

Religious Leaders for Tobacco Farm Worker Justice
112 Cox Ave., Suite 208
Raleigh, NC 27605

April 27, 2021

To:

Mr. Richard Burrows
Chairman of the Board
British American Tobacco
Globe House
4 Temple Place
London UK WC2R2PG

Dear Mr. Burrows:

We are faith leaders from many religious traditions who believe that all persons are created in the image and likeness of God, giving them dignity and respect. We seek justice for all workers and especially for farm workers who are some of the most vulnerable workers in our society. The social teachings of our faith traditions support the moral right to freedom of association and collective bargaining for farm workers.

In our 2014 letter to Reynolds American CEO Susan Cameron and members of the Board of Directors, we in the faith community expressed our concern that the company did not ensure the internationally recognized human right to freedom of association for farm workers on their contract farms in North Carolina, and it did not guarantee that farm workers could join the Farm Labor Organizing Committee free from reprisals. At that time, British American Tobacco owned 42.02% of Reynolds American Inc., and the five BAT members on the board of directors were fully engaged on this issue. Since that time, no progress has been made by Reynolds American to address our concerns.

Seven years later, we are writing you, the Chairman of the Board of British American Tobacco, about ensuring freedom of association for farm workers on Reynolds American contract farms. Contrary to your company's position, the right of freedom of association on RAI contract farms is under fierce attack.

Since BAT's acquisition of Reynolds American Inc. in 2017, conditions have gotten worse in North Carolina for farm workers who seek to exercise their right to freedom of association on Reynolds American contract farms and want to join FLOC. Anti-farm worker union legislation, SB 615, North Carolina Farm Act of 2017, was introduced and supported by agricultural employers who are Reynolds American contract growers. This bill makes it impossible for farmworkers in North Carolina to organize with FLOC and engage in collective bargaining with their employers.

Furthermore, farmers contracted with Reynolds American are now utilizing the services of H2A Labor Contractors to provide H2A farm labor to growers. The practices of these contractors are in direct violation of BAT's code of conduct, and these farm labor contractors deny freedom of association to the workers. The abuses of the workers by these contractors are well documented, and we can provide specific documentation if requested. Without freedom of association, these workers cannot protect themselves.

We want to remind you of the United Nations Global Compact's two guiding principles on human rights supported by BAT. These are: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights within their sphere of influence (principle 1) and make sure they are not complicit in human rights abuses (principle 2).

We, as faith leaders, call on BAT to negotiate a memorandum of understanding – as requested by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee – that will guarantee freedom of association, without retaliation, to farm workers employed on Reynolds American's contract farms. Second, we call on BAT to prohibit contract growers and H2A farm labor contractors from retaliating against farm workers for exercising basic workplace rights. Workers who sign union cards, advocate for higher wages, or organize for better living and working conditions should not be subject to retaliation.

We look forward to your response.

Faithfully,

Co-Conveners

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II, *Repairers of the Breach*

Rev. Sekinah Hamlin, *Minister for Economic Justice, UCC Justice and Witness Ministries*

Clayton Sinyai, *Executive Director, Catholic Labor Network*

Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, *Director, Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries*

Rabbi David Teutsch, *The Louis and Myra Wiener Professor Emeritus of Contemporary Jewish Civilization, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College*

Mira J. Washington, *National President, Church Women United*

Jim Winkler, *President and General Secretary, National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA*

cc: Luc Jobin, BAT Board Chairman Designate

Attachment: Signatories