January 17, 2018

To the Legislators of the Plurinational Legislative Assembly of Bolivia:

The Baptist World Alliance is a network of 238 member bodies in 124 countries representing 165,000 churches and 47 million individuals. We are grateful for an ongoing partnership with the Bolivian Baptist Union, a partnership that has now existed for more than 50 years.

I have heard from key Bolivian leaders as well as from leaders across Latin America of their concern related to the recently passed Article 88 of the new penal code and specifically paragraph 11. I write to express my concern that the ambiguity of these laws could lead to unintended restrictions on religious freedom and to the direct persecution of churches and individuals of faith. My concern is not just for Baptists alone but for all who might find themselves unable to live according to the dictates of their conscience.

I join with our Baptist partners in asking for a modification or repeal of this law.

As a signatory of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Bolivia has a rich history of freedom of religion and expression. Preserving this legacy will help to continue to strengthen Bolivia in the days and years ahead.

On behalf of Baptists from more than 100 countries — and in direct partnership with our Baptist brothers and sisters in Bolivia — please know of my sincerest prayers for you and your country. We pray that your deliberations will lead to a complete resolution. We pray that freedom of religion and expression will be strengthened because of the actions taken over these next few days. We pray for the ongoing wellbeing of the country.

If the Baptist World Alliance can be of assistance or engage in further dialogue with you, we stand ready and available.

Sincerely,

Rev. Elijah M. Brown, Ph.D.
General Secretary
Baptist World Alliance