

No place in civil debate for Holocaust comparisons

Matthew E. Berger Religion News Service | Oct. 23, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Religious leaders are urging their colleagues and politicians to keep comparisons to Nazism and the Holocaust out of American public policy debates.

The Interfaith Alliance responded to a recent onslaught of references to Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust, particularly as an analogy to the current discussion on health care reform.

"There is no place in civil debate for the use of these types of metaphors," 15 religious leaders said in an open letter, released Wednesday (Oct. 21). "Perpetrators of such language harm rather than help both the integrity of the democratic process and the credibility of religious commentary."

In one instance, Richard Land, the president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, compared the proposed health care reforms to "what the Nazis did," and gave an award to President Obama's chief health care advisor that was named for a Nazi physician.

Land apologized in a letter to Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

"It was never my intention to equate the Obama administration's healthcare reform proposals with anything related to the Holocaust," Land wrote.

Other use of Nazi imagery has come from the Republican National Committee and Fox News Channel host Glenn Beck.

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