretary of State; Richard C. Holbrooke, chief negotiator of the Dayton Peace Accords and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations; and Dr. Garry Wills, Pulitzer Prize-winning author.

National Religious Freedom Day is observed each year on January 16, the anniversary of the date on which the Virginia General Assembly enacted the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, the landmark law that first guaranteed religious liberty and became the precursor for the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of religion.

Additional biographical information on each recipient is attached. For more information about the awards dinner ceremony, which is open to the news media, please contact Laura Baliles at (804) 643-1786 or lbaliles@firstfreedom.org.

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About the Council for America’s First Freedom

The Council for America’s First Freedom (CAFF) is a non-denominational, non-political, non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization based in Richmond, Va. Established in 1984, CAFF’s mission is to champion religious freedom through education and to strengthen appreciation for America’s protection of this fundamental human right. CAFF sponsors the annual Presidential Proclamation of National Religious Freedom Day (January 16); First Freedom Awards; and the First Freedom Student Competition. CAFF is also developing the First Freedom Center, a world-class facility with interactive exhibits and educational outreach programs that explore the development of religious freedom in America, and today’s related national and international issues. For more information, please visit www.firstfreedom.org.

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