

15TH ANNIVERSARY RETROSPECTIVE: RENEWING THE COMMITMENT

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RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM



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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE U.S. COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

15th Anniversary Retrospective: Renewing the Commitment

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INTRODUCTION: WHY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM MATTERS

More than three years ago, in March 2011, Shabbaz Bhatti, a Christian who was Pakistan's Minister for Minority Affairs, was murdered in Islamabad by the Pakistani Taliban for speaking out against his country's blasphemy law and the death sentence for blasphemy against Aasia Bibi. Minister Bhatti, a longtime friend of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), was not the only one to give his life for these reasons. Two months earlier, Salman Taseer, the Muslim governor of Punjab province, met the same terrible fate for opposing the same law and the Bibi verdict. Ms. Bibi remains jailed while her appealed case slowly drags on. USCIRF is aware of 16 other Pakistanis on death row for blasphemy and 19 serving life sentences.

In August 2007, a week before USCIRF's first official visit to Turkmenistan, the government released a national Muslim leader, former Chief Mufti Nasrullah ibn Ibadullah. USCIRF had called for his release since he was sentenced to a 22-year prison term on trumped-up treason charges three years earlier for refusing to display the *Ruhnama*, a book of sayings by the country's authoritarian ruler, alongside the Qur'an in mosques throughout the nation.

Gao Zhisheng, one of China's most respected human rights lawyers, has not been so fortunate. His brave defense of fellow citizens, including people of various faiths, from Falun Gong practitioners to Christians, continues to cost him dearly at the hands of his persecutors. After disbarring him, China's government imprisoned and tortured him, and has concealed his whereabouts for nearly two years.

Iranian pastor Saeed Abedini, a U.S. citizen, is serving an eight-year prison sentence in Iran since January 2012 for "threatening national security" through his involvement in Iran's house church movement. Also still in prison are the "Baha'i Seven," Baha'i leaders in Iran jailed since 2008 for the "crime" of heading a religious movement that dares to contradict the beliefs of Tehran's theocratic leaders.

Similarly, Eritrean Orthodox Church Patriarch Abune Antonios, the leader of Eritrea's largest religious community, remains under house arrest. He was illegally deposed and replaced in 2006 for protesting government interference in internal church affairs, refusing a government order to excommunicate 3,000 parishioners who opposed the Isaias Afwerki government, and calling for the release of political prisoners. Since 2007, the government has held him at an undisclosed location, and denied him family visits and access to medical care despite his being a severe diabetic.

While their fates and circumstances differ, the harm these men and women suffered was a direct blow to the fundamental right of freedom of religion or belief.¹ Each bears witness to a bedrock truth: When religious freedom is abridged, real people – as well as their families, communities, and countries – pay a price. Whether their names are etched on gravestones or their faces stare at us from behind prison bars, we must never forget them.

What is freedom of religion? It is a broad, inclusive right, sweeping in scope, embracing the full range of thought, belief, and behavior. And it is as deep as it is broad, honoring and upholding the claims of conscience. Religious freedom means the right of all human beings to think as they please, believe or not believe as their conscience leads, and live out their beliefs openly, peacefully, and without fear. When it comes to the peaceful exercise of religion or belief, no government, group, or individual has the right to compel others to act against their conscience or restrain them from answering its call.

¹ In this report, we use the terms religious freedom, freedom of religion, and freedom of religion or belief interchangeably to refer to the broad right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief protected under international human rights law.

How broad and inclusive is religious freedom as a human right?

Support for religious freedom stands in opposition to every form of coercion or restraint on people's ability to choose and practice their beliefs peacefully. Rather than imposing beliefs, it is about protecting people's right to believe and remain true to their deepest convictions.

Religious freedom applies to the holders of all religious beliefs. Thus, USCIRF advocates for the rights of members of every religious group in the world to practice their faith peacefully.

Broader still, the right to religious freedom extends to those who reject religious beliefs altogether. It upholds the right to embrace any belief, including one that excludes religion. When atheists or agnostics are targeted for expressing their convictions, they, too, are victims of religious persecution and merit USCIRF's advocacy.

Besides protecting every belief, freedom of religion is itself a conviction that is unbounded by geography or nation. Rather than being the exclusive preserve of any one country, it is a universal value endorsed by a majority of countries in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the world community overwhelmingly adopted in 1948, as well as in subsequent agreements. Like every other human right, religious freedom is the birthright of humanity.

Finally, religious freedom is broad and deep enough to merit a seat at the table with economic or security concerns in any nation's conducting its affairs with the world. Human rights, including religious freedom considerations, deserve to be among the central concerns of our foreign policy.

The reason is clear. A country's interests cannot be readily separated from its values. Since its values reflect its identity, such separation is hard to achieve, let alone desirable to pursue.

Moreover, we should not assume that there is an automatic tradeoff between religious freedom or other human rights and economic or security concerns. Both sets of concerns can work together in the real world.

Understanding and communicating the breadth and depth of religious freedom is essential to spurring our country to do more to advance this fundamental right abroad. This is particularly crucial today, since by any measure, religious freedom is under serious and sustained pressure across much of the globe. According

to the most recent Pew study on the subject, more than three-quarters of the world's population lives in countries in which religion is restricted in significant ways, either by the government or by societal actors.

But why should people care? Why should defending religious freedom abroad matter personally to us all?

As Americans, religious freedom reflects who and what we aspire to be as a nation and people. Bound up inextricably with our country's founding and development, enshrined in the First Amendment to our Constitution, religious freedom is our nation's first freedom.

A more comprehensive reason is confirmed by international law and documents like the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Simply stated, freedom of religion is critically important because it enables people to follow what their conscience dictates. For this reason, it must be protected. People are entitled to religious freedom by virtue of their humanity.

We must honor and protect the right of people to lead their lives with authenticity and integrity in line with their best judgments of conscience.

The great English religious thinker John Henry Newman observed that "conscience has rights *because* it has duties." We honor the rights of conscience in matters of faith because people must be free to lead lives of authenticity and integrity by fulfilling what they believe to be their solemn obligations.

But authenticity and integrity are threatened whenever there is coercion or compulsion in these matters. Indeed, coercion does not produce genuine conviction, but pretense and lack of authenticity. Compulsion may cause one to manifest the outward signs of belief or unbelief, but it cannot produce the interior acts of intellect and will that constitute genuine faith.

Therefore freedom of religion or belief must and does include the right to hold any belief or none at all, to change one's beliefs and religious affiliation, to bear witness to these beliefs publicly as well as privately, to be free from coercion, and to act on one's religiously-inspired convictions in fulfilling the duties of citizenship. And it is vital that religious freedom's full protections be extended to those whose answers to life's deepest questions specifically reject belief in the transcendent.

For the vast majority of people across the globe, religion matters: Fully 84 percent of the world's population identifies with a specific religious group.

From worship to prayer, births to funerals, weddings to holy days, almsgiving to thanksgiving, for billions of people, religion remains an inescapable source of identity, meaning, and purpose. And it follows that because religion matters for them, they want, at least for themselves, the freedom to practice the religion or belief system they favor, and not be forced to practice one they do not. Unfortunately, it is also true that for some, religion is a driver of dangerous conflict with others who hold different beliefs. Either way, it follows that our nation and its diplomats cannot have honest, mutually respectful dialogue – let alone productive and satisfactory relations or outcomes – with the rest of the world if we are inclined to ignore, downplay, or dismiss religion's pivotal role.

Because religious freedom is so central to human identity, we would expect that in places where it is unprotected, societal well-being would suffer. And according to a growing number of studies, that indeed may be the case across much of the world.

Politically, religious freedom abuses are linked with the absence of democracy and the presence of abuses of other human rights, such as freedom of expression, association, and assembly.

Economically, religious persecution can destabilize communities and marginalize the persecuted, causing their talents and abilities in many instances to go unrealized, robbing a nation of added productivity, and reducing its ability to fight poverty and create abundance for its citizens.

Civically, whenever religious liberty is violated, nations needlessly surrender the tangible benefit that religious beliefs may yield through the molding of character which can empower individuals to exercise positive and responsible citizenship. As President Bush said in 2008, "someone pledged to love a neighbor [as] they'd liked to be loved . . . is someone who will add to . . . society in constructive and peaceful ways."

Socially, wherever religious freedom is abused, peace and security may become ever more elusive. And this has a direct bearing not only on the well-being of those societies, but on the security of the United States and the overall stability of the world. In his 2009 Cairo speech, President

Obama put it this way: "Freedom of religion is central to the ability of peoples to live together."

Promoting the kind of tolerance that gives rise to religious freedom is critical in these societies.

In addition, for at least three reasons, there appears to be an association between a lack of religious freedom and the presence of violent religious extremism.

First, when governments enforce laws, such as blasphemy-like codes, that stifle religious freedom, they embolden extremists to commit violence against perceived transgressors. In Pakistan, such codes fuel extremist violence threatening all Pakistanis, but particularly Christians and Ahmadi Muslims.

Second, when governments repress religious freedom or fail to protect it, they risk driving some into the arms of radical religious groups and movements. Russia's repression of Muslims in the name of fighting the extremist views of some has produced violent extremism in others.

And finally, governments that crack down on everyone's liberty in the name of fighting extremists risk strengthening the hand of extremists by weakening their more democratic, but often less hardy or resilient competition in the process. Under President Mubarak's rule, Egypt ended up strengthening the Salafists and their allies while enfeebling their more liberal opposition.

An important tool to help defeat terrorism is the ability to persuade people to reject the extremist ideologies that support it. In the struggle for global safety and security, religious freedom might well be a powerful and effective means of countering violent religious extremism.

In summary, the defense of religious freedom is both a humanitarian imperative and a practical necessity. To betray it is to betray human nature and well-being; to affirm it is to affirm our very humanity and its thriving. It is an indispensable freedom that merits our firm and dedicated support abroad, wherever it is threatened.

2014 ANNUAL REPORT OVERVIEW

USCIRF's 2014 Annual Report, the 15th since our creation in 1998, provides an inflection point to review U.S. religious freedom policy over the past decade-and-a-half and discuss ways to strengthen U.S. engagement. To these ends, the report is divided into four sections: 1) a discussion of international standards for religious freedom; 2) a review of what the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) provides and how it has been implemented over the past 15 years; 3) recommendations for ways to improve and adapt U.S. foreign policy on religious freedom promotion to the 21st century; and 4) an examination of specific country situations, including country-focused policy recommendations.

The focus of the 2014 Annual Report examines IRFA implementation and recommends ways to adjust U.S. policy to promote freedom of religion or belief more effectively for all. These sections of the report highlight what Congress did in passing IRFA, what the statute provides, and how all administrations since its passage have implemented (or failed to implement) its provisions. We do not just identify shortcomings, but also recommend actions to both the executive branch and Congress. With religious freedom abuses occurring daily around the world for people of all faiths and none, it is critical that the United States recommit itself to meeting these challenges.

The final section of the 2014 Annual Report provides country reports. Due to this year's change in emphasis, they are briefer than in recent years, but still identify religious freedom violations and recommend policies to address the abuses. These reports are grouped into three categories. The first, referred to as Tier 1 CPCs, are those countries that USCIRF concludes meet IRFA's standard for "countries of particular concern," or CPCs, and recommends their designation as such. The statutory language requires the U.S. government to designate as a CPC any country whose government engages in or tolerates particularly severe violations of religious freedom that are systematic, ongoing and egregious. The second category,

referred to as Tier 2, are countries where the violations perpetrated or tolerated by the government are serious and characterized by at least one of the elements of the "systematic, ongoing, and egregious" standard, but do not fully meet the CPC standard. Lastly, there are shorter descriptions of other countries and regions that USCIRF monitored during the year.

For the 2014 Annual Report, USCIRF recommends that the Secretary of State re-designate the following eight countries as CPCs: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan. USCIRF also finds that eight other countries meet the CPC standard and should be so designated: Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam. For 2014, USCIRF places the following countries on Tier 2: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Cuba, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, Russia, and Turkey. The other countries and regions discussed are Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, and Western Europe.

This report is based on USCIRF's ongoing, independent review of the facts and circumstances surrounding violations of religious freedom abroad. USCIRF Commissioners and staff work with the White House and National Security Council, the State Department and other executive branch agencies, Congress and its various committees, other interested institutions and parties within the U.S. government, and domestic and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In addition, USCIRF travels abroad to examine religious freedom conditions firsthand, which includes in-country meetings with senior foreign government officials, representatives of human rights organizations and other NGOs, religious leaders, and victims of religious intolerance. Over the past reporting year, USCIRF Commissioners made country visits to Bahrain, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and after the reporting period, Nigeria, while USCIRF staff visited Afghanistan, Egypt, Russia, and Uzbekistan.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Showing High-Level Commitment by Developing and Implementing a Religious Freedom Strategy

- There is a need for continuous, high-level interest from the President, the Secretary of State, and Members of Congress about the importance of international religious freedom and for a renewed commitment to see the International Religious Freedom Act fully and consistently implemented;
- U.S. promotion of freedom of religion or belief should be mainstreamed to reflect how religious freedom concerns are interwoven throughout many of the greatest foreign policy challenges facing the United States, and deepened to strengthen the unique mechanism established by law; and
- Each administration should issue a strategy to guide how the U.S. government will protect and promote religious freedom abroad and set up a working group at the National Security Council to oversee its implementation across agencies.

Demonstrating the Importance of International Religious Freedom

- The President, the Secretary of State, Members of Congress, and other U.S. officials should consistently stress the importance of international religious freedom in their public statements as well as in public and private meetings in the United States and abroad;
- The U.S. government should publicly declare the results of its annual review of religious freedom conditions and make annual designations of “countries of particular concern” for particularly severe violations of religious freedom; and if it does not, Congress should take steps to require annual CPC designations through legislative action;

- The U.S. government should ensure that the CPC list expands and contracts as conditions warrant, and take Presidential actions that are unique to each situation
- Congress should hold annual oversight hearings on IRFA and hearings on religious freedom-specific issues, as well as raise concerns in hearings on countries and ambassadorial confirmations, and Members of Congress should introduce and support legislation focusing on religious freedom violations in specific countries and remedies for such violations.

Reinvigorating IRFA’s Tools

- All of IRFA’s tools should be used in a continuity of action, not limited to “country of particular concern,” or CPC, designations but not ignoring them either;
- Concerns about religious freedom should be included across U.S. engagements, including in diplomatic exchanges and strategic dialogues with other countries, and during country visits;
- Vacancies in relevant positions, including the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and USCIRF Commissioners, should be quickly filled;
- Per IRFA’s mandate that the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom be “a principal adviser” to the President and the Secretary of State, and regardless of the formal reporting relationship that is established, the Ambassador-at-Large should have regular and direct access to the Secretary of State; if no action is taken, Congress should clarify its intent through legislation;
- The Office of International Religious Freedom should be better resourced and staffed similar to other offices with a global mandate;

- Congress should give USCIRF flexibility on the timing of the issuance of its annual report, in light of the State Department's change in its timetable for the release of its reports on religious freedom; and
- The State Department should make greater efforts to ensure individuals are denied entry into the United States due to their inadmissibility under U.S. law for their responsibility for religious freedom violations abroad.

Creating New IRFA Tools

- Congress should expand the CPC classification to allow for the designation of countries where particularly severe violations of religious freedom are occurring but a government does not exist or does not control its territory; and
- Congress should allow the naming of non-state actors who are perpetrating particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Expanding Training, Programming, and Public Diplomacy

- The State Department should provide and implement mandatory training at the Foreign Service Institute on religion and foreign affairs and on the importance of international religious freedom;
- Congress should support State Department grants related to religious freedom programming, and call for entities that receive federal funds, including the Middle East Partnership Initiative, USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy, and U.S. Institute of Peace, to devote resources for religious freedom programming;
- The State Department should ensure that public diplomacy efforts address religious freedom issues and the U.S. commitment to advance this right abroad; efforts to promote Internet freedom for religious actors also should be increased; and
- The State Department should increase strategic communications programs to counter violent extremism by incorporating messaging on the importance of religious tolerance and religious freedom.

Expanding Multilateral Efforts

- The United States should continue vigorous multilateral engagement at the United Nations and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe on religious freedom issues; and
- The U.S. government should work with other governments and parliaments interested in promoting international religious freedom to share information and coordinate activities, working to build a global coalition.

Other Issues

- The U.S. government should address within its Expedited Removal process long-standing flaws that place asylum seekers at risk of being returned to countries where they may face persecution or being detained under inappropriate conditions; and
- Country-specific recommendations can be found in the last section of this report.

WHAT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM MEANS

Freedom of Religion or Belief in International Law

The 193 member states of the United Nations have agreed, by acceding to the UN Charter, to “practice tolerance” and to “promot[e] and encourag[e] respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.” These rights and freedoms include the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief, which is protected and affirmed in numerous international instruments, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

Article 18 of the UDHR provides:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 18 of the ICCPR similarly provides:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by

law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

Freedom of Religion or Belief is a Broad Right for Every Individual

The internationally-guaranteed right to religious freedom protects the freedom of religious communities, as groups, to engage in worship and other collective activities. It also protects every individual’s right to hold, or not to hold, any religion or belief, as well as the freedom to manifest such a religion or belief, subject to only the narrow limitations specified under international law. As such, it is closely related to the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression.

Religious freedom is not only for religious minorities. It affords members of a country’s religious majority the freedom to debate interpretations of the dominant religion, as well as to dissent from or otherwise refuse to follow the favored interpretation. In addition, religious freedom is not only for religious communities deemed “traditional.” The UN Human Rights Committee has found that freedom of religion or belief also includes the rights of individuals or communities to hold new beliefs, polytheistic beliefs, non-theistic beliefs, or atheistic beliefs.²

Religious freedom also encompasses more than just a right to worship or to practice religious rites. The full scope of the right to manifest religion or belief

² See Human Rights Committee, “General Comment no. 22, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Art. 18),” UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4, para 2 (1994) [hereinafter HRC General Comment No. 22].

includes the rights of worship, observance, practice, expression, and teaching, broadly construed. These include: wearing religious dress or symbols; observing dietary restrictions; participating in rituals associated with certain stages of life; possessing property rights regarding meeting places; and maintaining the freedom to manage religious institutions, possess, publish, and distribute liturgical and educational materials, and raise one's children in the religious teachings and practice of one's choice.³

Religious freedom includes the right to keep or to change one's religion or belief without coercion.⁴ It also includes the liberty to manifest one's religion or belief through public expression, including expression intended to persuade another individual to change his or her religious beliefs or affiliation voluntarily.

Finally, religious freedom is not only for a country's citizens. International human rights standards require a state to extend rights and equal status to "all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction" and to do so "without distinction of any kind," including distinctions based on religion.⁵

Notably, a state may declare an official religion, provided that basic rights, including the individual right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief, are respected for all without discrimination. Thus, the existence of a state religion cannot be a basis for discriminating against or limiting any rights of adherents of other religions or non-believers or their communities. Providing benefits to official state religions not available to other faiths would constitute discrimination, as would excepting state religions from burdensome processes required for faith communities to establish legal personality. Under the ICCPR, the Human Rights Committee has determined "the fact that" that "a religion is recognized as a state religion or that it is established as official or traditional or that its followers comprise the majority of the population,

shall not result in any impairment of the enjoyment of any of the rights under the Covenant."⁶

Under international law, the broad right to freedom of religion or belief may be subject to only such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. Limitations are not allowed on grounds unspecified in ICCPR Article 18, even grounds that may be permitted to restrict other rights protected in the Covenant. For example, national security is not a permissible limitation, and states cannot derogate from this right during a declared public emergency. Limitations also must be consistent with the ICCPR's provisions requiring equality before the law for all and prohibiting any measures that would destroy guaranteed rights.⁷ Finally, the Committee has also stated that these limitations on the freedom to manifest a religion or belief that rely on morality must be based on principles not deriving from a single tradition.⁸

³ HRC General Comment No. 22, at para. 4. See also 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, Articles 5 and 6.

⁴ ICCPR, Article 18(2).

⁵ ICCPR, Article 2(1). See also UDHR Article 2 ("Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as ... religion...")

⁶ HRC General Comment No. 22, at para 9.

⁷ ICCPR, Articles 2 and 5.

⁸ HRC General Comment No. 22, at para. 8.

FIFTEEN YEARS OF U.S. INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

What Congress Created

In October 1998, the U.S. Congress passed unanimously and President Bill Clinton signed into law the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), which sought to make religious freedom a higher priority in U.S. foreign policy. The unanimous passage and Presidential signature were the final steps in a contentious legislative process.⁹ IRFA emerged from two competing bills – in the House, the “Wolf-Specter” bill (which was introduced first and was called the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act) and in the Senate the “Nickles-Lieberman” bill (called the International Religious Freedom Act). Both bills articulated the need to elevate religious freedom in U.S. foreign policy, but differed on the specifics of how the United States could best address religious persecution in other countries. In the end, the law that was passed and enacted contained aspects of both approaches.

The primary focus of Wolf-Specter was the creation of an official in the White House to identify countries that engaged in egregious, violent religious persecution. These countries would then face automatic sanctions (denial of U.S. non-humanitarian aid and export bans on products facilitating persecution) unless the President issued a time-limited waiver and publicly explained why. Wolf-Specter also would have given preference in U.S. asylum law to individuals from persecuted groups in such countries. The bill passed the House of Representatives overwhelmingly in May 1998, but was opposed by the Clinton administration and lacked sufficient support in the Senate.

The main provisions in the Nickles-Lieberman Senate bill created a State Department official and office and required U.S. government action against countries

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the legislative history of IRFA, see Allen D. Hertzke, *Freeing God’s Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights* (2004); T. Jeremy Gunn, “The United States and the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief,” in Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Deskbook, Lindholm, Durham & Tazib-Lie, eds. (2004).

violating international religious freedom standards. The bill included a menu of options ranging from a diplomatic demarche to economic sanctions, with actions calibrated to the severity of the violations. The most egregious violators were to be designated annually and publicly and subject to an action chosen from the more serious options, though taking action could be waived in some circumstances. Nickles-Lieberman also created a State Department advisory commission of distinguished citizens to assess religious persecution and recommend policy responses. During the negotiations on the bill, the commission was made independent and bipartisan and given a Congressional appropriation.

As a result of the negotiations in the fall of 1998, support coalesced around the amended Nickles-Lieberman bill. It passed the Senate 98-0 on October 9, 1998, and the House by acclamation the following day. The Act was signed into law by President Bill Clinton on October 27, 1998.

In the words of IRFA, the law provides that it shall be the policy of the United States:

- 1) To condemn violations of religious freedom, and to promote, and to assist other governments in the promotion of, the fundamental right to freedom of religion;
- 2) To seek to channel United States security and development assistance to governments other than those found to be engaged in gross violations of the right to freedom of religion . . . ;
- 3) To be vigorous and flexible, reflecting both the unwavering commitment of the United States to religious freedom and the desire of the United States for the most effective and principled response, in light of the range of violations of religious freedom by a variety of persecuting regimes, and the status of the relations of the United States with different nations;

- 4) To work with foreign governments that affirm and protect religious freedom, in order to develop multilateral documents and initiatives to combat violations of religious freedom and promote the right to religious freedom abroad; and
- 5) Standing for liberty and standing with the persecuted, to use and implement appropriate tools in the United States foreign policy apparatus, including diplomatic, political, commercial, charitable, educational, and cultural channels, to promote respect for religious freedom by all governments and peoples.

What the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) Provides

IRFA's Principal Provisions

IRFA sought to make religious freedom a priority in U.S. foreign policy in a variety of ways. First, it created governmental institutions, both within and outside the executive branch, to focus on international religious freedom. Inside the executive branch, the law created the position of Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom (a political appointee nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate), to head an Office of International Religious Freedom at the State Department. It also urged the appointment of a Special Adviser for the issue on the White House National Security Council staff. Outside of the executive branch, IRFA created the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent U.S. government advisory body mandated to review religious freedom conditions globally and make recommendations for U.S. policy to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.

Second, IRFA required monitoring and reporting. It mandated the State Department to prepare an annual report on religious freedom conditions in each foreign country, in addition to the Department's annual human rights report. The law also required the State Department to maintain a religious freedom internet site, as well as lists of religious prisoners in foreign countries. And it required USCIRF, based on its review of the State Department's religious freedom and human rights reports and other sources, to issue its own annual report setting forth its independent recommendations for U.S. policy.

Third, IRFA established consequences for the worst violators. The law requires the President – who

has delegated this power to the Secretary of State – to designate annually “countries of particular concern,” or CPCs, and to take action designed to encourage improvements in those countries. Under IRFA, CPCs

IRFA sought to make religious freedom a priority in U.S. foreign policy in a variety of ways.

are defined as countries whose governments either engage in or tolerate “particularly severe” violations of religious freedom. A menu of possible actions is available, ranging from negotiating a bilateral agreement, to imposing sanctions, to taking a “commensurate action,” to issuing a waiver. While a CPC designation remains until changed, sanctions tied to a CPC action expire after two years, if not renewed. The law also makes inadmissible foreign government officials who were responsible for, or directly carried out, particularly severe violations of religious freedom from entry to the United States.

Fourth, IRFA included religious freedom as an element of U.S. foreign assistance, cultural exchange, and international broadcasting programs.

Fifth, IRFA sought to address perceived deficiencies in U.S. government officials' knowledge and understanding of the issue. It mandated that State Department Foreign Service officers and U.S. immigration officials receive training on religious freedom and religious persecution. It also required immigration officials to use the State Department's annual international religious freedom report as a resource in adjudicating asylum and refugee claims involving religious persecution.

Finally, IRFA sought assessments of whether recently-enacted immigration law reforms were being implemented consistent with the United States' obligations to protect individuals fleeing persecution, including religious persecution. Concerning USCIRF, the law authorized the Commission to appoint experts to examine whether asylum seekers subject to the process of Expedited Removal were being erroneously returned to

countries where they could face persecution or detained under inappropriate conditions. Expedited Removal is a mechanism enacted in 1996 whereby foreign nationals arriving in the United States without proper documentation can be returned to their countries of origin without delay, but also without the safeguard of review by an immigration judge, unless they can establish that they have a “credible fear” of persecution.

USCIRF’s Composition and Work

Under IRFA, USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan advisory body, separate from the State Department, mandated to review religious freedom conditions globally and make recommendations for U.S. policy to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress. USCIRF is led by nine part-time Commissioners appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in each house of Congress. Three Commissioners are appointed by the White House (with no requirement of Senate confirmation), three by House leaders, and three by Senate leaders, under a formula in which five Commissioners are appointed by the President’s party and four by the other party. The State Department’s Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom also serves ex-officio as a non-voting Commissioner.

USCIRF Commissioners are private citizens who serve as volunteers. They are appointed for two years and can be reappointed – subject to, as of 2012, a two-term limit. According to IRFA, Commissioners are to be “selected among distinguished individuals noted for their knowledge and experience in fields relevant to the issue of international religious freedom, including foreign affairs, direct experience abroad, human rights, and international law.” Over USCIRF’s life, Commissioners have been selected from a wide range of professional and religious backgrounds. USCIRF also has a full-time, non-partisan professional staff.

To carry out its work, USCIRF Commissioners and staff travel, meet with a variety of interlocutors, conduct research, testify before Congress, speak to the public and the press, hold hearings and events, and issue written reports and other documents. USCIRF gathers information from a wide range of sources including U.S. and foreign officials, international and regional organizations, human rights organizations, religious organizations, academic and policy experts,

and victims of religious persecution. USCIRF presents its findings and recommendations in an annual report, issued by May 1 of each year as required by IRFA, and in other publications and fora throughout the year, which are available at www.uscirf.gov.

Religious Freedom Violations under IRFA

IRFA defines violations of religious freedom as “violations of the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion and religious belief and practice” as articulated in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (ICCPR), the Helsinki Accords, and

Under IRFA, USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan advisory body, separate from the State Department.

other international instruments and regional agreements. In accordance with IRFA, international standards serve as the yardstick that the State Department and USCIRF use when examining state action.

As we have seen, under international standards, respecting religious freedom is not only a matter of protecting the freedom of religious communities, as groups, to engage in worship and other collective activities. Religious freedom also encompasses the freedom of every individual to hold, or not to hold, any religion or belief, and to do so free of coercion. It includes the freedom to manifest a religion or belief through worship, practice, teaching, and observance, broadly construed, subject only to specified, narrow limitations. Religious freedom also is closely related to the freedoms of expression, association, and assembly, as well as protections of equality and non-discrimination. And “religion or belief” has a broad meaning; it includes theistic, non-theistic, atheistic, agnostic, syncretic, “traditional,” “new,” favored, and disfavored beliefs alike, as well as no religion or belief at all.

Over the years, State Department reports have documented a wide range of abuses against a broad array of individuals and groups. In addition, USCIRF has documented violations against, and advocated for

the religious freedom rights of, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Baha'i's, Jews, Mandaean, Yazidis, Falun Gong, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Scientologists, folk religion adherents, atheists, and secular individuals, among others, in the various countries on which we report.

Recognizing that religious freedom abuses can vary widely in form and severity, IRFA includes a non-exclusive list of “violations” of religious freedom, as well as a separate, non-exclusive list of “particularly severe violations” that merit CPC designation. IRFA also recognizes that religious freedom violations can occur through both governmental action and inaction against abuses by private actors. As a result, the statute focuses on violations and particularly severe violations that are “engaged in or tolerated by” foreign countries’ governments.

In terms of violations of religious freedom, IRFA provides the following examples: “arbitrary prohibitions on, restrictions of, or punishment for (i) assembling for peaceful religious activities such as worship, preaching, and prayer, including arbitrary registration requirements; (ii) speaking freely about one’s religious beliefs; (iii) changing one’s religious beliefs and affiliation; (iv) possession and distribution of religious literature, including Bibles; or (v) raising one’s children in the religious teachings and practices of one’s choice.” It also lists the following, more violent acts, if committed on account of an individual’s religious belief or practice: “detention, interrogation, imposition of an onerous financial penalty, forced labor, forced mass resettlement, imprisonment, forced religious conversion, beating, torture, mutilation, rape, enslavement, murder, and execution.”

In terms of particularly severe violations warranting CPC designation, IRFA defines these as “systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom, including violations such as—(A) torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; (B) prolonged detention without charges; (C) causing the disappearance of persons by the abduction or clandestine detention of those persons; or (D) other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, or the security of persons.”

How IRFA Has Been Implemented

Institutional Issues

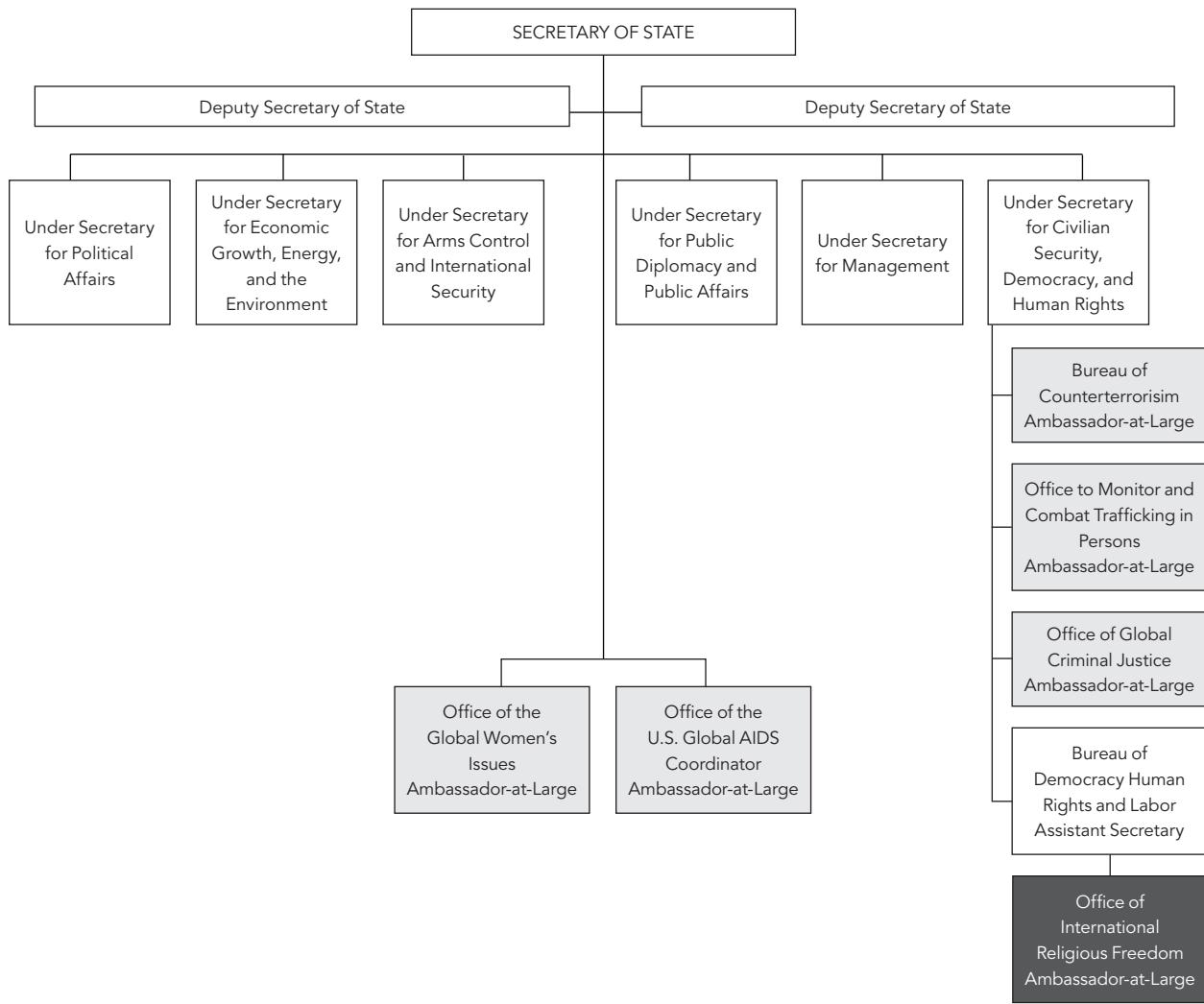
IRFA intended the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to be the highest-ranking U.S.

official on religious freedom, coordinating and developing U.S. policy regarding freedom of religion or belief, while also serving as an *ex officio* member of USCIRF. There have been three Ambassadors-at-Large since IRFA’s enactment: Robert Seiple (May 1999 to September 2000); John Hanford (May 2002 to January 2009); and Suzan Johnson Cook (May 2011 to October 2013). As of this writing, the position is vacant, and no nominee has been announced, but reports suggest officials in the Obama administration are vetting candidates.

Under IRFA, the Ambassador-at-Large is to be a “principal adviser to the President and the Secretary of State regarding matters affecting religious freedom abroad.” However, since the position was established, every administration, including the current one, has situated the Ambassador-at-Large in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) and thus under its Assistant Secretary, even though the State Department’s organizational guidelines consider an Ambassador-at-Large to be of higher rank than an Assistant Secretary. Other Ambassadors-at-Large report to the Secretary, such as those for Global Women’s Issues, Counterterrorism, and War Crime Issues, as well as the AIDS Coordinator.

According to a March 2013 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), DRL further diminished the status of the position. GAO reported that the then-Ambassador was informed that, while officially reporting to the DRL Assistant Secretary, she would report in practice to the bureau’s Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary or a Deputy Assistant Secretary. Even before the change reported by GAO, the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom was the lowest-positioned Ambassador-at-Large in the State Department hierarchy.

In addition, it is unclear whether the Ambassador-at-Large retains managerial control of the Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF Office), as has been the case in the past. Moreover, the IRF Office’s staff has decreased in recent years, and it now has a smaller staff than other Department offices with a global mandate. It also staffs the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism and works closely with the Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Special Representative to Muslim Communities, but has received no additional resources for these duties.



Source: GAO analysis of Department of State information

Since IRFA's enactment, no administration has appointed a Special Adviser on International Religious Freedom within the National Security Council (NSC) staff to focus solely on these issues, as the statute urges. A NSC staffer in the Clinton administration was given this title, but still dealt with an array of other issues. Since then, one of the directors in the NSC's Directorate of Human Rights and Multilateral Affairs has covered religious freedom, among other issues in a large portfolio, but was not granted the title or mandate.

Various administrations have created special State Department positions to focus on particular countries or issues where religious freedom is implicated, such as a Special Envoy for Sudan, a Special Representative to Muslim Communities, and a Special Envoy to the

Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In addition, Congress created the position of Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism.

Annual Reports

Mandated by IRFA, the State Department's *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom* (IRF Report) is a comprehensive resource which extensively documents the nature and extent of religious freedom violations worldwide. While other entities, including USCIRF, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and some NGOs also report on religious freedom violations in various countries, the State Department is the only entity that does so annually on every country (except the United States). As a

result, the report has become an invaluable source of information for religious freedom advocates, lawyers and adjudicators in asylum cases, and academic researchers, among others. For example, without the IRF Report's frequency, detail, and scope, the Pew Research Center studies on global religious restrictions would not have been possible.

IRFA requires the State Department to submit the IRF Report "on September 1 of each year or the first day thereafter on which the appropriate House of Congress is in session." It also requires USCIRF, based on its review of the IRF Report and other sources, to submit its Annual Report by May 1.

However, a recent change by the State Department in its reporting calendar and release date has affected USCIRF's ability to review the IRF Report and still meet the mandated May 1 deadline. In 2010, the State Department decided to consolidate the reporting periods of its various reports on different human rights issues, in an effort to minimize the impact on limited staff resources. As a result, the period covered in each IRF Report was shifted from a mid-year (July 1 to June 30) to a calendar-year (January 1 to December 31) cycle. It also decided to release the report in March or April, rather than comply with the September timeframe established in IRFA.

As a result, since 2011 it has been impossible for USCIRF to review the current IRF Report as part of our Annual Report process. After an interim report covering July to December 2010 (released in September 2011), the first full calendar-year report was for 2011. The 2011 IRF Report was not released until July 2012, and the 2012 IRF Report was released on May 17, 2013. Even a March or April release date would not allow USCIRF enough time for review and analysis before May 1.

It should be noted that, although IRFA mandated both the State Department and USCIRF to report annually on international religious freedom, the two entities' annual reports are significantly different. As mentioned above, the State Department reports on every country in the world, while USCIRF reports on selected countries, generally those exhibiting the worst conditions. In recent years, USCIRF's Annual Reports have included country chapters on about 25 to 30 countries (a large increase from our first several annual reports, which covered fewer than 10), with additional countries addressed more briefly in the-

matic and regional sections. Further, the State Department's reports focus primarily on religious freedom conditions, while USCIRF's country chapters discuss conditions, analyze U.S. policy, and make policy recommendations. USCIRF's Annual Reports also include

USCIRF's country chapters discuss conditions, analyze U.S. policy, and make policy recommendations.

sections assessing the executive branch's implementation of IRFA and discussing religious freedom issues in multilateral organizations.

Furthermore, unlike the State Department, USCIRF periodically issues special reports focusing intensively on a particular country or issue. Over USCIRF's lifetime, such reports have included two studies on religious freedom conditions in North Korea based on first-hand testimony from refugees and defectors;¹⁰ a study on school textbooks in Pakistan;¹¹ two studies on the religion-state relationship and freedom of religion or belief in the constitutions of Muslim-majority countries;¹² and the Expedited Removal study and related follow-up reports (discussed below under *The Treatment of Asylum Seekers in Expedited Removal*). In addition, USCIRF has issued numerous public statements, such as press releases, letters, and op-eds to further highlight its findings and recommendations for U.S. policy.

¹⁰ *Thank You Father Kim Il Sung: Eyewitness Accounts of Severe Violations of Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion in North Korea* (2005), available here: http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/stories/pdf/nkwitnesses_wgraphics.pdf; *A Prison Without Bars* (2008), available here: http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/A_Prison_Without_Bars/prisonwithoutbars.pdf

¹¹ *Connecting the Dots: Education and Religious Discrimination in Pakistan* (2011), available here: <http://www.uscirf.gov/reports-briefs/special-reports/connecting-the-dots-education-and-religious-discrimination-in-pakistan>

¹² *The Religion-State Relationship and the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Comparative Textual Analysis of the Constitutions of Predominantly Muslim Countries* (2005), and *The Religion-State Relationship and the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Comparative Textual Analysis of the Constitutions of Predominantly Muslim Countries and Other OIC Members* (2012), both available here: <http://www.uscirf.gov/issues/muslim-constitutions>

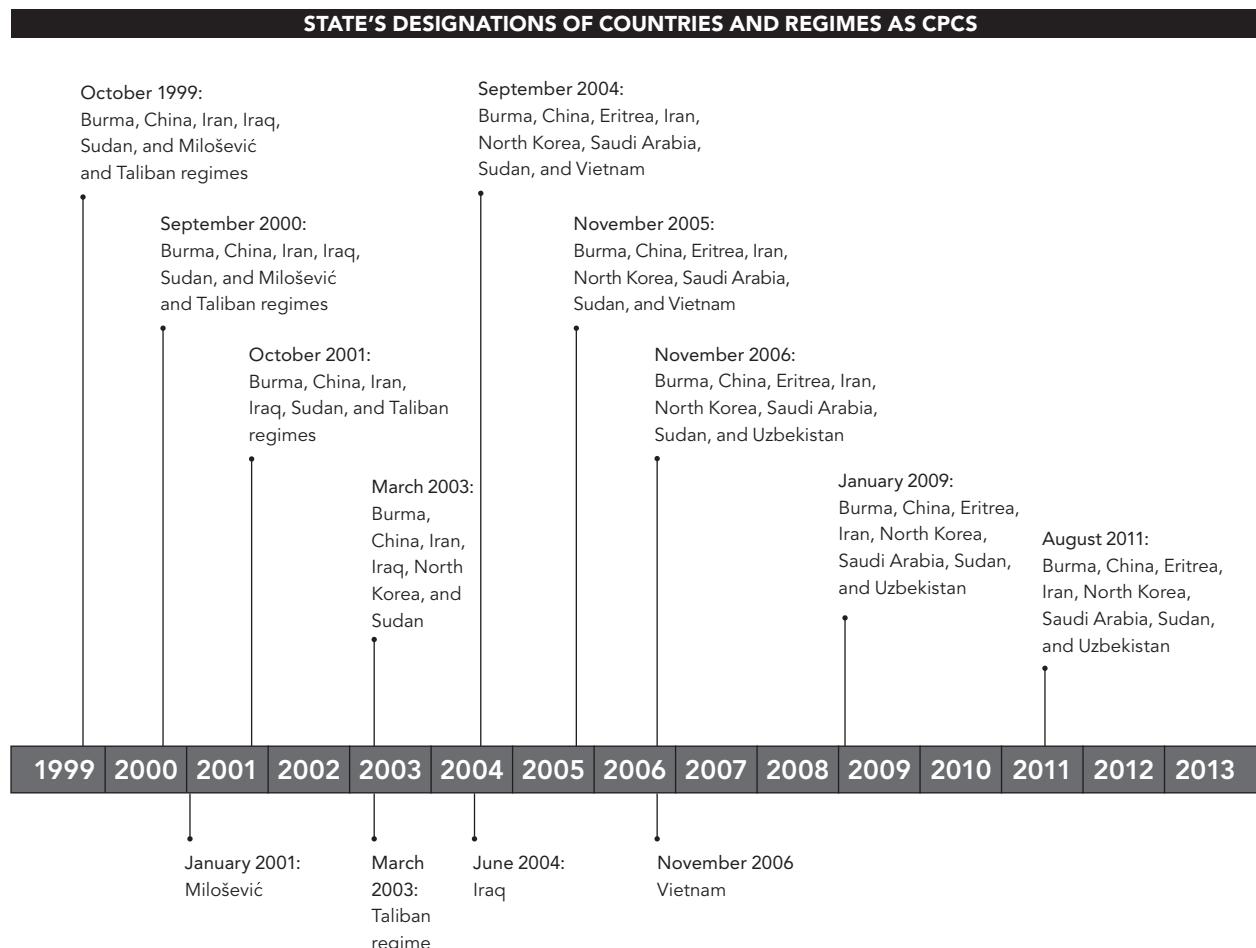
Prisoner Lists

IRFA mandated that the Secretary of State establish monitoring mechanisms “consisting of lists of persons believed to be imprisoned, detained, or placed under house arrest for their religious faith, together with brief evaluations and critiques of the policies of the respective country restricting religious freedom.” In compiling this list, the State Department was directed to use the resources of the various bureaus and embassies and consult with NGOs and religious groups. While the State Department has advocated for individual prisoners, USCIRF is unaware of the Department’s establishing or maintaining a comprehensive list of such prisoners. However, USCIRF maintains informal lists of the prisoners of which it is aware in a number of countries (see lists in Appendix). In addition, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China

maintains a comprehensive, searchable database of prisoners in China. The ability of both commissions to track prisoners, even while operating with substantially fewer resources and less access to international information than the State Department, demonstrates that the State Department is capable of fulfilling this statutory mandate.

The CPC Mechanism

In IRFA’s 15-year existence, the State Department has made CPC designations on nine occasions: October 1999, September 2000, October 2001, March 2003, September 2004, November 2005, November 2006, January 2009, and August 2011. As is evident from these dates, for a number of years the designations were generally made annually, but after 2006, designations became increasingly infrequent. As of this writing, the Obama administration has made CPC designations only once, in its first



STATE'S REMOVALS OF COUNTRIES AND REGIMES FROM CPC LIST

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State information

term. While IRFA does not set a specific deadline, the Act indicates that CPC designations should take place soon after the State Department releases its annual IRF Report, as the decisions are to be based on that review. In August 2011, the Obama administration's only CPC designations were made in conjunction with the IRF Report.

As noted earlier, while a CPC designation remains until it is removed, associated Presidential actions expire after two years if not renewed. The last two CPC designations occurred after the two-year mark had passed. Moreover, two years have now lapsed since the most recent CPC action in 2011. Consequently, as of this writing there are no punitive actions in place against CPC countries for their particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

In addition to the CPC mechanism being used increasingly infrequently, the list has been stagnant. The eight countries designated as CPCs in August 2011 have been on the State Department's CPC list for years: Burma, China, Iran, and Sudan for 15 years; North Korea for 13 years; Eritrea and Saudi Arabia for 10 years; and Uzbekistan for eight years.

Removal from the CPC list has been rare. Since IRFA's inception, only one country has been removed from the State Department's CPC list due to diplomatic activity: Vietnam (a CPC from 2004 to 2006). Three other CPC designees were removed, but only after military intervention led to the fall of those regimes: Iraq (a CPC from 1999 to 2004), the Taliban regime of Afghanistan (a "particularly severe violator" from 1999 to 2003), and the Milosevic regime of the Serbian Republic of Yugoslavia (a "particularly severe violator" from 1999 to 2001).

Over the past 15 years, there also has been a growing disparity between State Department CPC designations and USCIRF CPC recommendations. For instance in 2011, when the most recent the State Department designations named eight countries, USCIRF concluded that seven other countries also should be named. Similarly, in 2009, USCIRF found that 13 countries should be named, five more than the eight nations designated by the State Department.

Besides naming violators, IRFA provides the Secretary of State with a unique toolbox to promote religious freedom effectively and with impact. The Act includes a menu of options for countries designated as CPCs and a list of actions to help encourage improvements in coun-

tries that violate religious freedom but do not meet the CPC threshold. The specific policy options to address severe violations of religious freedom in CPC countries include sanctions (referred to as Presidential actions in IRFA) that are not automatically imposed. Rather, the

Over the past 15 years, there also has been a growing disparity between State Department CPC designations and USCIRF CPC recommendations.

Secretary of State is empowered to enter into direct consultations with a government to find ways to bring about improvements in religious freedom. IRFA also permits the development of either a binding agreement with a CPC-designated government on specific actions it will take to end the violations giving rise to the designation or the taking of a "commensurate action." The Secretary may further determine that pre-existing sanctions are adequate or waive the requirement of taking action to advance the purposes of the Act or the national interests of the United States.

However, in practice, the flexibility provided in IRFA has been underutilized. In addition to repeating the same countries for years, administrations generally have decided not to levy new Presidential actions in accordance with CPC designations, with the State Department instead relying on pre-existing sanctions. While the statute permits such reliance, relying on pre-existing sanctions, or "double-hatting," has provided little incentive for CPC-designated governments to reduce or halt egregious violations of religious freedom. For these mechanisms to have any real impact on promoting religious freedom, the designation of an egregious religious freedom violator as a CPC must be followed by implementing a clear, direct, and unique Presidential action.

The Presidential actions for the eight currently-designated CPC countries are shown in the table to the right. Because of the indefinite waivers for Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan, the United States has not implemented a unique policy response tied to the CPC designation for either country. The other actions expired on August 18, 2013, when two years elapsed

ACTIONS TAKEN UNDER IRFA

The following Presidential actions under section 402(c)(1) of IRFA were approved by
Secretary Clinton on August 18, 2011

Burma	The existing, ongoing arms embargo referenced in 22 CFR 126.1(a).
China	The existing, ongoing restrictions on exports to China of crime control and detection instruments and equipment, under P.L. 101-246 and the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1990 and 1991.
Eritrea	The existing, ongoing arms embargo referenced in 22 CFR 126.1(a).
Iran	The existing, ongoing restrictions on certain imports from and exports to Iran, in accordance with section 103(b) of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-195).
North Korea	The existing, ongoing restrictions to which North Korea is subject, pursuant to sections 402 and 209 of the Trade Act of 1974 (the Jackson-Vanik Amendment).
Sudan	The restriction on making certain appropriated funds available for assistance to the Government of Sudan in the annual Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, currently set forth in section 7070(f) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2010 (Div. F, P.L. 111-117), as carried forward by the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (Div. B, P.L. 112-10) and any provision of law that is the same or substantially the same as this provision.
Saudi Arabia & Uzbekistan	Waived the requirements of section 405(a) of the IRF Act with respect to Saudi Arabia, and Uzbekistan, to further the purposes of the IRFA.

without their renewal. As a result, there currently is not a single IRFA-specific sanction in place for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

CPC Case Studies: Vietnam, Turkmenistan, Saudi Arabia

Looking back over the past 15 years, there are three examples of the CPC mechanism being used to bring about change. Without designation or the threat of designation, concrete improvements in freedom of religion or belief would not have occurred in Vietnam and Turkmenistan. In addition, the naming of Saudi Arabia as a CPC in 2004 helped spur that country's government to make new commitments to improve conditions in the Kingdom, although they remain only partially fulfilled.

Vietnam

The designation of Vietnam as a CPC in 2004 produced tangible religious freedom improvements without hindering other aspects of the U.S.-Vietnam bilateral relationship.¹³ As permitted by IRFA, the State Department entered into negotiations to achieve a binding agreement with Vietnam on steps it could take to get off the CPC list. In addition, negotiations over Vietnam's entry into the World Trade Organization were implicitly tied to its fulfilling this agreement. As a result, the Vietnamese government released a number of prisoners; expanded certain legal protections for nationally-recognized religious groups; banned the

¹³ For more details, see Dr. Maryann Cusimano Love, *The Vietnam Dilemma, GUISD Pew Case Study* (2010), available at <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/stories/pdf/maryann%20love%20vietnam%20case%20study.pdf>

policy of forced renunciations of faith; and expanded the zone of toleration for legally-recognized religious communities to worship and organize, particularly in urban areas. At the same time, U.S.-Vietnamese bilateral trade, humanitarian programs, and security cooperation all expanded. In 2006, the State Department lifted the CPC designation for Vietnam based on the government's progress in implementing the binding agreement. However, USCIRF found that the binding agreement and the steps taken did not address all of the country's severe religious freedom issues, and concluded that the removal was premature. USCIRF has continued to recommend CPC status for Vietnam, and has noted backsliding on religious freedom in Vietnam since the CPC designation was lifted.

Turkmenistan

The threat of CPC designation motivated Turkmenistan to make certain reforms to its religion law and improve the religious freedom environment. In 2003–2004, the State Department leveraged USCIRF's CPC recommendation, increasing Congressional interest in religious freedom there, and the threat of CPC designation to achieve religious freedom improvements in the country.¹⁴ Due largely to these efforts, the President of Turkmenistan issued decrees reducing the number of members required for legal registration as a religious group from 500 to five and treating lack of registration as an administrative rather than a criminal offense, and the government allowed a number of minority religious communities to register. Authorities also released six Jehovah's Witnesses from prison after they had served more than two years for conscientious objection to military service. Religious groups at the time reported an improved climate, with groups allowed to meet more freely without the impending threat of police harassment or imprisonment. However, in the years following these improvements, Turkmenistan has regressed on these issues. USCIRF has continued to recommend Turkmenistan for designation as a CPC.

¹⁴ For more details, see Dr. Maryann Cusimano Love, *Taking on Turkmenistan*, GUISD Pew Case Study (2010), available at <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/stories/pdf/maryann%20love%20turkmenistan%20case%20study.pdf>

Saudi Arabia

As previously noted, the designation of Saudi Arabia as a CPC in 2004 helped spur new commitments from the Saudi government relating to religious freedom. In 2005, rather than taking action as a follow-up to the CPC designation, the State Department put in place a temporary waiver to allow for continued diplomatic discussions with the Saudi government. In July 2006, the waiver was left in place when the State Department announced that the ongoing bilateral discussions had enabled the U.S. government to identify and confirm a number of policies that the Saudi government "is pursuing and will continue to pursue for the purpose of promoting greater freedom for religious practice and increased tolerance for religious groups." In January 2009 and August 2011, when re-designating Saudi Arabia as a CPC, the State Department instituted an indefinite waiver of any action to "further the purposes" of IRFA.

As a result, promised reforms remain unfulfilled. The only policy among the July 2006 list with an explicit timetable for completion is still incomplete: textbook reform. At that time, the Saudi government confirmed that it would revise and update textbooks to remove remaining intolerant references that disparage Muslims or non-Muslims or that promote hatred toward other religions or religious groups within one to two years [by July 2008]. However, nearly six years after that deadline, revisions are incomplete and language promoting hatred and incitement to violence remains in high school texts. To encourage additional reforms, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government continue to designate Saudi Arabia a CPC and press the Saudi government to take concrete action towards completing reforms confirmed in July 2006 in U.S.-Saudi bilateral discussions.

Actions against Individual Violators

Another IRFA issue relevant to both the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) concerns the admission to the United States of aliens who were "responsible for or directly carried out... particularly severe violations of religious freedom." IRFA bars the entry of such individuals. This provision has been invoked only once: in March 2005, it was used to exclude Chief Minister Narendra Modi of Gujarat state in India due to his complicity in riots in his state in

2002 that resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1,100 to 2,000 Muslims. USCIRF had urged this denial of entry. USCIRF continues to urge the Departments of State and Homeland Security to develop a lookout list of aliens who are inadmissible to the United States on this basis, and USCIRF has provided information about several such individuals to the State Department.

Directly related to identifying and barring from entry such severe religious freedom violators, IRFA also requires the President to determine the specific officials responsible for violations of religious freedom engaged in or tolerated by governments of CPC countries, and, “when applicable and to the extent practicable,” publish the identities of these officials in the Federal Register. Despite these requirements, no individual officials from any CPC countries responsible for particularly severe religious freedom violations have been identified to date.

Apart from the inadmissibility provision discussed above, Congress at times has imposed targeted sanctions on specific individuals for severe religious freedom violations. Based on a USCIRF recommendation, Congress included sanctions on human rights and religious freedom violators in the 2010 Iran sanctions act, the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions and Divestment Act (CISADA, P.L. 111-195). This was the first time Iran sanctions specifically included human rights violators. President Obama has now imposed such sanctions (visa bans and asset freezes) by executive order on 16 Iranian officials and entities, including eight identified as egregious religious freedom violators by USCIRF. Also based on a USCIRF recommendation, the Senate included Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov on the list of gross human rights violators in the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act (P.L. 112-208), which imposes U.S. visa bans and asset freezes on designated Russian officials. Kadyrov has engaged in abuses against Muslims and has been linked to politically-motivated killings.

Training

IRFA calls for American diplomats to receive training on how to promote religious freedom effectively around the world. In the past few years, training for Foreign Service Officers on issues of religious freedom has increased, but remains voluntary. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI)

continued to offer a three-day *Religion and Foreign Policy* course. USCIRF staff has been repeatedly invited to speak about the role of the Commission, and regularly speaks to regional studies classes to discuss the Commission’s findings on countries of interest.

By contrast, DHS has made training on religious persecution and IRFA for all new refugee and asylum officers mandatory, and USCIRF and IRF Office representatives regularly speak to these classes. Over the years, USCIRF also has participated in, as well as submitted materials for, training sessions on religious freedom and religious persecution for Department of Justice immigration judges. Training on religious freedom issues in the military education system remains minimal, despite the many schools, military service colleges, and universities providing professional military education. None has a specific focus on training on international standards of freedom of religion or belief.

Programs

IRFA also envisaged the funding of religious freedom programs, authorizing foreign assistance to promote and develop “legal protections and cultural respect for religious freedom.” This authorization was unfunded until fiscal year 2008, when \$4 million was carved out for specific DRL grants on religious freedom programming from the Human Rights Democracy Fund (HRDF). The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-74) also directed that appropriated funds for democracy and human rights promotion “shall also be made available to support freedom of religion, especially in the Middle East and North Africa.” While no specific earmark or carve-out was made, the IRF Office has managed more than \$10 million of HRDF funds covering 15 programs over the last several years, including seven NGO programs in Asia and the Middle East that include both legal training and grassroots support for religious freedom.

Engagement with NGOs and Religious Groups

IRFA recognized the importance of State Department officials and USCIRF engaging with relevant civil society organizations, including religious groups and leaders, in order to carry out their respective mandates under the statute.

The U.S. government has long engaged with NGOs and religious groups on domestic policy issues,

but engagement on issues of foreign policy, including international religious freedom, is more novel. In the late 1990s, under the Clinton administration, the State Department had an Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad. The Bush Administration created venues after 9/11 where American Muslims and other religious minorities could engage with various departments across government, including the State Department. More recently the Obama administration included a Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group in its 2011-2012 Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society. In October 2012, the Working Group made four recommendations to the Secretary of State: 1) Create a “national capacity” to guide the State Department on religion and foreign policy (such as a national strategy on religious engagement); 2) Direct the State Department to create mechanisms to engage with religious communities; 3) Establish an official point of contact within the State Department to foster better communication with religious communities; and 4) Institutionalize the Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group. As a result of these recommendations, the State Department decided to continue the Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group for another two years.

In August 2013, the State Department also created a new Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives, headed by a Special Advisor, Shaun Casey. According to the announcement, the new Office will “set Department policy on engagement with faith-based communities and . . . work in conjunction with bureaus and posts to reach out to those communities to advance the Department’s diplomacy and development objectives,” “work closely with faith communities to ensure that their voices are heard in the foreign policy process;” and “collaborate regularly with other government officials and offices focused on religious issues, including the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and the Department’s Office of International Religious Freedom.”

During the Working Group process, the State Department Legal Adviser’s office was tasked with providing legal guidance on how diplomats can work with faith-based communities abroad. The guidance has reportedly been issued as an internal document. Also, ongoing training programs at the Foreign Service Institute on religion and foreign policy were approved by

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The State Department reports that more than 40 civil society working groups have been set up through American embassies around the world which focus on civil society engagement.

Multilateral Efforts

IRFA specifically cites U.S. participation in multilateral organizations as an avenue for advancing religious freedom. Both the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have conventions and agreements that protect freedom of religion or belief and related rights, including assembly and expression. Both the UN and OSCE also have mechanisms that can be used to advance religious freedom or call attention to violations, at which the State Department and USCIRF have engaged vigorously over the years.

Multilateral Case Study: Defeating the Defamation of Religions Resolutions

For more than a decade, the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly were the centers of an effort by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and its members to restrict offensive or controversial speech about Islam. From 1999 to 2010, both bodies adopted annual OIC-sponsored resolutions on “combating defamation of religions,” which sought – in violation of the individual rights to freedom of religion and expression – to establish what would be in effect a global blasphemy law.

Years of effort by the State Department, USCIRF, members of Congress, and NGOs helped bring about a marked decline in support for these flawed resolutions between 2008 and 2010 and their replacement in 2011 with a consensus resolution on “combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief.” This effort provides a positive example of the relevant U.S. executive branch entities, USCIRF, Congress, and civil society groups effectively working together on an issue related to international religious freedom. The State Department made defeating the defamation-of-religions resolutions a priority in its multilateral engagement; USCIRF and NGOs bolstered these efforts by highlighting the dangers of the resolutions through public advocacy campaigns and private meetings; and

members of Congress did the same by writing UN delegations and heads of state urging them to vote against the resolutions.

Unlike the defamation resolutions, the consensus resolutions properly focus on protecting individuals from discrimination or violence, instead of shielding religions from criticism; they protect the adherents of all religions or beliefs, instead of privileging one religion; and they do not call for legal restrictions on peaceful expression. Instead, the new approach (often referred to as the “Resolution 16/18” approach, after the first such resolution) calls for speech to be criminalized only if it amounts to incitement to imminent violence, a high threshold which is also the U.S. First Amendment standard.

The Treatment of Asylum Seekers in Expedited Removal

As authorized by IRFA, USCIRF conducted a major research study in 2003 and 2004 on the U.S. government’s treatment of asylum seekers in Expedited Removal.¹⁵ The Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and Justice (DOJ) cooperated with the Commission, whose designated experts had unrestricted access to the internal workings of Expedited Removal.¹⁶

USCIRF’s February 2005 report, *The Treatment of Asylum Seekers in Expedited Removal* (the Study),¹⁷ found serious flaws placing legitimate asylum seekers at risk of being returned to countries where they could

face persecution. It also found that asylum seekers were being inappropriately detained under prison-like conditions and in actual jails. To address these problems, the Study made a series of recommendations, none requiring Congressional action, to the responsible agencies within DHS and DOJ. The recommendations were geared to help protect U.S. borders and ensure fair and humane treatment for *bona fide* asylum seekers, mirroring the two goals of the 1996 immigration reform law that established Expedited Removal.

USCIRF has continued to monitor the implementation of these recommendations and has issued several follow-up reports finding progress in some areas but no changes in others.¹⁸ For example, as a result of 2009 reforms, DHS’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) is housing more – though still not all – asylum seekers under civil detention conditions, and its parole policy is more in line with the Study’s recommendations. However, USCIRF remains concerned that, nearly ten years later, the serious flaws relating to the initial interviews of arriving aliens apparently have not been addressed. Moreover, since the time of the Study, DHS has expanded Expedited Removal from a port-of-entry program to one that covers the entire land and sea border of the United States. In addition, over the past several fiscal years, the number of individuals claiming a fear of return in Expedited Removal has increased sharply. As a result, the continuing flaws in the system now potentially affect even more asylum seekers.

¹⁵ Under Expedited Removal, aliens arriving in the United States without proper documents can be returned to their countries of origin without delay and without a hearing before an immigration judge. To ensure that *bona fide* refugees are not mistakenly returned, an alien who claims a fear of return is detained while a preliminary assessment (the “credible fear determination”) is made. If credible fear is found, the case goes before an IJ and the asylum seeker may, at the government’s discretion, be paroled (released) from detention while the case is pending. If credible fear is not found, the individual is put back in Expedited Removal and removed promptly.

¹⁶ Within DHS, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) first encounters aliens and identifies those subject to Expedited Removal and from that group, those seeking asylum. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detains asylum seekers until Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) makes the credible fear determination. If credible fear is found, DOJ’s Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) takes over; IJs hear the cases, and the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) reviews any appeals.

¹⁷ The Study is available here: <http://www.uscirf.gov/reports-briefs-special-reports/report-asylum-seekers-in-expedited-removal>

¹⁸ Expedited Removal Study Report Card: 2 Years Later (2005), available at: : <http://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/press-releases/uscirf-finds-disappointing-response-departments-justice-and-homeland>

Assessing the U.S. Government’s Detention of Asylum Seekers: Further Action Needed to Fully Implement Reforms (2013), available at <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/ERS-detention%20reforms%20report%20April%202013.pdf>

THE FUTURE OF U.S. INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

Current Global Challenges and Opportunities

Over the past 15 years, the global landscape for freedom of religion or belief has undergone drastic changes that impact the U.S. government's ability to promote respect for this human right. Despite the evolving international scene, the tools IRFA created for the executive branch have not been updated or better resourced, leaving them underpowered and ill-equipped to address today's challenges. However, there are straightforward changes that would better position the United States to engage these difficult issues successfully and reenergize its religious freedom promotion efforts.

When IRFA was passed in 1998, the Cold War had only recently ended and the United States was at its height of unipolar power. The Act's tools were geared for highlighting abuses by states, either through commission or omission, and using the United States' influence and power to encourage change or impose consequences. As discussed above, two of IRFA's major achievements with Vietnam and Turkmenistan occurred in classic state-to-state engagements within the context IRFA's drafters had envisioned. Both governments featured authoritarian systems with a communist heritage. Each government was the driver of religious freedom violations and thus was capable of resolving the problems. Pressure and adroit diplomacy brought about improvements that would have not occurred without the CPC mechanisms.

The paradigm for IRFA was state-to-state relations. Non-state actors, extremists groups and terrorist organizations were active in 1998, but lurking in seemingly inconsequential locations, like Afghanistan. In addition, it appeared inconceivable that frozen political systems in the Middle East and elsewhere could thaw rapidly, if at all, with "the street" influencing the direction of governments. Statecraft was the relationship between governments.

Since 1998, world events have transformed U.S. foreign policy in general and the environment for IRFA mechanisms in particular. The demise of the Soviet empire predated IRFA, but its reverberations are still being felt throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as in other areas where Russia wishes to reestablish its influence. Three years after IRFA's passage, the

Since 1998, world events have transformed U.S. foreign policy in general and the environment for IRFA mechanisms in particular.

shocking attacks of September 11, 2001, demonstrated that foreign affairs would no longer be solely dominated by major powers, but rather be a multilayered contest with and between states and transnational movements, some of which advocated violent religious ideologies. The ensuing American military engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq placed the United States in the center of sectarian and ethnic conflicts in turbulent regions. Starting in 2011, the Arab Awakening both unleashed democratic forces and opened space for extremist groups to vie for influence, if not outright power, with debates about intertwining issues of religion, society, law, governance, and fundamental rights occurring for the first time. At the same time, the information revolution empowered both human rights activists and extremists to share their information globally, at the click of a mouse.

In this new landscape, IRFA's mechanisms struggle for relevance in countries in transition or in contexts where weak governments are grappling with non-state actors like terrorist organizations or extremist groups. Syria is a case in point. A tragedy on many levels, Syria also represents one of the worst situations in the world for religious freedom, yet the IRFA tools

are almost irrelevant to address the actions of terrorist organizations fighting a brutal, dictatorial regime or when the longstanding government is no longer seen as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. In other places like Central African Republic where targeted mass killing along religious lines has garnered international attention and an individual's membership in a particular faith can be a life or death matter, IRFA's tools are ill-suited to address the causes or aftermath of such violence.

To be sure, we recognize that not every situation of human rights violations fits the religious-freedom mold. Governments, and the societies they serve or control, are multifaceted and multilayered; religious factors are only one of many. Issues of local politics, access to resources, and ethnic divisions often are the main drivers of conflict. However, we must recognize that religious freedom concerns frequently are ignored or overlooked in U.S. foreign policy. Ensuring space for the free and peaceful practice of religion will not solve every problem, but it will solve some, and in other contexts it will be part of the solution. Those nuances must be better understood by U.S. policy makers; having a greater sensitivity to issues tied to religious freedom will make U.S. foreign policy more effective and more durable.

In today's world, IRFA's statist model will no longer suffice by itself. There is a clear window of opportunity to do something new. The challenges of the 21st century, with growing violent religious extremism and continuing authoritarianism, call for an updated approach that energizes and mainstreams the promotion of freedom of religion or belief. To ensure future successes, IRFA's tools need to be reworked to deal with both state and non-state violations.

Conditions Today

The question is often asked, "Have religious freedom abuses gotten worse since 1998?" It is difficult to answer, in part because it is not simply a matter of measuring and comparing violations around the world. No regular consumer of news can deny the alarming scope and scale of continuing religious freedom abuses. Bringing about systematic change is rarely an easy task. Nevertheless, especially in light of how complex the landscape for religious freedom and related rights has become in an information-driven, exponentially-changing, post-

9/11, post-Arab Awakening world, one surprising fact remains: the mechanisms the Act created continue to bear their share of concrete, positive results despite their limitations. On multiple occasions, for example, the Ambassador-at-Large and USCIRF have been credited with playing a key role in prisoner releases and successfully addressing violations.

The types of violations we see today span a wide range of repressive policies and actions. They include repression by authoritarian governments; abusive laws that target particular religious activity or religious communities for activity deemed illegal or inappropriate;

The challenges of the 21st century call for an updated approach that energizes and mainstreams the promotion of freedom of religion or belief.

suppression of religious minorities under majoritarian domination in democratic contexts; and sectarian violence and attacks by extremist groups and non-state actors in failed or failing states.

In many contexts, authoritarian governments attempt to control the civic space for religious actors, limiting religious activities to those they approve or can manipulate. The motivation for these limitations can come from hostility to particular religious beliefs or fear of alternate sources of influence over the society. In these countries, religious groups and practices are tolerated only to the extent they can be controlled, or even subverted, to the service of the regime. For instance, the legal systems of many post-Soviet states restrict or deny legitimate religious rights in the name of distorted secularism or disguised official, usually majority, religions. USCIRF has documented the growth of increasingly restrictive laws and practices in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, which criminally punish unapproved religious association and practice. Similar approaches are also seen in China, North Korea and Vietnam. Regardless of the motivation – be it fear of alternative sources of influence or hostility to religion – individuals suffer from their inability to practice their

faith freely and peacefully and the government uses the force of law to punish those who refuse to follow the state-sanctioned approach. In this context, conditions are often better for approved religious groups or those deemed “traditional,” as long as they stay within the government’s parameters.

Religious communities in democracies and countries in transition also suffer from religious freedom abuses. The “tyranny of the majority” can lead to violations against religious minorities or dissenting members of the majority faith, especially if rule of law protections are weak. Countries such as Nigeria and Burma, two countries working to overcome a history of military dictatorships, are struggling to build a culture of tolerance among individuals of different faiths. In both states, politicians and religious leaders have misused religion and religious identity for political purposes, especially around elections. And in doing so, the leaders have increased tensions for short-term gains at the ballot box, often with violent or fatal results.

Environments where religion is hyper-politicized and politics is conducted through ballots and bullets allow extremist groups and terrorist organizations to press their politico-religious agendas and silence competing voices. These highly-charged situations severely limit freedom of religion, especially for religious minorities and dissenters within the majority, as extremists treat differing religious beliefs as competition in their war of ideas. Violence by non-state actors to silence competition shrinks the civic space for peaceful sharing, and chills the debate of, religious ideas. Diversity of thought and belief is lost and societies are unable to consider appropriate religion-and-state arrangements.

Sectarian violence between groups from the same faith community and inter-religious violence can also severely impact religious freedom. In these environments, the state is not a participant, but rather an observer, of the violence. Non-state actors participating in sectarian attacks can vary greatly and include individuals, mobs, vigilante groups, anti-government insurgents, militant organizations, and recognized terrorist groups. The state’s role also varies: the state may be complicit in the private persecution, may choose not to protect the victims or punish the perpetrators, or may be unable to do so. Nevertheless, state inaction,

whatever the cause, often creates a climate of impunity that can lead to a vicious cycle of sectarian attacks and retaliation, such as in India and Indonesia.

Some governments also enforce religious conformity. In countries where governmental and religious authority overlap, there may be a requirement that national laws conform with religious law or that the law of one religion applies to all regardless of individual choice, and/or the government may coerce compliance with an official religion. Iran’s theocratic regime is a good example. And when legal systems promote intolerance, USCIRF has documented that non-state actors often act unilaterally to enforce these biased notions. For instance, blasphemy-type laws empower the forces of intolerance to use state institutions to protect their religious hegemony. International law experts have repeatedly deemed blasphemy-type laws incompatible with human rights commitments.¹⁹ Pakistan’s laws and practice are particularly egregious in this regard, with its constantly-abused law penalizing blasphemous acts with the death penalty or life in prison. In addition to state enforcement, mobs feel enabled, under the cover of this law, to mete out vigilante justice against individuals deemed to have committed blasphemy. The result

¹⁹ The UN Human Rights Committee has stated that “[p]rohibitions of displays of lack of respect for a religion or other belief system, including blasphemy laws, are incompatible with the [ICCPR].” Human Rights Committee, “General comment no. 34, Article 19: Freedoms of opinion and expression,” UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 48 (2011). In addition, an international group of experts convened by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recently recommended that “[s]tates that have blasphemy laws should repeal the[m] as such laws have a stifling impact on the enjoyment of freedom of religion or belief and healthy dialogue and debate about religion.” See “Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, Conclusions and recommendations emanating from the four regional expert workshops organised by OHCHR in 2011, and adopted by experts in Rabat, Morocco on 5 October 2012,” available at www.ohchr.org. Furthermore, these laws run counter to consensus UN resolutions recognizing that religious intolerance is best fought through positive measures, such as education, outreach, and counter-speech, and that criminalization is only appropriate for incitement to imminent violence. See, e.g., Human Rights Council, “Resolution 16/18: Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against, persons based on religion or belief,” UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/16/18 (2011); General Assembly, “Resolution 66/167: Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief,” UN Doc. A/RES/66/167 (2011).

is that extremist groups are empowered and the state's rule-of-law system corrupted in the service of the narrow agendas of extremist groups and unscrupulous religious leaders.

In addition, some governments promote domestically, and sometimes export internationally, extremist religious ideologies that instill hate, and sometimes incite violence, against members of disfavored religions. This is particularly damaging when done through school textbooks used to teach children. The public school curriculum in Saudi Arabia has been a long-standing concern and case in point.

IRFA's Unexpected Impact

While IRFA has not been fully implemented and its provisions often ignored, it has positively influenced the conduct of U.S. foreign policy in unexpected ways. For instance, take the State Department's *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom*, which has been issued every year since its mandated creation. A first- or second-tour diplomat at each embassy usually is responsible for writing the first draft of the report, which means that a generation of Foreign Service Officers gained valuable experience by gathering information and writing about the status of religious freedom in their country of assignment. As a result, diplomats are better informed on and more aware of the relevant issues as they move forward in their careers. As mentioned above, over the past five years, new training opportunities were developed for diplomats at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), partly because a cadre of diplomats now is more attuned to religious freedom as well as the growing relevance of religion in many key countries and regions for U.S. foreign policy.

Moreover, although USCIRF's task is to advise the U.S. government, not conduct diplomacy, it undertakes fact-finding missions abroad with the assistance of U.S. embassies, which bring it into contact with foreign governments. These country visits also have helped ensure that concerns about religious freedom are put squarely on the agenda of the local U.S. embassy, as it prepares for a USCIRF trip, requests and often participates in meetings, and follows up afterward.

USCIRF's public reports also provide another perspective that the State Department must account for in its dealings with host countries. The information

provided in State Department and USCIRF reports also helps the American public, foreign audiences, academics, and social scientists better understand the situation for religious freedom globally. For instance, due in part to this information, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life has devised ways to better understand global trends in restrictions on religion and statistically measure increasing or decreasing limitations.

In addition, the IRFA entities provided new access to the U.S. government for religious communities and religious freedom advocates. The IRF Office and USCIRF opened opportunities for nongovernmental organizations, such as advocacy groups and religious communities, to provide information about religious persecution and ask for the United States to raise concerns in private or public venues. This trend has continued since 1998, with different administrations creating other religiously-oriented offices at the State Department – most recently the Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives – that provide various avenues for engagement. In addition, USCIRF has worked to raise awareness among NGOs about UN mechanisms that provide venues for civil society advocacy on religious freedom issues, such as the Universal Periodic Review process and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, including by holding roundtables with and briefings for interested NGOs. USCIRF has also briefed religious communities and human rights groups on opportunities for public and diplomatic engagement at the annual Human Dimension Meetings of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as well as other OSCE venues.

This in turn has led the advocacy community to organize itself outside of government to better convey religious freedom concerns to the State Department, Congress, and USCIRF. In recent years, USCIRF staff and representatives of two NGOs established a Roundtable on International Religious Freedom to create a forum where representatives of organizations concerned about religious freedom can share information about their endeavors and U.S. government officials can update the religious freedom advocacy community about their activities. The Roundtable is not a membership organization, but its participants have written the administration, USCIRF, and members of Congress on

several occasions about religious freedom concerns or in support of USCIRF recommendations.

While the United States has not sought to export the IRFA model abroad, it has led the way on advocating for religious freedom internationally. As a result, other nations have looked to the U.S. government for best practices and examined its mechanisms as their own levels of interest in promoting religious freedom internationally increased. Last year, Canada established an

Showing High-Level Commitment by Developing and Implementing a Religious Freedom Strategy

USCIRF has drawn a key conclusion from its review of the past 15 years: the IRFA mechanisms have a greater chance of success if they are buttressed by robust political support and if the U.S. government is willing to impose genuine consequences for inaction. In other words, IRFA can work if there is a commitment to make

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ambassador and supporting office in its foreign ministry, looking closely at the IRF Office and USCIRF as models. In Europe, countries such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, Austria, Norway, and Germany have all emphasized this issue at various times in the past five years. The European Union also has become more engaged in recent years. Starting in 2009, a series of Council decisions has emphasized the importance of freedom of religion or belief, which culminated in the issuance of guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief. The comprehensive document sets out the key issues of concern for the EU's diplomatic corps (the European External Action Service, or EEAS) and member state diplomats when posted outside the Union. Parliamentary efforts to create cross-party support for promoting international religious freedom also have been initiated in the British and German parliaments and in the European parliament. To take advantage of this increased interest, USCIRF initiated the building of an inter-parliamentary coalition to advance religious freedom internationally for people of all faith or none.

Enhancing Current Mechanisms and Creating New Tools

So how should the United States equip and reposition itself to advance freedom of religion or belief more effectively for all? Is a wholesale revision of IRFA needed, a re-energizing of current structures, or both?

it work. By contrast, these tools are weaker and less likely to stimulate corrective action if implemented on the margins of U.S. foreign policy, with limited attention paid by high-ranking policymakers in an administration or Congress.

IRFA requires the United States to bear witness to religious freedom abuses abroad, but to do so credibly our government must maintain its fidelity to the law, its intent, and timing of designations. This requires continuous high-level policymaker interest and commitment. Issues of religious freedom are relevant in many of the key foreign policy challenges facing the United States. While not always the foremost issue, religious freedom is often an overlooked concern in many country contexts. Faith and belief are issues that animate the lives of individuals in governments and societies. To better position the United States to engage countries oppressing religious freedom or to work with nations that see the world through a religious lens, the promotion of freedom of religion or belief needs to be mainstreamed across U.S. foreign policy. In addition, the challenges to religious freedom are often unique, so the mechanisms IRFA created should be strengthened and updated.

This could be implemented in several ways. First, each administration should develop and issue a specific strategy outlining the need to promote freedom of religion or belief internationally across agencies, which would set the tone and give direction. The National Security Council issued a strategy about religious

engagement in July 2013, which has a component on religious freedom and human rights. This positive initiative, which USCIRF staff informally advised, connected religious freedom work to other related issues of conflict prevention and to engaging religious leaders on development goals. A document specifically tailored to the issue of religious freedom would further this effort.

With a national strategy in place, the emphasis on religious freedom should be further concretized through other related steps, such as creating an inter-agency working group of relevant officials, including the Ambassador-at-Large and the Director-level NSC official envisioned in IRFA. The Working Group, in consultation with USCIRF, could drive forward a national strategy and ensure robust implementation. Having this strategy reflected in the State Department's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) and as appropriate in the Defense Department's Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) would further strengthen this guidance.

Demonstrating the Importance of International Religious Freedom

Ensuring that elected leaders and U.S. officials communicate clearly and regularly about how religious freedom is a foreign policy priority for the United States is an important way to mainstream and deepen U.S. efforts. For instance, both President Obama and President Bush gave major speeches about the importance of international religious freedom. As these speeches demonstrate, one of the most direct ways to stress the importance of religious freedom is to do so in high-profile public events. Such presentations by the President, the Secretary of State and other high ranking U.S. government officials, as well as the leaders of Congress, will be noticed by both the U.S. government bureaucracy and foreign governments. There is a time-worn debate about the wisdom of speaking publicly on country-specific religious freedom concerns or individual cases, about whether it helps or hurts. USCIRF cannot recommend a rule governing all situations, as each will have specific nuances. However, we generally conclude that the United States has hardly reached a point where it speaks too much about international religious freedom.

And after communication must come action. Public advocacy should be tied to a country-specific action plan or strategy for advancing religious freedom. This is

especially important for countries designated as CPCs, as well as those recommended by USCIRF for designation or on USCIRF's Tier 2 list. Such actions would include scheduling trips for embassy officials, including the U.S. ambassador, to visit oppressed religious communities or sites of violence. The United States should also insist that discussions on religious freedom and religious tolerance be included in various bilateral strategic dialogues and summits, such as the strategic dialogues with Russia, Pakistan, or Indonesia, or the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission meetings. Concerns about freedom of religion or belief should also be interwoven into negotiations over trade agreements, like the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

It is also essential to ensure that religious freedom is raised during visits by U.S. officials and elected leaders to key countries of concern. It is important for foreign leaders to hear directly from visiting delegations that restrictions on religious freedom are hindering bilateral cooperation and the overall relationship. Face-to-face meetings are unique opportunities to raise concerns directly with government officials who are either directly repressing religious freedom or not intervening against non-state actors. During these country visits, delegations also should make a point to meet with religious leaders representing targeted communities, as well as their advocates. It can be particularly powerful to attend a worship service or visit important religious sites.

The speed with which relevant vacancies are filled is also noticed. It is important to quickly fill the Ambassador-at-Large position and USCIRF Commissioner appointments with distinguished individuals noted for their knowledge and experience in fields relevant to the issue of international religious freedom. Empowering the new Ambassador-at-Large to act in significant ways in the first 100 days after confirmation would also be noted.

Using Language Carefully

In public governmental statements, it is important to use the most precise terminology. U.S. officials sometimes have referred to "religious liberty" or "freedom of worship." While the intent was to convey concern about the full right of freedom of religion or belief, these phrasings are incomplete and only capture part of the right. Freedom of worship, for instance, is simply one component of freedom of religion; it does not include all its aspects

such as the freedoms to choose a belief, change beliefs, and share beliefs. In addition, the more precise phrasing of “freedom of religion or belief” denotes protection of the individual right to profess a particular religious belief, as well as to hold no religious beliefs.

Connected to this is the important point that religious freedom is not just for a particular religious community, but for all members of a society, including members of the majority faith as well as minorities. Language should be avoided that suggests the United States is only interested in the smallest communities, when the majority faith may also be suffering limitations on their religious freedoms. The rights of religious minorities are best protected in environments when the religious freedoms for all persons in a country are respected. In other words, religious freedom must be communicated – again and again – as being a right for all individuals, be they members of a minority religious group, a majority religious group, or no religious group at all.

Reinvigorating the CPC Mechanism

The centerpiece of IRFA for the executive branch is the “country of particular concern,” or CPC, designation. It is what gives IRFA teeth, taking it beyond simply “naming and shaming,” by creating incentives for improvements and consequences for inaction. To be sure, religious freedom advocacy should not only be about naming countries to a black list and sanctions. Yet the designation process and the possibility of punitive actions can breathe new life into diplomatic efforts that should both precede and follow a designation and stimulate political will in foreign capitals where none existed. The designation process itself can have an important impact on affecting a government’s behavior and be supplemented by other tools. However, if the designation of CPC countries occurs without any additional consequences, this limits its value as a tool to encourage reforms. For instance, the use of “double hatted” sanctions towards non-reforming governments undercuts the significance of designation and the levying of a Presidential action. And if the timing of designating countries is erratic over many years, the CPC process becomes less credible.

As a result, USCIRF recommends that current and future administrations and Congress need to recommit themselves to the full and robust application of IRFA’s

mechanisms. Interest has faded over the past decade-and-a-half, allowing these structures to atrophy. The tools remain relevant, as governments still perpetrate or tolerate religious freedom violations and IRFA’s instruments are well-suited to engage those situations. They still can be used to positive effect in many problematic environments for religious freedom.

To revitalize IRFA’s structures, the CPC process must be conducted annually, with Congress conducting annual oversight hearings. While some have argued that

USCIRF recommends that current and future administrations and Congress need to recommit themselves to the full and robust application of IRFA’s mechanisms.

IRFA’s language is unclear about an annual designation, reading the statute with an understanding of Congressional intent makes clear that it is to be an annual process. In fact, the first seven years of State Department implementation generally saw annual designations (see previous GAO graphic). Issuing CPC designations creates moments of clarity for diplomacy and truth telling. The State Department should ensure an annual designation process, and if it does not happen, Congress should make clear its intent by amending IRFA.

The CPC list should also expand and retract as conditions warrant. The current list of countries has not changed in a decade, except for the addition of Uzbekistan in 2006. The past 10 years have seen a worsening of the already-poor religious freedom environment in Pakistan, a continued dearth of religious freedom in Turkmenistan, backsliding in Vietnam, rising violations in Egypt before and after the Arab Spring, and Syria’s descent into a sectarian civil war with all sides perpetrating egregious religious freedom violations. Yet no new countries have been added to the State Department’s CPC list. In fact, based on USCIRF’s findings in this 2014 Annual Report, the current CPC-designation list does not accurately reflect conditions of particularly severe violations of religious freedom around the world and should be doubled in size.

The use of Presidential actions should also be more dynamic. Of the current eight countries designated as CPCs, six had “double hatted” sanctions for which the religious-freedom basis has now expired, and two have indefinite waivers. USCIRF recommends taking Presidential actions that are unique to each situation and applying specific actions directly related to religious freedom violations. Double hating sanctions can be the appropriate action in some circumstances. In addition, specifically tailored actions can be more precise, either broadly structured or narrowly crafted to target specific government officials or provinces, if acute situations are highly localized. The Act allows for “commensurate actions,” which could include freezing abusers’ assets, for example through the Senior Foreign Political Figure (also known as Politically Exposed Persons) status. In addition, use of the waiver should be judicious and tied to a specific timetable. Indefinite waivers of penalties undermine the effectiveness of efforts to advance religious freedom, as they signal a lack of U.S. interest and communicate to the designated country that there never will be consequences for their religious freedom abuses.

Along with an annual CPC process, we recommend that the IRFA toolbox be used in its entirety in a continuum of action. U.S. diplomatic engagement cannot and should not solely rely on naming CPCs, but rather use a concert of action including: diplomatic engagement; consultations about possible CPC action; CPC designations; binding agreement negotiations; presidential actions; and/or a waiver for the narrowest of circumstances. Past practice provides only a few examples of these tools being used together to bring about change in a country of concern. An annual CPC designation process should be the center of all IRF-related work, driving and energizing other areas of U.S. diplomacy, but should not be the sum total of all activity.

Creating New IRFA Tools

In addition to fulfilling IRFA’s existing mandates, new tools need to be created. Times have changed since 1998, but the Act has not. Accordingly, USCIRF recommends updates to IRFA to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

As alluded to earlier, there are a growing number of situations where the abuses of religious freedom in a country are particularly severe, with systematic,

ongoing, and egregious violations, but no government is in control or able to respond. Current examples would include Somalia and the Central African Republic. The CPC tool should be broadened to allow the naming of countries (and not just governments of countries) where the government either does not exist or cannot exert control over the country.

Tied to this, the State Department should be given the ability, where appropriate, to designate transnational or local organizations which are perpetrating particularly severe violators of religious freedom. These groups often are the ruling powers on the ground in failed or failing states. Being able to designate the actors perpetrating particularly severe violators of religious freedom would broaden the U.S. government’s ability to engage the actual drivers of persecution. Such a step was taken with the Taliban, which was in effect named a CPC from 1999-2003 despite the United States’ not recognizing its control of Afghanistan. While the ability of the United States to influence events on the ground may be marginal in these circumstances, naming these countries or groups would reflect reality, which should be the core point of the CPC process.

Addressing the Placement of the Ambassador-at-Large

The low placement of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom within the State Department hierarchy has long been a concern for religious freedom advocates, including USCIRF. According to a 2013 report by the Government Accountability Office, the State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) dramatically reduced the status of the Ambassador-at-Large. The demotion of the position constitutes a major change in the IRFA structure and frustrates congressional intent. Ensuring the Ambassador-at-Large has direct and regular access to the Secretary of State would fulfill IRFA’s intention that the Ambassador be “a principal advisor to the President and Secretary of State” on matters relating to religious freedom. USCIRF also recommends that the State Department give the Ambassador-at-Large clear oversight of the IRF Office in addition to addressing the placement issue, and if it does not, Congress should clarify its intent.

The increased number of religiously-oriented positions within the State Department means that the

Ambassador-at-Large is now in a crowded field. The Secretary of State should create a working group with all the religiously-oriented positions and programs to ensure consistency in message and strategy. In addition, the Office of International Religious Freedom should be strengthened, including by enlarging its staff, deepening its expertise, and providing dedicated programmatic funds for religious freedom promotion and protection.

Addressing Report Timing Issues

IRFA created a system in which the State Department's and USCIRF's annual reports would be issued approximately eight months apart, and USCIRF's report would be based in part on a review of the State Department's reporting. As discussed above, however, the State Department's change of the reporting period to harmonize the timing of various human reports changed the release date of the IRF Report. This had the unintended effect of upending this system, with both reports now being issued at almost the same time. In light of the State Department's change in its timetable for the release of its reports on religious freedom, Congress should give USCIRF flexibility on the timing of the issuance of its annual report.

Increasing the Use of IRFA's Inadmissibility Provision

USCIRF also recommends that the visa ban for individuals involved in particularly severe violations of religious freedom be used more expansively. USCIRF is only aware of the visa ban being used just once – against the State Minister of the Indian state of Gujarat, Narendra Modi. USCIRF supported and called for this decision, but it is highly likely that other violators of religious freedom applied for a visa to the United States over the past 15 years. A recent initiative of the IRF Office to ensure that people inadmissible under U.S. law for religious freedom violations are denied entry is a useful first step. The consular sections of all embassies should be trained on this requirement and directed that the application of this provision is mandatory.

Expanding Training

Training is another area where IRFA's mandate has only recently been implemented. The current optional class at the Foreign Service Institute is a positive development, but it is one class among many others. The

State Department should make training on international religious freedom mandatory, including education on what it is, why it is important for U.S. interests, and how to advance it. To ensure that this message is received at all levels, it should be required at three intervals in each diplomat's career: the "A-100" class for incoming diplomats, Area Studies for midcareer officials, and a class for all ambassadors and deputy chiefs of missions. Relevant members of the military also should receive training on the importance of religious freedom and practical ways to best promote it as an aspect of U.S. foreign policy. As U.S. service members and military chaplains must increasingly navigate religion-infused landscapes, advanced training to help rising officers understand the importance of religious freedom would equip them to engage more effectively with religious leaders and government and military officials in countries of concern.

Ensuring Funding for Religious Freedom Programming

While IRFA authorizes the expenditures of funds for grant making to promote religious freedom, there is no annual appropriation of funds specifically for this purpose. In fact, it was more than a decade before any such funds were made available to the Office of International Religious Freedom, a result of Representative Frank Wolf's directing the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) to set aside funds from the Human Rights Defenders Fund (HRDF). As a result, the IRF Office currently receives from DRL approximately five percent of the overall HRDF funding.

USCIRF recommends that Congress annually call for the State Department to designate specific HRDF funds to the IRF Office for grant making, to help ensure consistent U.S. funding for civil society efforts to promote religious freedom in places and in ways that the U.S. government cannot do directly. Other potential funding sources would be the State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. Congress should also seek to ensure that the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and other entities dispersing federal funds for grant making undertake specific programming on religious freedom.

In statute, report language, and discussions, Congress has at times tasked USCIRF to develop recommendations for challenging issues. In addition to the Expedited Removal Study, one such congressional tasking resulted in USCIRF's study of how Pakistan's education system teaches about religious minorities in that country. Another example was the special fellowship program that was funded for two years to enable scholars to focus on the importance of freedom of religion or belief.

Emphasizing Religious Freedom in Public Diplomacy

IRFA, written at the start of the information revolution, stated that religious freedom should be an element in U.S. cultural exchanges and international broadcasting programs. These efforts would begin with the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, who oversees the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Bureau of International Information Programs, the Bureau of Public Affairs, and the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (which is across the hall from the IRF Office). The mission of public diplomacy is described as "informing and influencing foreign publics and . . . expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and Government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world." Religion is often the lens through which many societies see the United States and the world. The United States should be well-positioned to engage these countries on issues of religious freedom and religion-state relations, considering the role religious freedom has played in American history and the commitment the United States has placed on promoting and protecting this right abroad.

In addition, there should be greater efforts to increase strategic communications programs to counter violent extremism (CVE). A few embassies in key countries have established special CVE programs that seed NGO activity for programming on ways to counter violent messages often grounded in a twisted theology. These activities should be expanded globally, while also incorporating messaging on the importance of religious tolerance and religious freedom to oppose rhetoric used to promote and justify violent acts.

As abuses continue to rise and religious communities are increasingly interconnected globally, more can be done to help expand understanding about the importance and value of religious freedom. In this effort, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) should increase broadcasts and Internet programs with information on religious freedom and related human rights. The BBG and other U.S. government entities can also use appropriated internet freedom funds to develop free, secure internet access for use in closed countries, for example by facilitating the provision of high-speed internet access via satellite. Greater efforts also should be taken to distribute proven and field-tested counter-censorship programs in order to prevent the arrest and harassment of religious freedom and human rights activists and help them maintain their freedom of expression and legitimate expectations of privacy. The U.S. government can also encourage the private sector to take into consideration the impact of their dealings with repressive countries on targeted religious communities.

Continuing Vigorous Multilateral Engagement

IRFA specifically cites U.S. participation in multilateral organizations as an avenue for advancing the freedom of religion or belief, and continued U.S. government involvement at the UN and OSCE on religious freedom issues is critical.

United Nations

At the UN Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process allows states to assess the human rights performance of every UN member state, and thereby provides an opportunity for the United States and other like-minded countries to ask questions and make recommendations about religious freedom. This is particularly important when countries designated as "countries of particular concern" under IRFA are reviewed. Country-specific resolutions in the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly provide another opportunity to highlight religious freedom concerns, as has been done, for example, in the annual General Assembly resolution on the human rights situation in Iran.

The Human Rights Council also has an independent expert, or Special Rapporteur, who focuses on religious freedom. The position was created in 1986,

at the initiative of the United States. The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief – currently Professor Heiner Bielefeldt of Germany – monitors freedom of religion or belief worldwide, communicates with governments about alleged violations, conducts country visits, and brings religious freedom concerns to the UN and public attention through reports and statements. The United States and other human-rights supporting states should continue their vigorous support of this mandate and its work, including by working to secure sufficient assistance to support the Rapporteur in carrying out this volunteer position. USCIRF also urges the United States to work for the creation of additional country-specific Special Rapporteur positions, especially for CPC countries.

Finally, the United States must remain vigilant against any renewed efforts to seek legal limitations on offensive or controversial speech that does not constitute incitement to violence. As discussed previously, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is no longer sponsoring its flawed “defamation-of-religions” resolutions. Nevertheless, USCIRF remains concerned that OIC members have not abandoned their global anti-blasphemy efforts. Many OIC member states continue to have and enforce repressive domestic blasphemy and religious defamation laws that result in gross human rights abuses. In addition, some OIC countries continue to refer publicly to the defamation-of-religions concept and call for laws against it, including in the context of the “Istanbul Process,” a series of international meetings launched in 2011 to discuss the implementation of the new resolutions that replaced the defamation resolutions. The Arab League also is considering a regional model law against the defamation of religions. Accordingly, the United States and other UN member states that support universal human rights must remain vigilant, including in the Istanbul Process, against any efforts to erode the new resolutions’ language or to expand existing international incitement norms – which comprise only narrow exceptions to the freedom of expression – to include speech defaming religions. Not only would such efforts undermine universal rights, they would exacerbate religious intolerance, discrimination, and violence, the very problems that the OIC claims that it is trying to address.

OSCE

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), comprised of 57 participating States from Europe, the former Soviet Union, Mongolia, the United States, and Canada, continues to be an important forum for holding those states to extensive international standards on freedom of religion or belief and to combat hate crimes, discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance, and anti-Semitism. In recent years, however, some OSCE-participating States, led by Russia, have sought to curtail the OSCE’s human rights activities in favor of a security focus and have tried to limit the participation of NGOs, particularly in the annual Human Dimension (HDIM) meeting in Warsaw, Europe’s largest human rights conference.

In 2012, the OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) undertook efforts to “reform” its Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief. The Panel, at the request of participating states, reviews proposed or enacted legislation against international and OSCE commitments, as well as provides expert opinions and guidelines. The Panel previously was composed of 60 persons nominated by OSCE countries, including a 15-member Advisory Council appointed by the ODIHR Director. The restructure resulted in a much smaller panel with 12 members, thus narrowing the expertise available to the OSCE that existed in the larger panel. In 2012, ODIHR discussed forthcoming guidelines on the recognition of religious or belief communities and in 2013, Panel members were involved in consultations on those guidelines in Kiev, Astana and Brussels. USCIRF recommends that the United States urge that these guidelines be released soon.

After the appointment of a new ODIHR director in June 2014, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government urge that, to ensure and maintain its independence, the new Advisory Panel be empowered to act independently and issue reports or critiques and conduct activities without undue interference by ODIHR or participating States. USCIRF also recommends that the United States urge the new ODIHR director to consider returning the issue of freedom of religion or belief to the mandate of the ODIHR Human Rights Section, rather than its Tolerance Unit. Religious freedom is not merely an issue of tolerance but also encompasses a full range of human rights concerns, such as the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression.

The Role of Congress

Congress has an important role to play to ensure that religious freedom remains a priority to the U.S. government. Hearings are a particularly useful tool to use, as they signal Congressional interest in international religious freedom and in publicly holding administration officials accountable. The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs' subcommittee dealing with human rights has held several hearings on religious freedom matters, including around the issuance of the State Department's IRF Report and USCIRF's Annual Report. However, neither the full House Committee on Foreign Affairs nor the full Senate Committee on Foreign Relations has ever held a hearing specific to international religious freedom. In addition, the first oversight hearing of the implementation of IRFA was held in 2013, some 15 years after passage. Holding an oversight hearing of IRFA implementation once during each Congress would signal lasting interest in the issue.

But stand-alone hearings on IRF issues are not the only opportunity. As religious freedom problems are interwoven into some of the most difficult foreign policy challenges facing the United States, both houses of Congress should ensure that religious freedom issues are addressed in specific country hearings and ambassadorial confirmation hearings. In addition, Members of Congress also should introduce and support legislation that focuses on religious freedom violations in specific countries and remedies for such violations. Appropriations bills and supporting report language can also be a way to express congressional concerns to both our own government and other governments, which assiduously monitor how U.S. funds are appropriated. Creating a Senate caucus on international religious freedom, similar to the existing House caucus, would also serve an important function.

Another example of congressional action is the Defending Freedoms Project, an initiative of the Congressional Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC), in conjunction with USCIRF and Amnesty International USA. Through the project, Members of Congress advocate on behalf of prisoners abroad, work toward their release, and shine a spotlight on the laws and policies that have led to their incarceration. The goal of this project is to increase attention to and support for human rights and religious freedom through a focus on these prisoners of conscience.

Working with Like-Minded Nations

The U.S. government should do more to work in concert with like-minded nations and build an international coalition around freedom of religion or belief. The United States is no longer the only player in this field. The United Kingdom's foreign ministry and parliament have increased their focus, the European Union issued guidelines for its diplomats in the field on promoting freedom of religion or belief, and the European Parliament estab-

Congress has an important role to play to ensure that religious freedom remains a priority to the U.S. government.

lished a working group on the subject. Canada also created an ambassadorial position on religious freedom. The Austrians, Dutch, Italians, Norwegians, and Germans also have focused specifically on religious freedom over the past five years. Recently, USCIRF has taken the lead in fostering increased collaboration between the United States, Canada, and a number of European countries in promoting freedom of religion or belief. USCIRF's unique status, 15-year track record, and engagement around the world has served as a catalyst to better integrate and coordinate efforts between the United States and other governments and parliaments.

In early 2014, USCIRF Commissioners and staff met with members of the British All Parties Parliamentary Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief in London and cosponsored with the European Parliament Working Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief (EPWG) an unprecedented joint event in the European Parliament. In Brussels, the event USCIRF cosponsored with the EPWG had a remarkable turnout of almost 200 people, creating a standing room only situation in the large committee room. The London and Brussels meetings have spurred interest in forming a core group of parliamentarians who could advocate in unison and coordinate interventions regarding situations of concern about religious freedom for everyone, everywhere.

Paired with any parliamentary effort should be coordinated inter-government activities. Officials from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the

EU External Action Service have recognized this need in informal conversations. Efforts are beginning and it is hoped will soon be underway to share information among European and North American countries about activities taken by interested countries to date. While coordinating government action may pose challenges, the impact of many voices is sure to be more significant.

Addressing the Flaws in Expedited Removal

Finally, USCIRF continues to recommend that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) implement the recommendations from the 2005 Expedited Removal Study that remain either wholly or partly unimplemented. These include addressing the serious flaws identified in the initial interviews of arriving aliens; allowing asylum officers to grant asylum at the credible fear stage in appropriate cases; not detaining asylum seekers after credible fear has been found unless absolutely necessary and, if asylum seekers must be detained, doing so only in civil conditions; codifying the existing parole policy into regulations; and increasing detainees' access to legal representation and in-person hearings. In addition, in light of Expedited Removal's expansion since the 2005 Study and the recent increase in claims of fear, Congress should consider authorizing and funding another study on the treatment of asylum seekers in Expedited Removal by USCIRF, the Government Accountability Office, or another appropriate entity.

2014 COUNTRY REPORTS

This section of the 2014 Annual Report provides this year's reports on specific countries. Due to this Annual Report's focus on a 15-year review of U.S. international religious freedom policy, the country reports are shorter than in recent years, but they still identify religious freedom violations and recommend policies to address the abuses.

The country reports are grouped into three categories. The first, referred to as Tier 1 CPCs, are those countries that USCIRF concludes meet IRFA's standard for "countries of particular concern" and recommends for designation as such. IRFA requires the U.S. government to designate as a CPC any country whose government engages in or tolerates particularly severe violations of religious freedom that are systematic, ongoing and egregious. The second category, referred to as Tier 2, includes countries where the violations engaged in or tolerated by the government are serious and are characterized by at

least one of the elements of the "systematic, ongoing, and egregious" standard, but do not fully meet the CPC standard. Lastly, there are brief descriptions of other countries and regions that USCIRF monitored during the year.

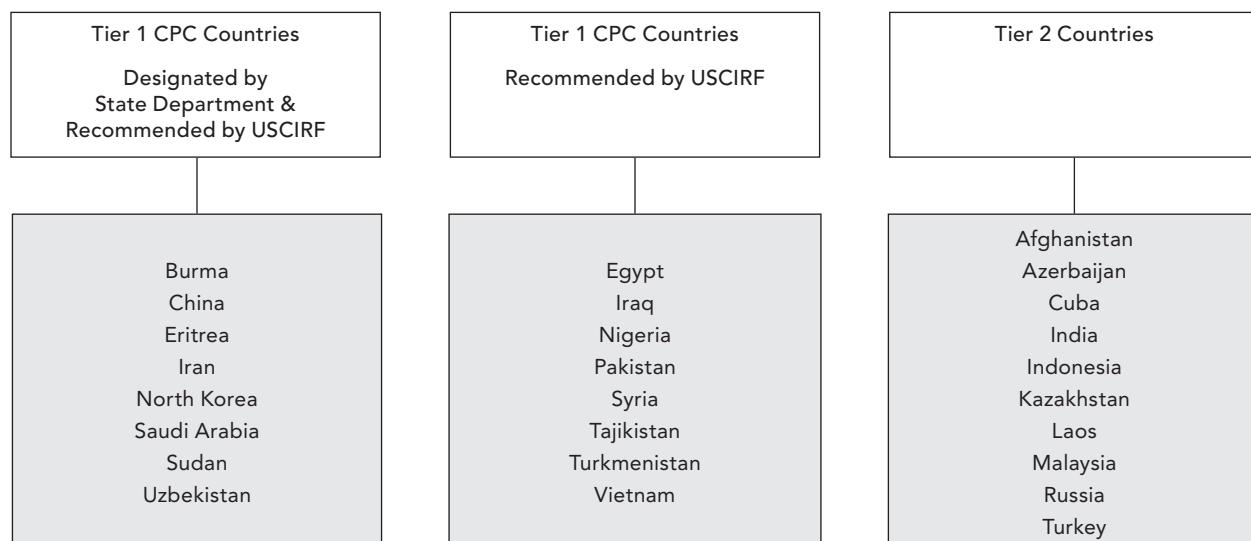
This year, USCIRF recommends that the Secretary of State re-designate the following eight countries as CPCs: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan.

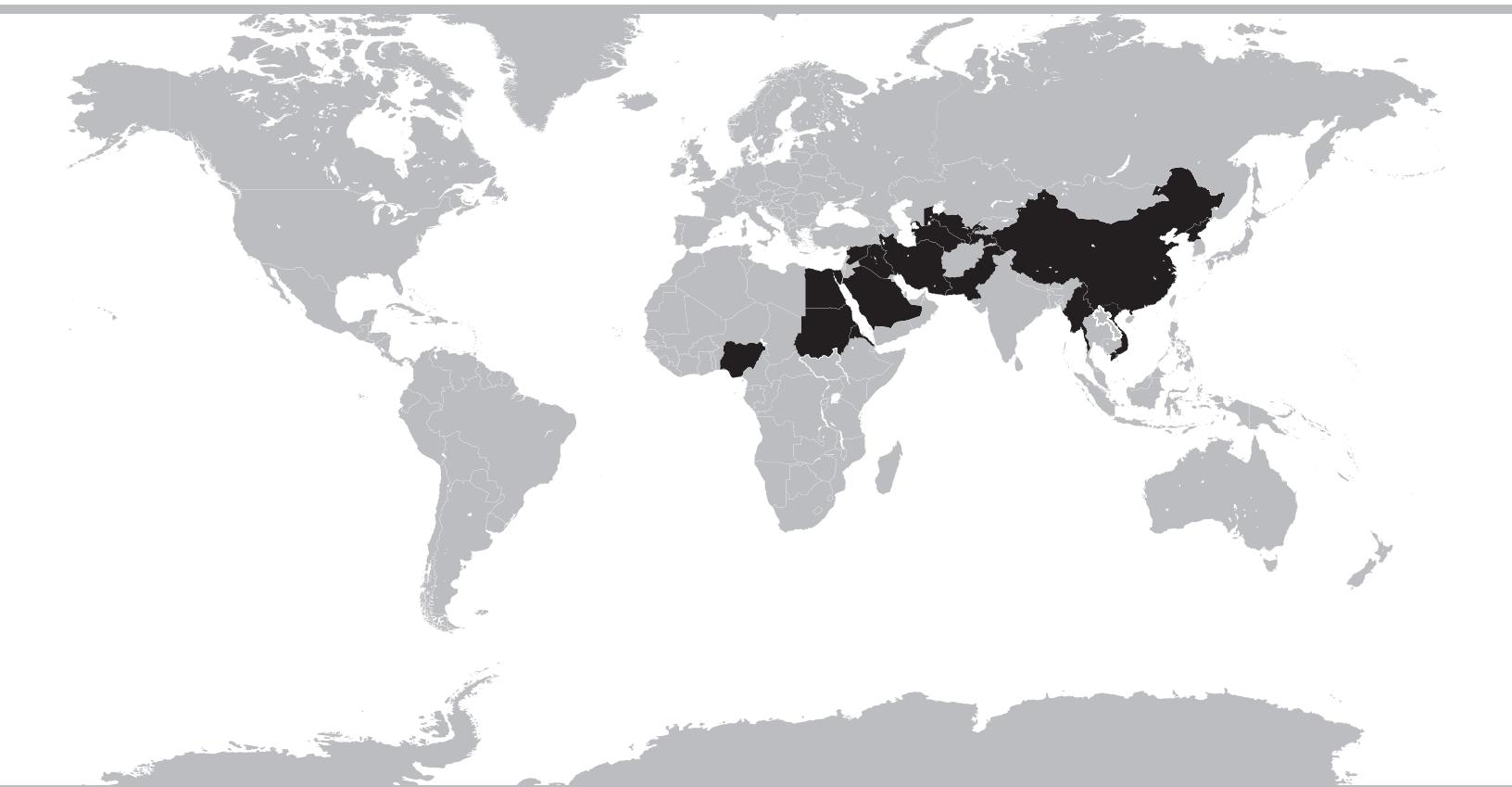
USCIRF also finds that eight other countries meet the CPC standard and should be so designated: Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam.

For 2014, USCIRF places the following ten countries on Tier 2: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Cuba, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, Russia, and Turkey.

The other countries and regions discussed are Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, and Western Europe.

USCIRF TIER 1 & TIER 2 COUNTRIES





TIER 1

COUNTRIES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN

- BURMA
- CHINA
- EGYPT
- ERITREA
- IRAN
- IRAQ
- NIGERIA
- NORTH KOREA
- PAKISTAN
- SAUDI ARABIA
- SUDAN
- SYRIA
- TAJIKISTAN
- TURKMENISTAN
- UZBEKISTAN
- VIETNAM



BURMA

Key Findings

Political reforms in Burma have not improved legal protections for religious freedom and have done little to curtail anti-Muslim violence, incitement and discrimination, particularly targeting the Rohingya Muslim minority. Police failed to intervene effectively and the government has taken inadequate steps to address the underlying causes of sectarian violence or hold individuals fully accountable. State-sponsored discrimination and state-condoned violence against Rohingya and Kaman ethnic Muslim minorities also continued, and ethnic minority Christians faced serious abuses during recent military incursions in Kachin state. Based on these systematic, egregious, ongoing violations, USCIRF continues to recommend that Burma be designated as a “country of particular concern,” or CPC, in 2014. The State Department has designated Burma a CPC since 1999.

Background

The Burmese government in the past year took steps welcomed by both the United States and the international community that included releasing political and religious prisoners and allowing increased freedoms for the media and civil society groups. Nevertheless, constitutional changes failed to lift the prohibition on Aung Sang Suu Kyi running for President. The Burmese government was either unable or unwilling to curtail societal actors engaged in abuses against religious minorities or military units engaged in armed conflicts in ethnic minority areas. Ongoing negotiations with ethnic minority groups failed to produce meaningful results and military incursions continued in Kachin state. These issues, along with continued anti-Muslim discrimination and violence, raise questions about whether planned 2015 elections will speed Burma’s democratic trajectory and its integration of ethnic minorities.

Legal reforms are still needed to provide protections for religious and ethnic minorities. Rohingya

Muslims continue to be denied citizenship and face strict controls over their religious activities and family lives, including a new two-child proposal in northern Rakhine (Arakan) state. Reportedly, the military continues to limit religious worship in Kachin state as part of its military operations. Issues of justice remain vital concerns for many religious and ethnic minorities, as military officers who ordered or participated in forced labor, rape, intimidation, killings, and destruction of religious sites continue to escape accountability and, in some cases, are now local political leaders. The government also continues to censor religious publications, prohibits the import of Bibles and Qu’rans in indigenous languages, and retains legal authority to close unregistered Christian churches and seminaries.

Coordinated communal violence against Muslim communities escalated in the past year and spread beyond Rakhine (Arakan) state. Over the past two years, such violence has resulted in over a thousand deaths, the destruction of over ten thousand homes, mosques, and schools, and the displacement of nearly 250,000 people, who often are denied adequate food and medical supplies. An estimated 180,000 Rohingya Muslims continue to live in displacement camps and many are trafficked to Thailand, Malaysia, or Bangladesh, where they face additional discrimination, detention, squalid conditions, and death.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Anti-Muslim Violence

In March 2013 and for several months after, Burma saw the worst spate of anti-Muslim violence in over a decade. Violence and human rights abuses that started against the Rohingya Muslim minority in the town of Meiktila spread to other Muslim communities. The initial violence reportedly was sparked by an argument in a gold shop and the retaliatory killing of a Buddhist monk. Over three days, armed mobs,

including some Buddhist monks, burned more than 1,500 homes, destroyed more than a dozen mosques and three schools, and left more than 100 people dead and several thousand displaced. In April 2013, a Buddhist mob overran the Muslim community of Okkan in Yangon state, burning mosques and homes and killing two people. At least 100 homes were also destroyed in nearby villages of Yadanakon, Panipin, Chaukthe and Thekon. The Okkan riot reportedly began when a Muslim girl accidentally knocked over the alms bowl of a Buddhist monk. In May 2013, violence broke out in Laisho, Shan State after allegations that a Muslim man killed a Buddhist woman. Over two days, mobs burned and looted Muslim shops, homes, and religious sites; at least 1,400 Muslims took shelter at a Buddhist monastery until police and army units restored order.

In August 2013, local Buddhist monks and villagers in Htangon village, in the Sagaing Region, burned down a mosque and Muslim business in retaliation for

reportedly participated in anti-Muslim violence during the past year, no member of the police or other security units were held responsible. Individuals who incited violence against Muslims, including Buddhist monks and leaders of the “969” anti-Muslim movement, also were not held accountable.

The Plight of the Rohingya Muslim Minority

Muslims in Rakhine (Arakan) state, and particularly those of the Rohingya minority group, continue to experience the most severe forms of legal, economic, religious, educational, and social restrictions and discrimination. The government denies citizenship to Rohingyas. Without citizenship, Rohingyas lack access to secondary education in state-run schools, cannot be issued government identification cards (essential to receiving government benefits), and face restrictions on freedoms of religion, association, and movement. In some areas, Muslims were allowed to gather for worship

Muslims continue to experience the most severe forms of legal, economic, religious, educational, and social restrictions and discrimination.

a rumored rape of a Buddhist woman by three Muslim men. In October 2013, attacks against ethnic Kaman Muslims in the town of Thandwe left at least six people dead and destroyed an estimated 100 homes. The attacks came the day before President Thein Sein visited the region; authorities arrested several members of a local political party. In January 2014, violence in Du Chee Yar Tan village in the Maungdaw township resulted in over 40 deaths. Reportedly, the violence started when ethnic Rakhine villagers killed eight Rohingya they believed were illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. According to UN sources, Rohingya villagers retaliated by killing a police officer, which resulted in both police and mob attacks on Du Chee Yar Tan.

In April 2013, President Thein Sein warned that continued communal violence threatened Burma’s nascent reform process. During the year, the government did hold a few perpetrators (both Muslims and Buddhists) accountable, including 25 for violence in Meiktila and two for violence in Okkan. However, though police

and religious training only during major Muslim holidays. The government recently ordered the destruction of mosques, religious centers, and schools. In his 2013 report, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma again reported to the UN Human Rights Council on the systematic and endemic discrimination against the Muslim community.

In the past year, Rohingya asylum seekers have been turned away from Bangladesh and Thailand, including being forcibly pushed back to sea by Thai military forces. Untold numbers have died attempting to seek refuge in third countries. About 300,000 Muslim Rohingya live, often in squalid conditions, in refugee camps in Bangladesh, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian countries, and face discrimination, trafficking, and other hardships.

Abuses Targeting Ethnic Minority Christians

In Kachin and northern Shan states, home to large Christian minority populations, the military conducted

new operations, beginning in January 2013. In Kachin State, an estimated 100,000 civilians remain internally displaced from 2011-2013 conflicts, and despite tentative ceasefires, fighting and abuses against civilians continued throughout the year.

The 2013 report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma contains evidence of continued religious freedom abuses in Kachin areas, including the targeting of religious venues in military operations, forced labor of church members, restrictions on building places of worship, destruction of religious venues and artifacts, and prohibitions on some religious ceremonies.

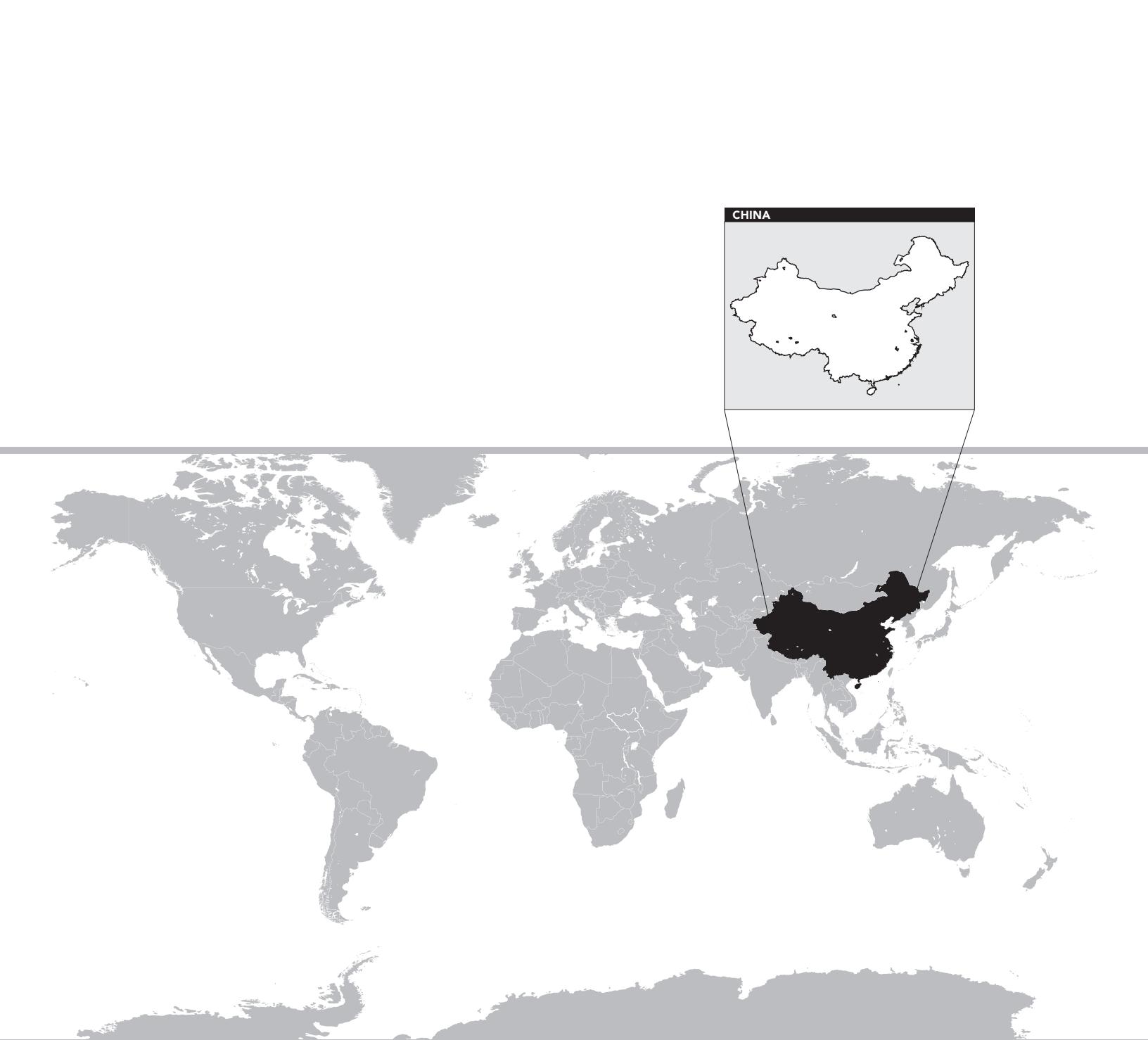
Recommendations for U.S. Policy

Despite progress in other areas, serious problems remain regarding religious freedom and related human rights, and it therefore is premature to lift all economic and other sanctions placed on Burma. U.S. leadership is essential to ensuring the full transition to democratic rule, advancing religious freedom, and establishing the rule of law in Burma. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government maintain the CPC designation for Burma, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Enter into a binding agreement with the government of Burma, as defined in section 405(c) of the International Religious Freedom Act, setting forth commitments the government would undertake to address policies leading to violations of religious freedom, including but not limited to the following:
 - releasing unconditionally all persons detained for the peaceful exercise of religious freedom and related human rights;
 - taking concrete steps to end violence against religious minorities, either by state or non-state actors, by investigating and prosecuting individuals who committed or incited violence;
 - ending policies of discrimination against non-Buddhist religious minorities;
 - and lifting all restrictions inconsistent with international standards on freedom of religion or belief;
- Continue to use the leverage of targeted visa bans and the “specially designated nationals” (SDN) list

by the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) until benchmarks set by the UN Special Rapporteur on Burma and various UN resolutions are fully met;

- Renew the designation under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) for another year, citing specifically the renewal of anti-Muslim violence and the trafficking, discrimination, and denial of humanitarian assistance faced by Rohingya and Kaman Muslim minorities in Rakhine (Arakan) state;
- Work more closely with allies in the region to create a multi-national coordination effort to focus on measures to protect ethnic and religious minorities, including measures to promote the rights of the Rohingya population in Burma and to provide durable solutions for Rohingya refugees outside the country, and promote accountability, for example, by redrafting discriminatory laws, training lawyers and judges, and professionalizing the police force;
- Increase financial and technical support to UN agencies and humanitarian organizations providing assistance in Rakhine (Arakan) state and for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and elsewhere in Southeast Asia; and
- Ensure that development projects in ethnic minority areas funded by the World Bank or other international lending institutions are conditioned on non-discrimination in the provision of assistance and take into careful account the impact of planned projects on all communities.



CHINA

Key Findings

The Chinese government continues to perpetrate particularly severe violations of religious freedom. For Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims, conditions are worse now than at any time in the past decade. Independent Catholics and Protestants face arrests, fines, and the shuttering of their places of worship. Practitioners of Falun Gong, as well as other Buddhist, folk religionist, and Protestant groups deemed “superstitious” or “evil cults,” face long jail terms, forced renunciations of faith, and torture in detention, and the government has not sufficiently answered accusations of psychiatric experimentation and organ harvesting. Based on these systematic, egregious, ongoing abuses, USCIRF again recommends that China be designated as a “country of particular concern,” or CPC, in 2014. The State Department has designated China as a CPC since 1999.

Background

While the Chinese Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the constitution protects only “normal” religious activities, which is not defined. Religious groups and individuals believed to pose a threat to national security or social harmony, or whose practices are deemed superstitious, cult-like, or beyond the vague legal definition of “normal,” face severe restrictions, harassment, detention, imprisonment, and other abuses. Despite this, millions of Chinese manifest their beliefs openly in officially “recognized” religious venues or within the seven government-approved religious organizations. Senior government officials regularly praise the positive role played by religious communities in society. In September 2013, President Xi Jinping publicly expressed his hope that China’s “traditional cultures” of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism can help staunch the country’s “moral decline.” New directives seem to allow approved religious groups to

conduct charitable activities. These are positive developments that were unthinkable two decades ago.

Nevertheless, the government continues to see the growth of religious communities which resist its oversight as potential threats to social stability, security, or its core interests. There continues to be suspicion among Communist Party officials about the growth of religious belief and practice. Government authorities continue to provide strict ideological control and oversight of government-supported religious groups; praise religious groups who resist “foreign infiltration;” prohibit religious affiliation among Communist Party members and some government employees; and restrict the amount of religious materials available, including on the Internet.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims

Since the 2008 and 2009 protests in Tibetan and Uighur areas respectively, the Chinese government has intensified efforts to discredit religious leaders, issued new measures to increase government oversight of monasteries and mosques, and implemented new programs to ensure the political loyalty of Buddhist monks and weaken the religious beliefs of Uighur Muslims. There are hundreds of Tibetans and Uighurs in prison for their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy, including individuals arrested in the past year.

Religious freedom conditions in Tibetan areas remain acute. Since May 2011, there have been 127 self-immolations, including 61 monks, nuns, and former nuns. In the past year, there were 18 self-immolations, including nine by Buddhist monks. These protests are directly related to Chinese efforts to control religious practice and culture of Tibetans, but Chinese authorities view these expressions of protest as criminal activities. Authorities detain senior monks for periods after self-immolations by monks associated with their monasteries, and in April 2013 officials in Dzoebe, Ngaba

Autonomous Prefecture, issued new rules extending criminal penalties to family members, fellow villagers, and monasteries of self-immolators. The December 2013 detention for anti-state activity of popular religious teacher Khenpo Kartse led to clashes between his followers and police, large demonstrations for his release, and the detention for several weeks of monks advocating for his release.

In Xinjiang province in the past year, over 100 people have died in clashes between Uighur Muslims and police and security units. Ongoing tensions were ignited after a Uighur man and five others drove a car through a line of tourists in Tiananmen Square. Beijing views the recent violence as motivated by extremism and separatism, but some contend it is related to China's heavy-handed restrictions on Uighur religious practice. For example, the person accused of planning the Tiananmen attack reportedly was motivated by the destruction of a refurbished mosque in his hometown. In response to the recent violence, police in Xinjiang have implemented another "strike hard" campaign aimed at curtailing banned religious activity. These new restrictions triggered additional violence when residents of No. 16 village, Aykol town, Aksu prefecture

property destruction. The head of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) recently called on government officials to renew efforts to "guide" unregistered Protestants and Catholics to join the state-sanctioned churches. He also urged efforts to "break" large Protestant house churches into small groups. According to reports by Protestant house church leaders, 1,470 people were detained in the past year and 10 were given sentences of more than one year, both increases from the previous year.

In June 2013, a court in Taiyuan, Shanxi province convicted two Christian bookstore owners to five and two years' imprisonment for "illegal business operations." In April 2013, seven house church leaders from Pingdingshan city, Hebei province were sentenced to between three and seven years for being part of a "cult." Churches in Shandong, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Shaxi provinces were forcibly closed after they refused to register with the state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). In November 2013, Pastor Zhang Shaojie, head of the Nanle County Christian Church, Henan province (which is affiliated with the TSPM) was arrested and 20 church members were detained after filing official complaints in a local land dispute. Local officials beat visitors

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pelted police with stones after they halted Eid Al-Fitr prayers. Over 300 people were detained. In June, in Hanerik township near Hotan, two young Uighurs died in clashes with police after a local mosque was raided, reportedly because the Imam refused to read a government-approved sermon. Uighurs in Hotan remain in jail after being arrested in 2012 for running an independent religious school.

Protestants and Catholics

Protestants and Catholics who refuse to join the state-sanctioned religious organizations continue to face severe restrictions, including efforts to undermine and harass their leaders, arrest and detentions, and

to the church and detained lawyers seeking to assist in Pastor Zhang's case, which remains pending.

Relations between Beijing and the Vatican remained problematic as China continued to promote bishops ordained without Vatican approval to positions of Church oversight and governance. Dozens of unregistered Catholic clergy, including three bishops, remain in detention, in home confinement, or disappeared. Bishop Ma Daqin, who publicly quit the state-sanctioned Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) during his July 2012 ordination ceremony as auxiliary bishop of Shanghai, remains in detention, his whereabouts unknown. The CPA officially stripped him of his bishopric last year.

Falun Gong

The Chinese government continued its 15-year campaign to eradicate Falun Gong activity and pressure practitioners to renounce their beliefs. China maintains an extrajudicial security apparatus, the 6-10 Office, to stamp out Falun Gong activities and created specialized facilities known as “transformation through reeducation centers” to force practitioners to relinquish their faith. As many as 2,000 individuals are estimated to be detained in these extralegal centers. There are 486 known Falun Gong practitioners currently serving prison sentences. Practitioners who do not renounce their beliefs in detention are subject to torture, including credible reports of deaths in custody and the use of psychiatric experiments and possible organ harvesting.

Human Rights Defenders

Since 2011, more than 100 human rights defenders, many who often work on religious freedom cases, were forcibly disappeared, tortured, detained, stripped of legal licenses, or sentenced to prison terms. In the past year, officials beat lawyers who sought access to arrested Falun Gong and Protestants or to clients in “black jails” where individuals are held without charge. In July, 13 lawyers were barred from assisting Falun Gong clients during their trial in the port city of Dalian.

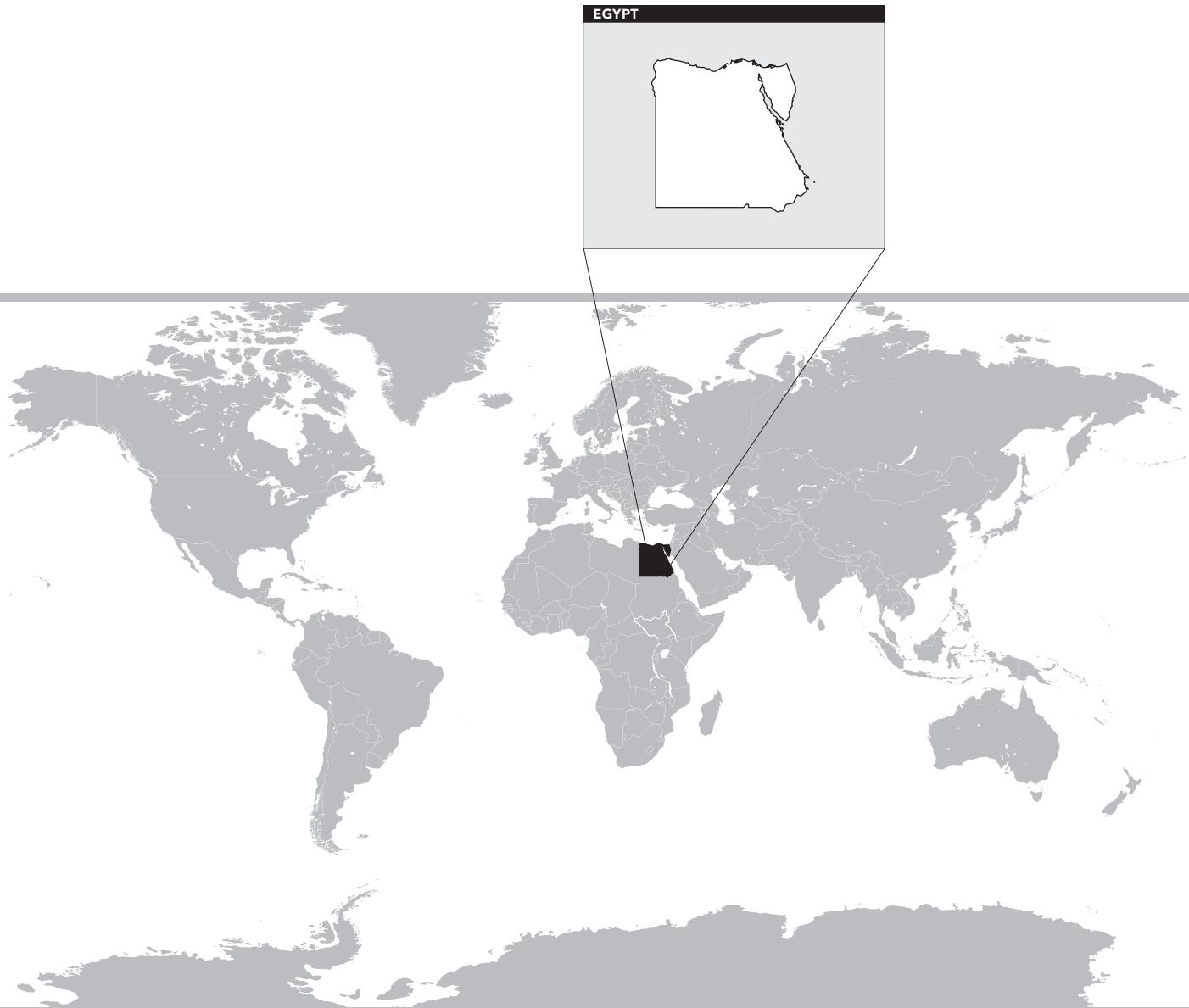
Recommendations for U.S. Policy

A China committed to protecting and advancing its citizens’ fundamental rights and religious freedoms is in the interests of the United States. Religious freedom directly relates to expanding the rule of law, developing civil society, aiding stability in ethnic minority areas, expanding the freedoms of expression and association, and bringing China firmly within the international system. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government continue to designate China as a CPC, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Raise religious freedom concerns at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue and other high-level bilateral meetings with Chinese leaders; encourage Chinese authorities to delink state control of religious groups from security policy to provide more civic space for peaceful and independent religious activity; use the annual U.S.-China Human

Rights Dialogue as a mechanism to further high-level discussions and reach concrete agreements;

- Ensure that high-level U.S. officials speak directly to the Chinese people about the universality and importance of religious freedom and related human rights;
- As permitted by IRFA and to more directly convey U.S. concerns about severe religious freedom violations in China, impose targeted travel bans and other penalties on specific officials and state agencies who perpetrate religious freedom abuses, as well as on specific provinces or autonomous regions with the highest numbers of documented religious freedom abuses;
- Initiate a “whole-of-government” approach to human rights diplomacy with China in which the State Department and National Security Council staff develop a human rights action plan and coordinate its implementation across all U.S. government agencies and entities, including developing targeted talking points and prisoner lists, and providing support for all U.S. delegations visiting China;
- Increase staff attention to U.S. human rights diplomacy and the rule of law, including the promotion of religious freedom, at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and U.S. consulates in China, including by gathering the names of specific officials and state agencies who perpetrate religious freedom abuses;
- In multilateral institutions where China and the United States are members and in bilateral discussions, press China to uphold its international obligations to protect North Korean asylum seekers, including and especially obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, or the Convention Against Torture; and
- Encourage the Broadcasting Board of Governors to use appropriated funds to advance Internet freedom and protect Chinese activists by supporting the development of new technologies and distributing programs to counter censorship.



EGYPT

Key Findings

Despite some progress during a turbulent political transition, the Morsi-era government and the interim government failed or were slow to protect religious minorities, particularly Coptic Orthodox Christians, from violence. While the new constitution includes improvements regarding freedom of religion or belief, the interpretation and implementation of relevant provisions remain to be seen. Discriminatory and repressive laws and policies that restrict freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief remain in place. For example, Egyptian courts continue to prosecute, convict, and imprison Egyptian citizens for blasphemy. As a consequence, for the fourth year in a row, USCIRF recommends in 2014 that Egypt be designated a “country of particular concern,” or CPC, under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). Previously, Egypt was on USCIRF’s Watch List from 2002 to 2010.

Background

During 2013, Egypt continued to experience substantial political and societal turmoil. After growing popular discontent and mass demonstrations started on June 30, democratically-elected president Mohamed Morsi was removed from office by the military on July 3 after one year in power. The military, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, appointed an interim government and released a roadmap to amend the constitution and hold parliamentary and presidential elections. In August, security forces dispersed two sit-ins resulting in the deaths of more than 600 pro-Morsi supporters and nearly 700 civilians in the days that followed. Approximately 100 police and security personnel were killed during this period. After being appointed in September by interim president Adly Mansour, a “Committee of 50” completed a new constitution in December, which was approved overwhelmingly in a January referendum.

Both during and after Morsi’s tenure, there were violent attacks against Coptic Orthodox Christians, including an unprecedented level of violence in August. While the Coptic Church has been more optimistic about its future after Morsi’s removal, the situation remains precarious for Copts. Most perpetrators of sectarian attacks

Despite some progress during a turbulent political transition, the Morsi-era government and the interim government failed or were slow to protect religious minorities, particularly Coptic Orthodox Christians, from violence.

have not been convicted, including from large-scale incidents that occurred in 2011 and 2012. During the first half of 2013, sectarian rhetoric and incitement by Islamist clerics against Copts, Shi'a, and Baha'is increased. Both before and after the Morsi era, blasphemy cases continued to be leveled against dissident Muslims and religious minorities. The small communities of Baha'is and Jehovah's Witnesses remain banned, and anti-Semitism persists in state-controlled and semi-official media.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Violence and Incitement Targeting Christians and Other Religious Minorities

In 2013, violent sectarian attacks, targeting primarily Copts, occurred both during and after Morsi’s tenure. Clerical supporters of President Morsi and some other extremists often used incendiary, sectarian rhetoric and incitement without consequence or accountability. For example, in April 2013, police failed to prevent an attack on St. Mark’s Cathedral during a funeral. The funeral

was being held for five Copts who were killed, along with a Muslim, after sectarian attacks two days earlier. This was the first violent incident on the seat of the Coptic Orthodox Pope in centuries. In June, five members of the Shi'a community were removed from a private home outside Cairo where they were commemorating a religious holiday and were lynched in the street by an angry mob chanting anti-Shi'a slogans. At the end of the reporting period, investigations are ongoing.

Following President Morsi's ouster from office on July 3, there was a significant increase in violent attacks against Christians in July and August. On August 14, the day the Egyptian security forces dispersed pro-Morsi protesters, violent religious extremists and thugs launched a coordinated series of attacks on Christians and their property throughout the country. At least seven Copts were killed and more than 200 churches and other Christian religious structures, homes, and businesses attacked. A commission of inquiry was formed and an investigation is ongoing. In October, four Copts were killed, including two sisters aged eight and 12, when gunmen on motorcycles opened fire at a wedding party outside a church near Cairo. There were a number of other violent attacks on Christians and their property in 2013, particularly in Upper Egypt. USCIRF received reports alleging that police have not investigated many cases, sometimes due to fear of retribution against them by violent extremists. The inability to protect Copts and other religious minorities, and successfully prosecute those responsible for violence, continued to foster a climate of impunity.

Blasphemy Law

Article 98(f) of the Egyptian Penal Code prohibits citizens from "ridiculing or insulting heavenly religions or inciting sectarian strife." Authorities use this blasphemy law to detain, prosecute, and imprison members of religious groups whose practices deviate from mainstream Islamic beliefs or whose activities are alleged to jeopardize "communal harmony" or insult Judaism, Christianity, or Islam (see blasphemy prisoners list in appendix). There has been an increase in these cases since 2011. The trend continued in 2013. The bulk of the charges target Sunni Muslim entertainers, prominent personalities, and journalists. Yet the majority of those sentenced by a court to prison terms for blasphemy have been Christians, Shi'a

Muslims, and atheists, mostly based on flawed trials. Some 40 percent of the defendants were Christians, a high percentage when compared to the approximately 10-15% Christian population.

Baha'is and Jehovah's Witnesses

Baha'is and Jehovah's Witnesses have been banned since 1960 by presidential decrees. As a result, Baha'is living in Egypt are unable to meet or engage in public religious activities. Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Center has issued *fatwas* over the years urging the continued ban on the Baha'i community and condemning its members as apostates. Al-Azhar is one of the preeminent Sunni Muslim centers of learning in the world. During the constitutional drafting process, representatives of the Baha'i community met with Amr Moussa, chairman of the "Committee of 50," yet the new constitution did not include recognition or protections for Baha'is. Since Baha'i marriage is not recognized, married Baha'is cannot obtain identity cards, making it impossible to conduct daily transactions like banking, school registration, or car ownership. In recent years, the government has permitted Jehovah's Witnesses to meet in private homes in groups of fewer than 30 people, despite the community's request to meet in larger numbers. Jehovah's Witnesses are not allowed to have their own places of worship or to import bibles and other religious literature. Over the past year, security officials stepped up harassment and intimidation of Jehovah's Witnesses by monitoring their activities and communications and by threatening the community with intensified repression if it does not provide membership lists.

Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Community

In 2013, material vilifying Jews with both historical and new anti-Semitic stereotypes continued to appear in Egypt's state-controlled and semi-official media. This material included anti-Semitic cartoons, images of Jews and Jewish symbols demonizing Israel or Zionism, comparisons of Israeli leaders to Hitler and the Nazis, and Holocaust denial literature. Egyptian authorities failed to take adequate steps to combat anti-Semitism in the state-controlled media. The small remnant of Egypt's Jewish community, now consisting of fewer than 50 people, owns communal property and finances required maintenance largely through private donations.

Egypt's New Constitution

There are some encouraging changes in the new constitution that could bode well for religious freedom. Several problematic provisions from the 2012 constitution were removed: a provision that narrowly defined Islamic Shari'ah law; a provision potentially giving Al Azhar a consultative role in reviewing legislation; and a provision that effectively banned blasphemy. In addition, a new provision, Article 235, requires the incoming parliament to pass a law governing the building and renovating of churches. This would potentially lift the longstanding requirement of governmental approval for building or repairing churches, which has served as a justification for sectarian-related violence targeting Christians. While

There are some encouraging changes in the new constitution that could bode well for religious freedom.

Article 64 provides that "freedom of belief is absolute," like the 2012 constitution, this article limits the freedom to practice religious rituals and establish places of worship to only the "divine" religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.¹

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

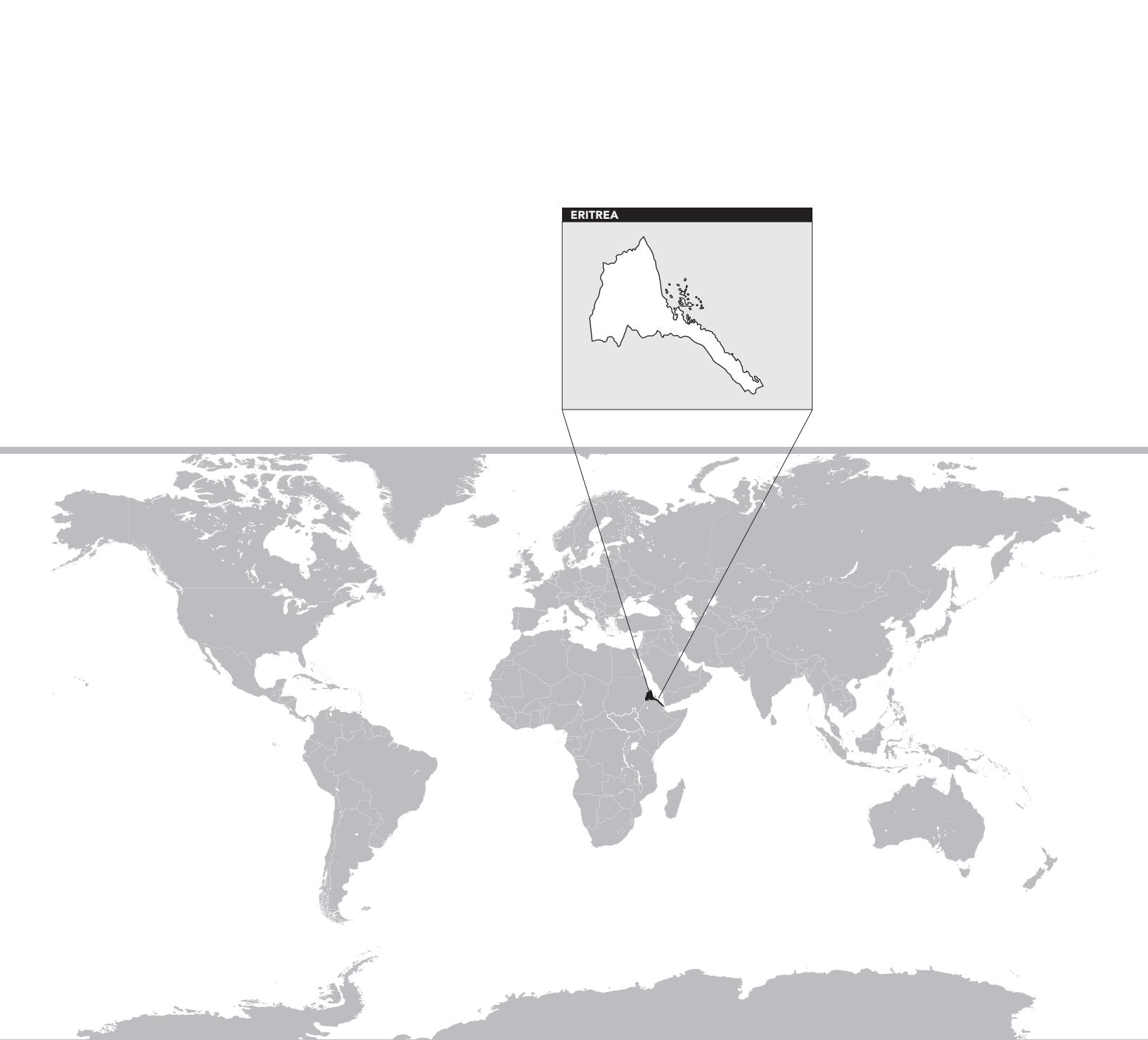
Egypt continues to experience both progress and setbacks during its transition, the success of which hinges on full respect for the rule of law and compliance with international human rights standards, including freedom of religion or belief. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government designate Egypt as a CPC, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Ensure that a portion of U.S. military assistance is used to help police implement an effective plan for dedicated protection for religious minority communities and their places of worship, and provide

direct support to human rights and other civil society or non-governmental organizations to advance freedom of religion or belief for all Egyptians;

- Press the Egyptian government to undertake immediate reforms to improve religious freedom conditions, including: repealing decrees banning religious minority faiths; removing religion from official identity documents; and passing a law for the construction and repair of places of worship once a new parliament is formed;
- Urge the Egyptian government to revise Article 98(f) of the Penal Code, and, in the interim, provide the constitutional and international guarantees of the rule of law and due process for those individuals charged with violating Article 98(f);
- Press the Egyptian government to prosecute perpetrators of sectarian violence through the judicial system, and to ensure that responsibility for religious affairs is not under the jurisdiction of the domestic security agency, which should only deal with national security matters such as cases involving the use or advocacy of violence; and
- In its annual reporting to Congress on human rights and religious freedom, place particular emphasis on the Egyptian government's progress on the protection of religious minorities, prosecution of perpetrators of sectarian violence, and the ability of Egyptian non-governmental organizations to receive outside funding from sources including the U.S. government.

¹ For a detailed analysis of religious freedom provisions in Egypt's new constitution, see USCIRF's December 2013 Policy Focus: <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/Egyptian%20Constitutional%20Review%20Policy%20Brief%20FINAL%2012-17-2013.pdf>.



ERITREA

Key Findings

Systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations continue in Eritrea under the regime of President Isaias Afwerki. Violations include torture or other ill-treatment of religious prisoners, arbitrary arrests and detentions without charges, a prolonged ban on public religious activities, and interference in the internal affairs of registered religious groups. The religious freedom situation is particularly grave for Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses. The government dominates the internal affairs of the Orthodox Church of Eritrea, the country's largest Christian denomination, and suppresses Muslim religious activities and those opposed to the government-appointed head of the Muslim community. In light of these violations, USCIRF again recommends in 2014 that Eritrea be designated as a "country of particular concern," or CPC. Since 2004, USCIRF has recommended, and the State Department has designated, Eritrea as a CPC.

Background

President Isaias and the Popular Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) have ruled Eritrea since the country gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993. Absolute authority is maintained by President Isaias and his circle, with all independent activity suppressed. Thousands of Eritreans with religious or civil society affiliations have been imprisoned for their real or imagined opposition to the government. Torture and forced labor are extensive. No private newspapers, political opposition parties, or independent non-governmental organizations exist, and independent public gatherings are prohibited.

In 2002, the government increased its control over religion by imposing a registration requirement on all religious groups other than the four officially-recognized religions: the Coptic Orthodox Church of Eritrea; Sunni Islam; the Roman Catholic Church; and the

Evangelical Church of Eritrea, a Lutheran-affiliated denomination. The requirements mandated that the non-preferred religious communities provide detailed financial and membership information, as well as background on their activities in Eritrea. No religious group has been registered since 2002, although the

Absolute authority is maintained by President Isaias and his circle, with all independent activity suppressed.

Baha'i community, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church, and Seventh-day Adventists have all submitted the required applications. As a result of the registration requirement and the government's inaction on applications, all of Eritrea's religious communities, except the four government-sanctioned ones, lack a legal basis on which to practice their faiths publicly, including holding prayer meetings or weddings. The government's campaign against religious activities by persons belonging to unregistered denominations frequently targets Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses, the latter of whom are denied citizenship by an October 1994 Presidential Decree. Eritrean security forces conduct mass arrests of followers of these faiths, including at clandestine prayer meetings and religious ceremonies

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Repressive Environment

The government controls the internal affairs of the four recognized religions, including appointing religious leaders and controlling religious activities. The recognized groups are required to submit activity reports

to the government every six months. Since December 2010, the Eritrean Department of Religious Affairs reportedly has instructed these groups to not accept funds from co-religionists abroad, an order with which the Eritrean Orthodox Church reportedly said it would not comply. Despite community protests, the Department of Religious Affairs also appoints the Mufti of the Eritrean Muslim community and hundreds of Muslims who protested this appointment remain imprisoned. In a reversal of policy, in 2010 the Eritrean government

on religious grounds in Eritrea during this reporting period. Reports of torture of religious prisoners as described above continue. The vast majority are Evangelical or Pentecostal Christians. Other notable religious prisoners include: the government-deposed Eritrean Orthodox Patriarch Abune Antonios, who protested government interference in his church's affairs and has been under house arrest since 2007; 49 Jehovah's Witnesses detained without trial or administrative appeal, one-third of whom are over the age of

The government's campaign against religious activities by persons belonging to unregistered denominations frequently targets Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses.

began requiring all religious workers and leaders, including those from registered religious communities, to participate in national military service. Many religious leaders from the Catholic and Orthodox communities have protested this new decision, stating that military service violates their religious tenets.

Torture

The government tortures and beats detainees imprisoned in violation of freedom of religion and related human rights. Released religious prisoners have reported to USCIRF and other human rights monitors of being confined in crowded conditions, such as in 20-foot metal shipping containers or underground barracks, and being subjected to extreme temperature fluctuations. Evangelicals and Pentecostals released from prison report being pressured to recant their faith in order to be freed. Persons detained for religious activities, in both short-term and long-term detentions, often are not formally charged, permitted access to legal counsel, accorded due process, or allowed family visits. Prisoners are not permitted to pray aloud, sing, or preach, and religious books are banned.

Religious Prisoners

The State Department, non-governmental human rights organizations, and Christian advocacy groups estimate that 2,000 to 3,000 persons remained im-

60 and three of whom have been imprisoned for more than 15 years (see prisoner list in appendix); more than 180 Muslims detained for opposing the state's appointment of the Mufti of the Eritrean Muslim community; and other reformist members of the Orthodox clergy. During the past year, there were reports of deaths of religious prisoners, who were denied medical care, or who were subjected to other ill treatment.

Arbitrary arrests and short-term detentions of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians continued in 2013. Those released continue to report being pressured to recant their faith.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

Relations between the United States and Eritrea remain poor, despite some outreach to the Eritrean government by the United States. Nonetheless, the U.S. government should press for immediate improvements to curb religious freedom violations in Eritrea. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government continue to designate Eritrea as a CPC and maintain the existing, ongoing arms embargo referenced in 22 CFR 126.1(a), USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Work to limit the Eritrean government's ability to levy and forcibly collect a "diaspora tax" on Eritreans living in the United States, and partner with other countries with an Eritrean diaspora community to ban similar forced "taxes,"

- Condition any resumption of assistance to the Eritrean government on measurable improvements in religious freedom and other human rights conditions and, if such assistance is to be resumed, ensure that it is directed to programs that contribute directly to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law;
- Urge the government of Eritrea to: unconditionally and immediately release all religious prisoners, including Orthodox Patriarch Abune Antonios; make registration voluntary for religious groups and promptly register groups that comply with the 2002 requirements; and allow visits by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention;
- Encourage a visit by U.S. and international religious leaders to facilitate dialogue among all of Eritrea's religious communities and expand the use of educational and cultural exchanges, such as the Fulbright Program, the International Visitor Program, and lectures by visiting American scholars and experts;
- Work with other nations, especially those with mining interests in Eritrea and large diaspora communities from Eritrea, to draw attention to religious freedom abuses in Eritrea and advocate for the release of religious prisoners; and
- Further target assistance to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and nongovernmental organizations to provide support to Eritrean asylum-seekers who have fled the country, especially those with psychosocial needs due to torture and other ill-treatment.



IRAN

Key Findings

Despite the June 2013 election of a new and purportedly moderate president, the already-poor religious freedom conditions in Iran continued to deteriorate, particularly for religious minorities, especially Baha'is and Christian converts. Sufi and Sunni Muslims and dissenting Shi'a Muslims also faced harassment, arrests, and imprisonment. The government of Iran continues to engage in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, including prolonged detention, torture, and executions based primarily or entirely upon the religion of the accused. Since 1999, the State Department has designated Iran as a "country of particular concern," or CPC, under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). USCIRF again recommends in 2014 that Iran be designated a CPC.

Background

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a constitutional, theocratic republic that proclaims the Twelver (Shi'a) Jaafari School of Islam to be the official religion of the country. While the constitution recognizes Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians as protected religious minorities, it discriminates against its citizens on the basis of religion or belief, as all laws and regulations are based on unique Shi'a Islamic criteria. Five seats in the parliament are reserved for recognized religious minorities, two for Armenian Christians, one for Assyrian Christians, and one each for Jews and Zoroastrians. Since the 1979 revolution, many members of minority religious communities have fled for fear of persecution. Killings, arrests, and physical abuse of detainees have increased in recent years, including for religious minorities and Muslims who dissent or express views perceived as threatening the government's legitimacy. The government continues to use its religious laws to silence reformers, including human rights defenders and journalists, for exercising their internationally-protected rights to freedom of expression and religion or belief.

Since his June 2013 election, President Hassan Rouhani has not delivered on his campaign promises of strengthening civil liberties for religious minorities. The numbers of Baha'is and Christians in prison for their faith increased over the past year. Physical attacks, harassment, detention, arrests, and imprisonment intensified. Even some of the recognized non-Muslim religious minorities protected under Iran's constitution – Jews, Armenian and Assyrian

Since his June 2013 election, President Hassan Rouhani has not delivered on his campaign promises of strengthening civil liberties for religious minorities.

Christians, and Zoroastrians – face harassment, intimidation, discrimination, arrests, and imprisonment. Majority Shi'a and minority Sunni Muslims, including clerics who dissent, were intimidated, harassed, and detained. Dissidents and human rights defenders were increasingly subject to abuse and several were sentenced to death and even executed for the capital crime of "waging war against God." While anti-Semitic sentiment continued among Iran's clerical establishment, the level of anti-Semitic rhetoric among government officials has diminished since the election of President Rouhani.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014 Muslims

Over the past few years, the Iranian government has imposed harsh prison sentences on prominent reformers from the Shi'a majority community. Authorities charged many of these reformers with

“insulting Islam,” criticizing the Islamic Republic, and publishing materials that allegedly deviate from Islamic standards. Leaders from the minority Sunni community have been unable to build a mosque in Tehran and have reported widespread abuses and restrictions on their religious practice, including detentions and abuse of clerics and bans on Sunni teachings in public schools. Iranian authorities have destroyed Sunni religious literature and mosques in eastern Iran. Iran’s government also has been stepping up its harassment and arrests of its Sufi Muslim minority, including prominent leaders from the Nematollahi Gonabadi Order, while increasing restrictions on places of worship and destroying Sufi prayer centers and *hussainiyas* (or meeting halls). In recent years, authorities have detained hundreds of Sufis, sentencing many to imprisonment, fines, and floggings. As of February 2014, more than a dozen

Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm – and Baha’i educators and administrators affiliated with the Baha’i Institute for Higher Education. Over the past year, violent incidents targeting Baha’is and their property increased. In August 2013, after months of harassment and government interrogation, a local Baha’i leader, Ataollah Rezvani, was murdered for his faith, the first such killing in several years. At the end of the reporting period, no one has been charged with Mr. Rezvani’s death. The government’s draft Citizens’ Rights Charter, released in November 2013, includes protections for the recognized minorities but excludes Baha’is from any legal protections.

Christians

Over the past year, there were numerous incidents of Iranian authorities raiding church services, threatening church members, and arresting and imprisoning

The government’s draft Citizens’ Rights Charter, released in November 2013, includes protections for the recognized minorities but excludes Baha’is from any legal protections.

Sufi activists were either serving prison terms or had cases pending against them. Iranian state television regularly airs programs demonizing Sufism.

Baha’is

The Baha’i community, the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iran, long has been subject to particularly severe religious freedom violations. The government views Baha’is, who number at least 300,000, as “heretics” and consequently they face repression on the grounds of apostasy. Since 1979, authorities have killed or executed more than 200 Baha’i leaders, and more than 10,000 have been dismissed from government and university jobs. More than 700 Baha’is have been arbitrarily arrested since 2005. As of February 2014, at least 135 Baha’is, nearly twice the number than in 2011, are being held in prison solely because of their religious beliefs, including seven Baha’i leaders – Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naemi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash

worshippers and church leaders. Since 2010, authorities arbitrarily arrested and detained about 400 Christians throughout the country. As of February 2014, at least 40 Christians were either in prison, detained, or awaiting trial because of their religious beliefs and activities. In January 2013, Saeed Abedini, an Iranian-born American pastor, was sentenced in a trial without due process to eight years in prison for “threatening the national security of Iran” for his activity in the Christian house church movement. Pastor Abedini had been in Iran since June 2012 to establish an orphanage and was arrested and imprisoned in September 2012. While in Evin prison, Pastor Abedini spent several weeks in solitary confinement and was physically and psychologically abused. In November, he was transferred to the notorious Gohardasht, or Rajai Shahr, prison outside Tehran which is known for its harsh and unsanitary conditions.

Jews and Zoroastrians

Although not as pronounced as in previous years, the

government continues to propagate anti-Semitism and target members of the Jewish community on the basis of real or perceived “ties to Israel.” Numerous programs broadcast on state-run television advance anti-Semitic messages. Official government discrimination against Jews continues to be pervasive, fostering a threatening atmosphere for the approximately 20,000 member Jewish community. In recent years, members of the Zoroastrian community – numbering between 30,000 and 35,000 people – have come under increasing repression and discrimination. At least four Zoroastrians convicted in 2011 for propaganda of their faith, blasphemy, and other trumped-up charges remain in prison.

Human Rights Defenders and Journalists

Iranian authorities regularly detain and harass journalists, bloggers, and human rights defenders who say or write anything critical of the Islamic revolution or the Iranian government.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

During the past year, U.S. policy on human rights in Iran included a combination of public statements, multilateral activity, and the imposition of unilateral sanctions on Iranian government officials and entities for human rights violations. During the reporting period, high-level U.S. officials in multilateral fora and through public statements urged the Iranian government to respect its citizens’ human rights, including the right to religious freedom. For example, President Obama used public and private occasions – including an unprecedented phone conversation with President Rouhani in September 2013 – to call for the release of Iranian-American pastor Saeed Abedini, among other things.

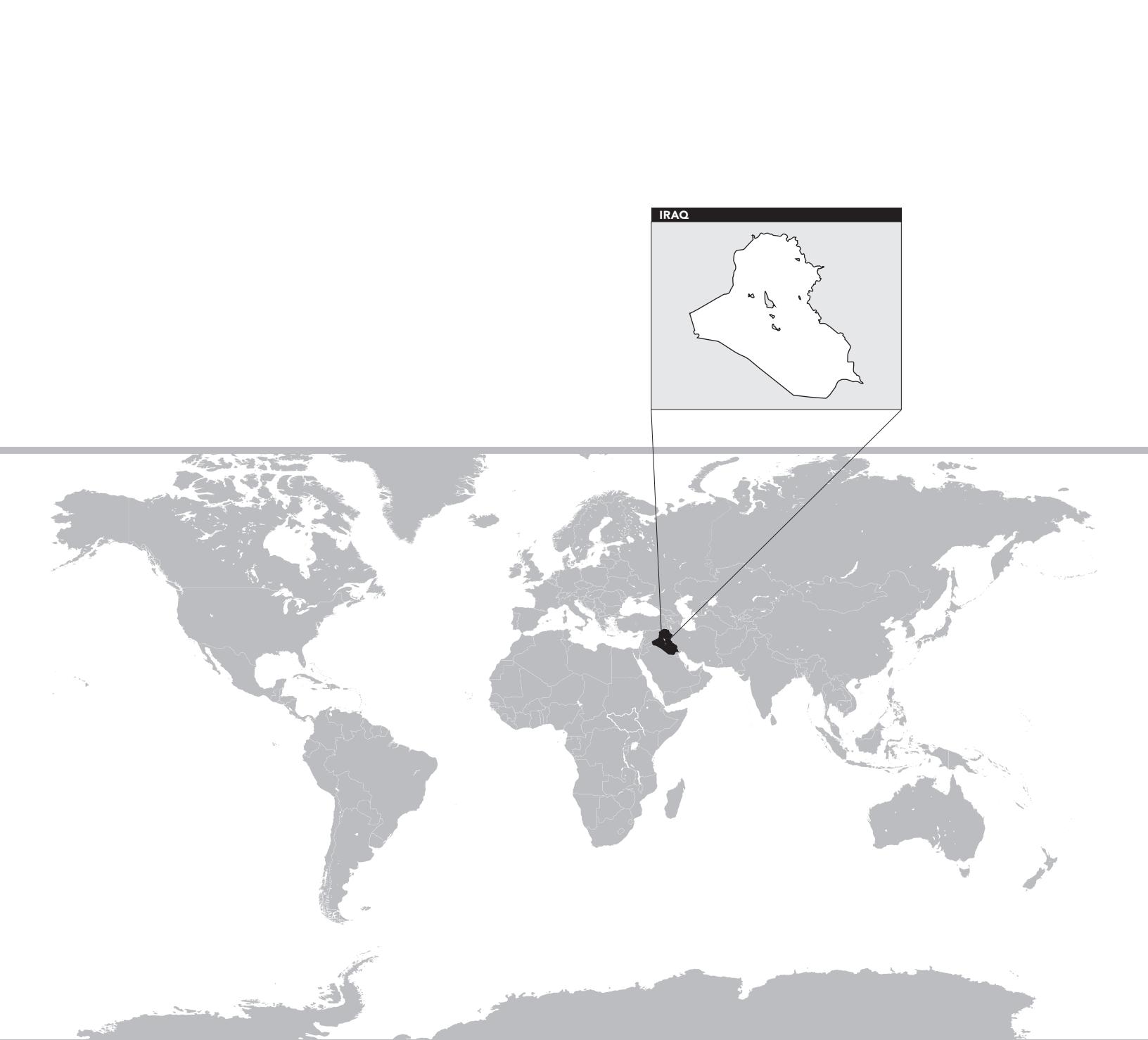
In addition to recommending that the U.S. government continue to designate Iran as a CPC, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Ensure that violations of freedom of religion or belief and related human rights are part of multilateral or bilateral discussions with the Iranian government whenever possible, and continue to work closely with European and other allies to apply pressure through a combination of advocacy, diplomacy, and targeted sanctions;

- Continue to speak out publicly and frequently at the highest levels about the severe religious freedom abuses in Iran, press for and work to secure the release of all prisoners of conscience (see list of known religious prisoners in appendix), and highlight the need for the international community to hold authorities accountable in specific cases;
- Continue to identify Iranian government agencies and officials responsible for severe violations of religious freedom, freeze those individuals’ assets, and bar their entry into the United States, as delineated under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (CISADA);
- Call on Iran to cooperate fully with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Iran, including allowing the Special Rapporteur – as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief – to visit, and continue to support an annual UN General Assembly resolution condemning severe violations of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, in Iran and calling for officials responsible for such violations to be held accountable; and
- Use appropriated Internet freedom funds to develop free, secure email access for use in Iran; facilitate the provision of high-speed internet access via satellite; and distribute immediately proven and field-tested counter-censorship programs in order to prevent the arrest and harassment of religious freedom and human rights activists and help them maintain their freedom of expression and legitimate expectations of privacy.

The U.S. Congress should:

- Reauthorize and make permanent the Lautenberg Amendment, which aids persecuted Iranian religious minorities and others seeking refugee status in the United States by establishing a presumption of eligibility and allowing fast-track processing to prevent backlogs in the countries that host their processing.



IRAQ

Key Findings

In the past year the government failed to stem egregious and increasing violence by non-state actors against Iraqi civilians, including attacks targeting religious pilgrims and worshippers, religious sites, and leaders, as well as individuals for their actual or assumed religious identity. While the Syrian crisis contributed to sectarian tensions, the Iraqi government took actions that increased, rather than reduced, Sunni-Shi'a tensions, threatening the country's already fragile stability and further exacerbating the poor religious freedom environment. Especially concerning is the draft personal status law that would separately apply to Shi'a Iraqis, which risks further hardening the sectarian divide. Based on these concerns, USCIRF again recommends in 2014 that the U.S. government designate Iraq as a "country of particular concern," or CPC. USCIRF has recommended CPC status for Iraq since 2008.

Background

The Iraqi government has made some recent efforts to increase security for religious sites, pilgrims, and worshippers, provide a stronger voice for Iraq's smallest minorities in parliament, and revise secondary textbooks to portray minorities in a more positive light. These efforts, however, have not fundamentally altered the fear built up over the last decade, during which many Iraqis, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, have been victimized by religiously-motivated violence. The government has proven unable to stop religiously-motivated attacks and bring perpetrators to justice. This has created a climate of impunity, which in turn exacerbates a perpetual sense of insecurity for all religious communities, particularly the smallest ones.

Large percentages of the country's most vulnerable religious minorities – which include Chaldo-Assyrian and other Christians, Sabean Mandaeans, and Yezidis – have fled the country, threatening these

communities' continued existence in Iraq. Those remaining face official discrimination, marginalization, and neglect, particularly in areas of northern Iraq over which the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) dispute control.

The Iraqi constitution guarantees equality and religious freedom to all Iraqis, but also makes Islam the religion of the state and a fundamental source of legislation and says no law may contradict "the established

The government has proven unable to stop religiously-motivated attacks and bring perpetrators to justice.

principles of Islam," which are not defined. The Baha'i faith remains banned under a 1970 law. A 2006 law prohibits Jews who emigrated from regaining Iraqi citizenship, despite a constitutional provision that prohibits the rescinding of citizenship obtained by birth. A 2001 resolution prohibits the practice of the Wahhabi branch of Islam.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Sectarian and Religiously-Motivated Violence

In 2013, the frequency of sectarian and religiously-motivated attacks escalated, negatively impacting all Iraqis' safety and perpetuating the general climate of fear. The primary victims of violence in the past year were members of the Shi'a majority, including pilgrims celebrating important holidays. For example, in 2013 during the major Shi'a holiday of Ashura, over 40 Shi'a pilgrims commemorating the holiday were killed in coordinated attacks. Moreover, space for religious minorities continues to shrink. Attacks are occurring with greater frequency in the northern areas of Iraq, which had been

safe-havens for Iraq's smallest minority communities since 2003.

Sunni-Shi'a Tensions

Over the past year, al-Qaeda linked extremist groups, emboldened by the Syrian crisis, heightened Sunni-Shia' tensions through a series of attacks and bombings. However, the Shi'a-led Iraqi government exacerbated the situation by acting in an authoritarian manner, raiding and disbanding largely peaceful Sunni protests, targeting Sunni areas, citizens, and politicians for security sweeps and arrests, and mistreating Sunni prisoners, which has given rise to charges of sectarian behavior. Prime Minister al-Maliki also continues to defy the power-sharing agreement that allowed the current government to be formed in 2010. These actions strained already frayed Sunni-Shi'a relations, threatening the country's fragile stability.

As of the end of the reporting period, the Iraqi cabinet had approved the Justice Ministry's draft Jaafari (Shi'a) jurisprudence personal status law and referred it to the Council of Representatives. The proposed law would apply to all Shi'a Muslims for issues including

nation, particularly in areas disputed between the central government and the Kurdistan regional government. Although they reported fewer violent incidents than in past years, these groups continued to report a perpetual sense of fear. In January 2014, the Iraqi cabinet announced that it supported, in principle, the creation of three new provinces, including one in the largely Christian Nineveh Plains. Some Christians have long advocated for such a province, viewing it as having the potential to stop the emigration of Christians. The details of the plan and its implementation have yet to be presented.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

Since 2008, U.S.-Iraqi bilateral relations have been governed by a "Strategic Framework Agreement," which emphasizes cooperation in specified areas such as political and diplomatic, defense and security, cultural, and law enforcement and judicial. The Obama administration's stated goal for this bilateral relationship is to help Iraq become a secure, diverse, and stable democracy. Towards this end, the United States should do more to ensure that the human rights and religious

Opponents fear the proposal would increase Sunni-Shi'a divisions by establishing sectarian religious law and lead to pressure on non-Shi'a communities to adhere to Shi'a jurisprudence and societal norms.

marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption. Opponents fear the proposal would increase Sunni-Shi'a divisions by establishing sectarian religious law and lead to pressure on non-Shi'a communities to adhere to Shi'a jurisprudence and societal norms. Opponents also cite troubling articles that would violate other internationally-protected human rights, especially for women and children. For example, one provision would permit girls as young as nine, and boys as young as 15, to marry without parental consent, and even below those ages with the consent of a male guardian.

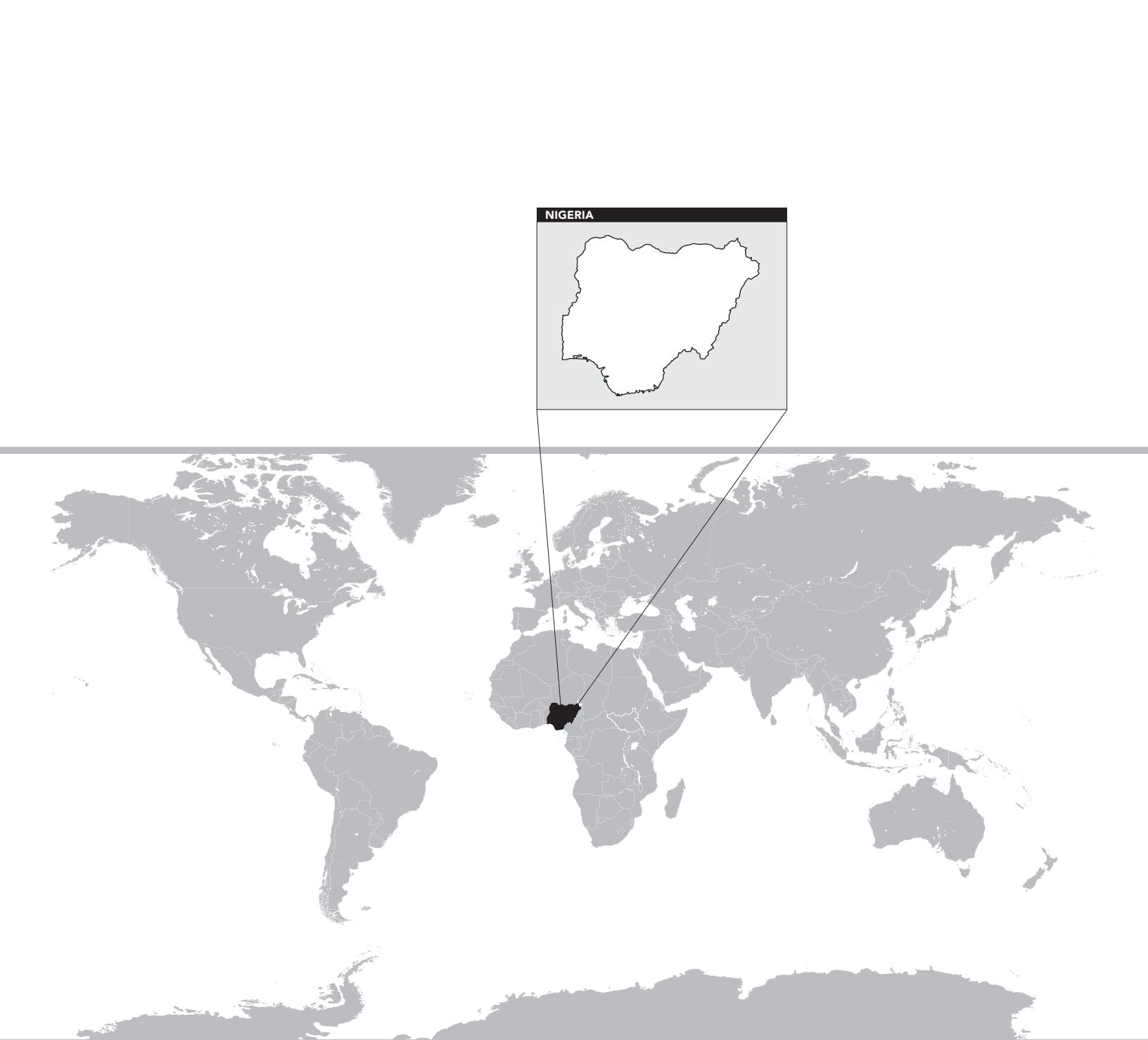
Abuses against the Most Vulnerable Minority Communities

Members of the smallest minority communities continued to experience violence, intimidation, and discrimi-

freedoms of all Iraqis are guaranteed and enforced in law and practice. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government designate Iraq as a CPC, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Urge, and where appropriate assist, the Iraqi government in its efforts to provide security to protect likely targets of sectarian or religiously-motivated violence and to investigate and prosecute perpetrators;
- Include in all military or security assistance to the Iraqi government training for recipient units on universal human rights standards and how to treat civilians, particularly religious minorities, and insist that the Iraqi government ensure greater integration of the government and security forces so that they reflect the country's religious and ethnic diversity;

- Continue to task an embassy official with engaging religious minority communities, and work with Iraq's government and these communities and their political and civic representatives to help them reach agreement on what measures are needed to ensure their rights and security in the country;
- Urge the parties to include the protection of rights for all Iraqis and ending discrimination as part of negotiations between the KRG and the Iraqi government on disputed territories;
- Press the KRG to address alleged abuses against minorities by Kurdish officials in these areas;
- Focus U.S. programming in Iraq on promoting religious freedom and tolerance and fostering human rights compliance and the rule of law, and ensure that marginalized communities benefit from U.S. and international development assistance; and
- Continue to prioritize the resettlement to the United States of vulnerable Iraqi refugees, including those who fled to Syria but are now refugees in a third country; interview applicants by video-conference when in-person interviews cannot be conducted for security reasons; and allocate sufficient resources to the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies to expeditiously process applications and conduct security background checks to facilitate resettlements without compromising U.S. national security.



NIGERIA

Key Findings

Nigeria's democracy is being tested by recurring sectarian violence, attacks and threats against Christians by Boko Haram, and the misuse of religion by politicians, religious leaders, and others. In a country where religion and religious identity are intertwined in ethnic, political, economic, and social controversies, these dynamics strain already tense Christian-Muslim relations. While the Nigerian government does not engage in religious persecution, it tolerates severe violations through its failure to bring to justice those responsible for systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations, or to prevent or contain sectarian violence. Boko Haram benefits from this culture of impunity and lawlessness as it exploits religious tensions to destabilize Nigeria. Based on these concerns, USCIRF again recommends in 2014 that Nigeria be designated as a "country of particular concern," or CPC. USCIRF has recommended CPC status for Nigeria since 2009. Previously, Nigeria was on USCIRF's Watch List since 2002.

Background

Nigeria's population of 170 million people is equally divided between Muslims and Christians. It is among the world's most religious countries, and religious identity is of primary importance to most Nigerians. Religious identity frequently falls along regional, ethnic, political, and socio-economic lines and provides flash-points for violence. The Nigerian government does not actively perpetrate religious freedom abuses, but does tolerate particularly severe violations.

While the 1999 constitution provides for freedom of religion or belief, several legal provisions negatively impact religious freedom, including the legal distinction between persons whose ethnic group is deemed by state-level officials to be native to a particular area ("indigenes") and those considered from another part of the country ("settlers"). Indigene and settler iden-

ties can fall along religious lines, leading to violent ethno-religious fights to control local governments and determine who is considered an indigene and therefore entitled to education, social service, and employment benefits. Additionally, the constitution's federalism provisions create a confused rule-of-law system that impedes successful prosecutions. The frequent result is late and poor police response to religious violence and no prosecutions of perpetrators.

Since 1999, violence between Christian and Muslim communities in Nigeria, particularly in the Middle Belt states, has resulted in more than 16,000 people killed,

Nigeria's democracy is being tested by recurring sectarian violence, attacks and threats against Christians by Boko Haram, and the misuse of religion by politicians, religious leaders, and others.

hundreds of thousands displaced, and thousands of churches, mosques, businesses, homes, and other structures damaged or destroyed. Years of inaction by Nigeria's federal and state governments have created a climate of impunity. Human Rights Watch, Jubilee Campaign, and Nigerian government officials have documented only 225 convictions for this violence, including for the March 2010 Dogo Nahawa massacre, April 2011 post-election violence, and other incidents. Since there are no consequences for violence, incidents regularly trigger ricochet riots and retaliation. Human Rights Watch estimates that since January 2010, 2,000 to 3,000 Muslims and Christians in the Middle Belt have been killed in regular revenge attacks on each other's communities. While herder-farmer fights over land also factor into this violence, religion is a significant catalyst,

increasing the sectarian character of these conflicts, leading to dire consequences.

Exacerbating Muslim-Christians tensions is Boko Haram, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization that views Nigeria's federal and northern state governments, political leaders, and religious elites as morally corrupt. It rejects the secular state, calls for the universal implementation of what it considers "pure" Shari'ah law to resolve the ills facing northern Nigerian Muslims, has called on all Christians to leave northern Nigeria, and perpetrates violent attacks against the police, military, Christians, churches, schools, and Muslim critics.

In addition, Christian leaders in the northern states protest northern state governments' discrimination against Christians in the denial of applications to build or repair places of worship, access to education and state-run media, representation in government bodies, and government employment. Since 1999, 12 Muslim-majority northern Nigerian states have established their interpretation of Shari'ah law in their criminal codes and some states have funded and supported *Hisbah*, or religious police, to enforce such interpretations.

USCIRF travelled to Abuja, Jos, Kaduna, and Kafancan in March 2014 and met with Nigerian politicians, religious leaders, civil society representatives, and U.S. officials to further investigate religious freedom in Nigeria.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Sectarian Violence

Although there were no episodes of large-scale violence, Muslim-Christian attacks continued at elevated levels in Plateau and Kaduna states and have spread to other states in this reporting period. Hundreds of persons were killed in dozens of episodes of this violence, chiefly Christians attacked by Fulani herdsmen. No prosecutions are known and security agents were reported at times to have participated. While there was no post-election Muslim-Christian violence in Jos after the February 2014 Local Government Area elections, sectarian violence outside the city escalated in the lead-up to the elections.

Boko Haram

Despite the deployment of the Nigerian army and the declaration of a state of emergency in three northeast-

ern Nigerian states in May 2013, Boko Haram continued its attacks in the reporting period. While there were fewer bombings and other large-scale attacks on churches during the reporting period, at least 30 churches were burned or shot at, killing more than 150 Christians. Boko Haram also targeted attacks on Christian communities in the northeast, killing dozens of Christian villagers. The terrorist organization also

Boko Haram continued its attacks in this reporting period.

was responsible for the July 30 bombing in the Christian area of Sabon Gari, Kano State that damaged two churches and killed more than 45; the January 22, 2014 attack on a Catholic parish in Adamawa State that killed 22; the May 14, 2013 murder of Christian Association of Nigeria Borno Secretary Reverend Faye Pama Musa; and the kidnapping and later release of a French priest in Cameroon. Boko Haram attacks on Muslim critics also continued this year with the January 31, 2014 assassination of Sheik Adam Albani. The terrorists also attacked multiple mosques in this reporting period, killing more than 50 Muslims.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

Nigeria is the United States' primary priority in sub-Saharan Africa, highlighted by the frequent trips there by senior U.S. government officials. In 2010, the two governments created the U.S.-Nigeria Bi-National Commission to help them "work together on issues of common concern and shared responsibility" and to "support the aspirations of the Nigerian people for a peaceful, prosperous, stable, democratic future." USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government designate Nigeria a CPC to help the Nigerian government end the culture of impunity, reduce religious tensions, and address other root causes of sectarian violence. In addition USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Enter into a binding agreement with the Nigerian government, as defined in section 405(c) of the International Religious Freedom Act, setting forth commitments the government would undertake

to address policies leading to violations of religious freedom, including but not limited to the following:

- vigorously investigating, prosecuting, and bringing to justice perpetrators of all past and future incidents of sectarian violence and terrorism;
- developing effective conflict-prevention and early-warning mechanisms at the local, state, and federal levels using practical and implementable criteria;
- developing the capability to deploy specialized police and army units rapidly to prevent and combat sectarian violence in cities around the country where there has been a history of sectarian violence; and
- taking steps to professionalize its police and military forces in its counter-terrorism, investigative, community policing, crowd control, and conflict prevention capacities by conducting specialized training for its military and security forces on human rights standards, as well as non-lethal responses to crowd control and quelling mob or communal violence;
- Prioritize in the U.S.-Nigeria Bi-National Commission issues of Nigeria's recurrent sectarian violence and failure to prosecute perpetrators in the discussions of the working groups on good governance and security;
- Issue public statements warning against post-election violence and the misuse of religion by politicians during the campaigns for the February 2015 presidential and governorship elections, and support civil society efforts to prevent election-related violence;
- Encourage and support efforts by the Nigerian government to provide additional security personnel to protect northern Christian minorities and clerics and Muslim traditional rulers who denounce Boko Haram, and consider creating a witness protection-like program;
- Support civil society organizations at the national, regional, state, and local levels that have special expertise and a demonstrated commitment to interreligious and interethnic reconciliation and conflict prevention; and
- Support programs and institutions, particularly in areas where sectarian violence has occurred, that monitor, report on, and counter religiously-inflammatory language and incitement to violence, consistent with the right to freedom of expression.



NORTH KOREA

Key Findings

The government of North Korea tightly controls all religious activity and perpetuates an extreme cult of personality venerating the Kim family as a pseudo-religion. Individuals engaged in clandestine religious activity are arrested, tortured, imprisoned, and sometimes executed. Thousands of religious believers and their families are imprisoned in penal labor camps, including refugees repatriated from China. Based on these systematic, ongoing, egregious violations, USCIRF again recommends that North Korea be designated a “country of particular concern,” or CPC. The State Department has designated North Korea a CPC since 2001.

Background

The Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea (DPRK or North Korea) remains one of the world’s most repressive regimes, with a deplorable human rights record. The DPRK has long operated an all-encompassing personality cult requiring absolute obedience to the Kim family. Improvements in human rights or religious freedom are unlikely as long as the personality cult continues. Information from North Korea is difficult to gather and verify, though North Korea asylum-seekers and organizations providing humanitarian assistance to North Koreans continue to report severe religious freedom abuses. In March 2013, the UN Human Rights Council established the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to “investigate the systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights . . . with a view to ensuring full accountability, in particular for violations which may amount to crimes against humanity.” The findings released in February 2014 found “an almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, information and association.”

All unapproved religious activity is prohibited. Approved activity, primarily in Pyongyang or at

important Buddhist sites, is small in scope, tightly controlled, and managed for either tourism or international consumption. North Korea maintains a *songbun* system, which classifies families according to their loyalty to the Kim family; religious believers have the lowest *songbun* rating. Spreading Christianity is a political crime. Many religious believers are incarcerated in infamous penal labor camps (*kwan-li-so*). It is

North Korea maintains a songbun system, which classifies families according to their loyalty to the Kim family; religious believers have the lowest songbun rating.

estimated that there are 150,000 to 200,000 prisoners currently in these camps, with as many as 15,000 incarcerated for religious activity. Religious prisoners reportedly are treated worse than other inmates and subject to constant abuse to force them to renounce their faith.

The government reportedly interrogates North Korean asylum-seekers repatriated from China about their religious belief and affiliations, and mistreats, imprisons, and sometimes executes those suspected of distributing religious literature or having connections with South Korean religious groups. Defectors from police and intelligence agencies have reported that security officials train border guards about the dangers of religion and infiltrate Protestant churches in China to catch worshippers.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Government Control of Buddhism

The state-controlled press reports that Buddhist ceremonies are carried out in various locations, although

this is impossible to verify independently. According to former North Korean refugees, Buddhist temples and shrines are maintained as cultural heritage sites and do not function as places of worship or pilgrimage.

Government Control and Repression of Christianity

Pyongyang contains one Catholic church, two Protestant churches, and a Russian Orthodox church. The government claims that there are 500 officially-approved “house churches” in the country. South Korean academics report that participants in these gatherings are those whose families were Christians before 1950 and as such, may gather for worship without leaders or religious materials.

The Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR) reports that anyone caught possessing religious materials, holding unapproved religious gatherings, or being in contact with overseas religious groups is subject to severe punishments. Recently-published refugee testimony indicates that the wife of a Chinese military officer was publicly executed in 2009 for possessing a Bible; 23 Christians were arrested in 2010 for belonging to an underground church in Kuwol-dong, Pyongsong City, South Pyongan Province; and a family of three was taken to a political prison camp in 2011 for conducting worship services in Sambong-gu, Onseong-gun, North

...those suspected of becoming Christian, distributing religious materials, or having ongoing contact with foreign groups are harshly treated.

Hamgyeong Province. According to South Korea press reports, as many as 80 people were executed in the past year for watching South Korean entertainment videos or possessing Bibles. In April 2013, U.S. citizen Kenneth Bae was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment for national security crimes based on his work for the evangelical organization Youth With A Mission.

North Korean Refugees in China

Reports continue to surface that individuals forcibly repatriated from China are systematically interrogated

about any contacts with churches and missionaries from South Korea or the United States, and those suspected of becoming Christian, distributing religious materials, or having ongoing contact with foreign groups are harshly treated. The government reportedly offers rewards to its citizens for providing information leading to arrests for cross-border missionary activities or the distribution of religious literature.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

Despite the difficulty of achieving improvements in human rights and religious freedom in North Korea, U.S. officials should continue to raise these issues in their limited engagement with the North Korean government and seek to make progress where possible, including in areas such as prisoner releases. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government continue to designate North Korea as a CPC, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Coordinate efforts with regional allies, particularly Japan and South Korea, to raise human rights and humanitarian concerns and press for improvements, including closure of the infamous penal labor camps;
- Encourage Chinese support for addressing the most egregious human rights violations in North Korea, and raise regularly with the government of China the need to uphold its international obligations to protect North Korean asylum seekers in China, including by allowing the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and international humanitarian organizations to assist them and ensuring that any repatriations to North Korea do not violate the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, or the Convention Against Torture; and
- Implement fully the provisions of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2012, and use authorized funds to increase access to information and news media inside North Korea, increase the capacity of NGOs to promote democracy and human rights, protect and resettle refugees, and monitor deliveries of humanitarian aid.



PAKISTAN

Key Findings

Pakistan represents the worst situation in the world for religious freedom for countries not currently designated by the U.S. government as “countries of particular concern.” In the past year, conditions hit an all-time low due to chronic sectarian violence targeting mostly Shi'a Muslims but also Christians, Ahmadis, and Hindus. The previous and current governments failed to provide adequate protection or to arrest perpetrators. Also, Pakistan's repressive blasphemy laws and anti-Ahmadi laws are widely used to violate religious freedoms and foster a climate of impunity. USCIRF again recommends in 2014 that Pakistan be designated as a “country of particular concern” (CPC). Since 2002, USCIRF has recommended Pakistan be named a CPC.

Background

Despite the first transfer of power in Pakistan's history, from one civilian government to another the exceedingly poor religious freedom environment worsened. Both the previous and current governments engaged in and tolerated systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of freedom of religion or belief. Despite democratic institutions, Pakistan's legal environment is particularly repressive due to its blasphemy laws and other religiously discriminatory legislation and constitutional provisions. The government failed to protect citizens, minority and majority alike, from sectarian and religiously-motivated violence, and Pakistani authorities have not consistently brought perpetrators to justice or taken action against societal actors who incite violence. In April 2013, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan concluded that Pakistan is “on the verge” of becoming an undemocratic society where violence is the accepted form of communication.

The previous Zardari government established a special Federal Ministry for Interfaith Harmony led by the brother of the late Shahbaz Bhatti, Dr. Paul Bhatti.

Shahbaz Bhatti was assassinated by the Pakistani Taliban in March 2011. Dr. Bhatti convened a major interfaith conference in Islamabad in February 2013 and the then prime minister participated. After the election of Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister, the interfaith harmony ministry was folded into the ministry for religious affairs, which

Conditions hit an all-time low due to chronic sectarian violence.

primarily deals with concerns of the Muslim community, such as *hajj* participation. The Sharif government did keep the Minorities Day holiday, established by Shahbaz Bhatti, although the level of participation by government officials was low. In September, authorities arrested individuals who later admitted to killing Shahbaz Bhatti. A prosecution was initiated, but courtroom security has been lax and witnesses have received death threats from the terrorist groups Pakistani Taliban and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. At the end of the reporting period, the trial was ongoing.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Targeted Sectarian Violence

The previous and current Pakistani government failed to intervene effectively against a spike in violence targeting the Shi'a minority community, as well as violence against Christians, Hindus, and Ahmadis. Authorities have not consistently brought the perpetrators of such violence to justice. Pakistani Chief Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jillani has on several occasions taken notice of the poor security situation for religious minorities and tasked the government to take remedial steps. Religious minorities were not the only victims, as members of the majority faith also were targeted. For instance in January 2014, the Pakistan Taliban

allegedly slit six people's throats while they were visiting a popular Sufi shrine in Karachi.

Shi'a

During the reporting period, militants and terrorist organizations targeted Shi'a processions and mosques, as well as social gathering places, with impunity. Particularly large bombings occurred at a pool hall frequented by Shi'a in Quetta in January 2013 and on a busload of Shi'a pilgrims returning from Iran in January 2014. Overall, advocacy organizations put the number of Shi'a killed across Pakistan during the past year at close to 700, with over 1000 wounded. The response by the Pakistani government has been grossly inadequate. Police, if present, have been unwilling to stop attackers before people are killed, and the government has not cracked down on the groups that repeatedly target Shi'a.

Christians

Violence against Christians continued. The largest attack against the Christian community in Pakistan's history occurred in September 2013, when Pakistani Taliban suicide bombers attacked the All Saints Church in Peshawar as services were ending, killing 100 individuals. In addition, two large mob attacks against Christian villages in Punjab province occurred in March and April, with over 100 homes destroyed. While the provincial government provided some reparations, few, if any, perpetrators were held to account. In addition, in August 2013, the charges brought against a prayer leader for planting blasphemy evidence against an underage, mentally-handicapped Christian girl in 2012 were dismissed. The Centre for Legal Assistance and Settlement and other groups continue to report kidnappings and forced conversions, such as in January 2014, when a 14-year-old Christian girl was abducted, forcibly converted, and forced to marry.

Ahmadis

During the reporting period, individual Ahmadis continued to be murdered in religiously-motivated attacks. In addition, local police repeatedly forced Ahmadis to remove Qur'anic scripture from mosques and minarets. There also were desecrations of Ahmadi graves, sometimes by local police, with one body being disinterred in April 2013. During the reporting period, Ahmadis were effectively disenfranchised from voting in the parliamentary elections,

due to discriminatory laws targeting their faith. (See more about the unique legal repression of Ahmadis below.)

Hindus

Hindu marriages are not recognized by the state. Allegations of kidnapping of Hindu women, followed by forced conversions to Islam and forced marriages to Muslim men, continued to arise throughout the reporting period. USCIRF also received reports in April 2013 of approximately 500 Hindus from Pakistan leaving for India due to sectarian threats and poor economic conditions. Hindu boys were kidnapped in September, a mob dug up the grave of a Hindu man in province of Sindh in October, and in January 2014 a nine-year-old Hindu girl was raped and killed in Punjab province.

Blasphemy Laws

The country's blasphemy laws, used predominantly in Punjab province, but also nationwide, target members of religious minority communities and dissenting Muslims and frequently result in imprisonment. During the reporting period, Muhammad Asghar was sentenced to death and Sajjad Masih was sentenced to life in prison. After the reporting period, in March 2014, a Pakistani court sentenced Sawah Masih to death for blasphemy. In April 2013,

USCIRF is aware of at least 17 individuals on death row and 19 more serving life sentences [for blasphemy]. Many others have been charged and await trial.

Younis Masih's blasphemy conviction was overturned by the Lahore high court; he was released from prison after nine years in jail. Overall, USCIRF is aware of at least 17 individuals on death row and 19 more serving life sentences. (See list of blasphemy prisoners in appendix.) Many others have been charged and await trial. While Sherry Rehman was serving as Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, for example, she was accused of blasphemous activity by police in February 2013 for comments made during a 2010 television appearance. The Pakistani government continues to block YouTube out of concerns that its hosts "blasphemous content."

Blasphemy laws are deeply problematic on a number of levels, and Pakistan's is especially so. The so-called crime carries the death penalty or life in prison, does not require proof of intent or evidence to be presented after allegations are made, and does not include penalties for false allegations. Further, the laws do not provide clear guidance on what constitutes a violation, empowering accusers to apply their personal religious interpretations. In September 2013, the Council of Islamic Ideology recommended against amending the blasphemy laws to add procedural safeguards, noting situations of misuse or fraud could be penalized through other sections of the Penal Code. In December, the Federal Shariat Court decreed that the death penalty is the only appropriate punishment for blasphemy. It requested the government remove life imprisonment as a sentence, but no action has been taken as of this writing.

Legal Restrictions on Ahmadis

Ahmadi are subject to severe legal restrictions, both in the constitution and criminal code, and suffer from officially-sanctioned discrimination. The constitution declares members of the Ahmadi religious community to be "non-Muslims," and the penal code makes basic acts of Ahmadi worship and interaction criminal offenses. They also are prevented from voting. During the reporting period, USCIRF continued to receive reports of Ahmadis being charged under the criminal code for their "illegal" religious activities.

Education

The National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) reported in May 2013 that discriminatory content against religious minorities was found in 22 Sindh and Punjab provincial textbooks for grades 1-10. These conclusions mirror USCIRF's 2011 study, which found that an alarming number of Pakistan's public schools and privately-run *madrassas* devalue religious minorities in both textbooks and classroom instruction. Despite reforms, in August 2013, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa education minister said they would return Qur'anic passages about jihad to the curriculum.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

Promoting respect for human rights and freedom of religion or belief must be an integral part of U.S. policy

in Pakistan, since the systematic, ongoing, egregious religious freedom violations described above and documented in the State Department's reporting clearly meet IRFA's statutory standard for designation as a "country of particular concern." USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Designate Pakistan as a CPC, as required under the International Religious Freedom Act due to the government's engagement and toleration of particularly severe violations of religious freedom, and work to reach a binding agreement with the Pakistani government on steps to be delisted and avoid Presidential actions; such an agreement should be accompanied by resources for related capacity building through State Department and USAID funding;
- Press the Pakistani government to protect religious groups from violence and actively prosecute perpetrators, both individuals involved in mob attacks and members of militant groups, and ensure that a portion of U.S. military assistance is used to help police implement an effective plan for dedicated protection for religious minority communities and their places of worship;
- Encourage the reestablishment of the Federal Ministry for Interfaith Harmony, include discussions on religious tolerance in U.S.-Pakistan dialogues and summits, and encourage national textbook and curricula standards that actively promote tolerance towards all religions;
- Urge the government to unconditionally release and pardon individuals currently jailed for blasphemy or for violating anti-Ahmadi laws (see list of blasphemy prisoners in appendix), as well as to repeal or reform the blasphemy law and rescind anti-Ahmadi provisions of law; and
- Provide USAID capacity-building funding to the provincial Ministries of Minority Affairs to support efforts to uphold and guarantee religious freedom and increase religious tolerance and understanding, and work with Pakistan's government and minority religious communities to help them reach agreement on measures to ensure their rights and security in the country.



SAUDI ARABIA

Key Findings

Despite improvements in religious freedom, Saudi Arabia remains unique in the extent to which it restricts the public expression of any religion other than Islam. Not a single church or other non-Muslim house of worship exists in the country. The government privileges its own interpretation of Sunni Islam over all other interpretations. It also has arrested individuals for dissent, apostasy, blasphemy, and sorcery. Based on these continuing violations of religious freedom, despite some areas where progress has been made, USCIRF again recommends in 2014 that Saudi Arabia be designated as a “country of particular concern” (CPC) under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). Although the State Department has designated Saudi Arabia a CPC since 2004, an indefinite waiver on taking any action in consequence of the CPC designation has been in place since 2006.

Background

Saudi Arabia is officially an Islamic state with a sizeable population of expatriate workers of various faiths. In recent years, the Saudi government has made improvements in policies and practices related to freedom of

Despite improvements in religious freedom, Saudi Arabia remains unique in the extent to which it restricts the public expression of any religion other than Islam.

religion or belief. Nevertheless, the Saudi government persists in restricting most forms of public religious expression inconsistent with its particular interpretation

of Sunni Islam. Saudi officials say they base this on their interpretation of *hadith* and state that they believe this is what is expected of them. This policy violates the rights of other Sunni Muslims who follow varying schools of thought, Shi'a and Ismaili Muslims, and both Muslim and non-Muslim expatriate workers. While the government has taken some steps to address its legitimate interest in limiting advocacy of violence in sermons and educational materials, other steps the government has taken continue to restrict legitimate and peaceful religious activities and expression in other ways by suppressing the legitimate religious views and practices of Saudi and non-Saudi Muslims who do not conform to official positions. It also prohibits any public non-Muslim places of worship and has not fully protected the private religious practice of non-Muslim expatriate workers in the country.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Recent Improvements

USCIRF has noted some improvements that include: curtailing the powers of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (CPVPV); promoting a “culture of dialogue” and understanding between Muslim religious communities inside the Kingdom and advancing inter-religious dialogue in international fora; improving conditions for public religious expression by Shi'a Muslims in the Eastern Province; continuing efforts to counter extremist ideology inside the Kingdom; and making further revisions to remove intolerant passages from textbooks and curriculum.

Restrictions on Dissidents and Non-Conforming Muslims, including Blasphemy and Apostasy Charges

Sporadic arrests and detentions of Shi'a Muslim dissidents continued. Since 2007, the government has detained Shi'a Muslims for participating in demonstrations or calling for reform; holding small religious

gatherings in private homes; organizing religious events or celebrating religious holidays; and reading religious materials in private homes. Saudi officials often cite national security concerns as a pretext for cracking down on religious minorities and Muslim dissidents.

The Saudi government has used criminal charges of apostasy and blasphemy to suppress discussion and debate and silence dissidents. Promoters of political and human rights reforms, and those seeking to debate the role of religion in relation to the state, its laws, and society, typically have been the targets of such charges. Hamza Kashgari, a Saudi blogger – who had been held since February 2012 on blasphemy charges for comments he posted on Twitter – was released without explanation in October 2013. In May 2012, the Saudi government detained two Saudis, Sultan Hamid Marzooq al-Enezi and Saud Falih Awad al-Enezi, allegedly for becoming members of the Ahmadi community in the Kingdom. While they could face the death penalty for apostasy, their current whereabouts and status are unknown. From information USCIRF has received, they remain detained without charge and they have had no access to legal counsel. In June 2012, Raif Badawi, the founder and editor of the *Free Saudi Liberals* website, which encourages religious and political debate, was arrested in Jeddah and charged with apostasy, “insulting Islam through

Abuses by the CPVPV

The CPVPV, which reports to the King and is not subject to judicial review, officially enforces public morality and restrictions on public religious manifestations and practice by both Saudis and non-Saudis. In recent years, including during the past year, the public presence of the CPVPV has diminished. Nevertheless, in 2013, members of the CPVPV periodically overstepped their authority in parts of the country. In January 2013, a new law was passed limiting the jurisdiction of the CPVPV. Despite the fact that the CPVPV is not allowed to engage in surveillance, detain individuals for more than 24 hours, arrest individuals without police accompaniment, or carry out any kind of punishment, its members have been accused over the past year of beating, whipping, detaining, and otherwise harassing individuals. USCIRF continues to call for the dissolution of the CPVPV.

The Dissemination and Global Exportation of Intolerant Materials

During USCIRF’s 2013 visit to Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government claimed that textbooks from grades one through nine have been revised to remove intolerant passages, and that revisions for grades 10-12 would be completed in 2014. From reports USCIRF has received, high school textbooks in use during the 2013–2014

From reports USCIRF has received, high school textbooks in use during the 2013–2014 school year continue to teach hatred toward members of other religions and, in some cases, promote violence.

electronic channels,” and “parental disobedience.” In January 2013, a Saudi court elected not to pursue the apostasy charge, which carries the death penalty in the Kingdom. In July 2013 Badawi was sentenced by the court to 600 lashes and seven years in prison, and his website was ordered closed. Badawi received five years for insulting Islam and violating provisions of Saudi Arabia’s 2007 anti-cybercrime law through his liberal website and for promoting “unbelief” and two years for insulting both Islam and the CPVPV in comments during television interviews.

school year continue to teach hatred toward members of other religions and, in some cases, promote violence. For example, some justified violence against apostates and polytheists and labeled Jews and Christians “enemies.” In recent years, a Saudi royal decree banned the financing outside Saudi Arabia of religious schools, mosques, hate literature, and other activities that support religious intolerance and, in some cases, violence toward non-Muslims and disfavored Muslims; however, there continue to be reports that some hate literature and other intolerant materials remain

in distribution. In response to inquiries about the Saudi government's commitment to halting the global dissemination from the Kingdom of extremist ideology, literature, and other materials, government officials cite, among other things, the activities of the Saudi government-funded King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) in Vienna, Austria.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

In July 2006, the State Department announced that ongoing bilateral discussions with Saudi Arabia had enabled the U.S. government to identify and confirm a number of policies that the Saudi government "is pursuing and will continue to pursue for the purpose of promoting greater freedom for religious practice and increased tolerance for religious groups." USCIRF has concluded that full implementation by the Saudi government of these policies would diminish significantly the government's institutionalized practices that negatively affect freedom of religion and belief.

USCIRF urges the U.S. government to address religious freedom and other human rights issues actively and publicly with the Saudi government and to report openly on the government's success or failure to implement genuine reforms in these areas, in order to ensure that the Saudi government's initiatives will result in substantial, demonstrable progress.

In response to the policies and practices of the Saudi government, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

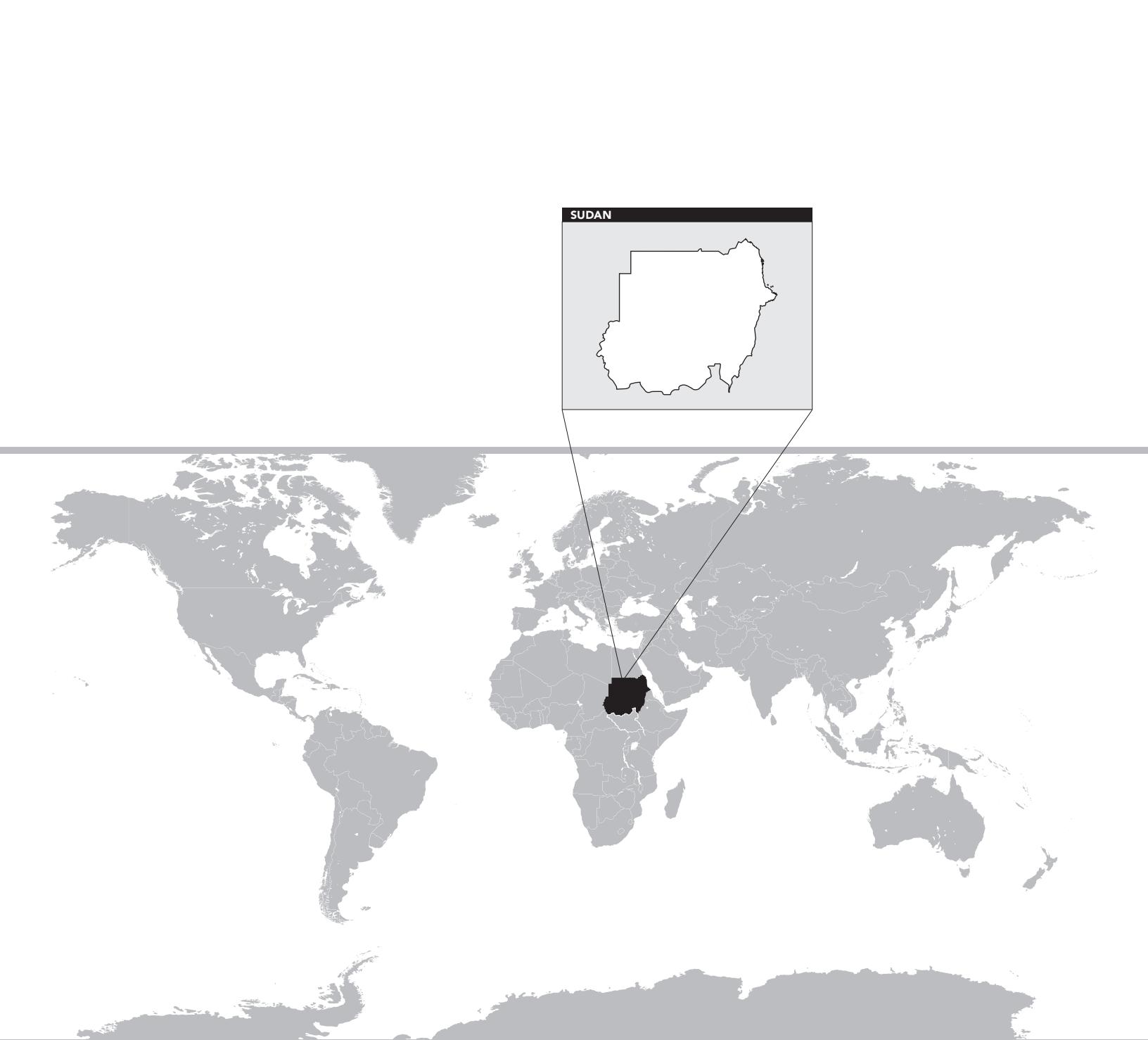
- Continue to designate Saudi Arabia a CPC and press the Saudi government to take concrete action towards completing reforms confirmed in July 2006 in U.S.-Saudi bilateral discussions, and provide a detailed report on progress and lack of progress on each of the areas of concern;
- At the highest levels, press for and work to secure the release of Raif Badawi, Sultan Hamid Marzooq al-Enezi, Saud Falih Awad al-Enezi, and other prisoners of conscience, and press the Saudi government to end state prosecution of individuals charged with apostasy, blasphemy, and sorcery;
- Undertake and make public an assessment of the Ministry of Education textbooks used during the

current school year to determine if passages that teach religious intolerance have been removed, and urge the Saudi government to include the concepts of tolerance and respect for the human rights of all persons;

- Press the Saudi government to continue to address incitement to violence and discrimination against disfavored Muslims and non-Muslims, including by prosecuting government-funded clerics who incite violence against Muslim minority communities or individual members of non-Muslim religious minority communities;
- Press the Saudi government to ensure equal rights and protection under the law for Shi'a Muslim citizens; and
- Work with the Saudi government to allow non-Muslim religious practices to occur with greater security and permit foreign clergy to enter the country to carry out worship services and to bring religious materials for such services.

The U.S. Congress should:

- Require the State Department to issue a public progress report on efforts and results achieved by the Saudi government to implement religious freedom reforms announced in July 2006.



SUDAN

Key Findings

The government of Sudan led by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir continues to engage in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of freedom of religion or belief. It imposes a restrictive interpretation of Shari'ah law on Muslims and non-Muslims alike, using amputations and floggings for crimes and acts of "indecency" and "immorality" and arresting Christians for proselytizing. President al-Bashir and other National Congress Party (NCP) leaders have stated that Sudan's new constitution, when drafted, will be based on its interpretation of Shari'ah. Governmental and non-governmental attacks on the Christian community also continue. These religious freedom violations, as well as the violence in Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Darfur, are the result of President Bashir's policies of Islamization and Arabization. In 2014, USCIRF again recommends that Sudan be named as a "country of particular concern" (CPC). The State Department has designated Sudan a CPC since 1999.

Background

For the past 20 years, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) has based many of the provisions of the 1991 Criminal Code, the 1991 Personal Status Law of Muslims, and state-level "public order" laws on its interpretations of Shari'ah, and has imposed these interpretations on all Sudanese, Muslims, and Christians alike. The 1991 Criminal Code allows death sentences for apostasy, stoning for adultery, cross-amputations for theft, prison sentences for blasphemy, and floggings for undefined "offences of honor, reputation and public morality," including undefined "indecent or immoral acts." State level "public order" laws further implement the 1991 Criminal Code's prohibitions and related punishments for "immorality" and "indecency." These religiously-based morality laws and corporal punishments are imposed through the Public

Order Regime and violations carry a maximum penalty of 40 lashes, a fine, or both.

Hundreds of Muslim and Christian women and girls in Khartoum annually are flogged for indecent dress that violates the Public Order Regime. What constitutes indecent dress is not defined by law, but is left to the discretion of arresting officers and prosecuting judges. Indecency charges relating to dress or the brewing or selling of alcohol are used primarily against poor Southern Sudanese women who comprise the vast

Religious freedom violations, as well as the violence in Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Darfur, are the result of President Bashir's policies of Islamization and Arabization.

majority of the female inmate population in Khartoum. Under the guise of protecting morality and preventing co-mingling, which is deemed "prostitution," the Public Order laws also have been used to stop co-mingling of unmarried men and women, as well as to target the NCP's political opponents.

Government policies and societal pressure promote conversion to Islam, including alleged government tolerance of the use of government assistance to induce conversion to Islam. The Sudanese government has implemented a number of discriminatory practices favoring Muslims, including prohibitions on foreign church officials traveling outside Khartoum and the use of school textbooks that negatively stereotype non-Muslims. Muslims receive preferential access to government employment and government services, and favored treatment in court cases involving Muslims against non-Muslims. The government routinely grants permits

to construct and operate mosques, often with government funds. In contrast, permission to build churches is difficult or impossible to obtain and since 2011, the government has destroyed several churches.

Conversion from Islam is a crime punishable by death, suspected converts to Christianity face societal pressures, and government security personnel intimidate and sometimes torture those suspected of conversion.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Application of Shari'ah Law Provisions

The government continued to apply the Shari'ah-based provisions of the 1991 Criminal Code and Public Order laws during the reporting period. Three men were sentenced to death by crucifixion after being found guilty

Omdurman on February 17, 2014. NISS officers also continued to arrest and deport Nuba and South Sudanese Christians.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

Despite neither the United States nor the Sudanese government having representation at an ambassadorial level in one another's capitals, the United States is an important international actor in Sudan. With the al-Bashir regime taking steps that would move Sudan toward a more repressive state, the State Department, especially the office of the Special Envoy to the Sudan, should increase human rights engagement and advocacy efforts. The normalization of relations with Sudan and any considerations of lifting U.S. sanctions must be

Conversion from Islam is a crime punishable by death, suspected converts to Christianity face societal pressures, and government security personnel intimidate and sometimes torture those suspected of conversion.

of murder. In February 2014, an Ethiopian teen who was gang raped by three Sudanese men was convicted of "indecent acts," given a one month suspended jail term, and fined \$900. The three men who raped the teen were each given 100 lashes for adultery and a man who posted a video online of the rape was sentenced to 40 lashes. As in previous years, several amputation sentences for those found guilty of theft were reported. Hundreds of women were flogged or fined for "indecent" dress. Amira Osman Hamed continues her court fight against the law after she was arrested on August 27 for not covering her head.

Harassment of Christians

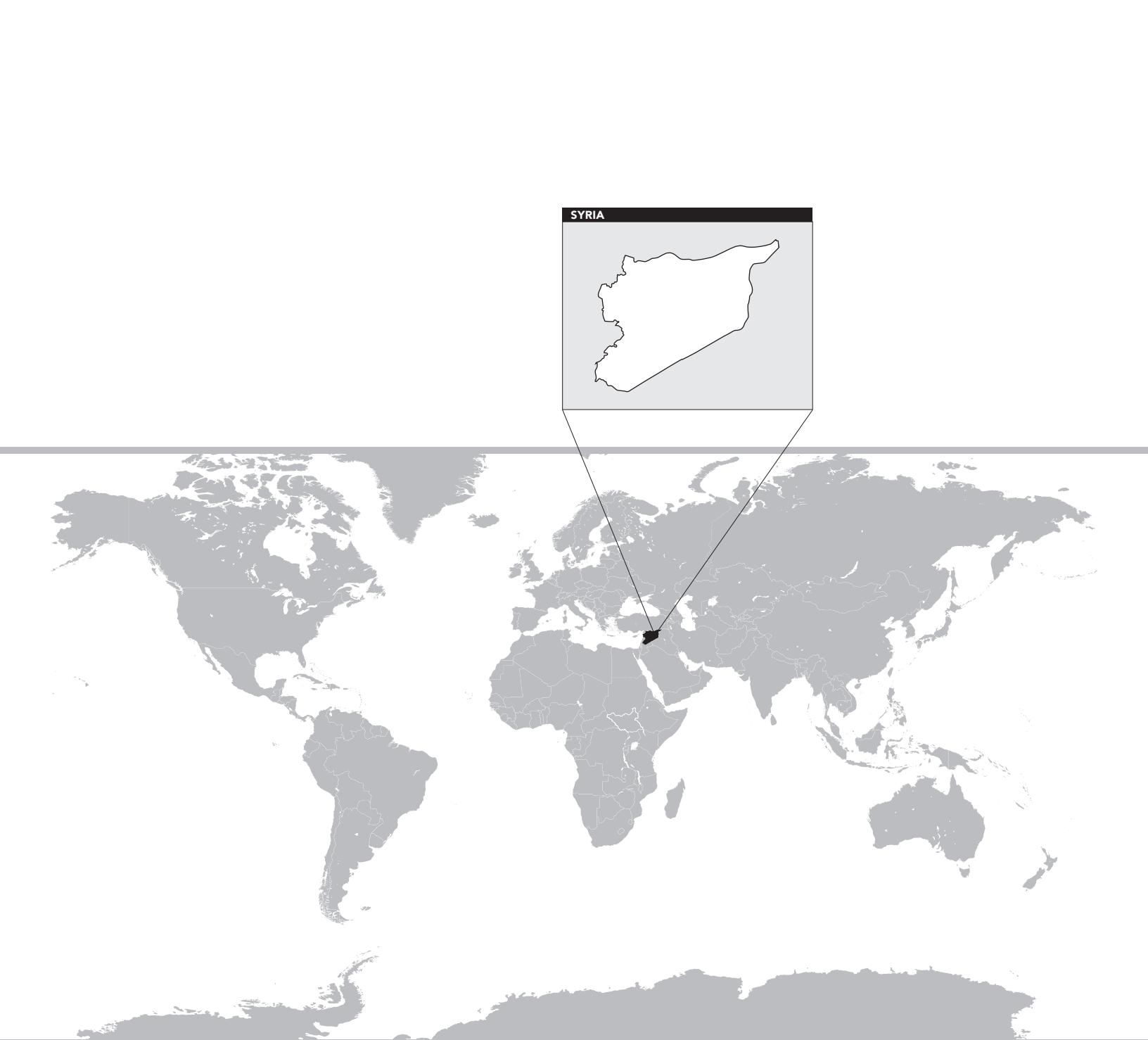
Government pressure on Christians in Sudan continued during 2013. In this reporting period, the National Intelligence Security Services (NISS) raided the New Life Church in Omdurman Town on March 2; raided the offices of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church on June 25; confiscated the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church on October 5; and bulldozed the Sudanese Church of Christ building also in

preceded by concrete action and demonstrated progress by Khartoum in implementing peace agreements, ending abuses of religious freedom and related human rights, and cooperating with efforts to protect civilians. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government continue to designate Sudan as a CPC, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Require, before normalizing relations or lifting sanctions under IRFA and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, that the government of Sudan abide by international standards of freedom of religion or belief, including by reforming the 1992 Criminal Code and repealing the Public Order Regime and laws and practices which discriminate against non-Muslim minorities;
- Urge the government of Sudan to ensure that, when the writing of the country's new constitution starts, the drafting process is transparent and inclusive of nationwide civil society leaders and representatives of all major political parties, to ensure that the future new constitution includes protections for freedom

of religion or belief, respect for international human rights commitments, and recognition of Sudan as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural nation, and support indigenous efforts to influence the process positively;

- Encourage and support civil society groups to monitor implementation of the Public Order laws and advocate for their repeal; and
- Increase attention to the stalled citizenship negotiations, urge the Joint High Level Committee on Nationals to immediately meet, and provide support to the Committee to ensure that the final laws on the status and treatment of nationals in Sudan and South Sudan reflect commitments to protect against statelessness and fully respect universal human rights, including religious freedom.



SYRIA

Key Findings

The Syrian crisis has devolved largely into a sectarian conflict, exacerbated by the actions of the Bashar al-Assad regime, with particularly severe violations of religious freedom affecting all Syrians. The regime's targeting of Sunni Muslims and other individuals or groups that oppose it and its indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas have killed tens of thousands of Syrians and displaced millions. In addition, extremist and U.S.-designated terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), target religious minority communities, including Christians and Alawites, because of their faith, and internationally-recognized opposition military groups have committed religious freedom violations when working with other groups to secure strategic areas. The existing humanitarian disaster and egregious human rights and religious freedom violations pose a serious danger to Syria's religious diversity post-conflict. Due to the collective actions of the Bashar al-Assad regime, internationally-recognized opposition groups, and extremist and U.S.-designated terrorist groups, USCIRF recommends, for the first time, that Syria be designated as a "country of particular concern" (CPC) under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act.

Background

The Syrian conflict began in March 2011 with peaceful protests by opponents of the al-Assad regime, mainly Sunni Muslims but also religious minorities. The initial protests had no religious or sectarian undertones and sought repeal of the abusive emergency law, space for political parties, and President al-Assad's resignation. As the protests grew, President al-Assad ordered an increasingly violent crackdown and he and his regime played on sectarian fears by utilizing religiously-divisive rhetoric. In opposition to the al-Assad regime, dozens of domestic and foreign groups, varying widely in goals,

emerged. Some of these groups, including the internationally-recognized Syrian National Council and the Syrian National Coalition, espouse democratic reform. Others, such as the U.S.-designated terrorist organizations, al-Qaeda, ISIL and the al-Nusra Front, are motivated by religious ideologies espousing violence. The regime also is supported by other U.S.-designated terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah and Shabiha.

The conflict became largely sectarian, as the regime responded with violent ground attacks and indiscriminate shelling, and as extremist and terrorist groups that

Now, Sunni Muslims largely associate all Alawites with the regime of Bashar al-Assad, an Alawite himself, and many Alawites and Christians believe they must support Assad or be killed by extremists and terrorists.

opposed the regime became increasingly imbedded and active. Now, Sunni Muslims largely associate all Alawites with the regime of Bashar al-Assad, an Alawite himself, and many Alawites and Christians believe they must support al-Assad or be killed by extremists and terrorists. Initiatives under the auspices of the United Nations and supported by the United States, including the Geneva peace conference meetings, have failed to find a political solution to end the conflict.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Violations by al-Assad Regime and Affiliated Groups

The regime's atrocities have been indiscriminate, primarily targeting the Sunni Muslim population, creating an environment where internationally-recognized and

protected human rights, including religious freedom, do not exist. The UN and most of the international community, including the United States, have found that the al-Assad regime has committed crimes against humanity. The regime has used tactics such as extra-judicial killings, rape, torture of prisoners, chemical weapons, the indiscriminate shelling of civilians, hospitals, places of worship, and schools, and the withholding of food and other aid to maintain its power.

A number of U.S.-designated terrorist groups, including Hezbollah and Shabiha, support the regime. These groups, in the name of the regime, perpetrate egregious human rights and religious freedom violations, especially targeting Sunni Muslim civilians, including women and children. For example, on May

the approximately 3,000 Christians in Raqqa province must either face death, convert to Islam, or be treated as *dhimmis* (non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state) who must pay a tax for their “protection” and obey serious restrictions on their religious practices.

In April 2013, Bishop Boulos Yazigi of the Greek Orthodox Church and Bishop John Ibrahim of the Assyrian Orthodox Church were kidnapped by unknown assailants in the northern province of Aleppo. Their whereabouts remain uncertain. Thirteen nuns and three workers from a Greek Orthodox monastery in the Christian village of Maaloula, who were kidnapped by the al-Nusra Front in late November 2013, were freed on March 9, 2014. Maaloula fell to al-Nusra in September 2013. At that time, al-Nusra fighters reportedly attacked

Terrorist organizations espouse violence and the creation of an Islamic state with no space for religious diversity, and have carried out religiously-motivated attacks and massacres against Alawite, Shi'a, and Christian civilians.

25, 2012, in what has become known as the Houla massacre, 108 Sunni Muslims, including 49 children, were killed in two opposition-controlled villages in the Houla region of Syria. The United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria determined that most of the victims had been “summarily executed” and “entire families were shot in their houses.” In addition, it is a common tactic of the regime to bomb areas, and then for regime militias to follow.

Violations by Extremist and Terrorist Groups

Extremist groups and terrorist organizations, including al-Qaeda and ISIL, also are perpetrating egregious religious freedom violations. They espouse violence and the creation of an Islamic state with no space for religious diversity, and have carried out religiously-motivated attacks and massacres against Alawite, Shi'a, and Christian civilians. NGOs report that several different anti-regime opposition groups have established Shari'ah courts in areas they control. Recently ISIL, a terrorist organization not aligned with the internationally-recognized opposition, announced that

Christian homes, killing at least a dozen people, and burning down a church; most Christians fled and those that remained were forced to convert to Islam.

In August 2013, 20 extremist groups attacked the coastal Latakia province. Human Rights Watch reported that 190 civilians were killed and another 200 taken hostage, the vast majority of whom were Alawite Muslims.

Internationally-Recognized Opposition

During the reporting year, the Syrian National Coalition did not effectively or adequately represent religious minorities. It also did not have oversight of local administrations in areas under its control, some of which are enforcing Shari'ah law. In addition, opposition military units on occasion have worked with terrorist groups to secure strategic areas. These joint operations raise concerns that the internationally-recognized organizations are being pulled closer to extremist ideologies and violent sectarian acts. For instance, in August 2012, the Free Syrian Army fought with terrorist groups during the battle for Mengh military base, which reports said led to the deaths of 200 Alawite civilians.

Refugees, Internally-Displaced People, and Sectarian Spillover

According to UN estimates, as of mid-March 2014, the Syrian crisis had led to more than 2.5 million registered refugees, mostly in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt. More than half of the UN-registered refugees are women and girls, and close to half of those are under the age of 17. Whether in refugee camps or cities, the refugees are facing increased societal harassment because they are perceived by their host communities to be taking jobs and using limited resources. Moreover, in many of the host countries, particularly Lebanon and Iraq, sectarianism is growing, putting them at greater risk.

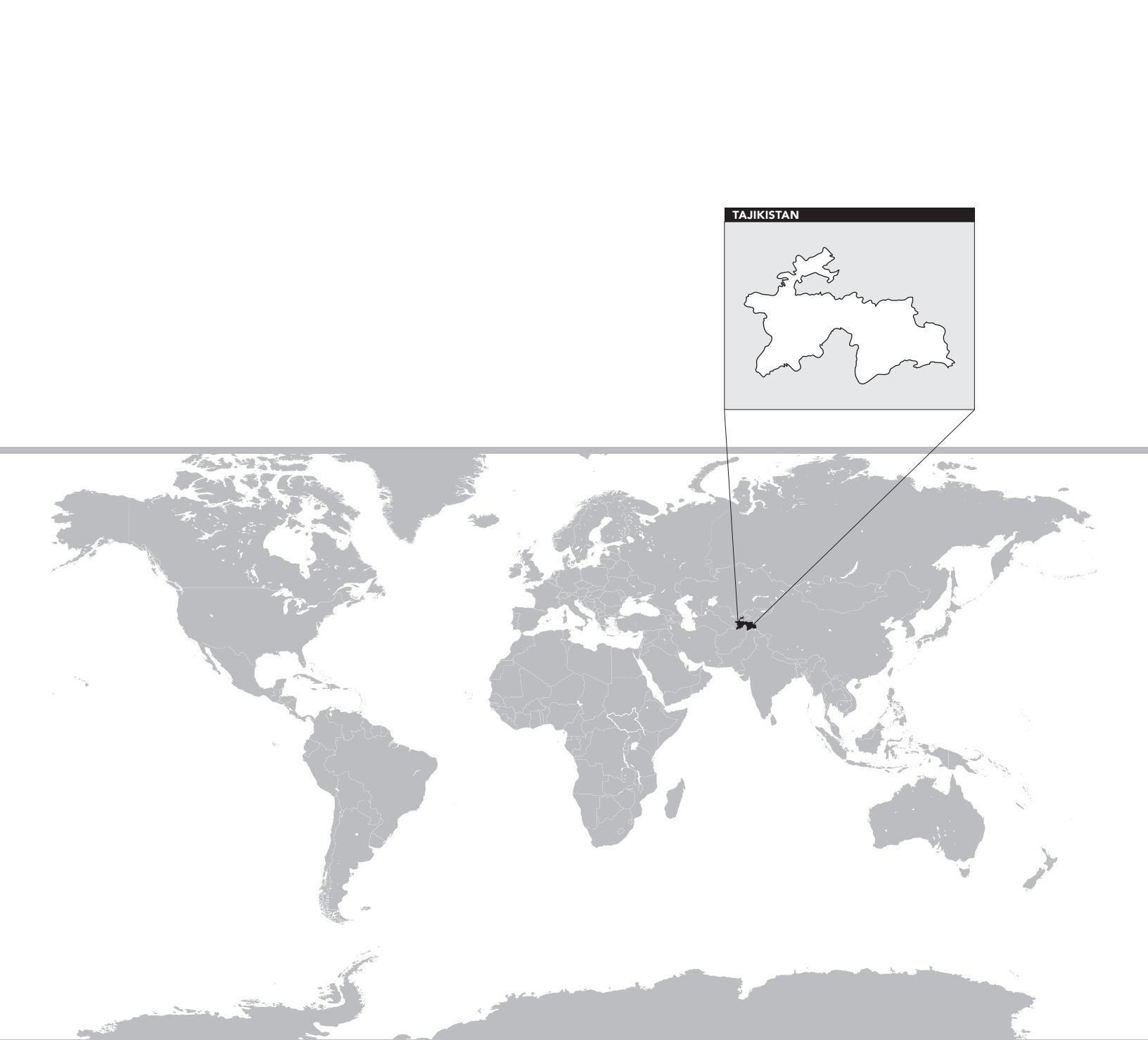
In addition to the millions of refugees, an estimated 9.3 million people in Syria need basic assistance, such as food, water and shelter, including at least 6.5 million internally-displaced people. (The UN stopped counting deaths in mid-January 2014 because of the inability to verify numbers and causes; at the time they estimated at least 100,000 Syrians had been killed, including Syrian military and rebel forces as well as civilians.)

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

All Syrians, including Muslims, Christians, Alawites, and the smallest communities, such as Yezidis and Druze, are living in bleak conditions and face a dire future. The prospect of achieving a post-conflict Syria that values religious diversity, minority rights, and religious freedom is daunting, with an entire generation at risk from fighting, prolonged hunger, disease, and indoctrination into extremist ideologies. In addition to continuing to seek an end to the conflict, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should designate Syria a “country of particular concern” and should:

- Ensure that religious freedom is given a high priority and minorities are given a voice as efforts continue to bring about an end to the conflict;
- Ensure that U.S. government planning for a post-conflict Syria is a “whole-of-government” effort and includes consideration of issues concerning religious freedom and related human rights, and that USCIRF and other U.S. government experts on those issues are consulted as appropriate;

- In U.S. efforts to build the capacity of the internationally-recognized opposition, the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations within the State Department should continue to prioritize training on international standards relating to human rights and religious freedom and stress the need for these groups to include all of Syria’s religious and ethnic communities;
- Initiate an effort among relevant UN agencies, NGOs, and like-minded partners among the Friends of Syria to fund and develop programs that bolster intra- and inter-religious tolerance, alleviate sectarian tensions, and promote respect for religious freedom and related rights, both in neighboring countries hosting refugees and in preparing for a post-conflict Syria;
- Consider issuing a new exemption to U.S. immigration law’s “material support bar” for Syrian refugees who supported specific U.S.-backed rebel groups, and properly apply existing exemptions, so that Syrians who pose no threat to the United States and are fleeing the al-Assad regime or terrorist groups are not erroneously barred from the U.S. refugee program;
- Allocate sufficient resources to the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies to expeditiously process applications and conduct security background checks to facilitate the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the United States without compromising U.S. national security; and
- Continue to provide significant funding and logistical support to the UN, humanitarian organizations, and host nations and communities to provide humanitarian aid to refugees and internally displaced persons, and encourage other countries to do the same.



TAJIKISTAN

Key Findings

Systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom continue in Tajikistan. The government suppresses and punishes all religious activity independent of state control, particularly the activities of Muslims, Protestants, and Jehovah's Witnesses. The government also imprisons individuals on unproven criminal allegations linked to Islamic religious activity and affiliation. Jehovah's Witnesses have been banned since 2007. There are no legal provisions on conscientious objection to military service. For these reasons, USCIRF again recommends in 2014 that Tajikistan be designated as a country of particular concern (CPC). USCIRF first recommended that Tajikistan be designated a CPC in 2012. Tajikistan had been on USCIRF's Watch List since 2009.

Background

The government's recent actions against peaceful religious practice are part of a five-year barrage of repressive laws limiting religious freedom. The 2009 religion law establishes onerous and intrusive registration requirements for religious groups; criminalizes unregistered religious activity as well as private religious education and proselytism; sets strict limits on the number and size of mosques; allows government interference with the appointment of imams; requires official permission for religious organizations to provide religious instruction and communicate with foreign co-religionists; and imposes state controls on the content, publication and import of religious materials.

In 2011 and 2012, administrative and penal code amendments set new penalties, including large fines and prison terms, for religion-related charges, such as organizing or participating in "unapproved" religious meetings and organizing or participating in a "religious extremist study group." In addition, a 2011 law on parental responsibility banned minors from any organized religious activity except funerals and in

official religious institutions. In August 2013, the UN Human Rights Committee called on the Tajikistan government to "repeal or amend all provisions" of the religion law, the parental responsibility law and the administrative code that "disproportionally restrict" its UN obligations. It also called on Tajikistan to "reverse its discriminatory refusal to register certain religious denominations;" to legally recognize the right to conscientious objection, and to amend provisions limiting religious education.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Official Control of and Restrictions on Muslims

Tajik officials monitor mosques and their attendees for possible extremist and anti-government views; place restrictions on Muslim religious dress; control the age and the numbers of *hajj* (religious pilgrimage) participants; and indirectly control the selection and retention of imams and the content of sermons. The law prohibits

The law bans private religious education . . .

the wearing of headscarves in educational institutions, and bans teachers from wearing beards in public buildings. In 2005, the semi-official Council of Ulema banned women from attending mosque services, ostensibly due to a lack of separate prayer spaces for men and women. President Emomali Rahmon instructed the Ministry of Finance and the State Committee on Religious Affairs (SCRA) to begin paying the salaries of the imams of cathedral mosques by February 2014. Reportedly, growing numbers of Tajik women are protesting that their taxes will now be used to pay salaries for imams in mosques that they are not allowed to attend. Rahmon

also instructed the Council of Ulema to adopt a standard uniform for imams. The SCRA instructed imams across Tajikistan to preach against “nontraditional sexual relations” in 2014.

Abuses against Members of the Islamic Renaissance Party

Tajikistan has the only post-Soviet Islamist political party with legal status, which was given as part of the country’s post-civil war peace settlement. In April 2013, Mahmudali Hayit, deputy head of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), was severely beaten by unknown assailants. In January 2014, Umedjon Tojiev, 34, an IRPT member from the northern city of Isfara, died in a prison hospital under highly suspicious circumstances; he was arrested in October 2013 on charges of extremism. The IRPT and various Tajik human rights groups allege that the Tajik police and security services engage in maltreatment and torture of detainees and prisoners.

Restrictions on Houses of Worship

Tajik law sets strict limits on the numbers of mosques permitted, and in recent years the government has closed hundreds of unregistered mosques and prayer rooms and demolished three unregistered mosques in Dushanbe. A Dushanbe city official told the Forum 18 News Service in 2013 that people had been told not to use certain mosques for worship; it was not clear what measures would be taken if worship continued. In 2008, the nation’s only synagogue, located in Dushanbe, was bulldozed. The Dushanbe Jewish community later received a building (donated by President Rakhmon’s brother-in-law, one of Tajikistan’s richest bankers) that it uses for worship but does not own. In July 2013, after

in 2009 and Tajikistan announced that one of the world’s largest mosques, funded by Qatar, will open in Dushanbe in 2014.

Restrictions on Religious Minorities

In 2007, the Tajik government banned Jehovah’s Witnesses for allegedly causing “discontent” among the people and for their conscientious objection to military service. In September 2013 a court fined a Jehovah’s Witness the equivalent of USD70 for discussing religion on a street in Dushanbe. Tajik authorities allowed the previously-closed Ahoy Church to resume its activity in late 2008, but the Abundant Life Christian Center remains closed. In August 2013, the UN Human Rights Council noted its “particular concern” at the absolute ban of several religious denominations, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, and certain Muslim and Christian groups.

Restrictions on Religious Literature

The government must approve the production, importation, export, sale, and distribution of religious materials by registered religious groups, which is in effect a ban on religious materials by unregistered religious groups. The Ministry of Culture has confiscated religious texts it deems inappropriate, including from Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Restrictions on Religious Education

A state license is required for religious instruction, and both parents must give written permission for children to receive instruction. Only central mosques are allowed to set up educational groups. As of December 2013, five of Tajikistan’s six officially-approved *madrasas* (Muslim religious schools) remained closed, the

Restrictions primarily affect the majority Muslim community.

he publicly asked President Rakhmon for land to build a new mosque, Ubaydullo Khasanov, former Chief Imam in Vossei district of the Khatlon Region, was fired by the SCRA. In contrast, the Aga Khan Cultural Center, Central Asia’s first Ismaili center, opened in Dushanbe

Forum 18 News Service reported; their 300 students in the northern Sogd Region must study in non-religious public schools. Tajik authorities now allow only one *madrassa* to operate, in Tursonzade, near Dushanbe. During a July 4, 2013 address to religious leaders and

local government officials, President Rahmon warned that “extremism and fanaticism is prospering, and moreover terrorism has appeared in society,” and claimed that some graduates of religious schools later became terrorists.

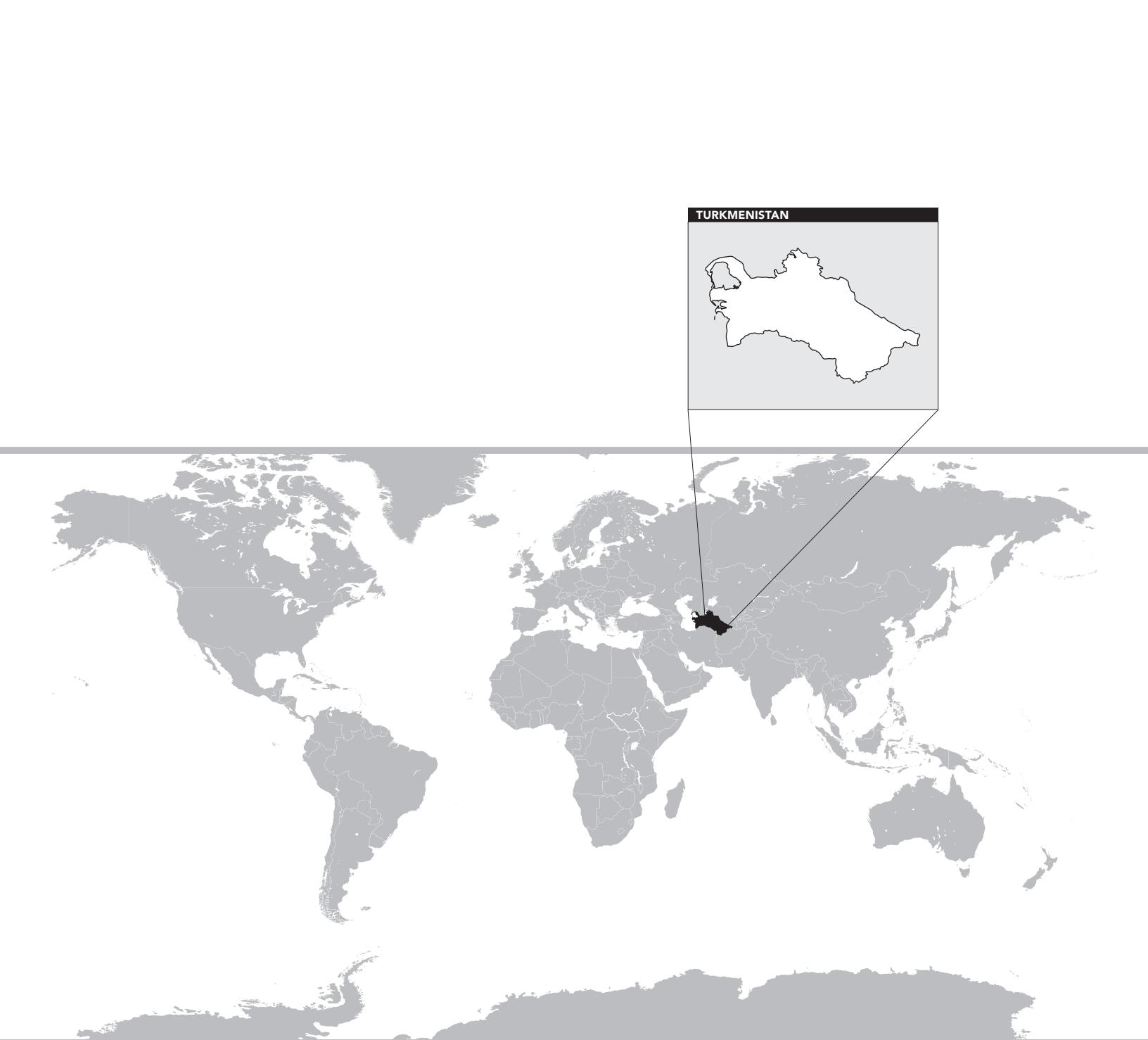
Recommendations for U.S. Policy

For the past decade, U.S. policy in Central Asia was dominated by the Afghan war, and human rights and religious freedom were not major concerns. USCIRF believes that this policy was shortsighted. The evolving regional geopolitical situation may or may not create new security imperatives for the United States, but USCIRF urges the U.S. government to prioritize religious freedom and related human rights in Tajikistan. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government designate Tajikistan as a CPC, USCIRF recommends the U.S. government should:

- Press Tajik officials to work with civil society to bring the 2009 religion law and other relevant laws into conformity with international commitments, including those on freedom of religion or belief, and criticize publicly violations by the Tajik government of those commitments;
- Continue to monitor the trials of those charged on account of their religious affiliation, and work with the international community, particularly the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to provide training for the judiciary in civil law and human rights standards;
- Urge the Tajik government to agree to visits by UN Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the Independence of the Judiciary, and Torture, set specific visit dates, and provide the full and necessary conditions for such a visit;
- Ensure that the U.S. Embassy maintains active contacts with human rights activists and press the Tajik government to ensure that every prisoner has greater access to his or her family, human rights monitors, adequate medical care, and a lawyer;
- Ensure that U.S. assistance to the Tajik government, with the exception of aid to improve humanitarian conditions and advance human rights, be contingent upon the government establishing and

implementing a timetable of specific steps to reform the religion law and improve conditions of freedom of religion or belief; and

- Re-establish funding for the State Department’s Title VIII program for research, including on religious freedom and human rights, as well as for language programs related to the study of Eurasia.



TURKMENISTAN

Key Findings

Particularly severe religious freedom violations persist in Turkmenistan. Despite a few limited reforms in 2007, the country's laws, policies, and practices violate international human rights norms, including those on freedom of religion or belief. Police raids and harassment of registered and unregistered religious groups continue. The repressive 2003 religion law remains in force, causing major difficulties for all religious groups. Turkmen law does not allow a civilian alternative to military service and nine Jehovah's Witnesses are imprisoned for conscientious objection. In light of these severe violations, USCIRF again recommends in 2014 that the U.S. government designate Turkmenistan as a "country of particular concern," or CPC. The Commission has recommended CPC designation for Turkmenistan since 2000, but the State Department has yet to take such action.

Background

Turkmenistan is the most closed country in the former Soviet Union. The country's first president, Saparmurat Niyazov, who died in late 2006, oversaw one of the world's most repressive and isolated states. Virtually no independent public activity was allowed, and the 2003 religion law banned most religious activity. Turkmenistan's public life was dominated by Niyazov's quasi-religious personality cult set out in his book, the *Ruhnama*, which was imposed on the country's religious and educational systems.

After assuming the presidency in early 2007, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov ordered the release of 11 political prisoners, including the former chief mufti; placed certain limits on Niyazov's personality cult; set up two new official human rights commissions; and registered 13 minority religious groups. He eased police controls on internal travel and allowed Turkmenistan to become slightly more open to the outside world. Yet, he has not reformed the country's oppressive laws, maintains a state structure of repressive control, and has

reinstituted a pervasive presidential personality cult. Denials of international travel for many citizens continues, especially those travelling to participate in religious events, though the Turkmen government announced in July 2013 that it will continue to allow dual Russian-Turkmenistan citizenship to some 110,000 persons, many of whom are Russian Orthodox, making it easier for them to meet with their coreligionists abroad.

Turkmenistan's constitution purports to guarantee religious freedom, the separation of religion from the state, and equality regardless of religion or belief. The 2003 religion law, however, contradicts these provisions. Despite reforms in 2007, this law sets intrusive registration criteria and bans any activity by unregistered religious organizations; requires that the government be informed of all foreign financial support; forbids worship in private homes, allows only clerics to wear

Police raids and harassment of registered and unregistered religious groups continue.

religious garb in public; and places severe and discriminatory restrictions on religious education. The government-appointed Council on Religious Affairs (CRA) supervises religious matters. The CRA controls the hiring, promoting, and firing of Sunni Muslim and Russian Orthodox clergy; censors religious publications; and oversees the activities of all registered groups. CRA members include only government officials and Sunni Muslim and Russian Orthodox Church representatives.

In its 2013 written response during the Universal Periodic Review, the government of Turkmenistan denied to the UN Human Rights Council that any laws restricted the activities of religious groups or criminalized religious activities due to a lack of legal registration.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Punishments for Religious and Human Rights Activities

In January 2014, new administrative code provisions increased the penalties for most “illegal” religious activities. The government continues to impose harsh penalties, such as imprisonment, forcible drug treatment, and fines, for religious and human rights activities. In recent years, Muslims, Protestants, and Jehovah’s Witnesses were detained, fined, imprisoned or internally exiled for their religious convictions. In September 2013, police in the city of Mary resumed pressure on the unregistered Protestant congregation led by former religious prisoner of conscience Pastor Ilmurad Nurliev, Forum 18 News Service reported; there is concern that the pastor may be re-arrested. Even registered religious groups may be subject to police raids, as happened in December 2013 in Dashoguz. A Baptist summer camp was also raided and closed by police in 2013. One Protestant and one Jehovah’s Witness are known to be imprisoned for their faith, in addition to nine conscientious objectors. Reports have faded of a dissident imam who had spent years in a psychiatric hospital; this information drought also applies to dozens of other political and religious prisoners, according to a new NGO coalition, known as “Prove they are Alive.” Further, the International Committee for the Red Cross continues to be denied access to Turkmenistan’s prisons.

Government Control over Religious Activities

The secret police, anti-terrorist police units, local government, and local CRA officials continue to raid registered and unregistered religious communities. It is illegal for unregistered groups to rent, purchase, or construct places of worship, and even registered groups must obtain scarce government permits. A decree banned publication of religious texts inside Turkmenistan and only registered groups can legally import such texts. The religion law also bans private religious education. Muslims are not allowed to travel abroad for religious education and there is an extensive list of Turkmen citizens banned from international travel. The country’s largest religious minority, the Russian Orthodox Church, lacks an institution within Turkmenistan to train clergy, but Russian Orthodox men are allowed to exit the country for clerical training.

Conscientious Objectors

Turkmen law has no civilian alternative to military service for conscientious objectors. Those who refuse to serve can face up to two years of jail, but until 2009 the Turkmen government had given suspended sentences. Currently, nine Jehovah’s Witnesses are imprisoned and

Nine Jehovah’s Witnesses are imprisoned for conscientious objection.

maltreated for refusal of military service; four others were given suspended sentences; their relatives who complained to the UN were threatened, tortured and beaten in 2013.

Registration of Religious Groups

Since 2005, some small religious groups have been registered, such as the Baha’i, several Pentecostal groups, Seventh-Day Adventists, several Evangelical churches, and the Society for Krishna Consciousness. In 2010, Turkmenistan told the UN Human Rights Committee there are 123 registered religious groups, 100 of which are Sunni and Shi’a Muslim and 13 Russian Orthodox. Some groups have decided not to register due to the onerous and opaque process, while certain Shi’a Muslim groups, the Armenian Apostolic Church, some Protestant groups, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses have had numerous registration applications rejected.

Government Interference in Internal Religious Affairs

The Turkmen government interferes in the internal leadership and organizational arrangements of religious communities. In early 2013, the President named a new Grand Mufti. Turkmen Muslims are concerned that the government replaced imams who had formal Islamic theological training with individuals lacking such education. Also, it is official policy not to name imams if they have had foreign theological training. The Turkmen government still limits the number of annual *hajj* travelers to 188, despite a higher quota being permitted. Local secret police officers reportedly require Muslim and Orthodox clerics to report regularly on activities.

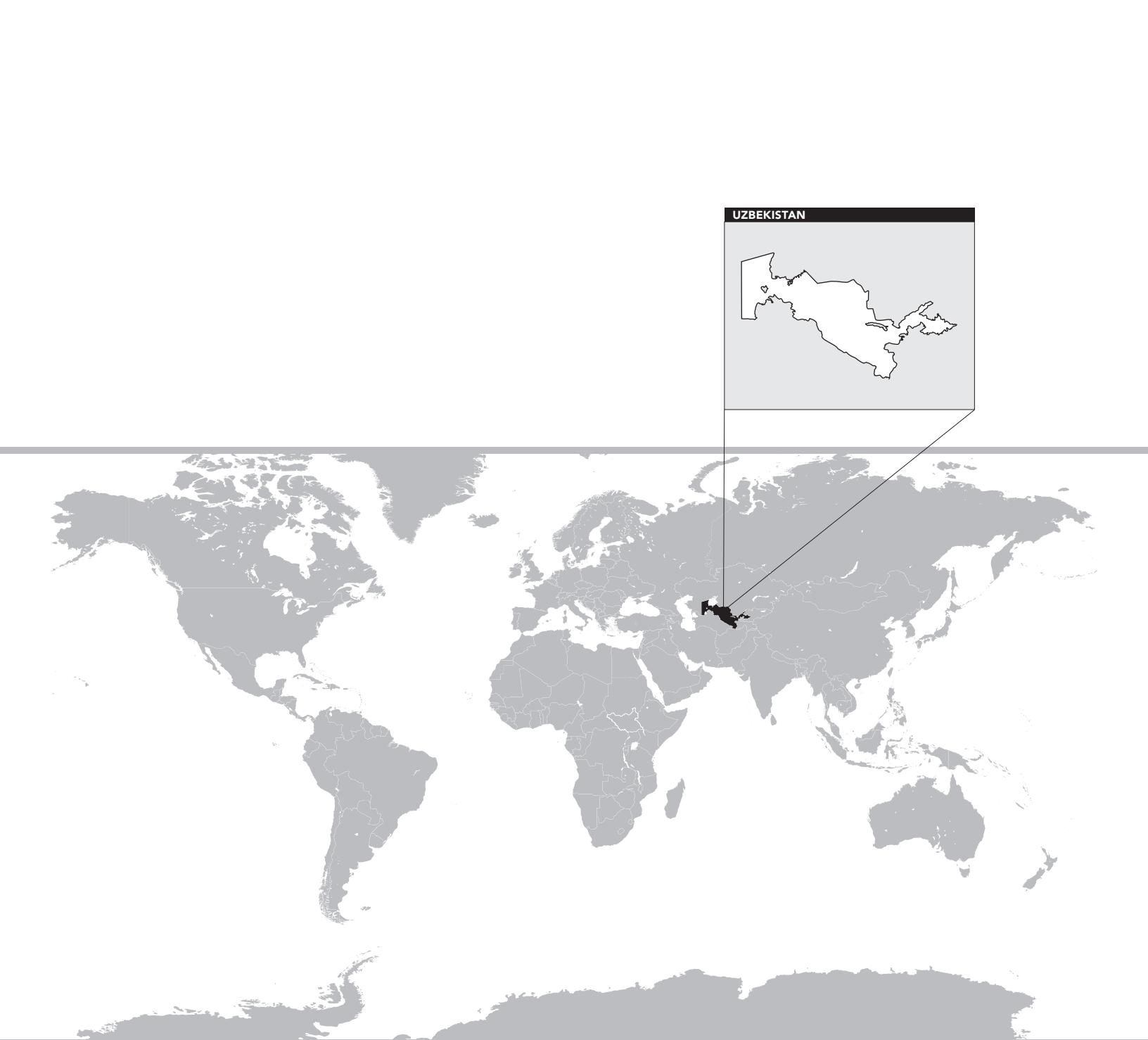
Recommendations for U.S. Policy

For the past decade, U.S. policy in Central Asia was dominated by the Afghan war, and human rights and religious freedom were not major concerns. USCIRF believes that this policy was shortsighted. The evolving regional geopolitical situation may or may not create new security imperatives for the United States, but USCIRF urges the U.S. government to prioritize religious freedom and related human rights in Turkmenistan. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government designate Turkmenistan as a CPC, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Raise human rights and religious freedom in all bilateral meetings with the Turkmen government, urge it to adopt new laws and practices that comply with international human rights standards, establish a regular reporting mechanism on these issues, and call for the release of religious prisoners, including conscientious objectors;
- Ensure that the U.S. Embassy maintains active contacts with human rights activists and press the Turkmen government to ensure that every prisoner has greater access to his or her family, human rights monitors, adequate medical care, and a lawyer;
- Encourage public scrutiny of Turkmenistan's record on religious freedom and related human rights in appropriate international fora, such as the UN and OSCE, and encourage the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), which is based in Turkmenistan and seeks to encourage more effective government responses to terrorism and extremism, to enhance the human rights aspect of its work;
- Urge the Turkmen government to agree to another visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, as well as visits from the Rapporteurs on Independence of the Judiciary and on Torture, set specific visit dates, and provide the full and necessary conditions for their visits;
- Encourage the Broadcasting Board of Governors to increase radio broadcasts and Internet programs to Turkmenistan, including information on religious freedom, human rights and basic education, to help overcome decades of isolation, and

continue to press for resumption of the U.S. Peace Corps program that existed for 20 years, which the Turkmenistan government ended in 2013; and

- Re-establish funding for the State Department's Title VIII program for research, including on religious freedom and human rights, as well as for language programs related to the study of Eurasia.



UZBEKISTAN

Key Findings

Particularly severe violations of freedom of religion or belief continue in Uzbekistan through a highly restrictive religion law and harsh penalties on all independent religious activity. The government also imprisons individuals who do not conform to officially-prescribed practices or who it claims are extremist, including as many as 12,000 Muslims. Based on these systematic, egregious, ongoing violations, USCIRF again recommends in 2014 that Uzbekistan be designated a “country of particular concern,” or CPC, under the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). While the State Department has so designated Uzbekistan since 2006, it has indefinitely waived taking any punitive action since 2009.

Background

Uzbekistan’s 1998 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations severely limits the rights of all religious groups and facilitates Uzbek government control, particularly of the majority Muslim community. The law criminalizes unregistered religious activity; requires official approval of the content, production and distribution of religious publications; bans minors from religious organizations; and allows only clerics, and not laypeople, to wear religious clothing in public. Many religious groups are unable to meet registration requirements, which include a permanent representation in eight of the country’s 13 provinces. In 2014, a detailed new censorship decree went into effect banning materials that “distort” beliefs or encourage individuals to change religions.

USCIRF staff visited Uzbekistan in October 2013. The visit confirmed previous reporting that the Uzbek government actively represses individuals, groups, and mosques that do not conform to officially-prescribed practices or for alleged association with extremist political programs. While Uzbekistan faces security threats from groups using violence in the

name of religion, the government has arbitrarily used vague anti-extremism laws against peaceful religious adherents and others who pose no credible security threat. In addition, the Uzbek government’s virulent

Uzbek law places severe limits on all religious communities.

campaign against independent Muslims continues. Particular targets include those linked to the May 2005 protests in Andijon of the conviction of 23 businessmen for their alleged membership in the banned Muslim group *Akromiya*. According to the Uzbek NGO, the Andijon-Justice and Revival, 231 individuals are still imprisoned in connection with the Andijon events; 10 prisoners have died. The Uzbek government continues to pressure other countries to return Uzbek refugees who fled after the Andijon tragedy.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Application of Extremism Laws

The Uzbek government continued its decade-long policy of arresting and imprisoning, some for as long as 20-year terms, an estimated 12,000 Muslims who reject state control over religious practice or affiliation. Many are denied due process and are tortured; some are detained in psychiatric hospitals. In 2013, an estimated 200 religious believers were arrested, according to the Uzbek Initiative Group of Independent Human Rights Defenders. The government claims that many detainees are associated with extremist groups that it broadly labels “Wahhabi” or “jihadist.” Authorities apply these terms to a range of Muslim individuals or groups, including genuine extremists, political opponents, those with foreign education, and others.

Detention Conditions

The Uzbek human rights group *Ezgulik* has reported on the torture of female detainees, including many jailed for their religious beliefs. Despite the Uzbek government's claims, torture remains endemic in prisons, pretrial facilities, and police precincts, and reportedly includes the threat or use of violence, including rape, and the use of gas masks to block victims' air supply. Torture allegedly is used to force adults and children to renounce their religious beliefs or to make confessions. In early 2013, the International Committee for the Red Cross announced it would halt its work in Uzbekistan due to lack of official cooperation.

Restrictions on Muslims

The Uzbek government tightly controls Islamic institutions and prohibits its independent practice. In the Ferghana Valley, the government has confiscated several mosques and banned children from attendance. The government-controlled Muslim Spiritual Board oversees the training, appointments, and dismissals of imams, and censors the content of sermons and Islamic materials. Despite a UN Committee against Torture appeal, Muslim believer Khayrullo Tursonov was returned by Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan; sentenced to a 16-year term in

The Uzbek government campaign against independent Muslims continues.

June 2013, he is now in a camp infested with tuberculosis. In July 2013, Ravshan Rahmatullayev received a six-year jail term for discussing religion in a tea house with five friends. Leading independent Uzbek imam Obid-kori Nazarov, who had received political asylum in Sweden, was the subject of an attempted assassination in early 2012. Despite these restrictions, attendance at registered official mosques is high and the country's former chief mufti, Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, is permitted to run a popular website which includes reports on human rights issues in Uzbekistan.

Charges against Non-Muslims

The government often brands evangelical Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses as "extremists" for practicing religion

outside of state-sanctioned structures, and they face massive fines, detention, and arrest for "illegal religious activity." Authorities raid meetings of registered and unregistered Christian and Baha'i groups. The state-controlled media encourages prejudice against minority religious groups and has equated missionaries with religious extremists. In October 2013, a Tashkent court ordered the confiscation of a Baptist Union summer camp.

Restrictions on Religious Materials

The Council on Religious Affairs (CRA) censors religious materials. The religion law prohibits the importing, storing, producing, and distributing of unapproved religious materials. Members of religious communities destroy their own sacred texts due to fear of confiscation during police raids. The government maintains an extensive list of banned international websites, particularly those that focus on human rights and religious freedom. In 2013, a CRA official told the Forum 18 News Service that Uzbek law only allows religious texts to be read inside buildings of registered religious groups.

Restrictions on Religious Instruction

Religious instruction is limited to officially-sanctioned religious schools and state-approved instructors, and only six registered religious communities have met the requirements to conduct religious education (eight legally-registered regional branches). In 2013, a woman was fined for her 12-year-old son's "illegal" religious education; he took art lessons from two Protestants. Private religious education is punished. In 2010 Muslim religion teacher Mehriniso Hamdamova was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment; she now reportedly is in urgent need of medical attention. The government also restricts international travel for religious purposes and maintains an extensive list of individuals banned from such travel.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

For the past decade, U.S. policy in Central Asia was dominated by the Afghan war, and human rights and religious freedom were not major concerns. USCIRF believes that this policy was shortsighted. The evolving regional geopolitical situation may or may not create new security imperatives for the United States, but USCIRF urges the U.S. government to prioritize religious

freedom and related human rights in Uzbekistan. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government continue to designate Uzbekistan as a CPC, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Lift the waiver on taking any action in consequence of the CPC designation, in place since January 2009, and impose sanctions if conditions do not improve within 90-180 days, including a ban on visits to the United States by high-level Uzbek officials;
- Ensure that U.S. statements and actions are coordinated across agencies so that U.S. concerns about human rights are reflected in its public statements and private interactions with the Uzbek government, including calls for the release of religious prisoners and conscientious objectors;
- Ensure that the U.S. Embassy maintains active contacts with human rights activists and press the Uzbek government to ensure that every prisoner has greater access to his or her family, human rights monitors, adequate medical care, and a lawyer;
- Make U.S. assistance, except humanitarian assistance and human rights programs, contingent on the Uzbek government's adoption of specific actions to improve religious freedom conditions and comply with international human rights standards, including reforming the 1998 religion law and permitting an international investigation into the 2005 Andijon events;
- Encourage the Board for Broadcasting Governors to ensure continued U.S. funding for the Uzbek Service of the Voice of America, which has been threatened in the recent past;
- Re-establish funding for the State Department's Title VIII program for research, including on religious freedom and human rights, as well as for language programs related to the study of Eurasia; and
- Press for UN Human Rights Council scrutiny of the human rights situation in Uzbekistan, as well as raise concerns in other multilateral settings, such as the OSCE, and urge the Uzbek government to agree to visits by UN Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the Independence of the Judiciary, and Torture, set specific visit dates, and provide the full and necessary conditions for such visits.



VIETNAM

Key Findings

Despite some positive changes over the past decade, the Vietnamese government continues to imprison individuals for religious activity or religious freedom advocacy. It uses a specialized religious police force and vague national security laws to suppress independent Buddhist, Protestant, Hoa Hao, and Cao Dai activities, and seeks to stop the growth of ethnic minority Protestantism and Catholicism via discrimination, violence, and forced renunciations of their faith. In the past year, arrests and confrontations with the Catholic Church have escalated tensions. Based on these systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations, USCIRF again recommends that Vietnam be designated as a “country of particular concern,” or CPC, in 2014. The Commission has recommended that Vietnam be named a CPC since 2001. The State Department did so in 2004 and 2005, but removed the designation in 2006 because of progress toward fulfilling a bilateral agreement to release prisoners, ban forced renunciations of faith, and expand legal protections for religious groups.

Background

Vietnam's overall human rights record remains very poor and deteriorated in the past year, as it has for the past several years. In the wake of ongoing battles within the Communist Party's leadership, the government has moved decisively to repress perceived challenges, tightening controls on freedom of expression, association, religion, and assembly. Over the past two years, new decrees were issued prohibiting peaceful protest, limiting speech on the Internet, tightening controls on journalists and access to the Internet at cafes, and making it more difficult for religious communities to gain legal recognition. At least 100-200 prisoners of conscience are detained in Vietnam, some for their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy. At least 63 human rights advocates were sentenced in the past year.

Increased U.S.-Vietnam bilateral engagement in the past few years, particularly in the areas of trade and defense, has not been accompanied by improvements in religious freedom and related human rights. The Vietnamese government responded to some U.S. religious freedom concerns in the past, particularly after being designated a CPC in 2004. That designation produced tangible religious freedom improvements without hindering other aspects of the bilateral relationship. Trade, humanitarian programs, and security cooperation all expanded in the years 2004-2006.

The government of Vietnam controls all religious activities through law and administrative oversight, severely restricts independent religious practice, and represses individuals and religious groups it views as

At least 100-200 prisoners of conscience are detained in Vietnam, some for their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy.

challenging its authority. In the past year, the Vietnamese government targeted independent branches of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao Buddhist church, independent Protestant house churches in the central and northwest highlands, Khmer Krom Buddhist temples, and leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV). Relations between Catholics and local government officials in Hanoi, DaNang, Vinh, and Ho Chi Minh City deteriorated as peaceful protests over land disputes led to violence and arrests. Vietnam also issued a revised decree on religion (Decree 92) that provides clearer timetables for registration, but expands oversight of religious affairs and makes it more difficult for new religious groups to ever achieve legal status.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Prisoners

Dozens of individuals are detained for their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy, including: Fr. Nguyen Van Ly; UBCV patriarch Thich Quang Do; Hoa Hao leaders Nguyen Van Lia and Tran Hoi An; Protestant pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh; human rights defender Le Quoc Quan; ethnic minority Protestant pastors, Ksor Y Du and Kpa Y Ko; Hoa Hao activist Mai Thi Dung; Cao Dai leader Cam Tu Huynh; and two Catholic residents of Con Dau village.

Cao Dai

In July, police raided the temple of an independent branch of the Cao Dai church. The Long Binh temple in Tien Giang province was closed, its property turned over to the state-approved Cao Dai branch, and its leaders detained and warned not to start another temple.

Catholics

In July, police arrested Ngo Van Khoi and Nguyen Van Hai, Catholics from the My Yen parish in Nghe An province. The two were reportedly seeking to repair or re-open a closed local shrine. A September prayer vigil for their release ended with police firing into the crowd, beating and injuring vigil participants, and detaining 15 people. The two men were convicted in October of “disturbing public order.” They were released in December after completing six months in detention.

Central Highlands

In May, eight ethnic minority Montagnard members of an independent Catholic movement were sentenced to between 3 and 11 years in prison for “undermining

Hoa Hao

Police raided the independent Hoa Hao Quang Minh Tu pagoda in An Giang province, beating followers and spraying raw sewage into the holy site. Leader Van Thanh Liem, previously jailed for leading a similar unsanctioned Hoa Hao group, slashed his stomach in protest of the attack. The pagoda remains closed and followers were told to attend the state-sanctioned Hoa Hao venue. In the past year, police in An Giang, Can Tho, Vinh Long, and Dong Thap provinces harassed independent Hoa Hao followers, barred them from worshipping, and prohibited public readings of founder Huynh Phu So’s writings.

Khmer Buddhists

Vietnamese authorities harassed Ta Set and Prey Chop temples, Soc Trang province, leading to detentions, defrockings, and several monks seeking asylum in third countries. Monks Lieu Ny, Thach Thuol, and Ly Chanh Da were detained and defrocked for being in contact with Khmer Krom organizations overseas. Monks Thach Thuol and Lieu Ny and several other monks from Ta Set pagoda are currently awaiting trial. Monk Ly Chanh Da is in hiding. Several worshippers at Prey Chop temple, who blocked police entrance, were detained for several months.

UBCV Buddhists

The largest Buddhist organization in the country, the UBCV refuses to join the state-sanctioned Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha. In the past year, partly in response to the election of new UBCV leaders, police have increased pressure. In January 2014 police in Hue forcibly stopped a planned UBCV commemoration ceremony, warn-

In the past year, police in An Giang, Can Tho, Vinh Long, and Dong Thap provinces harassed independent Hoa Hao followers, barred them from worshipping, and prohibited public readings . . .

unity” and “sowing ethnic and religious hatred” for protesting against the relocation of their village in Gia Lai province. The Bishop of Kontum repeatedly has been denied access to the areas where the men reside.

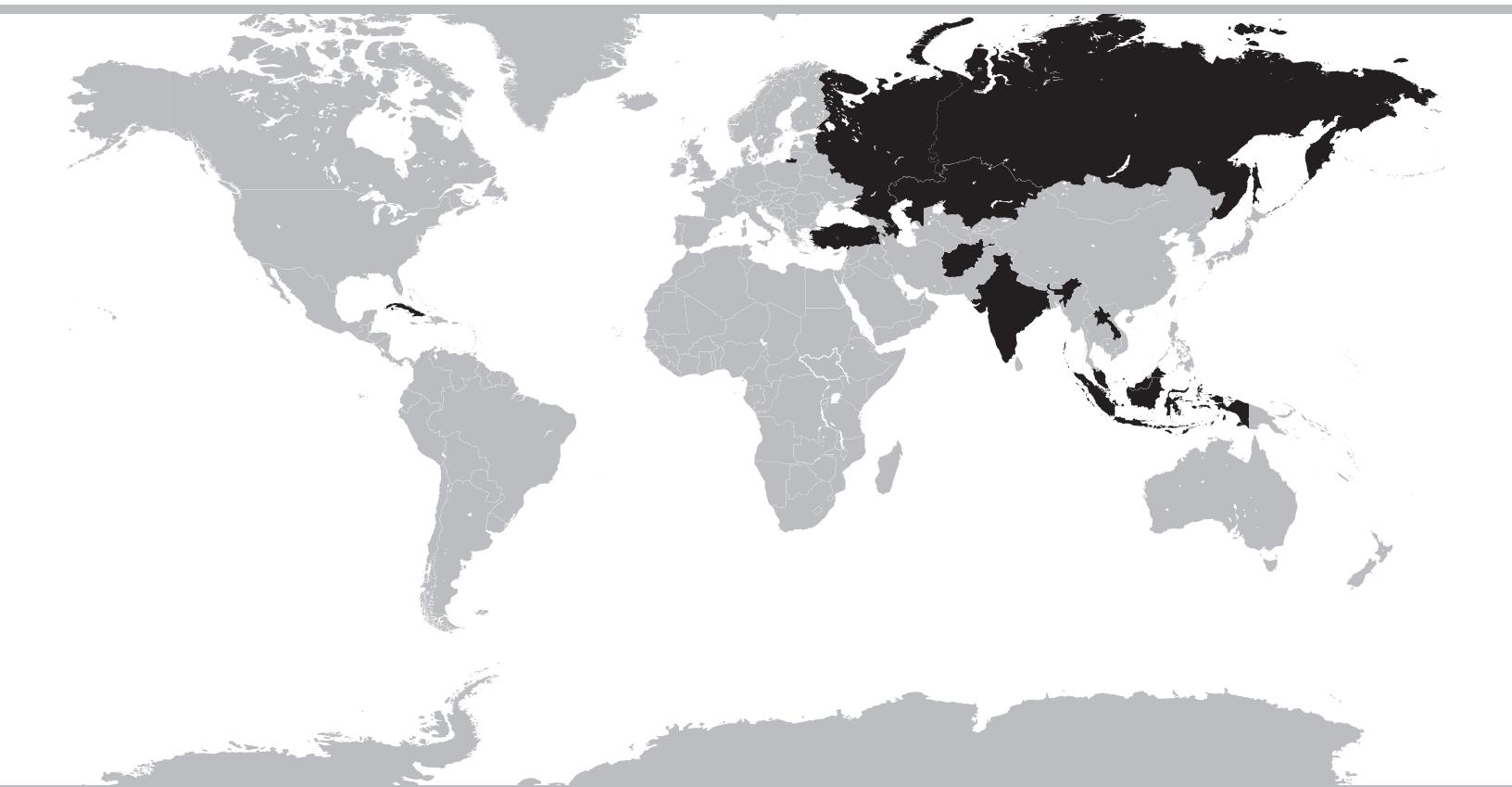
ing worshippers, beating a nun, and detaining over 15 monks. In February 2014, in Thua Thien-Hue province, police detained, interrogated, and later restricted the movement of Le Cong Cau, head of the 500,000 mem-

ber Buddhist Youth Movement. Cau was also detained briefly in March 2013 for posting articles supporting legal status for the UBCV. In February, in Ho Chi Minh City, police rammed the motorbike of and publicly beat monk Thich Chon Tam, a newly-elected member of the UBVC executive board.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

The United States should continue to link the expansion of U.S.-Vietnam relations, including the creation of a regular Strategic Dialogue and new military and trade ties, with improved human rights conditions, including the freedom of religion. In addition to recommending that the U.S. government designate Vietnam as a CPC, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Ensure that human rights are pursued consistently and publicly at every level of the U.S.-Vietnam relationship, including any new military and trade agreements that are being negotiated, such as Vietnam's potential membership in the Trans-Pacific Partnership;
- Demonstrate the importance of human rights as a U.S. interest by accompanying any new economic or security assistance program with initiatives in human rights and religious freedom, internet freedom, and non-commercial rule of law and civil society development;
- Increase the possibility of access to Priority 1 refugee resettlement authority (generally used for cases of compelling protection concern for individuals who would otherwise be without access to the U.S. resettlement program) for individuals from Vietnam facing a well-founded fear of persecution;
- Ensure the U.S.-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue has concrete outcomes relating to religious freedom, make it part of a larger strategy of U.S. engagement, and report to Congress on the trajectory and outcomes of the bilateral discussions on human rights; and
- Set aside funds from the State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund to start new Internet and religious freedom programming in Vietnam.



TIER 2

COUNTRIES

– AFGHANISTAN

– AZERBAIJAN

– CUBA

– INDIA

– INDONESIA

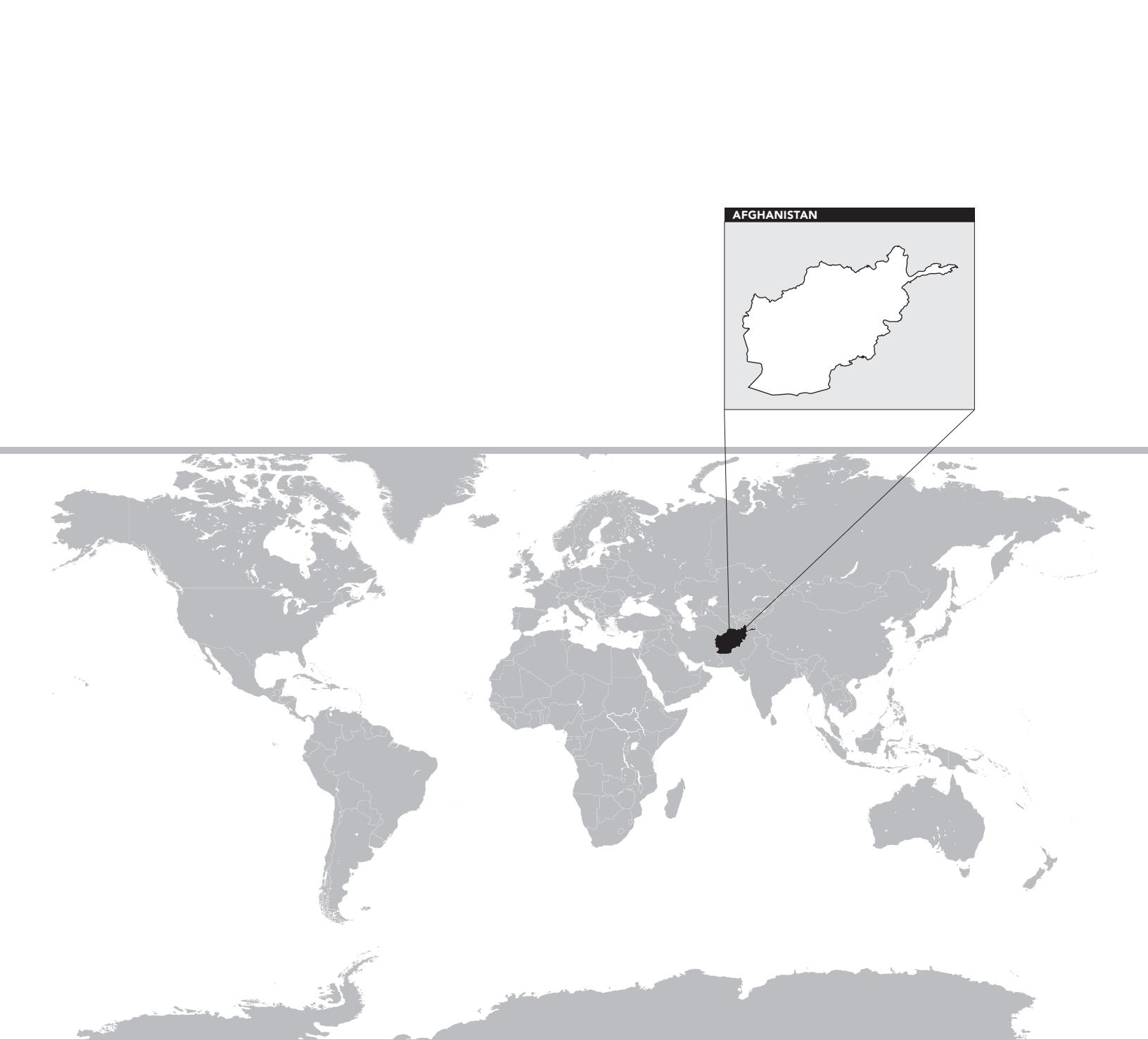
– KAZAKHSTAN

– LAOS

– MALAYSIA

– RUSSIA

– TURKEY



AFGHANISTAN

Key Findings

Religious freedom conditions continue to be exceedingly poor for dissenting Sunni Muslims, as well as Shi'a Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Bahai's. The Afghan constitution explicitly fails to protect the individual right to freedom of religion or belief, and it and other laws have been applied in ways that violate international human rights standards. The Taliban continues to target activity deemed "un-Islamic," and the Afghan government remains unable to protect citizens against violence and intimidation. Afghan government agencies have at times also taken action against "un-Islamic" activity. Based on these concerns, USCIRF places Afghanistan on its Tier 2 list in 2014. Afghanistan has been on this list every year since 2006.

Background

Restrictions on religious freedom begin with the Afghan constitution, which fails to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief, allows ordinary laws to supersede other fundamental rights, and contains a repugnancy clause stating that no law can be contrary to the tenets of Islam that the government interprets in a way con-

Religious freedom conditions continue to be exceedingly poor for dissenting Sunni Muslims, as well as Shi'a Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Bahai's.

tradicting human rights guarantees. The penal code permits the courts to defer to Shari'ah in cases involving matters that neither the penal code nor constitution explicitly address, such as apostasy and conversion, resulting in those charges being punishable by death.

State-backed religious leaders and the judicial system are empowered to interpret arbitrarily and enforce Islamic principles and Shari'ah law, leading at times to abusive interpretations of religious orthodoxy.

Given that the current constitution's undefined notions of Islamic law have already been interpreted to supersede human rights guarantees and undermine religious freedom and women's human rights, Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar's call for a government based on Islamic principles is concerning. Any peace deal with the Taliban that results in a stricter interpretation of religious law would lead to further violations of human rights and religious freedom.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Official Enforcement of Religious Norms

Within the legal context discussed above, a restrictive interpretation of Islamic law is prioritized over human rights guarantees and has resulted in abuses. During the reporting period, the United Kingdom gave asylum to an atheist from Afghanistan over fears he would be prosecuted for apostasy and could face a death sentence. Afghanistan's Ulema Council, a group of Muslim clerics appointed by President Karzai, demanded he take actions against "immoral" television stations. Karzai's Council of Ministers soon after issued a decree directing the Ministry of Information and Culture to prevent the broadcasting of programs which are "un-Islamic and are counter to social morality."

Repression of Non-Muslim Religious Minorities

Hindus and Sikhs face discrimination, harassment and at times violence, despite being allowed to practice their faith in places of public worship. They are represented in the parliament through Presidential appointments, but Parliament rejected Karzai's request to create one reserved seat for both Hindus and Sikhs in the lower house. The communities have declined over the past 30

years, due to general instability and fighting as well as targeted repression; only one of the eight Sikh *gurdwaras* in Kabul is operating. Reports regularly arise of Afghan authorities and local residents preventing Sikhs from performing cremation ceremonies for their deceased. A Sikh member of the upper house of parliament has undertaken an initiative to build a town in eastern Kabul for Sikhs and Hindus, complete with schools and a crematorium. However, construction has not begun and community support is weak.

Afghan Christians have been forced to conceal their faith and cannot worship openly. There were no reports of Christians arrested during the reporting period, but many have left for India, according to reports. The one known church in the country continues to operate on the grounds of the Italian embassy. Afghanistan's small Baha'i community leads a covert existence, particularly since May 2007 when the General Directorate of Fatwa and Accounts ruled the Baha'i faith blasphemous and converts to the Baha'i faith apostates. Afghanistan's Jewish community is down to one member.

Shi'a Muslims

The situation has improved since the end of Taliban rule for Afghanistan's Shi'a Muslim community, the largest religious minority in the country. Yet ongoing threats of violence make the community's future uncertain once international forces withdraw. Most Shi'a Afghans are from the majority-Shi'a Hazara ethnic group, which comprises between 10 to 19 percent of the population. Hazaras traditionally have been harshly discriminated against and segregated from the rest of society for a combination of political, ethnic, and religious reasons. In August 2013, three Hazara Shi'a were kidnapped from their cars and killed in separate attacks

hindrance. In September 2013, heavily armed members of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LEJ) terrorist group attempted to attack a Shi'a mosque during Friday prayers in Kabul, but were intercepted and killed by Afghan security forces outside the mosque. LEJ was responsible for the largest incident of sectarian violence in Afghanistan since 2001, when suicide bombers attacked a Shi'a shrine in Kabul in 2011.

Women's Rights

Violence and discrimination against women continued throughout the reporting period, due in part to the Taliban's resurgence and the strong influence of religious traditionalists. In 2013, the United Nations released statistics showing a 20% increase in violence against women in the country during the previous year, often attributed to domestic violence justified by conservative understandings of religion and culture. Women who seek to engage in public life often are condemned as "immoral" and targeted for intimidation, harassment, or violence. At least four female police officers were killed in 2013, and female members of parliament and their families were subjected to abductions and assassination attempts. The number of reserved seats for women in provincial councils was reduced. In May, an attempt to strengthen women's legal protections failed in parliament due to members objecting to "un-Islamic" provisions. Some argued to remove the minimum marrying age.

Other Issues

In September, President Karzai appointed five new commissioners to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). While the appointments were needed so the AIHRC could continue to function,

The U.S. government should work to promote religious freedom and create civic space for diverse religious opinions on matters of religion and society in Afghanistan.

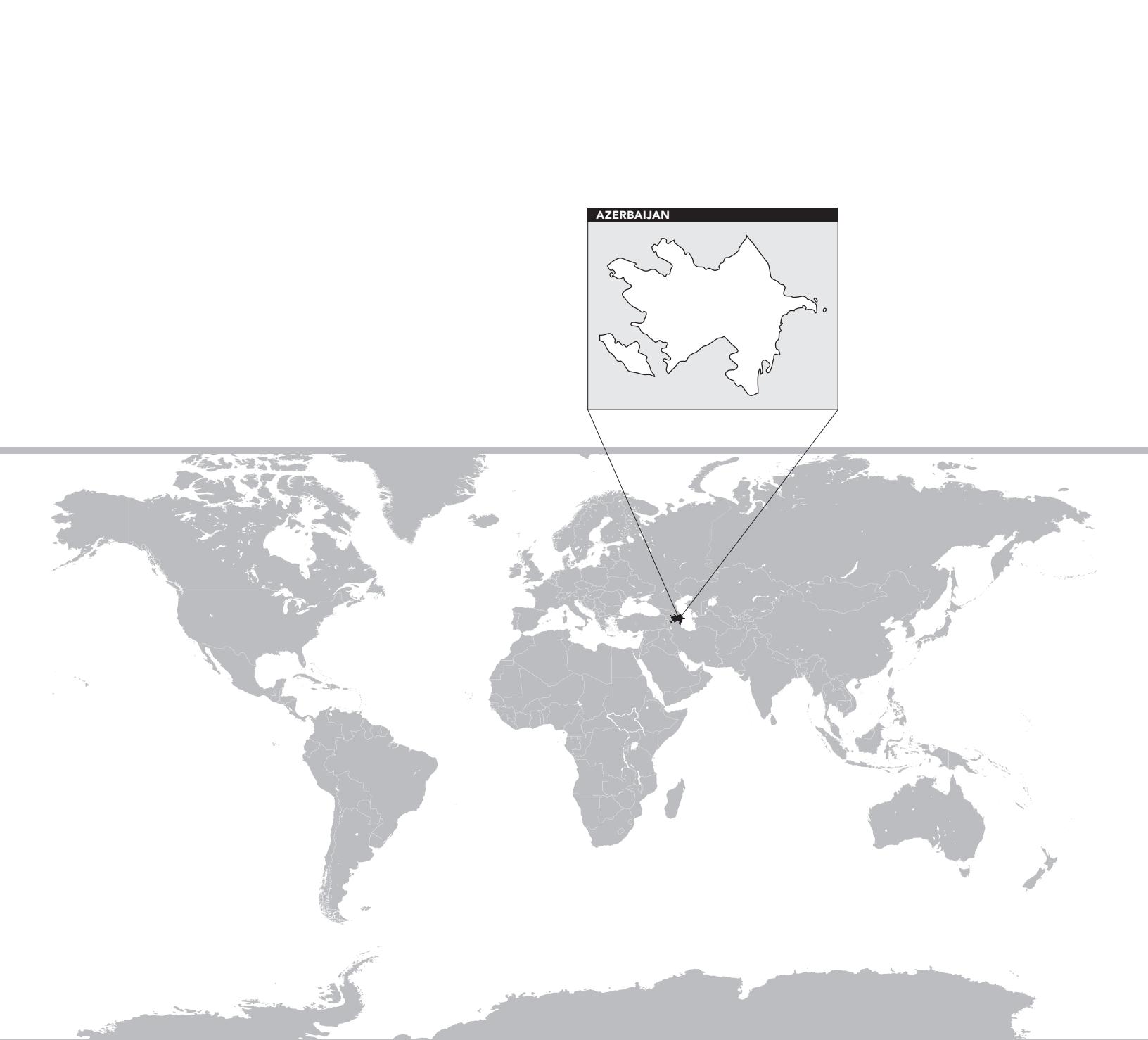
by Taliban insurgents. During the reporting period, Shi'a Muslims generally were able to perform their traditional Ashura public processions and rituals without

four appointees had no record of defending human rights. Navi Pillay, the UN high commissioner for human rights, requested the President make new appointments.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

In the context of international forces drawing down and an election in 2014 for a new Afghan President, the threat of violence by the Taliban and other armed groups is a growing reality for all Afghans, but especially for religious minorities. To promote religious freedom and create civic space for diverse religious opinions on matters of religion and society in Afghanistan, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Raise directly with Afghanistan's new incoming president the importance of religious freedom, especially for dissenting Muslims, Muslim minorities, and non-Muslim religious groups;
- Strengthen an existing interagency U.S. government taskforce on religious freedom in Afghanistan and ensure religious freedom issues are properly integrated into the State and Defense Department strategies concerning Afghanistan;
- Include a special working group on religious tolerance in U.S.-Afghan strategic dialogues and the trilateral dialogues with the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan;
- Encourage the Afghan government to sponsor, with official and semi-official religious bodies, an initiative on interfaith dialogue that focuses on both intra-Islamic dialogue and engagement with different faiths; and
- Ensure that human rights concerns are integrated in the reconciliation process and that the parties to any peace agreement pledge to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and not just the Afghan constitution.



AZERBAIJAN

Key Findings

Despite societal religious tolerance in Azerbaijan, government actions over the past several years have led to a deterioration in religious freedom, especially after penalties were increased in 2010 and 2011 for violating the restrictive 2009 religion law. Registration requests from religious organizations have been delayed or denied, religious groups closed, and in the past year non-violent religious activists have been detained, fined, and imprisoned. Based on these concerns, USCIRF again places Azerbaijan on Tier 2 in 2014. Azerbaijan was on Tier 2 for the first time in 2013.

Background

Azerbaijan's 2009 religion law is used to limit religious freedoms and to justify fines, police raids, detentions, and imprisonment. The law's provisions include: compulsory state registration with complex and intrusive requirements; no appeal for registration denials; religious activities limited to a community's registered address; extensive state controls on the content, production, import, export and dissemination of religious materials; and state-approved religious education to preach, teach religion or lead ceremonies. In October 2012, the Council of Europe's (CoE) Venice Commission and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) issued a legal opinion that Azerbaijan's

*State-approved religious education
is required to preach,
teach religion, or lead ceremonies.*

religion law failed to meet its international human rights commitments. In May 2014, Azerbaijan will become the chair of the CoE Council of Ministers for six months.

Individuals or groups violating the religion law are subject to administrative fines. Possible violations include: failing to register; holding religious meetings or ceremonies without state approval; conducting religious activity outside a group's registered address; and activity not in accord with the state-approved statute. In 2010, fines were increased 16-fold from 2009. Violations of provisions on religious education are subject to criminal penalties. Those who are found to have forced children to take part in religious activity or religious education are liable to fines or jail terms of up to two years.

In 2013, the Azeri parliament adopted new restrictive amendments to religion, NGOs, and other laws, purportedly to prevent the spread of religious extremism and of foreign missionary activity.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Government Control through Registration

The registration process is mandatory and groups denied registration or refusing to register are considered "illegal." Permissible activity of any registered religious organization can only occur at its legal address. Certain religious freedom NGOs, such as the International Religious Liberty Association and *Devamm*, were denied registration. In February 2012, the Azeri Supreme Court ordered the registration of the Baku-based Cathedral of Praise Pentecostal Church, but that same month the Jehovah's Witnesses lost their Supreme Court case over registration.

Penalties for Religious Activity

Members of unregistered religious communities face raids, confiscation of religious texts and other penalties. The Azeri NGO Legal Protection and Awareness Society Public Union has compiled a list of 51 Muslims jailed for the non-violent practice of their faith (see appendix). Most were sentenced since 2012, many for taking part in

public protests of what in effect is a ban on headscarves in schools. Islamic theologian Taleh Bagirov, who publicly criticized state efforts to impose an imam from the Caucasus Muslim Board on his mosque, was sentenced to a two-year prison term in November 2013 on fabricated drug charges. In August 2013, Bagirov's driver, Anar Melikov, received a 19-month prison term, also on drug charges. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) rapporteur presented a report to PACE in January 2013 that Azerbaijan had imprisoned 23 on religion-related political charges; PACE failed to pass a resolution on political prisoners in Azerbaijan.

Additional Restrictions on Muslims

Muslims in Azerbaijan (most of whom are Shi'a) are subject to additional restrictions. All Muslim religious leaders are named by the state-backed Caucasus Muslim Board and must be citizens educated in Azerbaijan; all mosques must belong to the Caucasus Muslim Board; and only Azeri citizens can establish Islamic religious communities. During 2013, all Islamic communities that did not belong to the Muslim Board still lacked legal status. Police continue to enforce a 2008 government order that

The Islamic headscarf is not permitted in schools or universities.

does not allow prayer outside of mosques. The Ministry of Education introduced a school uniform in 2010, in effect banning the Islamic headscarf. In 2013 that ban was extended to universities, leading to many petition drives and protests, for which people were arrested. In December 2013, local officials destroyed a village mosque being built in Peshtatuk because it lacked a national permit. Two Muslims were fined in late 2013 up to one year's salary for informally praying in a cemetery and for lacking official permission.

Restrictions on Religious Minorities

Almost all Protestant denominations are without legal status (including Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists and Pentecostals), as well as Jehovah's Witnesses. In May 2013 a court overturned fines against two Baptists who

took part in unregistered religious activities. Two Georgian Orthodox communities are registered, but Gakh region authorities have restricted worship to 30 minutes in three Georgian Orthodox churches and many are deprived of sacraments. Baku's historic Armenian Apostolic Saint Gregory the Illuminator's Church was renovated and now serves as the archive department of the Department of Administration Affairs of the Presidential Administration of Azerbaijan.

Status of Conscientious Objection

When Azerbaijan joined the CoE in 2001 it promised to allow alternative service, but has yet to enact a law on conscientious objection. While the Constitution allows for alternative service, other laws set 2-year prison terms for those who refuse military service. In June 2013, the country's two known conscientious objectors, both Jehovah's Witnesses, were released as part of a prisoner amnesty.

Government Censorship of Religious Materials

State permission is required to produce, import, export, or distribute religious material. Religious material cannot be sold outside officially-approved sites and foreigners cannot preach. Penalties for first-time offenders include up to two years' imprisonment, while a "conspiratorial" or organized group or a repeat offender faces a prison term of between two and five years. Legal bans on undefined "religious propaganda" by foreigners and stateless persons have led to deportations of some Muslims, Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses, including former Soviet citizens and long-term residents. In May 2013, the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations announced it would make public a list of banned materials, but it has not yet done so. The government has raided homes and confiscated religious materials, including Qur'ans, works of the Turkish Muslim theologian Said Nursi, and Baptist literature. It also has confiscated religious texts at the country's borders. Reportedly, the Georgian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, and some Muslim groups can more easily obtain or publish literature.

Closure and Confiscation of Places of Worship

Since 2009, Azerbaijan has closed or destroyed numerous houses of worship, including such mosques as the

“Albanian” Mosque in Gyanja, the Martyrs’ Mosque in Baku and the Juma Mosque in Nakhichevan. Baptists in Baku are seeking return of their historic places of worship. In late 2012, Baku’s Baha’is lost their last historic building to urban renewal. The Georgian Orthodox Church is attempting to reopen four churches in the Gakh Region and establish a monastery.

Situation in the Nakhichevan Exclave

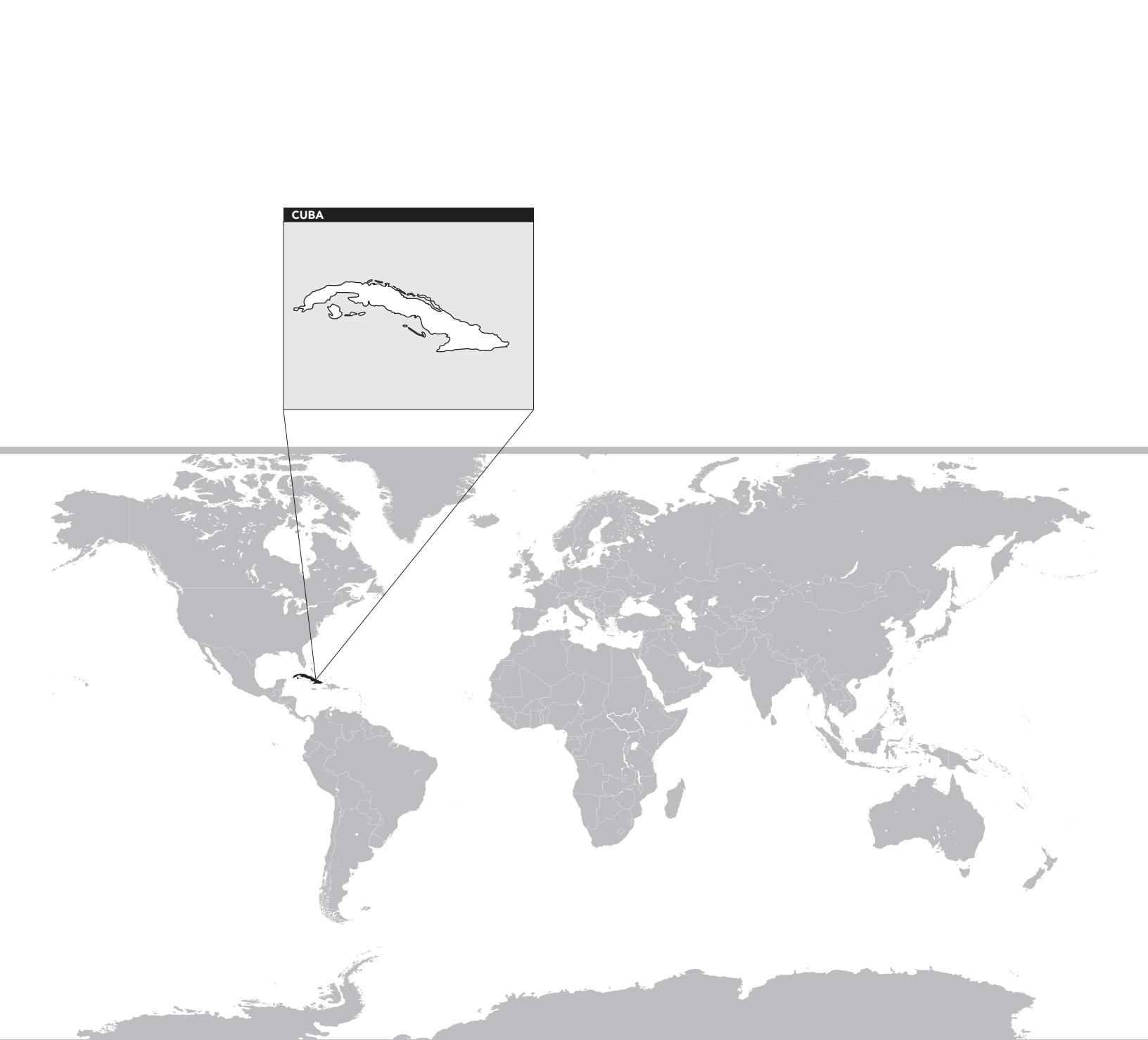
Residents of the Nakhichevan exclave encounter more severe religious freedom restrictions than in Azerbaijan’s other regions; local Sunni Muslims had nowhere to pray. Baha’is, Adventists and Hare Krishnas were banned.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

For the past decade, U.S. policy in Azerbaijan was dominated by the Afghan war, and human rights and religious freedom were not major concerns. USCIRF believes that this policy was shortsighted. The evolving regional geopolitical situation may or may not create new security imperatives for the United States, but USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government prioritize religious freedom and related human rights in Azerbaijan by:

- Pressing the Azeri government to allow religious groups to operate freely without registration and to amend the religion law registration process to ease its requirements and make it voluntary;
- Encouraging public scrutiny of Azerbaijan’s religious freedom record in international fora, such as the UN, the Council of Europe (CoE) and the OSCE, and highlight cases of prosecution of Azeri citizens that violate international norms in comments at such fora;
- Urging the Azeri government to agree to visits by UN Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the Independence of the Judiciary, and Torture, set specific visit dates, and provide the full and necessary conditions for such visits;
- Ensuring that the U.S. Embassy in Azerbaijan maintains active contacts with Azeri human rights activists and press the Azeri government to ensure that every prisoner has greater access to his or her family, human rights monitors, adequate medical care, and a lawyer;

- Specifying freedom of religion as a grants category and area of activity in U.S. government programming in Azerbaijan; re-establish funding for the State Department’s Title VIII program for research, including on religious freedom and human rights, and language programs; and encourage the publicly-funded National Endowment for Democracy to make grants for civil society programs on tolerance and freedom of religion or belief; and
- Encouraging the Broadcasting Board of Governors to increase radio, Internet, and other broadcasting, particularly in the Azeri language, on Azerbaijan’s human rights and religious freedom record and freedom of religion or belief as an element of U.S. foreign policy.



CUBA

Key Findings

Serious religious freedom violations continue in Cuba, despite some improvements for government-approved religious groups. Reports indicate harassment of religious leaders and laity, interference in religious groups' internal affairs, and pressure to prevent democracy and human rights activists from participating in religious activities. Despite constitutional protections for religious freedom, the Cuban government actively controls and monitors religious practice through a restrictive system of laws and policies, government-authorized surveillance and harassment, and short-term detentions of religious leaders. Based on these concerns, USCIRF places Cuba on Tier 2 in 2014. Cuba has been on USCIRF's Watch List since 2004.

Background

The Cuban government controls religious activities through the Office of Religious Affairs of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party and the Ministry of Justice. The government requires religious communities to undergo an invasive registration procedure with the Ministry of Justice. Only registered religious communities are legally allowed to receive foreign visitors, import religious materials, meet in approved houses of worship, and apply for travel abroad for religious purposes. Local Communist Party officials must approve all religious activities of registered groups, including granting permits to repair or build new houses of worship and granting permission to hold processions or events outside religious buildings. The government also restricts religious practices by denying access to state media and exit visas, requiring the registration of publications, and limiting the entry of foreign religious workers.

The government undertakes efforts to deny human rights activists their religious freedom by pressuring religious leaders to deny human rights activists access

to their churches. The government also prevents human rights activists and Ladies in White members from attending religious services either by detaining them for short periods, blocking entrances to churches, or staging "acts of repudiation" where other Cubans

The government undertakes efforts to deny human rights activists their religious freedom by pressuring religious leaders to deny human rights activists access to their churches.

citizens violently harass and prevent such activists from accessing churches. Churches and denominations that engage in or speak in favor of human rights and democracy activities are routinely targeted with increased governmental efforts to control their leadership and organizational structure.

Unregistered denominations, churches and church leaders, or those who are perceived as being too independent of government control are frequently threatened with church closures, short-term detentions, and harassment.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014 Positive Developments

As in previous years, there were some positive developments over the reporting period for the Catholic Church and major registered Protestant denominations, including Baptists, Pentecostals, Presbyterians, Episcopalian, and Methodists. Catholic and Protestant Sunday masses were held in more prisons throughout the island. Religious denominations continued to report increased opportunities to conduct some humanitarian and charity work, receive

contributions from co-religionists outside Cuba, and obtain Bibles and other religious materials. Small, local processions continued to occur in the provinces in 2013. The elimination of the need for Cubans to receive an exit visa, or “white card,” from the Cuban government in order to travel abroad allowed many religious leaders to travel outside of Cuba for the first time.

Continued Targeting

As in previous reporting periods, the Cuban government continued to target human rights activists and particular religious communities. At least 130 separate incidents were reported in 2013 of Ladies in White members and other human rights and democracy activists being prevented from attending Sunday masses, either by being arrested before mass and released hours later or by police officers blockading them from reaching their respective churches. At least one such incident was reported every Sunday during the year. Individuals reported being beaten and harassed during their arrests.

There were seven reported incidents of members of an interdenominational Protestant religious community being arrested, sometimes while evangelizing, and held for short periods of time. Those arrested report having their belongings confiscated and occasionally being beaten.

Government Harassment

The Apostolic Reformation, an independent and fast-growing religious community, continued to face government harassment during this reporting period. Such harassment includes: short-term arrests of leaders; “acts of repudiation;” confiscations, destruction or

activists, resisted government pressure to change its administrative structure; fought the closure of three of its churches; and contended with fines, frozen assets, and harassment of pastors, including threats of physical violence.

Increased Efforts to Control

In this reporting period, the Cuban government increased its efforts to control religious communities. The Office of Religious Affairs of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party announced that in 2014, bank accounts will be restricted to one per denomination or religious association and individual churches will no longer be permitted to maintain their finances independently. Given that the Cuban government controls the banks, this move increases its ability to freeze the accounts of disfavoured religious communities. Religious communities also report that the Office of Religious Affairs continues to pressure denominations to change internal governing structures, statutes and constitutions to be more hierarchical, which would aid government efforts to pressure or control religious communities.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

Despite the lack of full diplomatic relations, USCIRF urges the U.S. government to press Havana to end the detentions of religious leaders and followers. In addition, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Press the Cuban government to meet the following benchmarks in the context of any discussion about resumption of full diplomatic relations: ending arrests and harassment of religious leaders; ceasing

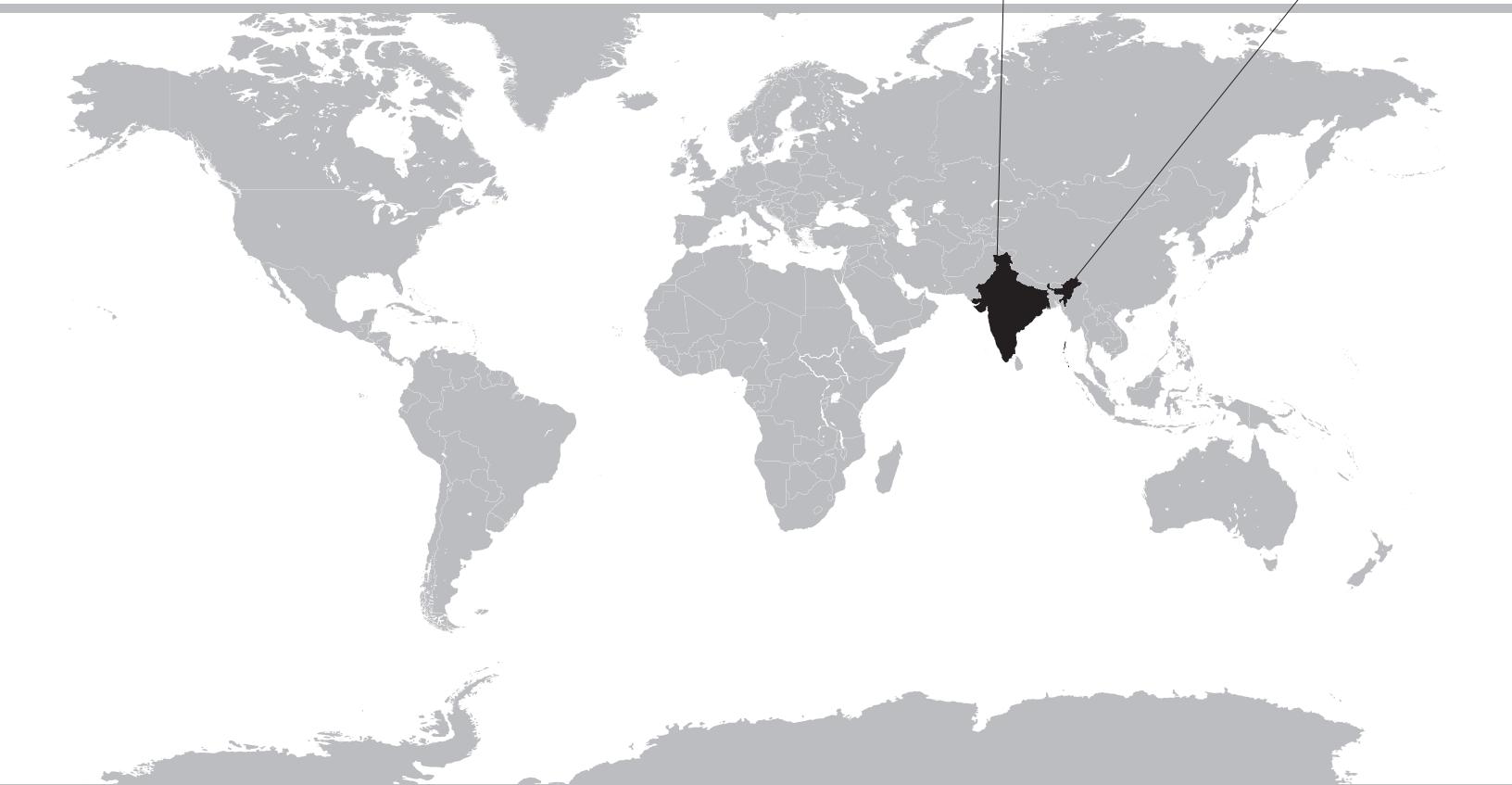
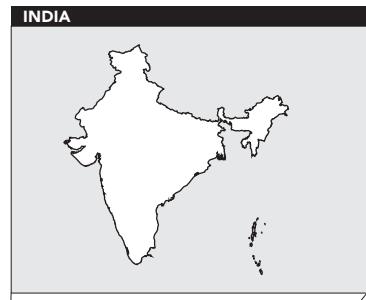
*At least 130 separate incidents were reported in 2013 of
Ladies in White members and other human rights and
democracy activists being prevented from attending Sunday masses . . .*

threats of destruction of church property; harassment and surveillance of church members and their relatives; fines on churches; and threats of losses of job, housing or educational opportunities. The Western Baptist Convention, which has supported democracy

interference with religious activities and religious communities’ internal affairs; allowing unregistered religious groups to operate freely and legally; revising government policies that restrict religious services in homes or other personal property; and

holding accountable police and other security personnel for actions that violate the human rights of non-violent religious practitioners;

- Encourage the Broadcasting Board of Governors to use appropriated funds to advance Internet freedom and protect Cuban activists by supporting the development of new technologies and distributing programs to counter censorship; and
- Encourage international partners, including key Latin American and European countries and regional blocks, to ensure that violations of freedom of religion or belief and related human rights are part of formal and informal multilateral or bilateral normalization discussions with Cuba.



INDIA

Key Findings

In the past year, reports of incidents of communal and religiously-motivated violence against religious minorities in India increased. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and religious leaders, including from the Muslim, Christian, and Sikh communities, attribute the increase to India's general election and some politicians' use of religiously divisive language. Christian NGOs and leaders report that their co-religionists are particularly at risk in states that have adopted "Freedom of Religion Act(s)," commonly referred to as anti-conversion laws. Despite the country's status as a pluralistic, secular democracy, India has struggled to protect minority communities or provide justice when crimes occur due to a lack of political will, political corruption, and religious bias by government officials. This exacerbates the climate of impunity that already exists in the country. Based on these concerns, USCIRF places India on Tier 2 in 2014. India has been on this tier since 2009.

Background

The world's largest democracy with about 1.22 billion people, India has a deeply religious, pluralistic society. A country with a Hindu majority, India is estimated to have the world's third largest Muslim population and over 25 million Christians. The country's religious diversity has been represented at the highest levels of government. In addition, the national government and several state governments have taken some positive steps to improve religious freedom, including increasing budgets for governmental bodies that provide financial support for minority groups and programs to bolster their economic, financial, career, and educational position in India.

Despite these positive factors, periodic outbreaks of large-scale communal violence against religious minorities have taken place in India. Christian communities have long reported harassment and violent attacks in the

states that have adopted anti-conversion laws. To address the aftermath of the Gujarat violence of 2002 and the Odisha violence of 2007–2008, India established Fast-Track Courts, Special Investigative Teams, and independent commissions. However, their impact has been hindered by limited capacity to investigate and prosecute cases, an

Despite the country's status as a pluralistic, secular democracy, India has struggled to protect minority communities or provide justice when crimes occur due to a lack of political will, political corruption, and religious bias by government officials.

antiquated judiciary, inconsistent use, political corruption, and religious bias, particularly at the state and local levels. As a result, a climate of impunity continues to exist in some Indian states, exacerbating the social and religious tensions among communities.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Hindu-Muslim Violence in Uttar Pradesh

In late August 2013, communal violence erupted in Muzaffarnagar district, Uttar Pradesh (UP). While the federal and state governments deployed to the area army troops, provincial military personnel, and federal Rapid Action Force officers, between 40 and 60 people were killed; at least a dozen women and girls were raped, often by gangs; nearly 100 people were injured; and upwards of 50,000 were displaced to "relief camps." As of early 2014, several thousand people, mostly Muslims, remained displaced in deplorable conditions out of fear of returning to their homes. Sixteen local governmental officials from several different political parties

were arrested in September 2013 and charged with inciting the communal violence, as were several local parliamentarians and community leaders. Their cases remain pending. In addition 570 cases, implicating over 6,000 people (including local governmental leaders and police) have been filed.

Christian and Muslim Dalit Rally

In mid-December 2013, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, the National Council of Dalit Christians, the National Council of Churches in India, and the Church of North India organized a rally in New Delhi to protest the treatment of Christian and Muslim Dalits, as compared to Hindu Dalits. When some protestors crossed police lines, the police responded with a water cannon and attacked protestors with canes and batons, injuring scores of people. In addition, police arrested dozens of protestors including the General Secretary for the Church of North India, Alwan Masih; the Roman Catholic Archbishop of New Delhi, Anil Couto; and dozens of nuns, monks, and others of both the Christian and Muslim faiths. The following day Prime Minister Manmohan Singh promised a full investigation, but the outcome is not known as of this reporting.

Attack on Buddhist Religious Complex

On July 7, nine explosives were detonated in the Bodh Gaya Buddhist religious complex located in the Indian state of Bihar. A temple and sacred tree sustained minor damage and two monks were injured in the attack. On August 14, the Indian National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Arup Brahmachari, a Hindu priest. Protests ensued and the NIA released Brahmachari, saying they made an error. The NIA has not made any other arrests.

Anti-Conversion Laws

Seven Indian states – Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Arunanchal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Odisha – have “Freedom of Religion Act(s),” commonly referred to as anti-conversion laws. These laws generally require government officials to assess the legality of conversions and provide for fines and imprisonment for anyone who uses force, fraud, or “inducement” to convert another. These laws have resulted in few arrests and no convictions, but have created a hostile atmosphere for religious minorities, particularly Christians.

In a negative development, the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly in August approved an amendment to the state's 1968 anti-conversion law that would make the law more stringent, though the state's governor had not yet signed it into law. Under the proposal, both the converter and would-be convert must obtain state permission at least 30 days prior to a conversion ceremony, or face one year in prison and a 1,000-rupee fine. However, in a positive development, in September similar provisions in Himachal Pradesh's anti-conversion law – requiring people to notify the authorities within 30 days of the intention to convert to a religion other than Hinduism and requiring the state to investigate conversions – were found unconstitutional by that state's High Court.

Redress for Past Large-Scale Violence

The Indian courts are still adjudicating cases stemming from large-scale Hindu-Christian communal violence in Odisha in 2007-08 and large-scale Hindu-Muslim communal violence in Gujarat in 2002. NGOs, religious leaders, and human rights activists allege religious bias and corruption in these investigations and adjudications. In October 2013, a lower court acquitted 54 individuals of crimes relating to the Odisha violence, including burning down a Baptist church and dozens of homes and businesses, due to lack of evidence and witnesses. Also in October, the same court convicted seven Christians for murdering Hindu leader Laxamananda Saraswati, whose death triggered the violence, despite the fact that Maoist rebels have twice claimed responsibility for the murder. In 2013, a lower court in Gujarat found longtime Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi – the current BJP candidate for Prime Minister – not responsible for the death of a prominent Muslim Congress Party leader who was burned alive in 2002. The case was brought by the leader's widow, and she reportedly has appealed. Several other cases where Modi has been implicated for involvement or complicity in the 2002 violence continue.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

Since 2004, the U.S. and India have pursued a strategic relationship based on shared concerns about energy, security, and the growing threat of terrorism, as well as shared values of democracy and the rule of law. As part

of this important relationship, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Integrate concern for religious freedom into bilateral contacts with India, at both the federal and provincial level, and encourage the strengthening of the capacity of state and central police to implement effective measures to prohibit and punish cases of religious violence and protect victims and witnesses;
- Increase the U.S. embassy's attention to issues of religious freedom and related human rights, including through visits by the Ambassador and other officials to areas where communal violence has occurred or is likely to occur and meetings with religious communities, local governmental leaders, and police;
- Urge India to boost training on human rights and religious freedom standards and practices for the police and judiciary, particularly in states and areas with a history or likelihood of communal violence;
- Urge the central Indian government to press states that have adopted anti-conversion laws to repeal or amend them to conform with internationally-recognized human rights standards; and
- Encourage the establishment of an impartial body of interfaith religious leaders, human rights advocates, legal experts, and government officials to discuss and recommend actions to promote religious tolerance and understanding.



INDONESIA

Key Findings

Indonesia's tradition of religious tolerance and pluralism is increasingly threatened by the detentions of individuals considered religiously "deviant" and the ongoing intimidation, discrimination, and violence against religious minorities, including Ahmadis, Christians, Shi'a, Sufis, Hindus, Baha'is, and followers of indigenous religions. Government officials sometimes tolerate, and occasionally actively support, the efforts of extremist groups, such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), to stop the perceived growth of religious minorities and police the orthodoxy of the Sunni majority. Based on these ongoing concerns, Indonesia remains a Tier 2 country in 2014. Indonesia has been on Tier 2, formerly USCIRF's Watch List, since 2009.

Background

Reflecting the country's tradition of tolerance, most of Indonesia's diverse religious communities operate openly and with few restrictions, particularly the six recognized religious groups (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Confucianism). Nevertheless, Indonesia's transition to democracy and economic stability has been marred by sectarian violence, terrorist attacks, the growth of extremist groups, and rising intolerance toward religious minorities and "heterodox" groups. The government has made strides in dealing with terrorist networks, but groups such as FPI continue to have outsized political influence through their mobilization of large numbers of people. Their activities, sometimes supported by government officials and Muslim religious leaders, send a chilling message to Indonesia's religious minorities, who number between 38 and 42 million.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono frequently has promised to protect religious minorities and has linked religious freedom to the survival of Indonesian democracy. Nevertheless, he also supported a 2008

decree "freezing" Ahmadiyya activities, refused to enforce a Supreme Court decision to re-open closed churches, allowed the implementation of laws and regulations restricting religious freedom, and called for an

Indonesia's transition to democracy and economic stability has been marred by sectarian violence, terrorist attacks, the growth of extremist groups, and rising intolerance toward religious minorities and "heterodox" groups.

anti-blASPHEmy norm in international law. Members of his cabinet also have sent mixed messages about protecting religious minorities.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Restrictions and Societal Violence Targeting Ahmadis

The 2008 Joint Ministerial decree "freezing" Ahmadiyya religious activity remains in place. Since 2008, at least 62 Ahmadiyya mosques have been vandalized and 45 forcibly closed; three Ahmadis killed in mob violence; and an Ahmadiyya leader imprisoned for two years for saying publicly that he had government permission to re-open his mosque. Over 100 Ahmadis remain displaced in Lombok after violence destroyed their village in 2007.

Forced Closures of and Violence Against Religious Properties

Extremist groups and local government officials during the past year denied permits, forcibly closed, sanctioned protests at, or vandalized minority religious venues,

primarily Protestant or Catholic churches seeking to renovate or build new structures. Authorities often cite the problematic 2006 law on Religious Buildings and Houses of Worship to justify closing or denying permits. The Communion of Churches in Indonesia claims that at least 430 churches have been attacked, closed down or burned in the past decade, and the Jakarta Christian Communication Forum reports attacks on churches rising from just ten in 2010 to 75 in 2013. Weekly confrontations between FPI- backed groups and Christian churches continued in West Java.

Violence Targeting the Minority Shi'a and Sufi Communities

Violence against Shi'a has increased in the past few years, particularly in East Java, after the Religious Affairs Minister, other government officials, and government-supported religious institutions began labeling Shi'a teachings as heresy. Despite promises from government officials, Shi'a remained displaced after mob violence targeted their community in Sampang, Madura province, in 2012, destroying homes and resulting in the death of one villager. Tajul Muluk, the community's cleric, continues to serve a prison sentence for blasphemy. In March 2013, the South Aceh regency ordered the closure of a Sufi madrassa run by the Al-Mujahadah Foundation and police reportedly stood by while a mob vandalized the school's property. Additional vandalism occurred in July and August 2013. To stop them from

Article 156(a) of the criminal code punishes "hostility, hatred or contempt against religions" or "disgracing a religion" with up to five years in prison.

providing home-schooling, local officials also prohibited the foundation's administrators from holding social gatherings. In Aceh and Sumatra, religious leaders issued fatwas declaring Sufi practice a heresy.

Blasphemy Law Enforcement

Article 156(a) of the criminal code punishes "hostility, hatred or contempt against religions" or "disgracing

a religion" with up to five years in prison. Since 2003, more than 120 individuals have been detained under the provision, often as intimidation. For example, in Aceh province, 700 members of the banned Millata Abraham Muslim sect renounced their faith instead of facing blasphemy charges. Some cases have resulted in convictions and sentences. Andreas Guntur, the leader of the spiritual group Amanat Keagungan Ilahi, continues to serve a four-year sentence for blasphemy imposed in 2012. Antonius Richmond Bawengan continues to serve a five-year sentence imposed in 2011. In February 2014, Alexander Aan was released from prison after serving a two-year sentence for starting a Facebook page advocating atheism.

Shari'ah Law in Aceh

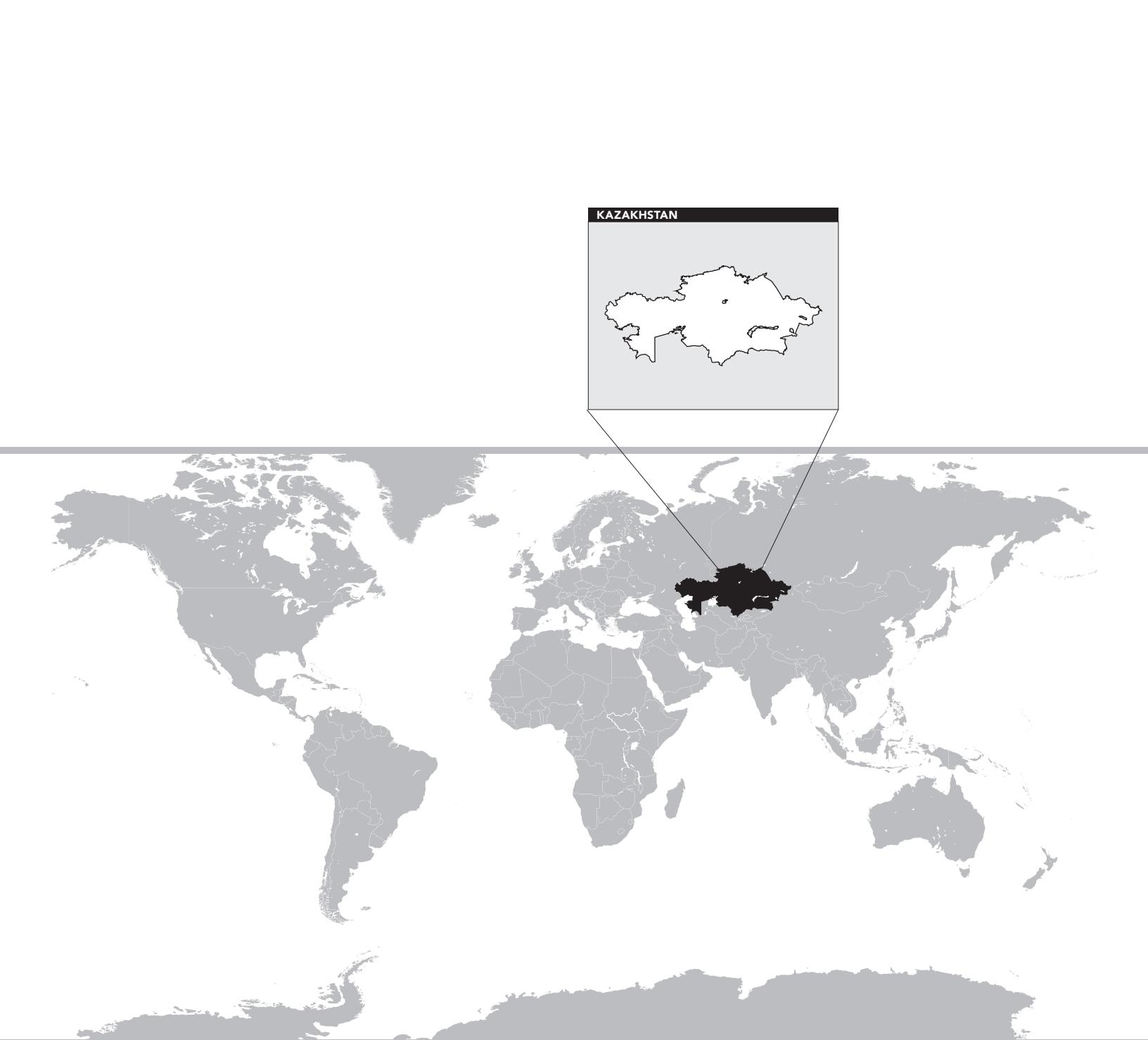
Presidential Decree 11/2003 allows the Aceh provincial government to implement a local interpretation of Shari'ah law and operate a vice patrol known as *Wilayatul Hisbah* (WH). WH patrols continue to enforce dress codes and bans on alcohol consumption, gambling, and unchaperoned male-female liaisons. Aceh continues to ban the Sufi, Shi'a, Ahmadiyya, and 11 other sects, and societal attacks against members of banned sects have occurred with impunity. The provincial government forcibly closed 34 venues of various Protestant denominations, Buddhist temples, and Catholic churches, including a chapel that was in operation since 1974, for lacking required permits. The Minister of Home Affairs, which can overturn Acehnese decisions in religious affairs, backed the actions of provincial officials.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

U.S. officials regularly laud Indonesia's religious tolerance and pluralism, but also need to express concerns about the rising tide of intolerance and extremism threatening Indonesian democracy, stability, and the rule of law. USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should acknowledge the increasing threat to this tradition and prioritize religious freedom by:

- Creating specific bilateral working groups in the annual Comprehensive Partnership and Counter-terrorism Cooperation meetings with Indonesia to discuss human rights, religious freedom, and rule of law issues and establishing concrete measures to address them;

- Raising in public and private with Indonesian officials the need to protect Indonesia's tradition of religious tolerance and pluralism by arresting and prosecuting individuals targeting religious groups for violence;
- Urging the Indonesian government to overturn the Joint Ministerial Decree on the Ahmadiyya community and any provincial bans on Ahmadiyya religious practice; amend or repeal Article 156(a) of the Penal Code and release anyone sentenced for "deviancy," "denigrating religion," or "blasphemy," including Andreas Guntur and Antonius Richmond Bawengan; and amend the Joint Ministerial Decree No. 1/2006 (Regulation on Building Houses of Worship) to comply with the Indonesian constitution and international standards;
- Prioritizing funding for governmental, civil society, and media programs that promote religious freedom, counter extremism, build interfaith alliances, expand the reporting ability of human rights defenders, train government and religious officials to mediate sectarian disputes, and build capacity for legal reform advocates, judicial officials, and parliamentarians to better fulfill Indonesia's obligations under international human rights law; and
- Helping to train Indonesian police and counter-terrorism officials, at all levels, to better address sectarian conflict, religiously-related violence and terrorism, including violence against places of worship, through practices consistent with international human rights standards, while ensuring those officers have not been implicated in past human rights abuses.



KAZAKHSTAN

Key Findings

Although the government of Kazakhstan promotes religious tolerance at the international level, religious freedom conditions in the country continued to deteriorate in 2013. The country's restrictive 2011 religion law bans unregistered religious activity and has been enforced through the closing of religious organizations, police raids, detentions, and fines. The law's onerous registration requirements have led to a sharp drop in the number of registered religious groups, both Muslim and Protestant. Based on these concerns, USCIRF places Kazakhstan on Tier 2 again in 2014. The Commission has reported on Kazakhstan in its Annual Reports since 2008, and it was on Tier 2 in 2013.

Background

Before the passage of the repressive 2011 religion law, Kazakhstan was considered one of the most liberal countries in post-Soviet Central Asia in regard to freedom of religion or belief. The 2011 law sets complex registration requirements with high membership thresholds and bans unregistered religious activity. It also restricts the areas of permitted activity, including in regard to places of worship, religious materials, religious teaching, training of clergy, and missionary activities. The 2011 law also raised the penalties for violations. While the religion law declares all religions equal under the law, its preamble "recognizes the historical role of Hanafi Islam and Orthodox Christianity," suggesting a preferred status. The government also supports "anti-sect centers" that promote intolerance against certain religious communities. On October 24, 2013 the Kazakhstan General Prosecutor's office presented a more restrictive draft Criminal Code to parliamentarians; that draft is still under consideration as of the writing of this report.

USCIRF made its first Commissioner-level visit to Kazakhstan in October 2013 to better understand

reports of a deteriorating climate for religious freedom. The delegation met with Kazakh government officials in Astana and religious communities there and in Almaty.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Registration Issues

Under the 2011 law, all religious organizations were required to re-register by October 2012 with both central and local governments or face court liquidation. By October 2012, the number of registered religious organizations fell from 46 to 17 and registered faith-based civic groups fell from 4,551 to 3,088. Of the 666 previously-registered Protestant religious associations, only 462 were re-registered; of 48 "non-traditional" religious

The restrictive 2011 religion law bans unregistered religious activity.

groups, only 16 were re-registered. By 2013, only Muslim groups affiliated with the state-backed Muslim Board had been registered; Shi'a and Ahmadi Muslims were denied legal status, as were mosques attended mainly by particular ethnic groups. Catholic communities were exempt because of an agreement with the Holy See. After the reporting period, Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov and Chairman of the Agency for Religious Affairs Marat Azilkhanov spoke to diplomatic representatives on March 6, 2014 and stated that, as of that date, 3,400 religious organizations operate in Kazakhstan.

The Case of Pastor Kashkumbayev

On February 17, 2014, retired Presbyterian Pastor Bakhytzhany Kashkumbayev of Astana's Grace Church received a four-year suspended prison term for allegedly harming a parishioner's psychological health, although

the alleged victim has said she was not harmed. Just days after USCIRF met with the pastor's family in October 2013, he was briefly released from jail and then re-arrested for "terrorism." During one month of his

The pastor was forcibly injected with psychotropic drugs.

nine months of imprisonment, the pastor was forcibly injected with psychotropic drugs. Observers consider the two-year-long criminal investigation and treatment of the pastor a symbol of the decline of respect for religious freedom in Kazakhstan.

Extremism Charges

Atheist writer Aleksandr Kharlamov in the town of Ridder was detained for five months during 2013, including one month of psychiatric examination. Criminal charges of extremism remain pending against him, while his writings are still under review by a group of religious "experts." In December 2013, two Protestants in Astana were fined the equivalent of a month's average wage for possession of "extremist" materials, although only one text was ruled as such by the courts. Court hearings on whether materials are "extremist" are not announced and a published list of banned texts also does not seem to exist. The leader of a Sufi group received a 14-year prison sentence in 2011 on charges of religious extremism and damage to health by "faith healing."

Penalties for Unregistered Religious Activity

In 2013, four known members of Council of Churches Baptists, who refuse to register or pay fines for that "offense," had to serve 10-day prison terms. In 2013, at least 150 individuals have been fined for taking part in unregistered religious activities throughout Kazakhstan, such as 79 year old Anatoly Lazarenko.

Increased Government Control of Muslims

The Muslim Board, which is closely tied to the Kazakh government, oversees mosque construction, theological exams and background checks for aspiring

imams, and *hajj* travel. It reportedly requires aligned mosques to transfer one-third of their incomes to it and pressures nonaligned imams and congregations to join or face mosque closures. The Din-Muhammad Tatar-Bashkir Mosque, built in 1852, lost its legal status due to a court order and is being transferred to another Muslim group in 2014. The Din-Muhammad Mosque may be the last publicly-accessible mosque not affiliated with the Muslim Board and one of the few remaining mosques attended mainly by members of specific ethnic groups. Increased official surveillance of mosques has fueled popular resentment and official discrimination, particularly in western Kazakhstan.

Restrictions on Religious Materials

There are few bookshops that meet the religion law's requirements to sell religious material. Muslim texts are limited to Hanafi Sunni materials. Forum 18 News Service reported that in 2013 the government imposed almost 150 fines of at least one month's salary on 123 individuals for violations relating to religious literature. In October, three Bibles and 12 icons were confiscated from a commercial bookseller in the western city of Oral.

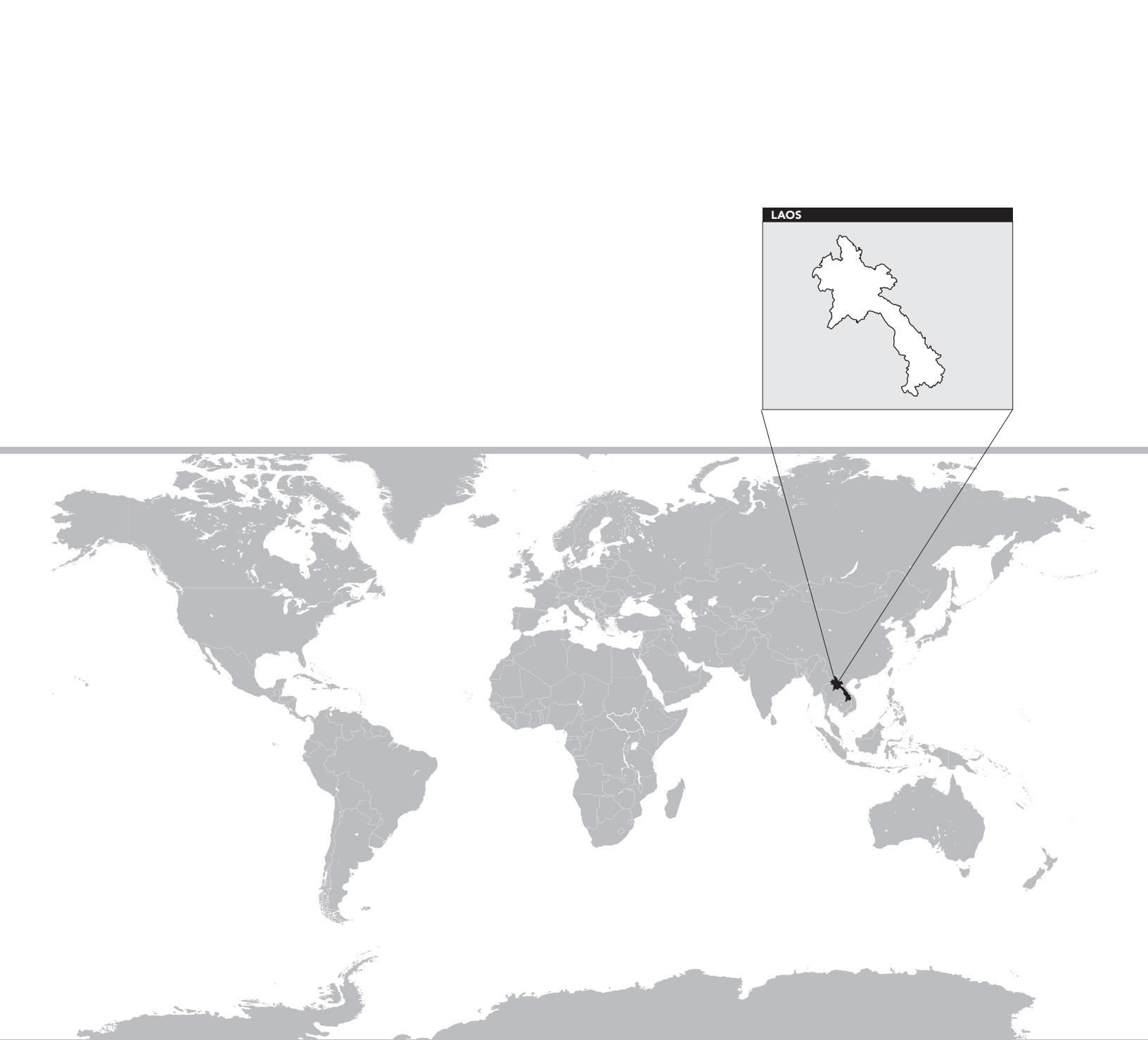
Country Visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

The Kazakhstan government invited the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, to visit the country in 2014. The Special Rapporteur is scheduled to visit Astana, Almaty and Karaganda after the reporting period and will consider issues related to the freedom of religion or belief, as well as the registration and recognition of religious organizations, litigations on relevant issues, missionary activities, and freedom of conversion and worship.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

For the past decade, U.S. policy in Central Asia was dominated by the Afghan war, and human rights and religious freedom were not major concerns. USCIRF believes that this policy was shortsighted. The evolving regional geopolitical situation may or may not create new security imperatives for the United States, but USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government prioritize religious freedom and related human rights in Kazakhstan by:

- Pressing the Kazakh government to reform the 2011 religion law to permit unregistered religious groups to operate freely and to end police raids of religious meetings and penalties for members and religious leaders, and ensuring that the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan actively monitors religious freedom cases and presses the Kazakh government to drop all criminal charges against Pastor Kashkumbayev and Aleksandr Kharlamov and to ensure that prisoners have access to family, human rights monitors, adequate medical care, and legal representation;
- Encouraging President Nazarbaev to speak publicly about respect for religious freedom for all Kazakhs and to include members of the country's minority religious communities in the Congress of World and Traditional Religions, a state-funded conference of international religious leaders held biannually in Astana;
- Encouraging public scrutiny of Kazakhstan's record on religious freedom and related human rights in appropriate international fora, such as the UN and OSCE, and encouraging the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) to enhance the human rights aspect of its mandate of assistance in more effective government responses to terrorism and extremism;
- Specifying freedom of religion as a grants category and area of activity in U.S. government programming in Kazakhstan, re-establishing the State Department's Title VIII program to fund research, including on religious freedom and human rights, and language programs, and encouraging the publicly-funded National Endowment for Democracy to make grants for civil society programs on tolerance and freedom of religion or belief; and
- Encourage the Broadcasting Board of Governors to increase radio, Internet, and other broadcasting, particularly in the Kazakh language, on Kazakhstan's human rights and religious freedom record and freedom of religion or belief as an element of U.S. foreign policy.



LAOS

Key Findings

Serious religious freedom abuses continue, particularly in ethnic minority areas, and restrictive laws remain in place. The Lao government seems either unable or unwilling to fully curtail religious freedom abuses in provincial areas, where officials and police are suspicious of Protestant growth. Over the past five years, however, religious freedom conditions have improved for the majority Buddhist groups and for other religious groups living in urban areas. In addition, the government agency tasked with monitoring religious activity and carrying out government religious policy has engaged with religious groups and with international NGOs to better understand religious freedom and occasionally has intervened in cases of detention or property confiscation. Nevertheless, based on ongoing concerns, in 2014 USCIRF again places Laos on Tier 2, where it has been since 2009.

Background

The Lao government's toleration of religious activity continues to vary by region, ethnicity, and religious group. Buddhism, which is deeply embedded in Lao culture and state functions and is practiced by the majority of the population, is now generally free from restrictive oversight. Lao Catholics have been allowed to build churches and, in the past several years, to ordain priests and the first new bishop since 1975. Lao Protestants in urban areas also have reported an increased ability to worship and to re-open, build, and expand some religious venues. The small Bahá'í community also reports better working relations with government officials and an expansion of its facilities. Animism is practiced by most rural ethnic minority groups and, while not officially recognized, is often tolerated by provincial officials. Still, there are reports that the government discourages some animist practice viewed as dangerous or "superstitious" and

actively promotes Buddhism as an alternative to traditional beliefs.

The Lao Constitution provides for freedom of religion, but the Prime Minister's 2002 Decree on Religious Practice (Decree 92) contains language allowing government control of, and interference in, religious activities. Religious leaders have reported that legally-permitted religious activities, such as proselytizing and producing religious materials, are restricted in practice. The Decree also includes cumbersome approval requirements for any religious activity. Some

Religious leaders have reported that legally-permitted religious activities, such as proselytizing and producing religious materials, are restricted in practice.

religious groups are unable to legally register under the Decree and have faced serious problems in the past. The Decree also contains vague prohibitions on activities that create "social division" or "chaos" and reiterates parts of the Lao criminal code arbitrarily used in the past to arrest and detain dissidents. Provincial officials routinely cite the social and familial divisions caused by the spread of Protestantism as justification for serious religious freedom abuses.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

During the reporting period, provincial officials violated the freedom of religion or belief of ethnic minority Protestants through detentions, surveillance, harassment, property confiscations, forced relocations, and forced renunciations of faith—though there were fewer reports of these abuses this year than last. Local officials in Phin

and Atsaphagthong districts, Savannakhet province, attempted to force Protestants to renounce their faith by requiring them to partake in animist ceremonies. In Borikan district, Borikhamxay province, ethnic minority converts to Christianity were ordered to recant their faith or lose their property. In Sanamsai district, Attapeu prov-

entities in provinces with the most egregious religious freedom problems;

- Initiate human rights and religious tolerance training as part of U.S.-Laos security sector reform programs, ensure that any officers participating in such programs are thoroughly vetted to confirm that

During the reporting period, provincial officials violated the freedom of religion or belief of ethnic minority Protestants.

ince, officials forcibly relocated a couple for converting to Christianity.

Also in the past year, Lao authorities released Khamxone Baccam, a Protestant leader who was arrested in 2007 for religious reasons, and Protestant pastors Yohan and Vanna, arrested in January 2011 in for holding Christmas celebrations. Lao Front for National Construction (LFNC) authorities also reportedly held a series of meetings with registered religious groups seeking input for possible revisions to Decree 92.

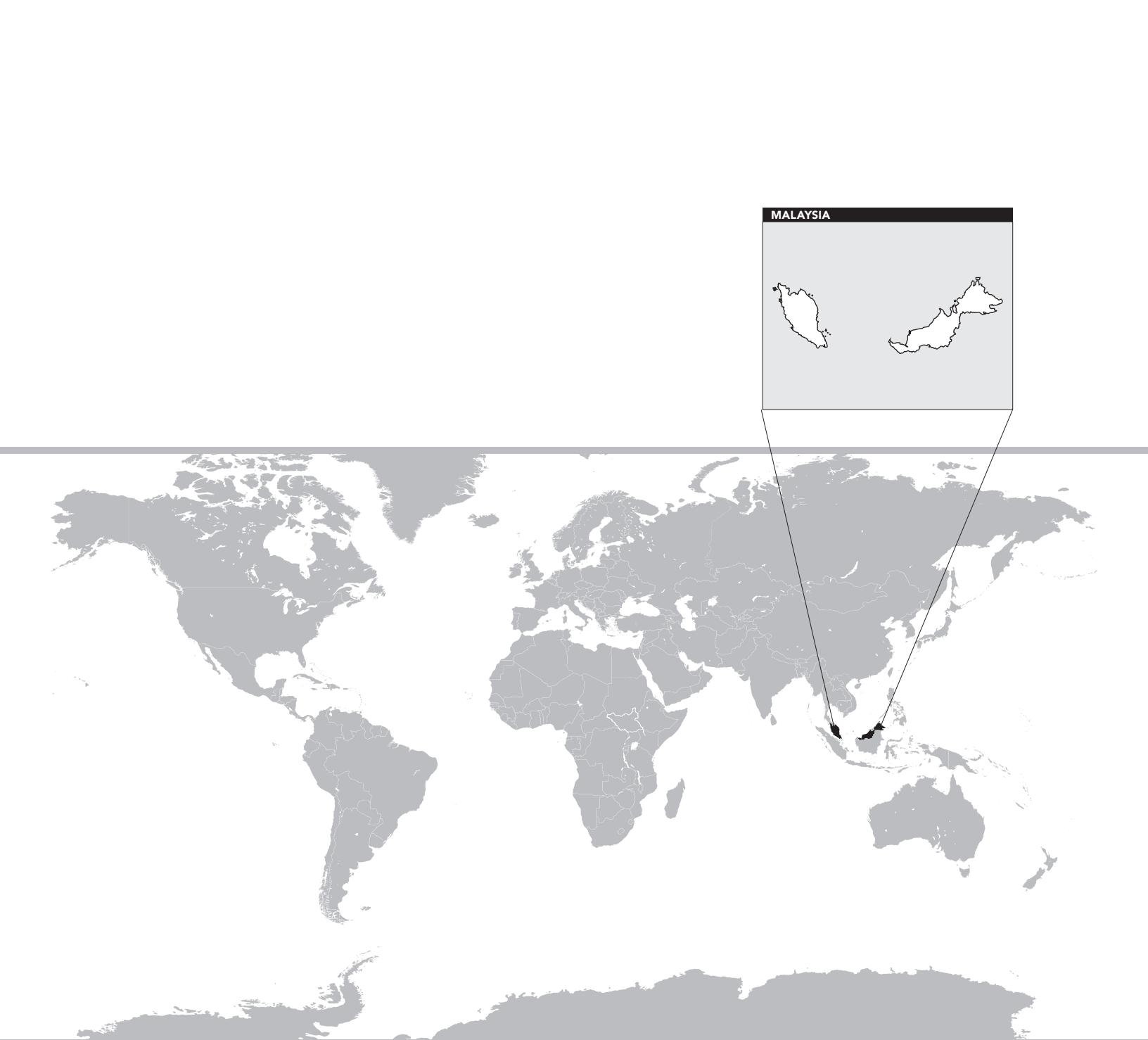
Recommendations for U.S. Policy

The United States has repeatedly expressed concerns about the disappearance of human rights defender Sombath Somphon, raising the public profile of human rights in U.S.-Lao relations which is primarily based on small economic assistance programs in public health, development, and counter-narcotics programs. There is a small religious freedom training program for Lao officials, run through an NGO. In addition, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Initiate a formal human rights mechanism to address regularly with the government of Laos such issues as ethnic and religious discrimination, torture and other forms of ill-treatment in prisons, unlawful arrests and detentions, and the lack of due process and an independent judiciary;
- With due regard to the need to address basic human needs and humanitarian concerns, consider voting against new multilateral development bank loans that would benefit the governments or state-owned

they have not been implicated in any human rights abuses, and deny U.S. training, visas, or assistance to any unit or personnel found to have engaged in a consistent pattern of violations of human rights, including religious freedom;

- Ensure that technical assistance programs support the goals of protecting religious freedom, human rights defenders, and ethnic minorities, including: rule of law programs and legal exchanges that focus on revising Decree 92; training in human rights, the rule of law, and religious freedom for Laotian police, religious leaders, and academics; and capacity-building for Lao civil society groups carrying out charitable, medical, and development activities in accordance with the Lao government's new law on non-governmental organizations; and
- Encourage the Broadcasting Board of Governors to provide adequate funding for the Voice of America and Radio Free Asia Lao language broadcasts and increase efforts to provide uncensored Internet, and other information, into Laos.



MALAYSIA

Key Findings

Religion, ethnicity, and politics are all profoundly intertwined in Malaysia and complicate religious freedom protections for religious minorities and non-Sunni Muslims. USCIRF has not reported on Malaysia since 2007. Renewed reporting stems from concerns about inadequate legal protections for religious minorities and ethnic Malays who wish to change their religion, bans on certain publications and groups considered religiously “deviant,” including Shi'a, and expanded efforts to arrest and harass members of such groups in the past two years. Based on these concerns, USCIRF places Malaysia on Tier 2 in 2014.

Background

Over the past decade in particular, Malaysian politics have been characterized by a balancing act between largely ethnically-based political parties, many of which seek to either increase or decrease Islam's socio-political influence. Despite Prime Minister Najib Razak's efforts to deemphasize ethno-religious differences, friction continues between non-Muslim ethnic populations, the Islamic-influenced moderate Malay government, and those advocating publicly for more conservative interpretations of Islam. Concerns have also been raised that the country's economic affirmative action programs for ethnic Malay Muslims may contribute to this friction; these programs grant preferences to the majority population in business contracts, government, and educational positions, to the detriment of Hindus, Chinese, and other groups.

The legal conflation of ethnic and religious identities negatively affects religious freedom. The official state religion is Islam, and while the constitution protects religious freedom, it defines all ethnic Malays as Sunni Muslims. Civil courts routinely cede jurisdiction to Shari'ah courts over familial or conversion cases involving Muslims, particularly ethnic Malays.

Depending on the judge and province, Shari'ah courts sometimes allow conversion from Islam, but only for non-Malays. In seven provinces conversion from Sunni Islam is a crime. State officials may subject individuals to fines or detention for up to six months in mandatory

Friction continues between non-Muslim ethnic populations, the Islamic-influenced moderate Malay government, and those advocating publicly for more conservative interpretations of Islam.

“rehabilitation” centers, sometimes at the request of parents or Shari'ah courts. A non-Muslim must convert to Islam to marry a Muslim (often leading to legal disputes upon divorce or death) and non-Muslims are barred from proselytizing to Muslims in most provincial areas. However, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs (JAKIM) sometimes supports proselytizing by Muslims to non-Muslims, which has caused problems with indigenous groups, such as the Orang Asli.

JAKIM officials oversee Islamic religious activities and seek to influence the content of sermons, use mosques to convey political messages, and prevent certain imams from speaking at mosques. State security officials also supervise the content of sermons and monitor religious publications, including for the use of certain words by non-Muslims. Since 2010, JAKIM reportedly launched a high profile effort to curtail the influence of the terrorist organization Jemaah Islamiyah in religious schools and mosques.

The federal and provincial governments reportedly maintain lists of “deviant religious sects” deemed to threaten national security. Among the groups believed to be included are Shi'a, Ahmadis, Baha'i, Jehovah's

Witnesses, the Church of the Latter Day Saints, and Al-Arqam (a Malaysian-based Islamic religious sect founded by Ashaari Mohammad). Enforcement efforts generally focus on conversions and proselytism, not assembly or worship, but members of such groups are vulnerable to arrests and detentions at any time, particularly if they are ethnic Malays.

Local officials in conservative Muslim-majority states such as Kelantan, Terengganu, and Selangor consider apostasy a capital offense. While prosecutions for apostasy are rare, detentions and fines have occurred, including in the past year. Officials in these states also enforce public modesty codes, including regarding alcohol and pork consumption, gambling, and *khalwat* (prohibited close proximity of unmarried non-relatives of the opposite sex) for both Muslims and non-Muslims. In these states all federal employees, regardless of their religion, are required to attend religious education classes and wear modest dress during work hours.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Arrests of Members of “Banned” Sects”

Over the past several years, Malaysia has expanded efforts to monitor and detain followers of banned sects, most prominently Shi'a and Al-Arqam. In 2011, Minister of Islamic Affairs Jamil Khir Baharom issued a statement banning the promotion of Shi'ism and pledging government efforts to halt the spread of the Shi'a sect, including by monitoring and controlling preaching and materials. Over the past several years, local Islamic Affairs ministries expanded efforts to halt Shi'a practice. According to Minister Baharom, 16 Shi'a were detained in 2013 on charges of proselytization and local authorities carried out 120 “inspections.” Since 2010, over 200 Shi'a followers have been detained, including in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor province, and Perak province. Generally they are released on bail pending investigations. Several have been charged with spreading Shi'ism and are out on bail awaiting trial. In 2012, 20 followers of Al-Arqam were arrested at a religious gathering in Selangor province; six were charged in 2013 with trying to promote the banned movement.

Policing Belief and Expression

There are proposals to expand the powers of JAKIM, including by creating a religious police force for Islamic

Affairs departments nationwide. This proposal has been widely criticized, but JAKIM's powers to restrict freedoms have expanded in recent years. In May 2013, JAKIM officials arrested bookstore employee Nik Raina for distribution of the book “Allah, Liberty and Love,” a publication which had not yet been banned. The book was officially banned two weeks after the arrest. Ms. Raina was charged in a Shari’ah court and the case is currently pending. In August 2013, on JAKIM’s recommendation, police in Segamat, Johor province detained Maznah Mohd Yusof. JAKIM requested the action because it found that a video of Ms. Yusof and her three dogs she posted on YouTube was “insulting to Islam.” She was released on bail, pending an investigation.

Official Promotion of Religious Hatred

In March 2013, the Federal Territory Islamic Affairs Department issued an official sermon stating that “Muslims must understand Jews are the main enemy to Muslims.” In November 2013, JAKIM published a sermon that discussed the “despicable nature” of the Jewish race and stated that “Israel is a nation of ruthless criminals.” After criticism, the sermons were removed and the government of Malaysia apologized. However, in January 2014, JAKIM released another approved sermon stating that “divisions among Muslims . . . is caused by Christians and Jews.”

Bans on Use of the Word “Allah”

In February 2014, the Malaysian Court of Appeals overturned a 2010 lower court ruling allowing Christian publications to use the word “Allah.” The decision reinstated earlier bans on the word’s usage by the Ministry of Home Affairs and several provinces. The court stated that the word “Allah” belongs exclusively to Islam and that use of the term by other religious groups could confuse Muslims and be used as a tool of conversion.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

U.S. officials regularly highlight Malaysia as “moderate” nation and a “multi-faith model.” While the country has a tradition of tolerance, these comments fail to recognize how Malaysia’s increasingly bifurcated ethno-religious politics threatens its traditional moderation and political stability. USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should publicly acknowledge

that increasingly religion-oriented politics undermines the efforts of those working to make Malaysia a religiously-pluralistic, Muslim-majority democracy. USCIRF also recommends that the U.S. government should undertake greater efforts to connect religious freedom and tolerance issues to expanded U.S.-Malaysia bilateral relations, including by:

- Urging the Malaysian government to cease the arrest of individuals involved in peaceful religious activity, such as Shi'a and Al-Arqam groups, and end government efforts to police religious belief and expression;
- Pressing the Malaysian government to bring all laws and policies into conformity with international commitments, including on freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression;
- Encouraging Malaysian elected leaders to address the human rights shortcomings of the parallel civil-Shari'ah justice systems to guarantee that all Malaysians, regardless of ethnicity or religion, can enjoy freedom of religion or belief in line with international standards; and
- In the context of expanding U.S.-Malaysia relations, insist in negotiations concerning Malaysia joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that religious and ethnic minorities benefit fairly from freer and expanded trade.



RUSSIA

Key Findings

In the context of growing human rights abuses, religious freedom conditions in Russia suffered serious setbacks. New 2012 laws and 2014 amendments to the anti-extremism law were used against religious individuals and groups, particularly Jehovah’s Witnesses and Muslim readers of Turkish theologian Said Nursi. There are hundreds of Muslims jailed, reportedly on false charges; many are denied due process and mistreated in detention. Rising xenophobia and intolerance, including anti-Semitism, are linked to violent and lethal hate crimes that occur with impunity. A blasphemy law, which went into effect in July 2013, further curtailed the freedoms of religion, belief, and expression. Based on these concerns, USCIRF again places Russia on Tier 2 in 2014. USCIRF has reported on Russia since 1999, and it has been on this list since 2009. A USCIRF staff member visited Moscow in October 2013.

Background

Using Russia’s 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and its burdensome registration system, state officials impede registration or obstruct the construction or rental of worship buildings for allegedly “non-traditional” groups. Officials often refer negatively to religious and other minorities, abetting an intolerant climate. Russia’s weak judicial system, inconsistent rule of law adherence, and arbitrary official legal interpretations mean that respect for freedom of religion or belief varies widely, often depending on a religious group’s relations with relevant state officials.

A major threat to religious freedom is the much-amended Russian anti-extremism law, which defines extremism in a religious context and does not require the threat or use of violence. New criminal code amendments, signed into law by President Putin in February 2014, increased terms of imprisonment, forced labor, and fines for “extremism”-related offenses and eased

legal procedures for government surveillance. If any Russian court rules a text extremist, it is added to the Justice Ministry’s Federal List of Extremist Materials and banned throughout Russia. As of this writing, the

A July 2013 blasphemy law further curtailed freedom of religion.

list of banned texts contained 2,241 items, including books approved by the Council of Muftis; works of the Turkish Muslim theologian Said Nursi; a 1900 sermon by Metropolitan Sheptytsky, a candidate for Catholic sainthood; and at least 70 Jehovah’s Witness texts. Merely possessing banned extremist works can result in fines; the mass distribution, preparation, or storage can result in a four-year prison term.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014 Extremism Charges

Russian human rights groups have evidence of prosecutions of Muslims for extremism despite no apparent link to such activities, including dozens detained for owning religious texts. Many were charged for being alleged followers of Said Nursi. For example, imams Ilhom Merezhov and Komil Odilov were given one-year suspended terms in Novosibirsk in May 2013. In January 2014 in Krasnoyarsk, Andrei Dedkov and nine others were detained as part of a Nursi group. Criminal proceedings were launched against Magomed Suleyman-ogly for leading a Nursi “youth wing” in 2014 according to Forum 18 News Service. In February 2014, two Muslims were fined in Tatarstan for reading Nursi’s works at home, the SOVA Center reported; two others await trial there. At least 13 Nursi readers were jailed in Russia last year; one, Shirazi Bekirov, was released in 2013 after six

months in jail, including a psychiatric examination, in St. Petersburg.

In Russia's largest ban of religious texts, an Orenburg court in March 2012 ruled 68 Islamic texts "extremist," including books approved by the Council of Muftis; in 2013 two fines were imposed in connection with this ban. In September 2013, a Novorossisk court ruled extremist a popular Russian Qur'an translation, but the ban was overturned by a Krasnodar Regional Court in December. In November 2013, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) asked Russia to respond to a case by the United Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Krasnoyarsk Region against a court ban on part of Said Nursi's Qur'an commentary. Sixteen Jehovah's Witnesses have been on trial since June 2013 in Taganrog for belonging to an "extremist" group. In January 2014, a ban on the Jehovah's Witness international Web site was overturned.

Legal Restrictions on Civil Society Impacting Religious Groups

A 2012 law on public meetings set onerous new fines that could exceed the equivalent of the average annual salary for those taking part in unauthorized public meetings violating "public order." It was used in 2012 against a Protestant pastor for holding a religious service. Another 2012 law requires foreign-funded NGOs engaged in vaguely-defined political activity to register as "foreign agents" or face fines or two years' imprisonment; religious groups are exempt, but in 2013 Russian authorities used this law as a pretext to inspect hundreds of these groups, such as Caritas. In 2012, the treason law was amended, putting at risk of 20-year prison terms those Russian citizens who provide financial, material, technical, consultative, or other help to a foreign state or an international or foreign organization. A 2013 law requires "close relatives and acquaintances" of alleged terrorists to pay material and moral damages; some view this law as reviving Stalin-era collective "guilt."

The North Caucasus Crisis

Russia's most severe human rights abuses occur in the North Caucasus, where violators operate with almost total impunity. Chechnya's Kremlin-appointed president, Ramzan Kadyrov, condones or oversees mass

violations of human rights, including religious freedom. He and his militia practice collective "justice," distort Chechen Sufi traditions, and operate a repressive state, including forcing women to wear Islamic headscarves. Kadyrov also is accused of murders, torture, and the disappearances of political opponents and human rights activists in Russia and abroad. In late 2013, the Chechen First Deputy Interior Minister stated that Kadyrov authorized him to plant evidence, arrest, imprison, or execute without trial anyone who "looks remotely like an Islamic militant," or who criticizes local officials. In the North Caucasus' most violent region, Dagestan, Salafi groups are banned and targeted as suspected insurgents, the International Crisis Group noted in 2013.

Orthodox Sovereignty

Russia's 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience preface singles out Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and especially Orthodox Christianity as the country's four "traditional" faiths, despite constitutional guarantees of a secular state and equal legal status for all religions. The Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church (MPROC) – which claims adherents among 60 percent of Russians – receives *de facto* favored status, and has agreements with state agencies on religious education and spiritual counseling. The MPROC receives most state support, but Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism have also benefitted, as have Moscow's ancient Orthodox schismatic sect of Old Believers. Other minority religious groups do not receive state subsidies.

After the reporting period, Russia illegally annexed the Ukrainian region of Crimea in March 2014 and the United States instituted visa bans and

Russia illegally annexed the Ukrainian region of Crimea . . . based on shared Orthodox culture.

asset freezes of individuals involved in that decision. In a March 18 speech, President Putin tried to justify this military action based on the shared Orthodox "culture, civilization, and human values that unite the

peoples of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.” He failed to mention the region’s Muslim Crimean Tatars, who were deported by Stalin and currently comprise 15 percent of Crimea’s population and oppose Russian occupation. Reportedly, some Ukrainian Orthodox loyal to Kiev have left Crimea. For those who remain, their churches are effectively closed and Crimean Tatars have offered the use of their mosques.

Blasphemy Law

The blasphemy law that came into force in July 2013 sets fines of up to U.S. \$15,000 and jail terms of up to three years for public actions in places of worship that disrespect or insult religious beliefs. Elsewhere, such acts entail up to a year of jail and fines of up to US \$9,000. This law was passed after the 2012 conviction of three in the Pussy Riot band for “hooliganism on grounds of religious hatred” after their protest in Moscow’s main Orthodox cathedral. The two jailed Pussy Rioters were freed under a December 2013 amnesty; three cases in 2014 involved charges under the new law.

Legal Status Issues

Despite a 2009 ECtHR finding that the 15-year existence rule for registration violated the European Convention on Human Rights, the Church of Scientology still is denied registration, as is an Armenian Catholic parish in Moscow. State officials obstruct construction or rental of worship buildings, particularly for allegedly “non-traditional” groups such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), non-Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox, and Old Believers. Muslim groups in urban areas, particularly Moscow, face obstacles in obtaining permits to open mosques.

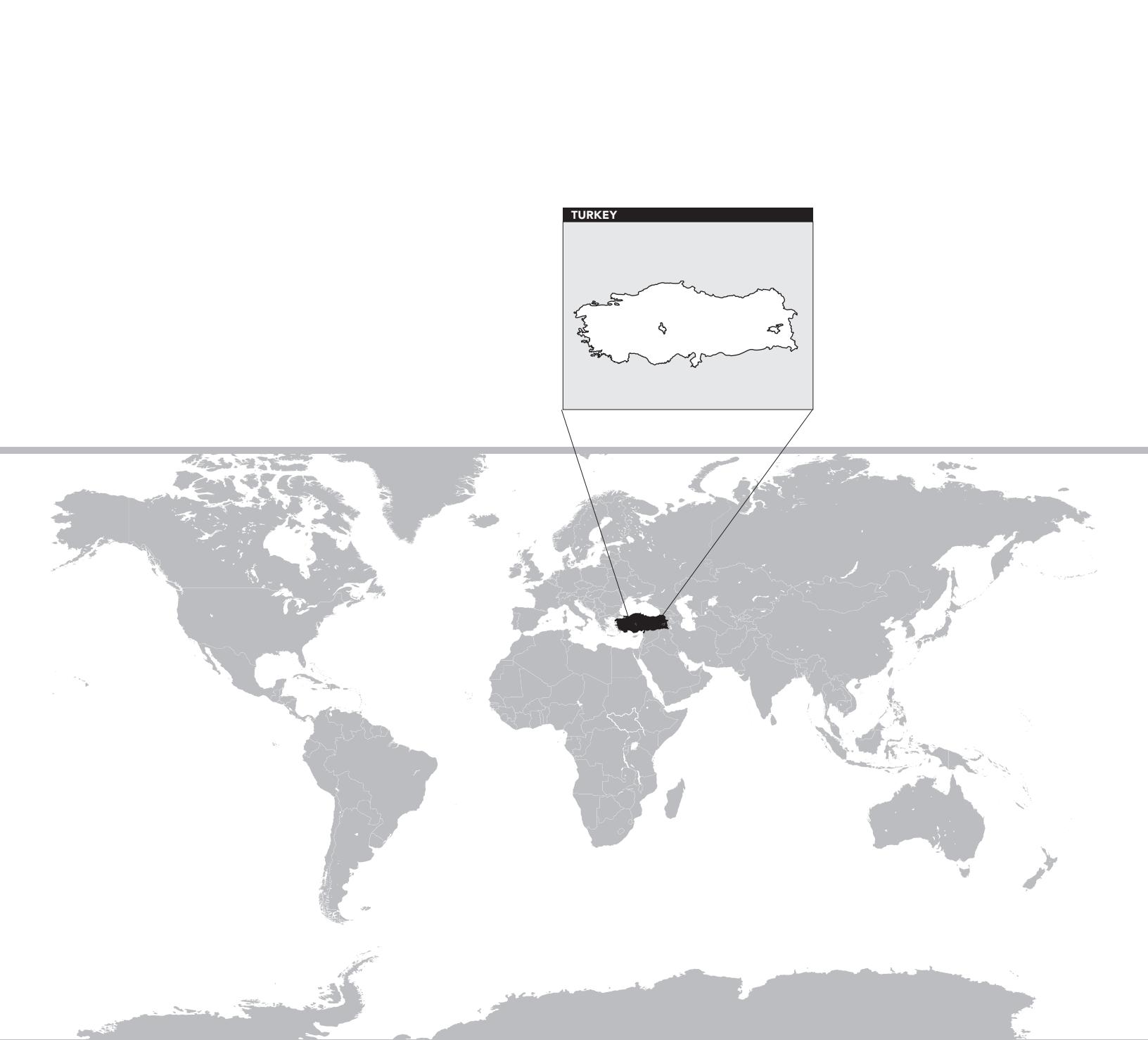
Violent Hate Crimes against Persons and Property

Chauvinist groups have stepped up violence against those who defend rights of religious minorities and migrants. Moscow police have assisted some victims, but inconsistently and often ineffectively. Local authorities often fail to investigate hate crimes against ethnic and religious minorities, mainly Muslim Central Asians and Jews.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

In response to continuing violations of religious freedom in Russia, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Implement fully the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Act, which imposes U.S. visa bans and bank asset freezes against Russian officials, including Chechen President Kadyrov, who violate human rights, by continuing to name such officials and including them in the Politically Exposed Persons list;
- Make freedom of religion or belief a key human rights and security concern in the U.S.-Russia relationship and press Russia to reform its extremism law in line with Council of Europe recommendations, such as by adding criteria related to the advocacy or use of violence and ensure the law is not used against peaceful religious communities;
- Include in U.S.-funded exchanges participants from Russian regions with sizeable Muslim and other minority populations and initiate an International Visitors Program for Russian officials and lawyers on the prevention and prosecution of hate crimes and other human rights issues;
- Give priority to re-programming funding from the \$50 million slated for the now-defunct USAID Russia program to a range of civil society programs, such as a new Internet program to address historical, religious and cultural issues as well as programs on tolerance and freedom of religion or belief; and
- Re-establish funding for the State Department’s Title VIII program for research, including on religious freedom and human rights, as well as for language programs related to the study of Eurasia.



TURKEY

Key Findings

While the Turkish government has implemented some reforms in recent years to improve religious freedom, including regarding minority communities' property rights, religious dress, and education, significant concerns remain. Turkish secularism, as codified in the 1982 constitution, requires absolute state control over religion, which leads to governmental interference and restrictions that hinder full religious freedom in the country. As a constitutional secular state no religious community, including the Sunni Muslim majority, has full legal status. The government limits all religious groups' rights to own and maintain places of worship, train clergy, and offer religious education. This has been particularly detrimental to the smallest minority communities and their ability to transmit their faith to future generations. Other concerns include the listing of religious affiliation on national identity cards, societal discrimination, anti-Semitism, and persistent religious freedom violations in the Turkish-occupied northern part of Cyprus. Finally, it should be noted that the overall landscape for democracy and human rights has deteriorated significantly during the past year, including serious new restrictions on internet freedom, privacy, and media freedom, with troubling implications for freedom of religion or belief in Turkey. Based on these concerns, USCIRF places Turkey on Tier 2 in 2014.²¹

Background

In February 2014 USCIRF travelled to Turkey and met with religious leaders and community representatives, government officials, and NGOs. In these meetings, USCIRF received reports that over the last year, the Turkish government has continued to take positive steps with regard to religious minorities concerning

²¹ Commissioner William J. Shaw dissented from the decision to place Turkey on Tier 2. See his statement in appendix.

property and education, as well as dress for Muslim women. Nevertheless, USCIRF also heard views from some religious minority communities that conditions had worsened and that the steps taken were negligible, as well as concerns that the improvements, which are not codified in law, could be easily revoked, especially in the current political climate. Additionally, some communities were extremely disheartened by persistent rumors that the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul would be reopened as a mosque; the former church, which has been a museum since 1935, is a symbol of Christian history, legacy and acceptance to Turkey's small Christian communities.

Turkey's legal climate centers on its 1982 constitution. It provides for freedom of belief, worship, and the private dissemination of religious ideas and prohibits discrimination on religious grounds, but no religious community has full legal status and all are subject to state control. Following his 2011 re-election, Prime

Despite the significant constitutional impediments to full religious freedom protections, the Turkish government has shown that some improvements, such as relating to property rights and religious dress, are possible without a new constitution as long as there is sufficient political will.

Minister Erdoğan pledged to replace the 1982 constitution with one "focused on the individual, and committed to freedom." A parliamentary drafting commission was established, which collected information and recommendations from civil society and religious minority representatives. After more than 16 months, the commission disbanded over disagreements unrelated to religious freedom.

Despite the significant constitutional impediments to full religious freedom protections, the Turkish government has shown that some improvements, such as relating to property rights and religious dress, are possible without a new constitution as long as there is sufficient political will. Recognition of this dynamic in Turkey makes the government's continued failure to follow through on the long promised reopening of the Halki Seminary, a disturbing indication of a lack of genuine will to resolve this longstanding religious freedom violation.

Religious Freedom Conditions 2013–2014

Interference in Internal Religious Affairs

The Turkish government continues to require that only Turkish citizens can be members of the Greek Orthodox Church's Holy Synod. Although the Prime Minister in 2010 approved dual citizenship for 25 Metropolitans, others were denied. The government's role in deciding which individuals may be part of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate represents interference into their internal affairs. The government also has inter-

according to the government, at more than 2.5 billion Turkish Lira – have been returned or compensated for. However, 1,000 applications were denied, 800 for lack of information and 200 for other reasons. Some communities allege bias, consider the process very slow, and claim that compensation has been insufficient.

Since 2008, there has been an ongoing dispute over the Turkish government's attempted seizure of some territory of the 1,600-year-old Mor Gabriel Monastery, the Syriac Patriarch's residence from 1160 to 1932. In September 2013, the government announced that it would return Mor Gabriel to the appropriate Syriac Foundation and it has handed over the deed for 244,000 square meters (over 60 acres) of land. A case concerning an additional 320,000 square meters (nearly 80 acres) claimed by the community is pending before the European Court of Human Rights.

Education

The constitution makes religious and moral instruction compulsory in public primary and secondary schools, with a curriculum established by the Ministry of

The Greek Orthodox Theological School of Halki remains closed, as it has been since 1971, despite promises and public statements of support for its reopening by Prime Minister Erdoan and President Gl.

ferred in the selection process of the Armenian Patriarchate's leadership, and denies religious minority communities the ability to train clergy in Turkey. The Greek Orthodox Theological School of Halki remains closed, as it has been since 1971, despite promises and public statements of support for its reopening by Prime Minister Erdoan and President Gl. The Armenian Orthodox community also lacks a seminary.

Religious Minority Properties

The Turkish government throughout its history has expropriated religious minority properties. Beginning in 2003 and especially since the issuance of a 2011 decree, the government established a process to return some properties or pay compensation when return is not possible. Since 2011, 340 properties – valued,

National Education. In recent years the course, which had primarily focused on Islam, has been expanded to include all religions and atheism. [Note: The USCIRF delegation was unable to verify representations about the content of these courses.] Non-Muslim children can be exempted, although there are reports of societal and teacher discrimination against children who opt out. Additionally, after complaints by religious minority communities, the Ministry of Education states that it has made an effort to revise textbooks so as not to portray minorities in a derogatory manner.

Religious Dress

Pursuant to Turkish secularism, the government has long banned religious dress, including the wearing of headscarves, in state buildings, including public

and private universities, the parliament, courts, and schools. In the past, women who wore headscarves, and their advocates, have been expelled from universities and have lost public sector jobs, such as nursing and teaching. In September 2013, the Turkish government lifted the headscarf ban for women in public institutions and at schools. However, the ban still exists in areas that require a uniform, such as military and police offices, and in some courts. In addition, under Turkish law, only the titular head of any religious group may wear religious garb in public facilities, although there were no reports that the government or local police uphold this law in practice.

Alevi

Alevi comprise 15 to 25 percent of Turkey's total population. Although the Turkish government and many Alevi view them as heterodox Muslims, many Sunni Muslims do not accept that definition and consider them non-Muslims. Some Alevi identify as Shi'a Muslim, while others reject Islam and view themselves as a unique culture. Alevi worship in *cemevi* (gathering places), which the Turkish government does not consider legal houses of worship and thus cannot receive the legal and financial benefits associated with such status.

Anti-Semitism

Representatives of the Jewish community told USCIRF that their situation in Turkey is better than that of Jews in other majority Muslim countries and in parts of Western Europe. Jews in Turkey are able to worship freely, and their synagogues generally receive government protection when needed. However, concerns exist over rising anti-Semitism in society and in the media. Additionally, references to the "interest rate lobby" by some government officials, including the Prime Minister, are viewed by some interlocutors as coded language for members of the Jewish communities.

Northern part of the Republic of Cyprus

Turkey has occupied nearly 1/3 of northern Cyprus since 1974. In the last year minority communities were denied access to their religious places of worship and cemeteries that are within the boundaries of Turkish military zones or bases.

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

As it engages Turkey as an important strategic partner, the U.S. government, at the highest levels, should continue to raise religious freedom issues with Turkish government counterparts. Specifically, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should urge the Turkish government to:

- Revive the multi-party constitutional drafting commission with the goal of drafting a new constitution consistent with international human rights standards on religious freedom;
- Fully implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and interpret the 1923 Lausanne Treaty so as to provide equal rights to all religious minority communities;
- Fulfill private and publicly stated promises that the Greek Orthodox Halki Seminary would be reopened, and permit other religious communities to open and operate their seminaries as well;
- Permit religious communities to select and appoint their leadership in accordance with their internal guidelines and beliefs;
- Publicly rebuke government officials that make anti-Semitic or derogatory statements about religious communities in Turkey;
- Remove the space listing religious affiliation on official identification cards to comply with the 2010 European Court of Human Rights ruling that it violates freedom of religion or belief under the European Convention; and
- Ensure that, with respect to the northern part of the Republic of Cyprus, Turkish military authorities and Turkish-controlled local authorities end all restrictions on the access, use, and restoration of places of worship and cemeteries for religious minorities.

OTHER COUNTRIES/REGIONS MONITORED

- BAHRAIN
- BANGLADESH
- BELARUS
- CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
- ETHIOPIA
- KYRGYZSTAN
- SRI LANKA
- WESTERN EUROPE

BAHRAIN

In January 2014, a USCIRF delegation traveled to Manama as a follow-up to a 2012 visit to assess conditions for freedom of religion or belief, including the government's implementation of relevant recommendations from the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). The delegation met in Manama with a range of high-level government officials, opposition groups, Sunni and Shi'a religious leaders, human rights organizations, non-Muslim religious minority communities, and other civil society leaders. Based on the visit, USCIRF has concluded that while the Bahraini government has made some progress in implementing various BICI recommendations, it must act with greater urgency to redress past abuses and embrace genuine reforms. USCIRF remains concerned by the government's continued lack of accountability for abuses against the Shi'a community since 2011, and will continue to monitor closely developments in Bahrain during the coming year.

Background

Bahrain is a diverse country and Bahraini citizens have a deep sense of their culture and history going back centuries. With a population of approximately 1.3 million, approximately half are Bahraini citizens and half are expatriate workers, primarily from South Asian countries. Almost half of the expatriate workers are non-Muslim (approximately 250,000-300,000). The religious demography of Bahraini citizens is estimated at 60-65% Shi'a and 30-35% Sunni, with approximately 1-2% non-Muslims, including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Baha'is. Compared to other countries in the region, Bahrain is among the most tolerant of non-Muslim religious minority communities. The government officially recognizes several Christian denominations, a tiny Jewish community, Hindus, Sikhs, and a Baha'i community. Most Bahrainis also acknowledge that their society has been historically tolerant of all faiths and religiously pluralistic.

Bahrain is ruled by a Sunni Muslim monarchy, the Al-Khalifa family.

Accountability for Past Abuses

During USCIRF's 2014 visit, the Bahraini government repeatedly expressed a commitment to making demonstrable progress on reforms, including expediting the rebuilding of Shi'a mosques and religious structures destroyed in 2011. Nevertheless, the government

USCIRF remains concerned by the government's continued lack of accountability for abuses against the Shi'a community since 2011 . . .

still has not adequately held security officials accountable for the 2011 abuses and subsequent violations, which included harassing, imprisoning, torturing, and killing predominantly Shi'a demonstrators. Bahraini courts have tried, prosecuted, and convicted only a few lower-level police officers, with little or no transparency about the trials, convictions, and length of prison terms. To date, no high-level officials have been held accountable. The Bahraini government's December 2013 BICI Follow-Up Report stated that Bahraini courts have investigated all 35 deaths of Shi'a protestors during demonstrations in 2011 and, as a result of investigations, 39 cases were sent to court with 13 security officials convicted and 15 acquitted. Some 25 cases are still being heard.

Ongoing Abuses and Discrimination

In 2013, Shi'a Muslims continued to be detained and arrested arbitrarily, including during Ashura commemorations in November. Incendiary, sectarian rhetoric continued in the government and pro-government media,

new media laws that would curb anti-Shi'a incitement have not been passed, and little has been done to ensure the Shi'a community greater media access.

Members of the Shi'a community still cannot serve in the active military, only in administrative positions, and there are no Shi'a in the upper levels of the Bahrain government security apparatus, including the military and police. The December 2013 BICI Follow-Up Report

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indicated the government had hired 577 Sunni and Shi'a personnel for entry-level security positions over the past year. Reflecting an effort to address the lack of Shi'a in security posts, the majority of those hired were Shi'a. Bahraini officials stated that new officers will perform police work in all security-related government agencies and will have the authority and function of "security officers."

Rebuilding of Shi'a Mosques and Religious Structures

The Bahraini government has allocated \$8 million for rebuilding Shi'a mosques and religious structures, twice the amount it pledged in 2012. It also has moved its deadline from 2018 to the end of 2014 to complete the construction of the 30 destroyed structures identified in the BICI report. During its visit, the USCIRF delegation visited several sites where Shi'a religious structures were at various stages of reconstruction. However, despite the government's claims that it had rebuilt 10 of these structures, the delegation found that the Shi'a community itself had paid for and built six of the 10. Officials acknowledged this to be accurate but claimed that the six were illegal and that the government had secured legal permits for them. Some government officials also indicated a willingness to reimburse the Shi'a community for its expenses.

In addition, in a few cases disputes continue over where to rebuild the mosque or structure. Bahraini officials committed to an ongoing dialogue with the Shi'a

community to resolve these cases, although some representatives from the Shi'a community did not believe the government was fully committed to the negotiations.

Recommendations

USCIRF urges the U.S. government to continue to press the Bahraini government to implement fully the BICI recommendations, including those related to freedom of religion and belief and accountability for past abuses against the Shi'a community. In addition, USCIRF encourages the Bahraini government to reimburse the Shi'a community for expending its own funds to rebuild six mosques and religious structures that were demolished in 2011. USCIRF also urges the U.S. government to continue to press the Bahraini government and members of the opposition and civil society to resume a genuine dialogue and reconciliation process, which is vital to achieving progress on religious freedom and related human rights.

BANGLADESH

USCIRF has become increasingly concerned about the religious freedom situation in Bangladesh. While the government has made some progress in returning seized Hindu-owned land and complying with the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, numerous incidents of communal violence, particularly targeting the Hindu and Buddhist communities, occurred in the last six months. NGOs, religious leaders and communities attributed the increased violence to political positioning before the January 2014 election through religiously divisive language by both the ruling Awami League, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and opposing political parties, including the main opposition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the main Islamist Party, Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamat).

Election-related violence

On January 5, 2014, Bangladesh held its parliamentary election, which was not free or fair, with more than half of the parliamentary seats uncontested. The BNP and 18 other political parties boycotted. In the days after the

Dozens of Hindu properties were looted, vandalized, or set ablaze, and hundreds of Hindus fled their homes.

election, reportedly 16 out of 64 districts in Bangladesh experienced violence. Most attacks were attributed to individuals and groups associated with the opposition BNP and Jammat. The worst attacks occurred in minority-dominated villages. Dozens of Hindu properties were looted, vandalized, or set ablaze, and hundreds of Hindus fled their homes. Prime Minister Hasina made public statements in support of religious minority communities after the violence, but reports emerged that police and security forces dispatched by the government to affected

areas did not actively stop the violence and in some cases, participated in it.

Blasphemy Charges

In early April 2013, the government arrested and charged three self-professed atheists with “offending religious sensitivities” after they blogged about Bangladesh’s 1971 War Crimes Tribunals. After the close of the reporting period, they were released pending trial. Individuals associated with Jamaat also reportedly gave the government a list naming 84 other individuals they want to see investigated for blasphemy.

Property Returns

In 2011, the Vested Property Return Act established an application process for families or individuals to apply for the return of, or compensation for, Hindu property seized prior to Bangladesh’s independence from Pakistan in 1971. However, many Hindu communities and NGOs believe only a small portion of their properties are eligible for return because the Act is too narrowly defined and the application process too cumbersome and convoluted.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord (CHT Accord)

The CHT Accord is a political agreement and peace treaty between the Bangladeshi government and the political party representing the ethnic and indigenous people of the area, of which nearly 50% are followers of Theravada Buddhism. According to information provided to USCIRF by the Bangladeshi government, out of 72 articles of the CHT Accord, 48 have been fully implemented, while another 15 have been implemented partially, and 9 more have yet to be implemented.

Rohingya Muslims

The Bangladeshi government considers Rohingya Muslims as Burmese nationals and therefore considers

them refugees, but does not accord them the treatment required under international law. About 30,000 Rohingyas remain in government-run camps in Cox's Bazaar. While UNHCR and NGOs support these camps, shelter and basic sanitary needs are insufficient. An additional 200,000 to 300,000 Rohingyas live outside the camps in deplorable conditions, and they receive no support from UNHCR.

Recommendations

Since 2012, the United States and Bangladesh have engaged in a Partnership Dialogue. The third Dialogue meeting is scheduled for mid-2014. As the United States engages Bangladesh, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should: urge Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and all government officials to frequently and publically denounce religiously-divisive language and acts of religiously-motivated violence and harassment; provide local government officials, police officers and judges with training on international human rights standards, as well as how to investigate and adjudicated religiously-motived violent acts; and urge the Bangladeshi government to revoke its blasphemy law.

BELARUS

USCIRF continues to monitor the situation in Belarus, where the government tightly regulates religious communities through an extensive security and religious affairs bureaucracy, which has driven some religious groups underground. Officials are particularly hostile towards religious groups viewed as political opponents, such as Protestants, and strictly control foreign citizens, including Catholic priests, who conduct religious activity. There is no legal provision for conscientious objection to military service, and the religious rights of prisoners are frequently denied.

Government control

In addition to the top-ranking official, the Plenipotentiary for Religious and Ethnic Affairs, each of the country's six regions employs multiple religious affairs officials, as does Minsk city. Officials from local Ideology Departments and the Belarusian secret police (which proudly retains the Soviet-era designation of KGB) are

Since registration is compulsory, the religion law makes no provision for those who do not wish to register, such as the Council of Churches Baptists.

A religious group found to have violated the law must correct the alleged violation within six months and not repeat it for one year, or face closure. There are no legal provisions to challenge such warnings. In April 2007, the Constitutional Court noted the Religion Law's failure to give religious groups the legal right to challenge warnings. After that decision, Jehovah's Witnesses have often tried, but failed, to establish the legal right to challenge rulings.

Action against religious leader

Roman Catholic priest Father Vladislav Lazar stands accused of treason for allegedly giving money to a person accused of spying, which he denies, but no details were provided on the charges, nor any evidence, according to Forum 18 News Service. After six months

Houses of worship and any public exercise of religion must have state permission.

also involved in religious controls. Central to the web of restrictions is the 2002 religion law, which includes compulsory state registration of all religious communities and geographical limits on religious activity. Religious meetings in private homes must not be regular or large. Houses of worship and any public exercise of religion must have state permission, which is rarely granted for disfavored groups, particularly Protestants. Orthodox and Catholic communities are less affected, partly due to the state's more positive attitude towards them, but also because they are more likely to occupy historic churches. Unregistered religious activity is usually treated as an administrative offense punished by a fine.

of incommunicado detention in Minsk's KGB detention center, Father Lazar was transferred to house arrest in December 2013, but the criminal investigation continues. The KGB interrogated his bishop, Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz of the Minsk-Mogilev diocese, as a witness in the case. The charges carry a punishment of 7 to 15 years' imprisonment. It is not known why the Belarusian authorities arrested and charged the priest. In July 2013, eight weeks after Father Lazar's arrest, President Aleksandr Lukashenko remarked on the arrest of a KGB secret police officer and claimed that this officer had passed on information through the Catholic Church. In a courageous step, Father Lazar's

parishioners in Borisov have written a petition to the Belarusian authorities calling for his release.

Recommendations

As the United States has almost no diplomatic relations with Belarus, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should publicly raise Belarusian religious freedom violations at appropriate international fora, such as the OSCE and the UN, including the need to reform the religion law and calling for the dropping of all criminal charges against Catholic Father Lazar.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Militias formed along opposing Muslim and Christian lines in the Central African Republic (CAR) have engaged in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of freedom of religion or belief. The country is engulfed in what is now viewed as a religious conflict where these militias kill, torture and rape individuals based on their actual or perceived religious affiliation. Despite its history of interfaith harmony, religious tensions in the country have skyrocketed, with cities and towns segregated into religious enclaves. After the close of this reporting period, the sharp increase in attacks on CAR's Muslim community led several UN and international human rights organizations to warn of genocide or ethnic cleansing in the country. While the severe religious freedom conditions in CAR meet the standards for the country to be designated a "country of particular concern," the March 2013 coup followed by anarchy and a complete breakdown of law and order, has resulted in there being no government to hold accountable under the International Religious Freedom Act.

The 2012–2013 Rebellion and Coup

The Central African Republic has a long history of political strife, coups, and human rights abuses. However, severe religious freedom violations and sectarian violence are new to the majority-Christian country, despite a history of societal discrimination against the Muslim minority. The rise of religious freedom violations and sectarian violence in CAR started with the December 2012 political rebellion by a coalition of armed rebels, the Séléka, from CAR's majority-Muslim Vakaga region and foreign fighters from Chad and Sudan. Chad and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) politically intervened before the Séléka captured the capital Bangui, leading to the signing of a power-sharing agreement in January 2013. This agreement, however, proved short-lived when former CAR President Francois Bozizé failed to implement it. In March 2013, the Séléka took the capital,

Bangui, and deposed President Francois Bozizé. Séléka leader Michel Djotodia proclaimed himself President and Minister of Defense.

During their rebellion and after the coup, Séléka fighters attacked Christian priests, pastors, nuns, church buildings, and other Christian institutions. The militias targeted predominantly Christian neighborhoods and

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businesses for destruction, looted churches but not mosques, and protected Muslim residents while killing or raping Christian residents. In some Séléka-controlled areas, non-Muslims were prohibited from selling foods not eaten by CAR Muslims, including pork, bushmeat, and caterpillars. In response to the Séléka attacks and fears that Djotodia would turn CAR into an Islamic state, militias comprised of Christians, known as the anti-balaka, were formed in September 2013 and started to attack the Séléka, individual Muslims, and/or Muslim villages. Since the formation of the anti-balaka, fighting in the CAR has devolved into a religious conflict.

Current Situation

In an effort to stabilize the country, almost 7,000 African and French peacekeepers are now on the ground in Bangui and outside of the capital; additional African and EU peacekeepers are still expected. On January 10, 2014, interim president Michel Djotodia resigned. The transitional parliament has selected a new interim president, Catherine Samba-Panza, and interim prime minister. Nevertheless, government officials, the police, and judiciary do not have the capacity to stop the fighting, and

Muslim-Christian religious violence continues daily and religious tensions remain extraordinarily high. After the close of the reporting period, the increased number of anti-balaka revenge attacks on CAR's minority Muslim population resulted in hundreds of deaths and tens of thousands of Muslims fleeing the country. The United Nations and humanitarian and human rights organizations report only a few remaining, and vulnerable, Muslims in many cities and towns.

Religious Freedom Violations, Sectarian Violence, and Reports of Genocide

Both the Séléka and the anti-balaka have engaged in severe human rights and religious freedom violations. Clashes between anti-balaka and Séléka fighters, as well as between civilian Christians and Muslims, started in September and continuously occurred and multiplied as the year ended. On September 6, anti-balaka fighters killed or captured 20 Séléka fighters and targeted Muslim homes in Benzambé. Séléka fighters then attacked the Christian areas of Bossangoa. On September 9, the anti-balaka attacked a Muslim neighborhood in Bouca. In response, Séléka fighters that same day in Bouca attacked Christian residents. Human Rights Watch estimated several hundred persons were killed in these and other attacks in the Ouham province from September 6-21. Between October 7 and 9, Muslim-Christian fighting in Gaga village killed more than 100 persons. An anti-balaka attack against Muslims in Bangui on December 5 left hundreds dead. Following this attack, both the Séléka and the anti-balaka conducted systematic house searches and summary executions, extrajudicial killings, torture, sexual violence, looting, and destruction of property in different Bangui neighborhoods and elsewhere throughout the country. In all of these actions, Muslims targeted Christians and Christians targeted Muslims. In December 2013 alone, more than 1,000 persons died in Séléka and anti-balaka battles. The Séléka and anti-balaka also routinely engage in executions of individual Christian and Muslim civilians.

Since December, and continuing after the January 31, 2014 end of the reporting period, there was a rise in anti-balaka attacks on newly-disarmed Séléka fighters and CAR Muslims. The United Nations, Doctors Without Borders, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International all report unprecedented levels of violence against

the Muslim population. Hundreds of Muslim citizens have been killed by the anti-balaka since January 2014, mosques are routinely destroyed, and cities, towns, and villages in western and northwestern CAR are now almost completely devoid of Muslim citizens. More than 100,000 Muslims have fled the country and thousands more remain internally displaced. The UN reported on March 7, 2014, that fewer than 1,000 of the city's 100,000 Muslims remained in CAR's capital Bangui. The International Criminal Court (ICC) and the United Nations are both opening investigations into reports of genocide in CAR. The ICC Prosecutor noted reports of "hundreds of killings, acts of rape and sexual slavery, destruction of property, pillaging, torture, forced displacement and recruitment and use of children in hostilities," in many of which "victims appear to have been deliberately targeted on religious grounds."

Recommendations

The U.S. government has been regularly speaking out against sectarian violence and gross human rights abuses in CAR, encouraging and supporting inter-faith dialogue, and providing support to international peacekeepers and humanitarian assistance organizations. USCIRF supports these actions, and additionally recommends that the U.S. government should increase humanitarian assistance funding to aid internally displaced persons and refugees; sanction individual Séléka and anti-balaka leaders and financiers; work with the transitional government to prevent religious discrimination in governance and militia disarmament and demobilization; ensure that international standards of freedom of religion or belief are enshrined in a new constitution; and work with the transitional government to hold Muslim and Christian perpetrators of violence accountable.

ETHIOPIA

USCIRF continues to monitor the situation in Ethiopia where, despite some improvements, the government continues to engage in religious freedom violations. Although Ethiopia has valid concerns about terrorism, the government has overreacted, prosecuting and cracking down on peaceful Muslim demonstrators protesting against government interference in the internal religious affairs of their community. This crackdown has taken place in an authoritarian environment in which freedom of speech, press, and assembly and human rights and independent interfaith and conflict resolution efforts are restricted.

Background

Ethiopia has a long history of religious tolerance and inter-religious cooperation, and its constitution protects freedom of religion or belief and provides for separation of religion and state. However, in 2011 the government made efforts to impose a particular Islamic interpretation on the country's Muslim community.

separation of religion and state and does not promote a particular religious belief. Imams who refused to preach al-Ahbash ideology were dismissed from their positions and replaced with other imams, and some were jailed. The Aweliya Islamic School in Addis Ababa was closed in December 2011.

In response to the trainings and school closing, Muslims in Addis Ababa and several other Ethiopian cities held peaceful protests in mosques after Friday prayers, calling on the government to respect constitutional protections for separation of religion and state and end its interference in their community's internal religious affairs. While the Ethiopian government generally allowed the demonstrations to occur without interference for the first half of 2012, almost a thousand protestors were arrested in July of that year. Protestors were also beaten, and there were reports of police use of teargas and live ammunition against them. Most of those arrested were later released, but in October 2012, authorities charged 29 people connected with

. . . despite some improvements, the government continues to engage in religious freedom violations.

In response to long-standing government concerns of rising extremism in the country, the Ethiopian Ministry of Federal Affairs and the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) from July to December 2011 held mandatory "religious tolerance" trainings for all imams and Islamic school teachers and administrators in the Addis Ababa and the Amhara, Harar, and Omiriya regions. The trainings were led by Lebanese al-Ahbash clerics and promoted the al-Ahbash Islamic ideology. The Ethiopian government denies its involvement in the promotion of al-Ahbash and reaffirmed to USCIRF that it respects the constitution's provision of

the protests with planning terrorism. In December the charges were amended to engaging in terrorism. Those charged include nine members of an Arbitration Committee tasked by the protestors to negotiate with the government on their demands.

Further, Muslims called for elections of new EIASC leadership who at the time has been government appointed. While elections were held in September 2012, protestors denounced the elections' credibility, complaining of government interference and that those individuals voted into leadership positions did not reflect the preferences of the community.

Current Situation

Since USCIRF's December 2012 visit to Ethiopia, al-Ahbash trainings and promotion have stopped. However, dismissed imams have not been permitted to resume their posts and the Aweliya Islamic School remains closed. Protests have continued intermittently and on a smaller scale than in 2012, although

Ethiopian officials both privately and publicly; offer a visit to Ethiopia by U.S. government officials and international counterterrorism experts to discuss best practices to combat religious extremism and to facilitate interreligious dialogue; increase engagement with Ethiopia's Muslim and Christian communities on religious freedom issues, including through educational and

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efforts to reignite weekly protests started in January 2014. Protests in July and August 2013 were met with government force with an unconfirmed number of persons killed and arrested.

The trial against the protestors continued during this reporting period and was held in secret. In February 2013, the Ethiopian government aired on Ethiopia TV *Jihadawi Harekat* (Holy War Movement) a program which portrayed the protesters and those arrested as terrorists. USCIRF noted its concern that the program could prejudice the outcome of their trial. In December 2013, 10 of the 29 individuals detained had their charges dropped and were released from prison, including two members of the Arbitration Committee. (See appendix for names of remaining prisoners.) Two NGOs were also found not guilty: Albi Development and Co-Operation Association and Nema Humanitarian Association. The trial is ongoing for the remaining 19, although the charges were reduced from engaging in acts of terrorism to planning acts of terrorism.

Recommendations

Ethiopia is one of the United States' strongest allies in Africa, despite the Ethiopian government's increasingly authoritarian actions and human rights violations.

To address the ongoing concerns in Ethiopia, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government: raise concerns about religious freedom violations and the ongoing trials and arrests of peaceful Muslim protestors with

cultural exchanges, the International Visitor Leadership Program, and lectures by visiting American scholars and experts; and urge the Ethiopian government to repeal the Civil Society Organizations Proclamation to allow for U.S. funding of programs to advance freedom of religion or belief, and inter- and intra-faith engagement.

KYRGYZSTAN

Over the past year, USCIRF has monitored religious freedom conditions in Kyrgyzstan. Although the Kyrgyz constitution provides for religious freedom for all citizens, the Kyrgyz government restricts the registration of some religious groups and the activities of Muslim and other groups it considered threats to security. Over 80 percent of Kyrgyzstan's population is Sunni Muslim, with some 1,000 Shi'a; 15 percent is

Seventh-Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Roman Catholic, and Jewish groups. An effort to ban the Unification Church as extremist was overturned by the Kyrgyz Supreme Court in 2013. In 2012, the government refused to re-register the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, based on purported "expert" advice which also served as the basis for a court ruling finding the Ahmadiyya community extremist and terrorist. After

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Christian, mostly Russian Orthodox, and an estimated 11,000 Protestants and a small number of Catholics; Jews, Buddhists and Baha'is are estimated at about 1,000 each.

Problematic religion law

Kyrgyzstan's 2008 religion law prohibits the distribution of religious materials in public places, apartments, private houses, schools and universities. The Kyrgyz religion law also imposes complex and burdensome registration requirements for religious organizations, including having 200 resident citizen founders and at least 10 members, of whom at least one must have been in Kyrgyzstan for 15 years.

Registration issues

In 2013, after they changed to their charters and names, the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Orthodox Church faced difficulties re-registering. Additionally, according to a September 2013 report by the Kyrgyz NGO Open Viewpoint, nine "non-traditional" religious organizations were denied local registration by the Bishkek City Council, including Evangelical Protestant,

the reporting period, a Bishkek court on March 14, 2014 banned the religious movement *Akromiya* on the grounds that it is an extremist organization.

Lists of prohibited religious organizations reportedly are coordinated with the decisions of intergovernmental regional security organizations, in particular, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Possible increase in regulation

In early February 2014, President Almazbek Atambayev reportedly chaired a government meeting to discuss increasing state regulation of the religious sphere, according to Forum 18 News Service. Participants included the new acting head of the state-backed Muslim Board, the new head of the State Commission for Religious Affairs, and officials from the National Security Committee, secret police, law enforcement agencies, Presidential Administration, and Parliament. After the meeting, a Presidential decree was issued announcing increased official control of the Muslim Board and the drafting of legal amendments that may further restrict freedom of religion. USCIRF will continue to monitor these developments.

Recommendations

USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should urge Kyrgyzstan to seek expert advice from relevant OSCE entities concerning any draft legislation pertaining to freedom of religion or belief, and should publicly raise Kyrgyzstan's religious freedom violations at appropriate international fora, such as the OSCE and the UN.

SRI LANKA

USCIRF is increasingly concerned about the religious freedom situation in Sri Lanka. In the last year there have been numerous attacks against religious minority communities, including Muslims, Hindus, and Christians, by extremist Buddhist monks and laity affiliated with Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist groups such as Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) and Sinhala Ravaya. Additionally, USCIRF received multiple reports that government officials and police did

Hostility against religious minorities

The BBS frequently makes public derogatory statements about religious minorities, calls for bans on Muslim headscarves and halal slaughter, urges Buddhists not to do business with religious minorities, and demands the adoption of an anti-conversion law. NGOs and various religious communities assert that it is BBS policy to incite Buddhist Monks and laity to violence. Allegedly, the BBS

USCIRF received multiple reports that government officials and police did not stop religiously-motivated attacks and in some cases participated in them, did not provide adequate protection for minority communities, and even harassed religious minority communities at their houses of worship.

not stop religiously-motivated attacks and in some cases participated in them, did not provide adequate protection for minority communities, and even harassed religious minority communities at their houses of worship. USCIRF reported on its monitoring of Sri Lanka between 2006 and 2010, but it was neither a CPC nor Tier 2 country.

Background

Until 2009, Sri Lanka was ravaged by a 26-year civil war primarily between government troops and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an ethnically-based movement seeking an independent state. During the war, both sides failed to take steps to prevent or stop incidents of communal violence involving Sinhalese Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. The UN and the United States have repeatedly called on the Sri Lankan government to allow an independent investigation of alleged war crimes committed by the government and the LTTE. The political aftermath of the civil war and allegations of war crimes continue to exacerbate religious and ethnic tensions.

has close political and financial ties to the government. In a March 2013 speech celebrating the opening of a BBS training school, Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, the brother of the Sri Lankan president, said “It is the monks who protect our country, religion and race.”

Increasing violence

Dozens of religiously-motivated attacks occurred during the last reporting year, with authorities rarely making arrests or initiating prosecutions. For example, over two days in August 2013, as Muslims celebrated the end of Ramadan, dozens of Buddhist monks and laity attacked the Grandpass mosque in Colombo and nearby Muslim homes. Four people were seriously injured. Reportedly, local police were warned of the attack in advance, but arrived after the violence. No known arrests were made. The Sri Lanka Muslim Council reportedly agreed to close the mosque and relocate to avoid ongoing harassment and potential violence. Video of the incident is widely available on the internet. Video of a January 2014 mob attack on the Assembly of God and Calvary churches in

Hikkaduwa is also available on the internet. Again, local police reportedly had been pre-warned but arrived after the attack. Eighteen individuals were arrested, including seven Buddhist monks. All were granted bail pending trial. It is not known if a trial date has been scheduled.

Recommendations

Since the end of the civil war, the United States has supported ethnic reconciliation efforts and post-conflict humanitarian support. In on-going engagement with the Sri Lankan government, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should: press the government to allow for a transparent and independent investigation into alleged 2009 war crimes as it relates to targeted attacks on religious minorities; ensure a portion humanitarian aid to Sri Lanka is used to help protect religious or ethnic minorities who have been or are likely targets of religious-motivated violence; train local government officials, police officers and judges on international religious freedom standards and on how to investigate and to fairly adjudicate violent attacks when they occur; and urge government officials to frequently and publically denounce religiously-motivated harassment and violence.

WESTERN EUROPE

USCIRF continues to monitor the religious freedom related issues in Western Europe highlighted in last year's Annual Report. These include restrictions on, and efforts to restrict, certain forms of religious expression (particularly dress and visible symbols, ritual slaughter, and religious circumcision); governmental monitoring of disfavored groups pejoratively labeled "cults" or "sects;" lack of accommodation of religious objections; and the potential use of hate speech laws against peaceful expressions of belief. USCIRF is concerned that these restrictions are creating a hostile atmosphere against certain forms of religious activity in Western Europe, as well as limiting social integration and educational and employment opportunities for the affected individuals. Governmental restrictions on religious freedom both arise from and encourage a societal atmosphere of intolerance against the targeted religious groups.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other international documents guarantee to every individual not only the right to believe, but also the right to manifest one's beliefs, individually or in community with others, in public or in private, through worship, observance, practice and teaching.¹ This encompasses a broad range of acts, including building places of worship, displaying symbols, observing dietary restrictions, wearing distinctive clothing or head coverings, and participating in rituals associated with certain stages of life.² Any limitations on these freedoms must meet several requirements: be prescribed by a narrowly-drawn law; not discriminatory; not destructive of guaranteed rights; not based solely on a single tradition; and necessary to protect an interest specifically enumerated in ICCPR Article 18. The five interests enumerated in Article 18 are public safety, public order, public health, public morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

¹ ICCPR, Article 18(1).

² Hum. Rts. Comm., gen. cmt. 22, art. 18, para. 2 (forty-eighth session, 1993), UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4 (1994).

Relevant developments during 2013-2014 are highlighted below.

Religious Dress

Various European states, at the national, state, and/or local level, restrict individuals from wearing visible religious symbols, such as Islamic headscarves, Sikh turbans, Jewish skullcaps, and Christian crosses, in certain contexts. For example, France and some parts of Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland prohibit wearing such symbols in public schools. In August 2013, a French government body, the High Council for Integration, proposed extending this ban to public universities. The French government also does not permit any government employees to wear visible religious symbols or religious dress at work. During 2013, President François Hollande and other high-ranking government officials publicly called for this prohibition to be extended to at least some private workplaces.

France and Belgium also ban the wearing of full-face Islamic veils anywhere in public. Covering one's face in public presents legitimate issues not presented by other forms of religious dress, such as the necessity of facial identification, which may justify governmental restrictions under certain circumstances. However, to satisfy international religious freedom standards, such restriction must be narrowly tailored to achieve a specified permitted ground (public safety, public order, public health, public morals, or the rights and freedoms of others) and it must be non-discriminatory. A case challenging the French full-face veil ban was argued before the European Court of Human Rights in November; the decision has yet to be released.

Ritual Slaughter

A 2009 European Union directive generally requires stunning before slaughter but allows countries to exempt religious slaughter. Nevertheless, EU members Luxembourg and Sweden and non-EU members

Switzerland, Norway, and Iceland continue to ban all slaughter without stunning, including ritual slaughter. In February 2014, Denmark joined these countries in prohibiting ritual slaughter. Ritual slaughter also is currently not permitted in Poland after a late 2012 court ruling, but the country's Muslim and Jewish communities are seeking further court review. In July the Polish parliament rejected a bill that would have allowed ritual slaughter to resume in the country.

Religious Circumcision

Disputes continue concerning the religious circumcision of male children, which is integral to both Judaism and Islam. Organizations such as the Swedish Medical Association, the Danish College of General Practitioners, and the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children have spoken out against the practice as, in their view, abusive. In October 2013, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution expressing concern about violations of the physical integrity of children, including "female genital mutilation, the circumcision of young boys for religious reasons, early childhood medical interventions in the case of intersex children, and the submission to, or coercion of, children into piercings, tattoos or plastic surgery." The resolution called for doctors and religious representatives to engage in "dialogue" to "clearly define" acceptable circumstances for religious circumcision. The accompanying report called the practice the "dark side" of religion and a human rights violation. In December 2013, a group of PACE parliamentarians proposed a counter-resolution calling the Jewish and Muslim circumcision of boys "a religious rite which does not present risks for children [that] should be respected as a longstanding religious tradition." It remained under consideration at the end of the reporting period.

Governmental Monitoring of Disfavored Religious Groups

Since the 1990s, the governments of France, Austria, Belgium, and Germany have, to varying degrees, taken measures against religious groups they view as "cults" or "sects," including through monitoring and investigations. Targeted groups have included Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientologists, Hare Krishnas, Evangelical Protestants, and other small, non-traditional, and/or new religious communities. In 2012, the French govern-

ment created a new entity (in addition to its "anti-cult" agency) to observe and promote secularism in the country, about which some religious groups have expressed concern.

Hate Speech Laws

The peaceful public sharing of one's religious beliefs is both an integral part of religious freedom and also protected by freedom of expression. This includes the expression of beliefs that may be offensive to others or are controversial in society, such as views on homosexuality or abortion. Vague and overbroad laws against "incitement to hatred" that encompass speech that does not rise to the level of incitement of violence pose a risk of chilling protected expression. If used against the peaceful expression of beliefs, they can result in violations of the freedoms of speech and religion.

Accommodation of Religious Objections

There have been issues in many countries concerning how to address conflicts between religious beliefs and generally-applicable laws, government policies, or employer requirements. In January 2013, the European Court of Human Rights recognized that wearing religious symbols or not being required to endorse same-sex relationships are protected manifestations of religious freedom that employers may only limit under certain circumstances.³ The decision did not establish a uniform approach for all cases, but rather gave great deference to national authorities to decide how to strike the balance in each particular case. In this context, the 2013 USCIRF Annual Report also discussed the prohibition on home-schooling in Germany and mentioned the case of a German home-schooling family, the Romeikes, seeking asylum in the United States. In February 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the Romeike's appeal of a lower court decision denying their asylum claim, but U.S. Department of Homeland Security decided to allow them to remain in the United States nonetheless.

³ Eweida and others v. the United Kingdom, nos. 48420/10, 59842/10, 51671/10 and 36516/10, chamber judgment (January 15, 2013).

APPENDIX 1

STATEMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

Statement of Commissioner

William J. Shaw:

Iwish to be recorded as a dissenting vote on the decision to make Turkey a tier II country. I think that the events over the past years of examination justify the category of “other countries and regions monitored.”

Let me be listed also as a dissenting vote on the 15 year IRFA Review chapter. I think that the timeframe for review was too limited, the range of persons consulted was too narrow and the Policy Review section calls for an unnecessary increased congressional involvement in the Executive Branch implementations of the IRFA charges. Further, because religious beliefs are intentionally personal and valued, its practices culturally conditioned, effecting change cannot best be done by an overshadowing presence or threat of sanctions.

Reverend William J. Shaw

APPENDIX 2

BIOGRAPHIES OF USCIRF COMMISSIONERS

Dr. Robert George, Chairman

Robert P. George is McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence and Director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University. He has been a Visiting Professor at Harvard Law School, and is a Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

He has served on the President's Council on Bioethics and as a presidential appointee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. He has also served on UNESCO's World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), of which he remains a corresponding member.

A graduate of Swarthmore College and Harvard Law School, Professor George also earned a master's degree in theology from Harvard and a doctorate in philosophy of law from Oxford University, which he attended on a Knox Scholarship from Harvard. He holds honorary doctorates of law, letters, science, ethics, divinity, humane letters, civil law, and juridical science.

He is the author of *Making Men Moral: Civil Liberties and Public Morality* and *In Defense of Natural Law*, among other books. His articles and review essays have appeared in the *Harvard Law Review*, the *Yale Law Journal*, the *Columbia Law Review*, the *Review of Politics*, the *Review of Metaphysics*, the *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, and *Law and Philosophy*. He has also written for the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, *First Things* magazine, *National Review*, the *Boston Review*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Professor George is a former Judicial Fellow at the Supreme Court of the United States, where he received the Justice Tom C. Clark Award.

His other honors include the United States Presidential Citizens Medal, the Honorable Medal for the Defense of Human Rights of the Republic of Poland, the Bradley Prize for Intellectual and Civic Achievement,

the Phillip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Liberal Arts of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, a Silver Gavel Award of the American Bar Association, the Paul Bator Award of the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy, and the Canterbury Medal of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and is Of Counsel to the law firm of Robinson & McElwee.

Dr. George was appointed to the Commission on March 22, 2012 by Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH).

Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser, Vice Chair

M. Zuhdi Jasser, M.D. is the President of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy (AIFD) based in Phoenix, Arizona. A first generation American Muslim, Dr. Jasser's parents fled the oppressive Baath regime of Syria in the mid-1960's for American freedom. A devout Muslim, he and his family have strong ties to the American Muslim community having helped lead mosques in Wisconsin, Arkansas, Virginia and Arizona.

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the United States, Dr. Jasser and a group of American Muslims founded AIFD which promotes Muslim voices for liberty and freedom through the separation of mosque and state in order to counter the root cause of Islamist terrorism--the ideology of political Islam (Islamism) and a belief in the supremacy of the Islamic state. AIFD's primary projects include the Muslim Liberty Project, the American Islamic Leadership Coalition and Save Syria Now!

An internationally recognized expert on Islamism, Dr. Jasser is widely published on domestic and foreign issues related to Islam, Islamism, and modernity. He has spoken at hundreds of national and international events including testimony to the U.S. Congress on the centrality of religious liberty in countering Muslim radicalization within the "House of Islam". He is a contributing writer to a number of books and the author of *The Battle for the Soul of Islam: An American Muslim Patriot's*

Fight to Save His Faith (Simon & Schuster, 2012).

Dr. Jasser earned his medical degree on a U.S. Navy scholarship at the Medical College of Wisconsin in 1992. He served 11 years as a medical officer in the U. S. Navy, achieving the rank of Lieutenant Commander. His tours of duty included Medical Department Head aboard the U.S.S. El Paso, Chief Resident at Bethesda Naval Hospital, and Staff Internist for the Office of the Attending Physician to the U. S. Congress. He is a recipient of the Meritorious Service Medal.

Dr. Jasser is a respected physician currently in private practice specializing in internal medicine and nuclear cardiology. He is a Past-President of the Arizona Medical Association. He and his wife Gada and their three children reside in Arizona.

Dr. Jasser was appointed to the Commission on March 22, 2012 by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY).

Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, Vice Chair

Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett established the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice in 2008 and serves as its President and Chief Executive Officer. This human rights organization is proudly carrying on the unique legacy of the late Congressman Tom Lantos who, as the only survivor of the Holocaust ever elected to Congress, was one of our nation's most eloquent and forceful leaders on behalf of human rights and justice. In addition to managing the Lantos Foundation, Dr. Lantos Swett teaches human rights and American foreign policy at Tufts University. She also taught at the University of Southern Denmark while her husband, former Congressman Richard Swett, was serving as the U.S. Ambassador in Copenhagen.

Her varied professional experiences include working on Capitol Hill as Deputy Counsel to the Criminal Justice Sub-Committee of the Senate Judiciary Committee for then Senator Joe Biden and as a consultant to businesses, charitable foundations, and political campaigns.

Dr. Lantos Swett also has experience in broadcasting, having co-hosted the highly regarded political talk show "Beyond Politics" for many years on WMUR TV, New Hampshire's only network affiliated television station. As co-host, she interviewed state, national, and international figures, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Vice President Al Gore, First Lady

Hillary Clinton, Members of the United States Congress, and George Stephanopoulos on the issues of the day.

From 2003-2006 Dr. Lantos Swett served as the Director of the Graduate program in Public Policy at New England College, where she now serves on the college's Board of Trustees. She is also a member of the Board of HRNK Human Rights in North Korea and the Tom Lantos Institute in Budapest. She has served on numerous Boards in the past, including the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium Foundation, the Institute for Justice Sector Development, the Granite State Coalition Against Expanded Gambling (co-Chair), and the NH Citizen's Commission on the State Courts. She has also been active in Democratic politics for over three decades. In 2002, she was the Democratic nominee for Congress in New Hampshire's 2nd District, and she was chosen as a Presidential elector in 1992. She has been a member of the New Hampshire Democratic Party (NHDP) Executive Committee and served as Vice-Chair of the NHDP Finance Committee.

Under Dr. Lantos Swett's leadership as President and CEO, the Lantos Foundation has quickly become a distinguished and respected voice on many key human rights concerns ranging from rule of law in Russia and Internet freedom in closed societies to the on-going threat of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. The Foundation also supports human rights defenders around the globe through its Front Line Fund and runs the Lantos Congressional Fellows program in conjunction with Humanity in Action. Each year the Lantos Foundation awards the Lantos Human Rights Prize to an individual who has demonstrated a commitment to standing up for decency, dignity, freedom, and justice. Past recipients have included His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Professor Elie Wiesel, and Paul Rusesabagina.

Dr. Lantos Swett graduated from Yale University in 1974 at the age of 18 and earned her Juris Doctor at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in 1976. She received her Ph.D. in History from the University of Southern Denmark in 2001. Dr. Lantos Swett has been married for 31 years to former Congressman and Ambassador Richard Swett and they are parents of 7 children and 2 grandchildren. She resides in Bow, New Hampshire.

Dr. Lantos Swett was appointed to the Commission on March 26, 2012 by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV).

Hon. Elliott Abrams, Commissioner

Elliott Abrams is senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in Washington, DC. He served as deputy assistant to the president and deputy national security adviser in the administration of President George W. Bush, where he supervised U.S. policy in the Middle East for the White House.

Mr. Abrams joined the Bush administration in June 2001 as special assistant to the president and senior director of the National Security Council (NSC) for democracy, human rights, and international organizations. From December 2002 to February 2005, he served as special assistant to the president and senior director of the National Security Council for Near East and North African affairs. He served as deputy assistant to the president and deputy national security adviser for global democracy strategy from February 2005 to January 2009, and in that capacity supervised both the Near East and North African affairs, and the democracy, human rights, and international organizations directorates of the NSC.

Mr. Abrams was president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, DC, from 1996 until joining the White House staff. He was a member of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom from 1999 to 2001, and chairman of the commission in the latter year. Mr. Abrams is currently a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, which directs the activities of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. He teaches U.S. foreign policy at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Abrams spent four years working for the United States Senate, including as special counsel to Senator Henry M. Jackson in 1975-1976, and as special counsel and then chief of staff to Senator Daniel P. Moynihan from January 1977 to June 1979. Mr. Abrams served in the State Department during all eight years of the Reagan Administration, as assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs, then as assistant secretary for human rights and humanitarian affairs, and finally as assistant secretary for inter-American affairs. In 1988, Mr. Abrams received the Secretary of State's distinguished service award from Secretary George P. Shultz.

Mr. Abrams was educated at Harvard College (BA, 1969), the London School of Economics (MSc, 1970) and

Harvard Law School (JD, 1973). He is the author of four books, *Undue Process* (1993), *Security and Sacrifice* (1995), *Faith or Fear: How Jews Can Survive in a Christian America* (1997), and *Tested by Zion: The Bush Administration and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (2013); and the editor of three more, *Close Calls: Intervention, Terrorism, Missile Defense and "Just War" Today; Honor Among Nations: Intangible Interests and Foreign Policy*; and *The Influence of Faith: Religion and American Foreign Policy*. He also writes about U.S. foreign policy, with special focus on the Middle East and democracy and human rights issues, on his CFR blog, "Pressure Points."

Mr. Abrams was appointed to the Commission on May 15, 2012 by Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH).

Hon. Sam Gejdenson, Commissioner

Sam Gejdenson served as a Member of Congress from 1981 until 2000 as the U.S. Representative from the Second Congressional District in Connecticut. During his tenure in Congress, he rose to be the senior Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. While on the Committee, he was widely recognized for his expertise in, among other areas, human rights, democracy and global engagement. His leadership on curbing international trafficking of women and children is reflected in his co-authorship of the groundbreaking Trafficking Victims Protection Act (which was reauthorized in 2008). Since leaving office, Mr. Gejdenson has, among other activities, worked to help build democracy in Eastern Europe and nations of the former Soviet Union. He has served on numerous boards including American Jewish World Service (AJWS), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), monitored elections in Bangladesh, Belarus, Georgia, Peru and Ukraine, and advised NDI's country offices world-wide on promoting democracy and good government.

Gejdenson, the first child of Holocaust survivors elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, was born in 1948 in a U.S. displaced persons camp in Eschwege, Germany. He received an A.S. degree from Mitchell College in New London, Connecticut in 1968 and a B.A. from the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Connecticut in 1970. In 1974, he was elected to the Connecticut House of Representatives, serving two terms before accepting a post in the administration of Connecticut Governor Ella T. Grasso.

Mr. Gejdenson was appointed by the Commission on the recommendation of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi on April 27, 2012.

Ambassador Mary Ann Glendon, Commissioner

Mary Ann Glendon is the Learned Hand Professor of Law at Harvard University, and former U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See. She writes and teaches in the fields of human rights, comparative law, constitutional law, and political theory.

Glendon is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences since 1991, the International Academy of Comparative Law, the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences which she served as President from 2004-2014. She is also a past president of the UNESCO-sponsored International Association of Legal Science. She served two terms as a member of the U.S. President's Council on Bioethics (2001-2004), and has represented the Holy See at various conferences including the 1995 U.N. Women's conference in Beijing where she headed the Vatican delegation.

Glendon has contributed to legal and social thought in several articles and books, and has lectured widely in this country and in Europe. Her widely translated books, bringing a comparative approach to a variety of subjects, include *The Forum and the Tower* (2011), a series of biographical essays exploring the relation between political philosophy and politics-in-action; *Traditions in Turmoil* (2006), a collection of essays on law, culture and human rights; *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (2001), which the New York Times reviewer said should be the definitive study of the framing of the UDHR; *A Nation Under Lawyers* (1996), a portrait of turbulence in the legal profession, analyzing the implications of changes in legal culture for a democratic polity that entrusts crucial roles to legally trained men and women; *Seedbeds of Virtue* (co-edited with David Blankenhorn) (1995); *Rights Talk* (1991), a critique of the impoverishment of political discourse; *The Transformation of Family Law* (1989), winner of the legal academy's highest honor, the Order of the Coif Triennial Book Award; *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law* (1987), winner of the Scribes Book Award for best writing on a legal subject; *The New*

Family and the New Property (1981), and textbooks on comparative legal traditions.

Her prizes and honors include the National Humanities Medal, the Bradley Foundation Prize, and honorary doctorates from numerous universities including the Universities of Chicago and Louvain.

Glendon taught at Boston College Law School from 1968 to 1986, and has been a visiting professor at the University of Chicago Law School and the Gregorian University in Rome.

She received her bachelor of arts, juris doctor, and master of comparative law degrees from the University of Chicago. During a post-graduate fellowship for the study of European law, she studied at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and was a legal intern with the European Economic Community. From 1963 to 1968, she practiced law with the Chicago firm of Mayer, Brown & Platt, and served as a volunteer civil rights attorney in Mississippi during "Freedom Summer" 1964.

A native of Berkshire County, she lives in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.

Ambassador Glendon was appointed to the Commission on May 23, 2012 by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY).

Hon. Eric Schwartz, Commissioner

Eric Schwartz became dean of the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota in October 2011, after serving for 25 years in senior public service positions in government, at the United Nations and in the philanthropic and non-governmental communities.

Prior to his arrival in Minnesota, he was U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration, having been nominated by President Obama and confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 2009. Working with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, he served as the Department of State's principal humanitarian official, managing a \$1.85 billion budget, as well as State Department policy and programs for U.S. refugee admissions and U.S. international assistance worldwide.

From 2006 through 2009, he directed the Connect U.S. Fund, a multi-foundation - NGO collaborative seeking to promote responsible U.S. engagement overseas, and which included the Hewlett Foundation, the

Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Open Society Institute, the Ford Foundation, the Atlantic Philanthropies and the Mott Foundation.

From August 2005 through January 2007, he served as the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Deputy Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery. In that capacity, he worked with the Special Envoy, former President Clinton, to promote an effective recovery effort. Before that appointment, he was a lead expert for the congressionally mandated Mitchell-Gingrich Task Force on UN Reform. Prior to that, in 2003 and 2004, he served as the second-ranking official at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva.

From 1993 to 2001, he served at the National Security Council at the White House, ultimately as Senior Director and Special Assistant to the President for Multilateral and Humanitarian Affairs. He managed responses on international humanitarian, human rights and rule of law issues, as well as United Nations affairs, including peacekeeping.

From 2001 through 2003, he held fellowships at the Woodrow Wilson Center, the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Council on Foreign Relations. During this period, he also served as a contributor to the Responsibility to Protect Project of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty.

From 1989 to 1993, he served as Staff Consultant to the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs. Prior to his work on the Subcommittee, he was Washington Director of the human rights organization Asia Watch (now known as Human Rights Watch-Asia). He holds a law degree from New York University School of Law, where he was a recipient of a Root-Tilden-Snow Scholarship for commitment to public service through law; a Master of Public Affairs degree from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs Princeton University; and a Bachelor of Arts degree, with honors, in Political Science from the State University of New York at Binghamton. Between 2001 and 2009, he also was a visiting lecturer of public and international affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School, teaching both undergraduate and graduate seminars, taskforces and workshops.

He was appointed to the Commission on April 25, 2013 by President Obama.

Rev. William Shaw, Commissioner

Dr. William Shaw is the Immediate Past President of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. and Pastor of White Rock Baptist Church in Philadelphia, a position he has held since 1956. In addition to his work as Pastor of the White Rock Baptist Church, Dr. Shaw is a recognized leader in Pennsylvania and across the nation. He was previously appointed to serve on the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund and currently sits on the Board of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Shaw has served as President of The Baptist Ministers' Conference of Philadelphia and Vicinity, The Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia, and the Union Theological Seminary National Alumni Association. From 1981 through 1994, Dr. Shaw served as Director of the Ministers' Division of the National Congress of Christian Education. He has been the recipient of numerous awards, including most recently, the Unitas Award, given by the Alumni Association of the Union Theological Seminary and the T. B. Maston Foundation Christian Ethics Award from the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dr. Shaw was appointed on June 15, 2010 by President Barack Obama. President Obama reappointed Dr. Shaw on May 11, 2012.

Dr. James J. Zogby, Commissioner

Dr. James J. Zogby is the founder and president of the Arab American Institute (AAI), a Washington, D.C.-based organization which serves as the political and policy research arm of the Arab American community. He is also Managing Director of Zogby Research Services, which specializes in public opinion polling across the Arab world.

Since 1985, Dr. Zogby and AAI have led Arab American efforts to secure political empowerment in the U.S. Through voter registration, education and mobilization, AAI has moved Arab Americans into the political mainstream.

For the past three decades, Dr. Zogby has been involved in a full range of Arab American issues. A co-founder and chairman of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign in the late 1970s, he later co-founded and served as the Executive Director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. In 1982, he co-founded Save Lebanon, Inc., a relief organization

which provided health care for Palestinian and Lebanese victims of war. In 1985, Zogby founded AAI.

In 1993, following the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accord in Washington, he was asked by Vice President Al Gore to lead Builders for Peace, an effort to promote U.S. business investment in the West Bank and Gaza. In his capacity as co-president of Builders, Zogby frequently traveled to the Middle East with delegations led by Vice President Gore and late Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown.

Dr. Zogby has also been active in U.S. politics for many years. Since 1995 he has played a leadership role in the National Democratic Ethnic Coordinating Committee (NDECC), an umbrella organization of leaders of European and Mediterranean descent. In 2001, he was appointed to the Executive Committee of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), and in 2006 was also named Co-Chair of the DNC's Resolutions Committee.

A lecturer and scholar on Middle East issues, U.S.-Arab relations, and the history of the Arab American community, Dr. Zogby has an extensive media profile in the U.S. and across the Arab World. He currently serves as Chairman of the Editorial Advisory Committee for SkyNewsArabia. Since 1992, Dr. Zogby has also written a weekly column published in 14 Arab and South Asian countries.

He has authored a number of books, including: "Looking at Iran" (2013), "Arab Voices" (2010), "What Ethnic Americans Really Think" (2002), and "What Arabs Think: Values, Beliefs and Concerns" (2001).

In 1975, Dr. Zogby received his doctorate from Temple University's Department of Religion. He was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Princeton University in 1976, and has been awarded numerous grants and honorary degrees.

Dr. Zogby is married to Eileen Patricia McMahon.

Dr. Zogby was appointed to the Commission on September 6, 2013 by President Obama.

APPENDIX 3

LIST OF KNOWN BLASPHEMY PRISONERS

As of April 10, 2014, the following individuals are serving prison sentences under laws prohibiting blasphemy, defamation of religion, or contempt or insult to

religion or religious symbols, figures, or feelings. The list is based on information collected by USCIRF and is not comprehensive.

	COUNTRY	INDIVIDUAL	SENTENCE
1.	Egypt	Amr Abdalla	Five years
2.	Egypt	Bishoy Kameel	Six years
3.	Egypt	Ayman Yousef Mansour	Three years
4.	Egypt	Karam Saber	Five years
5.	Indonesia	Andreas Guntur	Four years
6.	Indonesia	Antonius Richmond Bawangan	Five years
7.	Pakistan	Shafqat Emmanuel	Death
8.	Pakistan	Shugufta Emmanuel	Death
9.	Pakistan	Savan Masih	Death
10.	Pakistan	Muhammad Asghar	Death
11.	Pakistan	Hazrat Ali Shah	Death
12.	Pakistan	Soofi Mohammad Ishaq	Death
13.	Pakistan	Abdul Sattar	Death
14.	Pakistan	Rafiq	Death
15.	Pakistan	Malik Muhammad Ashraf	Death
16.	Pakistan	Malik Ashraf	Death
17.	Pakistan	Ms. Aasia Noreen Bibi	Death
18.	Pakistan	Muhammad Shafeeq Latif	Death
19.	Pakistan	Liaqat	Death
20.	Pakistan	Muhammad Shafiq	Death
21.	Pakistan	Abdul Hameed	Death
22.	Pakistan	Anwar Kenneth	Death
23.	Pakistan	Wajihul Hassan aka Murshid Masih	Death
24.	Pakistan	Sajjad Masih	Life in prison
25.	Pakistan	Manzarul Haq Shah Jahan	Life in prison
26.	Pakistan	Muhammad Mushtaq alias Masta	Life in prison
27.	Pakistan	Imran Ghafoor	Life in prison
28.	Pakistan	Muhammad Ishaq	Life in prison
29.	Pakistan	Muhammad Safdar	Life in prison
30.	Pakistan	Muhammad Shafi	Life in prison
31.	Pakistan	Muhammad Aslam (son)	Life in prison
32.	Pakistan	Imran Masih	Life in prison

	COUNTRY	INDIVIDUAL	SENTENCE
33.	Pakistan	Abdul Kareem	Life in prison
34.	Pakistan	Inayat Rasool	Life in prison
35.	Pakistan	Asif	Life in prison
36.	Pakistan	Arif Mahdi	Life in prison
37.	Pakistan	Imran	Life in prison
38.	Pakistan	Shamas ud Din	Life in prison
39.	Pakistan	Maqsood Ahmad	Life in prison
40.	Pakistan	Muhammad Shahzad	Life in prison
41.	Pakistan	Muhammad Yousaf	Life in prison
42.	Pakistan	Rehmat Ali	Life in prison
43.	Saudi Arabia	Raif Badawi	Five years

APPENDIX 4 FIFTY ONE RELIGIOUS PRISONER CASES IN AZERBAIJAN

**Compilation by the Azerbaijan Legal Protection and Awareness Society Public Union
Contributions by the Azerbaijan Institute for Peace and Democracy
(Includes Relevant Articles of Azerbaijan's Criminal Code and Prison Addresses)**

Case Description

Persons detained for the “Freedom for *hijab*” demonstration held on 10/5/2012. On 12/10/2010, the Azeri Education Ministry ordered the wearing of school uniforms, thereby banning the Islamic headscarf. A mass

protest, held in May 2011, was violently dispersed; a second protest in October 2012 resulted in mass arrests. There are reports that government provocateurs initiated a confrontation with police that resulted in the use of force and arrests.

	NAME	DATE OF ARREST	ARTICLES OF THE CRIMINAL CODE	PLACE OF DETENTION	STATUS
1.	Ruhid Nariman Abbasov	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 5	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/4/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July 2013.
2.	Xudaverdi Yaser Abdullayev	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 5	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/4/2013.
3.	Tarlan Faiq Agadadashov	10/5/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 5.5-year prison term on 4/22/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court on 12/19/2013.
4.	Bakhtiyar Latif Agayev	10/5/2012	233	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 1-year 9-month prison term on 5/20/2013.
5.	Rovshan Huseyn Allahverdiyev	10/5/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 5.5-year prison term on 4/22/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court on 12/19/2013.
6.	Arif Böyükaga Fataliyev	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 14	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/3/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in August, 2013.
7.	Elshan Aliaga Hashimov	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/4/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July, 2013.
8.	Nasimi Yusif Hasanov	10/6/2012	228.1; 234.1	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 4-year prison term on 7/27/2013.
9.	Ilham Bahman Hatamov	10/5/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 14	Sentenced to 5.5-year prison term on 4/22/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court on 12/19/2013.
10.	David Tarlan Karimov	10/5/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 6-year prison term on 4/22/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court on 12/19/2013.
11.	Rauf Nabi Qarayev	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 1-year 9-month prison term on 6/4/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July 2013.

	NAME	DATE OF ARREST	ARTICLES OF THE CRIMINAL CODE	PLACE OF DETENTION	STATUS
12.	Anar Asgar Gasimli	10/5/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 14	Sentenced to 5.5-year prison term on 4/22/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court on 12/19/2013
13.	Elchin Adil Gadimov	10/5/2012	233	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/4/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July 2013.
14.	Nahid Nasib Gahramanov	6/5/2013	233; 315.2	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 4-year prison term on 10/21/2013.
15.	Mammad Anvar Gambarov	10/5/2012	233	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 1-year 9-month prison term on 5/20/2013.
16.	Jeyhun Garyagdi Guliyev	10/5/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 14	Sentenced to 5-year prison term on 4/22/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court on 12/19/2013.
17.	Sakhavat Huseyn Guliyev	10/5/2012	233	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/4/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July 2013.
18.	Muraday Mursal Quluyev	10/5/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 17	Sentenced to 5-year prison term on 4/22/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court on 12/19/2013.
19.	Vahid Yusif Lalakishiyev	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 17	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/3/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July 2013.
20.	Ramil Babaxan Mehdiyev	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/3/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in August 2013.
21.	Aydin Canbakhish Mammadov	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 17	Sentenced to 2-years 3-month prison term on 6/4/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July 2013.
22.	Elchin Alisafa Mammadov	10/5/2012	233	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 1-year 9-month prison term on 6/3/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in August 2013.
23.	Elchin Fizuli Mammadov	10/5/2012	233	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 1-year 9-month prison term on 6/4/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July 2013.
24.	Nofal Khurshud Mammadov	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 5	Sentenced to 1-year 9-month prison term on 5/20/2013.
25.	Yusif Mirzayev	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 1-year 9-month prison term on 5/20/2013.
26.	Elshad Fikrat Rzayev	2/23/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 6-year prison term on 6/3/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in August 2013.
27.	Sahil Xalid Rzayev	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/4/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July, 2013.
28.	Telman Shirali Shiraliyev	10/5/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 6-year prison term on 4/22/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court on 12/19/2013.

	NAME	DATE OF ARREST	ARTICLES OF THE CRIMINAL CODE	PLACE OF DETENTION	STATUS
29.	Bayramali Gurbanali Valishov	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/4/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July 2013.
30.	Dadash Tofiq Valiyev	10/5/2012	233	Prison No. 17	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 6/4/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in July 2013.
31.	Ramil Rahim Valiyev	10/5/2012	167.2.1	Prison No. 5	Sentenced to 6.5-year prison term on 6/3/2013; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court in August 2013.

Case Description

Persons arrested with journalist Nijat Aliyev, editor of www.azad.xeber.az, a Muslim website. Aliyev, other journalists, and young people were arrested in 2013 for

campaigning against the arrests of religious believers and for distributing discs with religious materials (including sermons by imprisoned Muslim leaders Abdul Suleymanov and Tale Bagirov).

	NAME	DATE OF ARREST/ TRIAL	ARTICLES OF THE CRIMINAL CODE	PLACE OF DETENTION	STATUS
1.	Nidjat Aliyev	05/20/2012	167.2.2.1; 234.1; 282.1; 283.2.2	Unknown	Sentenced to 10 years in prison
2.	Valeh Mammadaga Abdullayev	12/9/2013	167.2.2.1; 281.2; 283.2.3	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 8-year prison term on 12/9/2013.
3.	Qorkhmaz Huseyn Jamalov	1/18/2013	167.2.2.1; 281.2; 283.2.3	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 8-year prison term on 12/9/2013.
4.	Ali Etibar Aliyev	12/9/2013	167.2.2.1; 283.2.3	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 4-year prison term on 12/9/2013.
5.	Elimkhan Gurbankhan Huseynov	5/22/2012	167.2.2.1; 283.2.3	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 7-year prison term on 12/9/2013.
6.	Samir Khanpasha Huseynov	5/23/2012	167.2.2.1; 228.1; 228.4; 283.2.3	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 6-year prison term on 12/9/2013.
7.	Safar Rovshan Mammadov	12/9/2013	167.2.2.1; 283.2.3	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 3-years 4 month prison term 12/9/2013.
8.	Elvin Nuraddin Nasirov	5/20/2013	167.2.2.1; 234.4.1; 234.4.3; 281.2; 283.2.3	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 9-year prison term on 12/9/2013.
9.	Jeyhun Zabil Safarli	5/20/2013	167.2.2.1; 234.4.1; 234.4.3; 281.2; 283.2.3	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 9-year prison term on 12/9/2013.

	NAME	DATE OF ARREST/ TRIAL	ARTICLES OF THE CRIMINAL CODE	PLACE OF DETENTION	STATUS
10.	Emin Yadigar Tofidi	1/16/2013	167.2.2.1; 283.2.3	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 3.5-year prison term on 12/9/2013.

Case Description

Persons arrested in the Masalli region along with journalist Araz Guliyev, editor of www.xeber44.com, a website critical of Azeri policies on religion. In 2012, six

Muslims from Masalli were arrested on various false charges, including stoning people during a local folk festival. The defendants assisted in Guliyev's activities as a journalist.

	NAME	DATE OF ARREST	ARTICLES OF THE CRIMINAL CODE	PLACE OF DETENTION	STATUS
1.	Araz Guliyev	09/08/2012	228.1; 233; 283.1; 315.2; 324	Unknown	Sentenced to 8 years in prison on 04/5/2013.
2.	Rza Gorkhmaz Agali	9/9/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 14	Sentenced to 7-year prison term on 4/5/2013; ruling upheld by Shirvan Appeals Court on 1/9/2014.
3.	Suraj Valeh Agayev	9/15/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 5	Sentenced to 5-year prison term on 4/5/2013; ruling upheld by Shirvan Appeals Court on 1/9/2014.
4.	Nijat Yaser Aliyev	9/18/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 16	Sentenced to 4.5-year prison term on 4/5/2013; ruling upheld by Shirvan Appeals Court on 1/9/2014.
5.	Khalid Nofal Kazimov	9/14/2012	233; 234.4.3; 315.2; 324	Prison No. 6	Sentenced to 8-year prison term on 4/5/2013; ruling upheld by Shirvan Appeals Court on 1/9/2014.
6.	Namig Alisa Kishiyev	9/18/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 5	Sentenced to 4.5-year prison term on 4/5/2013; ruling upheld by Shirvan Appeals Court on 1/9/2014.
7.	Ziya brahim Tahirov	9/9/2012	233; 315.2	Prison No. 5	Sentenced to 7-year prison term on 4/5/2013; ruling upheld by Shirvan Appeals Court on 1/9/2014.

Case Description

Tale Kamil Bagirov (also known as Taleh Bagirzadeh) a well-known Muslim theologian, was arrested after a video of his speech in a mosque was posted to the

internet. His speech was highly critical of Azerbaijani laws and policies on religion as well as illegal arrests of religious adherents and others. He was arrested on charges of drug possession.

	NAME	DATE OF ARREST	ARTICLES OF THE CRIMINAL CODE	PLACE OF DETENTION	STATUS
1.	Tale Kamil Bagirov	3/31/2013	234.1	Baku Investigative Prison	Sentenced to 2-year prison term on 11/1/2013.

Case Description

Abgul Neymat Suleymanov is an influential Muslim religious teacher, activist, founder of the “National-moral Values” Public Union and leading participant in protests of mosque destruction. He was arrested in

mid 2011 on suspicion of assisting a foreign state and its delegates in inciting enmity against Azerbaijan, as well as mass unrest, violation of public safety, and encouraging disobedience.

	NAME	DATE OF ARREST	ARTICLES OF THE CRIMINAL CODE	PLACE OF DETENTION	STATUS
1.	Abgul Neymat Suleymanov	8/12/2011	228.1; 233; 234.1; 234.4.3; 283.2.1	Prison No. 8	Sentenced to 11-year prison term on 8/10/2012; ruling upheld by Baku Appeals Court on 1/23/2013.

Case Description

Abgul Suleymanov is a leader of the *Jafari Heylyat* (Life of Jafar) Muslim religious congregation in Baku. As part of an official sweep against popular Muslim

leaders, he was arrested on August 12, 2011 on the false charge of “hostile activity against Azerbaijan, aiding to a foreign state and its representatives, abetting to disorders, public security and civil disobedience”.

	NAME	DATE OF ARREST	ARTICLES OF THE CRIMINAL CODE	PLACE OF DETENTION	STATUS
1.	Abgul Suleymanov	8/12/ 2011	228.1; 234; 283.2.1	Unknown	Sentenced to 11 years in prison on 8/10/2012.

Relevant Articles in Azerbaijan's Criminal Code

ARTICLE	DESCRIPTION
167.2.1	Import, sale and distribution of religious literature, religious items and other informational materials of religious nature with the aim of reproduction, sale and distribution without appropriate authorization
167.2.2.1	Import, sale and distribution of religious literature, religious items and other informational materials of religious nature with the aim of reproduction, sale and distribution without appropriate authorization, committed in advance agreement by a group of persons or organized group
214.2.1	Preparing to commit a crime [act of terror] through advance arrangement by a group of persons, an organized group or criminal community (criminal organization)
214.2.3	Preparing to commit a crime with fire-arms or objects used as a weapon
221.3	Hooliganism committed with the use of a weapon or objects used as a weapon
228.1	Illegal purchase, transfer, sale, storage, transportation or carrying of fire-arms, accessories to them, supplies (except for smooth-bore hunting weapons and ammunition), and explosives
228.3	Illegal purchase, transfer, sale, storage, transportation or carrying of fire-arms, accessories to them, supplies (except for smooth-bore hunting weapons and ammunition), explosives and facilities, committed by an organized group
228.4	Illegal purchase, selling or carrying of gas weapons, side arms, including throwing weapons, except for districts where carrying side arms is an accessory of a national suit or connected to hunting
233	Organization of or active participation in actions leading to a breach of public order
234	Illegal acquisition, keeping and carrying of narcotic drugs
234.1	Illegal purchase or storage (without intention of selling) of narcotics or psychotropic substances in a quantity (amount) exceeding what is necessary for personal consumption
234.4.1	Illegal purchase or storage (without intention of selling) of narcotics or psychotropic substances in a quantity (amount) exceeding what is necessary for personal consumption, committed on preliminary arrangement by group of persons or organized group
234.4.3	Illegal purchase or storage (without intention of selling) of narcotics or psychotropic substances in a quantity (amount) exceeding what is necessary for personal consumption, committed in large amount
278	Actions aimed at the violent capture of power or violent deduction power in infringement of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as aimed at the violent change of the state's constitutional grounds
281.2	Public appeals to violent capture of authority, violent deduction of authority or violent change in constitutional grounds or infringement of territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as distribution of materials with such contents, committed by a group of persons
283.1	Actions directed at provoking national, racial or religious hostility, humiliation of national advantage, as well as actions meant to restrict citizens rights, or to establish superiority of citizens on the basis of their nationality or race, and creeds committed publicly or with use of mass media
283.2.1	Actions directed at provoking national, racial or religious hostility, humiliation of national advantage, as well as actions meant to restrict citizens rights, or to establish superiority of citizens on the basis of their nationality or race, and creeds committed publicly or with use of mass media – committed with application of violence or with threat of its application
283.2.2	Incitement of ethnic, racial, social or religious hatred and enmity by using his position
283.2.3	Actions directed at provoking national, racial or religious hostility, humiliation of national advantage, as well as actions meant to restrict citizens rights, or establish superiority of citizens on the basis of their nationality or race, and creeds committed publicly or with use of mass media by organized group
315.2	Resistance or application of violence to representatives of authority
324	Actions insulting the National Flag or State Emblem of the Republic of Azerbaijan

List of Relevant Prison Addresses in Azerbaijan:

Prison No. 1

AZ-1029, Bakı city
Nizami district
M.Narimanov str. 1

Prison No. 11

AZ-1116, Bakı city
Binaqadi district
7th mikrorayon 10

Prison No. 17

AZ-1045, Bakı city
Khazar district
Bina settlement

Prison No. 5

AZ-5230, Salyan region
Yenikand village

Prison No. 12

AZ-1071, Bakı city
Qaradakh district
Puta settlement

Baku Investigative

Prison
AZ-1104, Bakı city
Sabunchu district
Zabrat-2 settlement

Prison No. 6

AZ-1029, Bakı city
Nizami district
Boyukshor settlement 23

Prison No. 14

AZ-1071, Bakı city
Qaradakh district
Qızıldash settlement

Prison No. 7

AZ-1032, Bakı city
Khatai district
Kohne Ahmadli settle-
ment

Prison No. 16

AZ-1042, Bakı city
Surakhanı district
Bul-Bula settlement

APPENDIX 5 ETHIOPIAN MUSLIMS IMPRISONED AND ON TRIAL FOR PEACEFUL PROTESTS

The following individuals were jailed in July 2012 for peacefully protesting the attempt by the Ethiopian government to control their religious structures and mandate different religious doctrine. All are charged with “planning, preparation, conspiracy, incitement and attempt of terrorist act” under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation.

	NAME
1.	Abubeker Ahmed Mohammed
2.	Ahmedin Jebel Mohammed
3.	Bedru Hussein Nurhusein
4.	Yassin Nuru Issa
5.	Kamil Shemsu Siraj
6.	Ahmed Mustefa Habin
7.	Seid Ali Juhar
8.	Mekete Muhe
9.	Munir Hussein Hassen
10.	Mubarek Aem Getu
11.	Sabir Yergu Mandefro
12.	Abubejer Alemu Muhe
13.	Khalid Ibrahim Balcha
14.	Abdurazak Akmel Hassen
15.	Mohammed Abate Tesemma
16.	Yusuf Getachew Zewde
17.	Nuru Turki Nuru
18.	Bahru Umer Shekur
19.	Murad Shekur Jemal

APPENDIX 6 IMPRISONED JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN ERITREA

As of February 6, 2014¹

	NAME OF PRISONER	AGE	GENDER	PRISON	DATE IMPRISONED	REASON FOR ARREST
1.	Paulos Eyassu	41	Male	Sawa Camp	September 24, 1994	Conscientious Objection
2.	Isaac Mogos	38	Male	Sawa Camp	September 24, 1994	Conscientious Objection
3.	Negede Teklemariam	38	Male	Sawa Camp	September 24, 1994	Conscientious Objection
4.	Aron Abraha	38	Male	Sawa Camp	May 9, 2001	Conscientious Objection
5.	Mussie Fessehaye	40	Male	Sawa Camp	June 2003	Conscientious Objection
6.	Ambakom Tsegezab	36	Male	Sawa Camp	February 2004	Conscientious Objection
7.	Bemnet Fessehaye	41	Male	Sawa Camp	February 2005	Conscientious Objection
8.	Henok Ghebru	28	Male	Sawa Camp	February 2005	Conscientious Objection
9.	Woreda Kiros	55	Male	Sawa Camp	May 4, 2005	Religious Activity
10.	Yonathan Yonas	26	Male	Sawa Camp	November 12, 2005	Religious Activity
11.	Kibreab Fessehaye	34	Male	Sawa Camp	December 27, 2005	Conscientious Objection
12.	Bereket Abraha Oqbagabir	44	Male	Sawa Camp	January 1, 2006	Conscientious Objection
13.	Yosief Fessehaye	23	Male	Sawa Camp	2007	Conscientious Objection
14.	Mogos Gebremeskel	66	Male	Adi-Abieto	July 3, 2008	Unknown
15.	Bereket Abraha	65	Male	Meitir Camp	July 8, 2008	Unknown
16.	Goitom Gebrekristos	76	Male	Meitir Camp	July 11, 2008	Unknown
17.	Ermias Ashgedom	22	Male	Meitir Camp	July 11, 2008	Unknown
18.	Habtemichael Mekonen	71	Male	Meitir Camp	July 17, 2008	Unknown
19.	Tareke Tesfamariam	61	Male	Meitir Camp	August 4, 2008	Unknown
20.	Tesfai Teklemariam	59	Male	Meitir Camp	August 5, 2008	Unknown
21.	Goitom Aradom	68	Male	Meitir Camp	August 8, 2008	Unknown
22.	Habtemichael Tesfamariam	64	Male	Meitir Camp	August 8, 2008	Unknown
23.	Tewoldemedhin Habtezion	53	Male	Meitir Camp	August 9, 2008	Unknown
24.	Teferi Beyene	71	Male	Meitir Camp	September 23, 2008	Unknown
25.	Beyene Abraham	60	Male	Meitir Camp	October 23, 2008	Unknown
26.	Asfaha Haile	78	Male	Meitir Camp	December 2, 2008	Unknown
27.	Semere Negussega	75	Male	Meitir Camp	December 22, 2008	Unknown
28.	Muse Paulos	67	Male	Meitir Camp	December 23, 2008	Unknown
29.	Tsehay Leghesse	73	Male	Meitir Camp	December 23, 2008	Unknown
30.	Tsegezeab Tesfazghi	63	Male	Meitir Camp	December 23, 2008	Unknown
31.	Tsehay Tesfamariam	71	Male	Meitir Camp	January 5, 2009	Unknown
32.	Yaob Tecle	61	Male	Meitir Camp	April 23, 2009	Rearrested
33.	Yoel Tsegezab	36	Male	Meitir Camp	August 26, 2008	Conscientious Objection
34.	Nehemiah Hagos	26	Male	Meitir Camp	August 26, 2008	Conscientious Objection
35.	Samuel Ghirmay	30	Male	Meitir Camp	March 2009	Conscientious Objection
36.	Teklu Gebrehiwot	37	Male	Meitir Camp	June 28, 2009	Religious Meeting

¹ Provided by World Headquarters of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Office of the General Counsel

	NAME OF PRISONER	AGE	GENDER	PRISON	DATE IMPRISONED	REASON FOR ARREST
37.	Isaias Afewoki	27	Male	Meitir Camp	June 28, 2009	Religious Meeting
38.	Milen	22	Female	Meitir Camp	June 28, 2009	Religious Meeting
39.	Faiza Seid	27	Female	Meitir Camp	June 28, 2009	Religious Meeting
40.	Yodit Mekonnen	30	Female	Police Station Karen	June 28, 2009	Religious Meeting
41.	Tesfazion Gebremichael	70	Male	5th Police Station	July 20, 2011	Unknown
42.	Hagos Woldemichael	60	Male	Meitir Camp	April 21, 2012	Religious Activity at a Funeral
43.	Araia Ghebremaiam	58	Male	Meitir Camp	April 21, 2012	Religious Activity at a Funeral
44.	Tsegabirhan Berhe	49	Male	Meitir Camp	April 21, 2012	Religious Activity at a Funeral
45.	Daniel Meharizghi	35	Male	Meitir Camp	April 21, 2012	Religious Activity at a Funeral
46.	Amharai Osman	-	Male	Meitir Camp	April 21, 2012	Religious Activity at a Funeral
47.	Yoseph Tesfamariam	48	Male	Meitir Camp	April 21, 2012	Religious Activity at a Funeral
48.	Wogahta Dawit	-	Female	6th Police Station, Asmara	July 4, 2013	Religious Activity
49.	Finan Kidane	-	Female	6th Police Station, Asmara	July 4, 2013	Religious Activity

APPENDIX 7

IRAN PRISONERS LIST

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED BAHAI'S IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)

From Report of Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

<http://shaheedoniran.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/A-HRC-25-61-updated.pdf>

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED BAHAI'S IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)						
	NAME	AGE WHEN ARRESTED	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE TRIED/SENTENCED
1	Mrs. Mahvash Shahriari Sabet	56	5-Mar-08	Three charges on religious grounds ("forming an illegal cult"); three charges related to "espionage" and "acting against national security"	5 years' imprisonment	Trial ended 14-Jun-10
2	Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi Taefi	46	14-May-08	Three charges on religious grounds ("forming an illegal cult"); three charges related to "espionage" and "acting against national security"	1) 5 years' imprisonment; Sentence upheld and 2 years added on appeal; 2) 5 years' imprisonment on separate charge.	Trial ended 14-Jun-10
3	Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani	76	14-May-08	Three charges on religious grounds ("forming an illegal cult"); three charges related to "espionage" and "acting against national security"	1) 5 years' imprisonment; Sentence upheld on appeal; 2) 5 years' imprisonment on separate charge	Trial ended 14-Jun-10
4	Mr. Afif Naemi	47	14-May-08	Three charges on religious grounds ("forming an illegal cult"); three charges related to "espionage" and "acting against national security"	4 years' imprisonment	Trial ended 14-Jun-10
5	Mr. Saeid Rezaie Tazangi	50	14-May-08	Three charges on religious grounds ("forming an illegal cult"); three charges related to "espionage" and "acting against national security"	4 years' imprisonment	Trial ended 14-Jun-10
6	Mr. Behrouz Azizi Tavakkoli	57	14-May-08	Three charges on religious grounds ("forming an illegal cult"); three charges related to "espionage" and "acting against national security"	1) 5 years' imprisonment; 2) Sentence upheld on appeal	Trial ended 14-Jun-10
7	Mr. Vahid Tizfam	36	14-May-08	Three charges on religious grounds ("forming an illegal cult"); three charges related to "espionage" and "acting against national security"	1) 5 years' imprisonment; 2) Sentence upheld on appeal	Trial ended 14-Jun-10
8	Mr. Mohammad Reza Kandi	54	19 or 25-Apr-09	Posing a threat to the holy regime of the Islamic Republic by teaching Bahai ideas through communication with the usurper country of Israel	1) 5 years' imprisonment 2) Sentence upheld on appeal; 3) 5 years' imprisonment	25-Dec-08
9	Mr. Alibakhsh Bazrafkan	58	31-Oct-09	Plotting overthrow, acting against national security and propaganda against the regime	1 year imprisonment and 4 years internal exile to Damghan. Ordered to go to Bijar. Remaining internal exile changed to additional 6 months' imprisonment in Sari.	7-Dec-09
10	Mr. Ighan Shahidi		3-Mar-10			
11	Ms. Rozita Vaseghi	40s	16-Mar-10			1) 25-Oct-09; 2) Appeal - 20-Dec-2010

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED BAHĀ'IS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)						
	NAME	AGE WHEN ARRESTED	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE TRIED/SENTENCED
12	Mrs. Nahid Ghadiri	40s	16-Mar-10			1) 25-Oct-09; 2) Appeal
13	Mr. Foad Khanjani		27-Apr-10		4 years' imprisonment	
14	Mr. Afshin Heyratian		3-Jun-10			
15	Mr. Davar Nabilzadeh	Mid 40s	13-Jul-10		1) 2.5 reduced to 2 on appeal; 2) 6.5 years' imprisonment	1) 25-Oct-09; 2) Appeal
16	Mr. Jalayer Vahdat	About 40	24-Oct-10			1) 25-Oct-09; 2) Appeal
17	Mrs. Sima Eshraghi (Aghas-zadeh)		24-Oct-10			1) 25-Oct-09; 2) Appeal
18	Mr. Feizollah Rowshan	61	15-Jan-11			1) 24-Apr-07; 19-Aug-07; 2) Obtained conditional release; began exile 26 Jul-08 in Damghan
19	Mr. Farhad Amri		1-Jan-11		5 years' imprisonment	
20	Mr. Shahin Shafaie		5-Feb-11		4 years' imprisonment	
21	Mr. Badiollah Lohrash		21-Feb-11		4 years' imprisonment	
22	Mr. Peyman Kashfi		13-Feb-11	"Membership in an anti-Islamic group and propaganda against the regime"	4 years' imprisonment	15-Jun-10
23	Mr. Afshin Safaieyan		27-Feb-11		4 years' imprisonment	
24	Mr. Pooya Tebyanian	24	12-Mar-11	1) "Activities against national security" and "membership in illegal groups and assemblies"; 2) 1 year for propaganda against the regime of the Islamic Republic and to 5.5 years for membership in illegal groups in the preliminary court in Simnán (Semnan)	5 years' imprisonment	1) 15-Apr-09*; 31-May-09 29-Apr-10; 2) 16-Apr-12; 12 or 16-May-12
25	Mr. Mesbah Monghate		18-Mar-11		4 years' imprisonment	
26	Ms. Sara Mahboubi Mahboubi		9-Apr-11		4 years' imprisonment	
27	Mr. Vesal Mahboubi		25-Apr-11			
28	Mr. Kamran Mortezaie		22-May-11	"Membership of the deviant sect of Bahā'ism, with the goal of taking action against the security of the country, in order to further the aims of the deviant sect and those of organizations outside the country".		25-Sep-11; 17-Oct-11
29	Ms. Noushin Khadem		22-May-11	"Membership of the deviant sect of Bahā'ism, with the goal of taking action against the security of the country, in order to further the aims of the deviant sect and those of organizations outside the country".		27-Sep-11
30	Mr. Mahmoud Badayam		22-May-11	"Membership of the deviant sect of Bahā'ism, with the goal of taking action against the security of the country, in order to further the aims of the deviant sect and those of organizations outside the country".		27-Sep-11
31	Mr. Ramin Zibaie		22-May-11	"Membership of the deviant sect of Bahā'ism, with the goal of taking action against the security of the country, in order to further the aims of the deviant sect and those of organizations outside the country".		

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED BAHAI'S IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)						
	NAME	AGE WHEN ARRESTED	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE TRIED/SENTENCED
32	Mr. Farhad Sedghi		22-May-11	"Membership of the deviant sect of Baha'ism, with the goal of taking action against the security of the country, in order to further the aims of the deviant sect and those of organizations outside the country".		20-Sep-11
33	Mr. Amanollah Mostaghim		22-May-11			16-Jun-12
34	Mr. Riaz Sobhani		14-Jun-11	"Membership of the deviant sect of Baha'ism, with the goal of taking action against the security of the country, in order to further the aims of the deviant sect and those of organizations outside the country".	4 years' imprisonment	
35	Mr. Behfar Khanjani	36	21-Jun-11	1) Forming groups and membership in groups and assemblies with intention to disturb the national security; 2) Activity against national security through propaganda against the regime; 3) Use, possession, and distribution of 63 illegal compact discs containing appalling and offensive material.		1) 17 Jan 07*; 26 Sep 07*; 2) 04-May-10; 6-Feb-12 appeal denied
36	Ms. Sanaz Tafazoli		27-Jun-11		4 years' 3 months' 1 day imprisonment	
37	Mrs. Jila Rezvani (Ghanei)		6-Jul-11		3 years' imprisonment	
38	Mrs. Saideh Foroughi (Negari)		6-Jul-11			
39	Mr. Hajir Septo		11-Jul-11			22-May-11
40	Ms. Samin Ehsani		17-Aug-11			
41	Mr. Emamgholi Behamin		24-Aug-11		4.5 years' imprisonment reduced to 1 year	
42	Mr. Janali Rasteh		24-Aug-11			
43	Mr. Kamran Rahimian		14-Sep-11	Using falsely obtained degrees, illegal counselling, running illegal classes, defrauding the public	4 years' imprisonment sentence upheld in appeals court	
44	Mr. Hassanali Delavar-manesh		4-Sep-11			
45	Mr. Afshin Ighani	28	11-Sep	1) Formation of a group and membership in illegal groups and assemblies with the intention of disturbing national security; 2) Actions against national security through propaganda against the regime [and in support of anti-regime groups], i.e., propaganda for the perverse sect of Bahaism.		05-May-10;
46	Mr. Didar Raoufi		16-Oct-11		6 months' imprisonment	12-Feb-11
47	Mrs. Sousan Badavam (Farhangi)		23-Oct-11 or 24-Oct-11		8 years	
48	Ms. Nadia Asadian (Abdu'l-Hamidi)		23-Oct-11 or 24-Oct-11		6 months' imprisonment	
49	Ms. Shiva Kashani-nejad (Samiian)		23-Oct-11 or 24-Oct-11			
50	Mr. Faramarz (Omid) Firiouzian		16-Jan-12			May-12
51	Mr. Shahnam Golshani		30-Jan-12		1 year's imprisonment under ta'zir law	

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED BAHÁ'IS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)						
	NAME	AGE WHEN ARRESTED	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE TRIED/SENTENCED
52	Mr. Shahrokh Taef	56	12-Jan			2) 13-Feb-11; 16-Jan-12 appeal
53	Mr. Payam Taslimi	~45	3-Feb-12			
54	Ms. Semitra Momtazian		5-Feb-12			
55	Ms. Naghmeh Zabilian		17-Feb-12			
56	Mr. Shahram Chiniyan Miandoab	27	15-Jan-12		1) 91 days; 2) 1 year imprisonment	
57	Ms. Negar Malekzadeh		2-Apr-12	Co-organizing junior youth exhibit		
58	Mr. Shahram Mokhtari		24-Apr-12		1) 6 months' imprisonment; 2) 6 years' imprisonment	
59	Mr. Mohammad Hossein Nakhaei	85	13-May-12		1) 6 months' imprisonment; 2) 3 years' imprisonment	
60	Mr. Afrasiyab Sobhani		14-May-12	Propaganda against the regime; Acquitted-membership in Bahá'í administrative institutions.	5 years' imprisonment	21-Aug-12
61	Mrs. Mona Pour Pir Ali		15-May-12		9 months' temporary detention	
62	Mrs. Sholeh Afshari		15-May-12			
63	Mrs. Atiyeh Anvari		20-May-12		6 months' imprisonment	
64	Mr. Saeed Azimi		29-May-12			
65	Ms. Jinous Nourani	22	late May-12		9 months' imprisonment	1) 10-Sep-06; 2) 26-Nov-11
66	Mr. Faran Khan Yaghma		9-Jun-12			
67	Mr. Adel Fanaiyan	49	10-Jun-12	1) Membership in a group; forming and mobilizing a group with intent to disturb the national security; propaganda against the sacred regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the interest of anti-regime groups and organizations by promoting the teachings and ideologies of the sect of Bahá'ism through publishing pamphlets and materials and producing and distributing announcements containing administrative information on the sect of Bahá'ism and opposing the sacred regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran. 2) Propaganda against the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran;	4 years' imprisonment	1) 12 Apr 06*; 2) 04-Jan-09; 3) 08-Oct-11
68	Mr. Taherverdi "Taher" Eskandarian		23-Jun-12			10-Sep-06; 04- Jan -09 (Appeal court)
69	Mr. Azizollah Samandari		7-Jul-12	An active member of the perverse Bahá'ist sect with the intention to act against the national security	12 years' imprisonment + 5 million rial (~US\$500) fine	2) 04-Oct-11
70	Mr. Adel Naimi		10-Jul-12			24-Apr-13
71	Mr. Khashayar Tafazzoli		11-Jul-12		2 years' imprisonment	
72	Mr. Shayan Tafazzoli		11-Jul-12		1 year's imprisonment under Ta'zír law	
73	Mr. Sina Aghdasizadeh		11-Jul-12		5 years' imprisonment + 97,877,000 rial fine (~US\$8,000)	
74	Mr. Rahman Vafaie		14-Jul-12			
75	Mr. Hamid Eslami		14-Jul-12			

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED BAHÁ'IS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)						
	NAME	AGE WHEN ARRESTED	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE TRIED/SENTENCED
76	Mrs. Faran Hesami (Rahimian)		15-Jul-12	a) Conspiracy and assembly with the intention to act against the national security by membership in perverse Bahá'í sect as the primary director of the Department of Psychology at the illegal Bahá'í university under the direction of the House of Justice; b) Earning illegal income in the sum of 7,000,000 túmán. (dismissed)		9-May-12
77	Mr. Vahed Kholousi		22-Aug-12	2) "Involvement in subversive political activities against the regime through providing assistance to the earthquake victims" later changed to "distributing contaminated food"	1 year imprisonment under Ta'zir law	
78	Mr. Navid Khanjani	22	22-Aug-12	1) 5 years' imprisonment for "engaging in human rights activities", another 5 for "illegal assembly" (in support of university students deprived of higher education), and additional 2 years for "disturbance of the general public's opinion". He is also required to pay a fine of five hundred thousand túmán (~ 500 USD). 2) "involvement in subversive political activities against the regime through providing assistance to the earthquake victims" later changed to "distributing contaminated food"	10 years imprisonment	07-Dec-10; 10-Aug-11 verdict upheld
79	Mr. Shayan Vahdati		22-Aug-12	"Involvement in subversive political activities against the regime through providing assistance to the earthquake victims" later changed to "distributing contaminated food"	5 months' temporary detention	
80	Mrs. Leva Khanjani (Mobasher)	23	3-Jan-10;		5 months' temporary detention	
81	Mr. Payman Hejabian		25-Aug-12	Propaganda against the regime, activity against national security, and insulting the President.		
82	Mr. Kayvan Rahimian		30-Sep-12	Assembly and collusion with intent to commit acts of crime against national security, membership in the perverse sect of Bahá'ísm, and earning illegal income (last charge dismissed).		12-Jun-12
83	Mr. Adib Shoiae		6-Oct-12			
84	Mr. Farzin Shahriari		late Oct-12			
85	Mr. Ramin Shahriari		late Oct-12		5 months' temporary detention	
86	Mr. Erfan Ehsani		30-Oct-12		5 months' temporary detention	
87	Mr. Farhad Fahandez		17-Oct-12	"Forming and managing illegal Bahá'í administration, membership in illegal Bahá'í administration and propaganda against the regime"	5 years' imprisonment	
88	Mr. Farahmand Sanaie		17-Oct-12		5 months' temporary detention	
89	Mr. Kamal Kashani		17-Oct-12			
90	Mr. Shahram Jazbani		17-Oct-12			
91	Mr. Navid Moallemi		17-Oct-12		6 months' imprisonment	
92	Mr. Behnam Hassani		17-Oct-12			

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED BAHÁ'IS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)						
	NAME	AGE WHEN ARRESTED	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE TRIED/SENTENCED
93	Mr. Afshin Seyyed-Ahmad		8-Nov-12		4 years' imprisonment	
94	Mr. Siamak Sadri		18-Nov-12		5 years' imprisonment under Ta'zir law	
95	Mr. Payam Markazi		18-Nov-12			
96	Mr. Foad Fahandej		18-Nov-12			
97	Mr. Kourosh Ziari		20-Nov-12			
98	Mr. Behnam Momtazi		11-Dec-12		1) 91 days' imprisonment, suspended for 3 years; 2) 5 years' imprisonment under ta'zir law+ 75 lashes and 2 million tuman cash fine.	
99	Mr. Adnan Rahmat-panah		12-Dec-12			
100	Ms. Neda Majidi (with her infant)		17-Dec-12			
101	Mrs. Nadia Khalili		15-Dec-12		2 years' imprisonment	
102	Mr. Shahin Negari Namaghi		13-Jan-13		6 years' imprisonment	
103	Dr. Foad Moghaddam		late Jan 13		4.5 years' imprisonment	30-Jun-12; ~9-Jul-12
104	Ms. Faranak Ighani		13-Jan-13	Spreading propaganda against the regime through teaching the Bahá'í Faith and holding memorial meetings to recite the Bahá'í prayer for the dead in Bahá'í funerals that were held throughout the city and the province.	8 Months	25-Sep-13
105	Mr. Vousagh Sanaie		20-Jan-13		1 year imprisonment under Ta'zir law	
106	Mr. Sahand Masoumiam		6-Mar-13			
107	Mr. Shamim Ettehadi	25	19-Mar-13	Propagation against the Islamic Republic regime		1) 18-04-2012
108	Mr. Mohammad Hossein Nakhai					
109	Mr. Babak Zeinali		15-Apr-13			
110	Ms. Elham Rouzbehi (with infant child)	29	27-Apr-13	'Collusion and assembly against national security,' to 2.5 years, and on 'propaganda against the regime,' to 6 months, totaling 3 years' imprisonment		Nov/Dec 11; 17 Dec 11 (signed 25-Jan-12)
111	Ms. Nika Kholousi					16-May-13
112	Ms. Nava Kholousi					16-May-13
113	Ms. Mahsa Mahdavi					
114	Mrs. Jinous Rahimi		1-Aug-13			13-Aug
115	Mr. Soroush Garshasbi		bet-ween 24 & 27 Sep 2013			
116	Mr. Faramarz Lotfi		bet-ween 24 & 27 Sep 2013			
117	Mr. Ziya Ghaderi		bet-ween 24 & 27 Sep 2013			
118	Mr. Hassan Bazrafkan		10-Sep-13			
119	Mr. Vahid Taghvajou		10-Sep-13			
120	Mr. Farzin Sadri Dowlatabadi		19-Oct-13		1 year imprisonment and 4 years internal exile to Damghan. Ordered to go to Bijar. Remaining internal exile changed to additional 6 months' imprisonment in Sari.	

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED CHRISTIANS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)

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LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED CHRISTIANS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)									
	NAME	GENDER	DATE OF BIRTH	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE OF SENTENCING	ACTIVITY	ETHNICITY
1	Rasoul Abdollahi	Male		26-Dec-10	Collusion against the government and evangelism	Three years	Transferred Dec 2, 2013 to serve sentence		
2	Saeed Abedini	Male	1980	26-Sep-12	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499), Undermining national security (Clause 498)	8 years	27-Jan-13		
3	Sevada Aghasar	Male		21-Aug-13	Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)				
4	Davoud Alijani	Male		1-May-13			15-Oct-13	Assemblies of God Church	
5	Sedigheh Amirkhani	Female		2-Aug-13				Christian convert	
6	Farshid Modares Aval	Male		10-Jul-13					
7	Mojtaba Baba-Karami	Male		21-Feb-03					
8	Somayeh Bakhtiyari	Female		24-Apr-13				House-churches	
9	Kamyar Barzegar	Male		29-Aug-13				Christian convert	
10	Sahar Barzegar	Female		29-Aug-13				Christian convert	
11	Ahmad Bazyar	Male		24-Dec-13				Christian convert	
12	Mehdi Chaghakaboudi	Male		21-Feb-13					
13	Amir Ebrahimi	Male		29-Aug-13				Christian convert	
14	Parham Farazmand			9-Aug-13					
15	Mohammad Reza Farid	Male		29-May-13				Our Salvation website	
16	Yashar Farzin-No	Male		11-Jul-13					
17	Farshid Fathi	Male	1978	26-Dec-10	Propaganda against the system (Clause 500), Undermining national security (Clause 498)	6 years	Jan-12	Ilam Organization	
18	Mona Fazli	Female		9-Aug-13					
19	Ebrahim Firooz	Male	1985	21-Aug-13	Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)	1 year			
20	Hamid Reza Ghadiri	Male		29-May-13				Afghan Christian convert	

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED CHRISTIANS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)									
	NAME	GENDER	DATE OF BIRTH	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE OF SENTENCING	ACTIVITY	ETHNICITY
21	Vahid Hakani	Male		8-Feb-12	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)	3 years and 8 months			Fars
22	Mohammadreza Hosseini	Male							
23	N/A Hosseini	Male		24-Dec-13				Christian convert	
24	Behnam Irani	Male		Apr-10		1 year and 5 years suspended	Jan-11		
25	Jamshid Jabari			1-Dec-13	Insulting Islam (clause 513)			Journalist/Blogger	
26	Shahnaz Jeyzan	Female		May-13				Assemblies of God Church	
27	Sedigheh Kiani	Female		9-Aug-13					
28	Shahin Lahooti	Male		12-Oct-12					
29	Sahar Mousavi	Female		24-Oct-11				Christian student activist	
30	Maryam Naghash	Female		15-Jul-13		5 years			
31	Faegheh Nasrollahi	Female		24-Dec-13				Christian convert	
32	Fariba Nazemian	Female		8-Feb-10					Fars
33	Amir-Hossein Nematollahi	Male		24-Dec-13				Christian convert	
34	Mohammad Reza (Kourosh) Partovi	Male		8-Feb-12	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)	3 years and 8 months			Fars
35	Mohammad Reza Peymani	Male		2-Aug-13				Christian convert	
36	Mohammad Reza Piri	Male		17-Jul-13					
37	Mahnaz Rafiee	Female		2-Aug-13				Christian convert	
38	Mastaneh Rastegari			24-Dec-13				Christian convert	
39	Saeed Safi	Male		29-May-13				Our Salvation website	
40	Hossein (Estifan) Saketi Aramsari			23-Jul-13					
41	Ronak Samayat	Female		24-Apr-13				House-churches	
42	Sara Sardsirian	Female		9-Aug-13					
43	Mojtaba Seyed Alaadin Hosseini	Male		Feb-12	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	2 years, 8 months suspended			Fars

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED CHRISTIANS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)									
	NAME	GENDER	DATE OF BIRTH	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE OF SENTENCING	ACTIVITY	ETHNICITY
44	Seyyed Alireza Seyyedian	Male		14-Mar-12	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)	4 years			
45	Homayoun Shokouhi	Male		7-Feb-13	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	3 years and 8 months			
46	Kiavash Sotoudeh			2-Dec-13	Insulting Islam (clause 513)			Journalist/Blogger	
47	Nasim Zanjani	Female		12-Jul-13					
48	Hamidreza N/A	Male		10-Jul-13				Arrested with Yashar Farzin-No, Mohammad Reza Piri, and Farshid Modares	

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED DERVISH MUSLIMS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)

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LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED DERVISH MUSLIMS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)									
	NAME	GENDER	DATE OF BIRTH	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE OF SENTENCING	ACTIVITY	ETHNICITY
1	Mostafa Abdi	Male		Aug 2012 and 30 Jan 2013	Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	3 years			Dervish
2	Ebrahim Bahrami	Male		May-13	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)				Dervish
3	Mohammad Ali Dehghan	Male		May-13	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)				Dervish
4	Reza Entesari	Male		4-Sep-11	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Insulting the Supreme Leader (Clause 514), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)	8 years and 6 months			Dervish

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED DERVISH MUSLIMS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)									
	NAME	GENDER	DATE OF BIRTH	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE OF SENTENCING	ACTIVITY	ETHNICITY
5	Amir Eslami	Male		4-Sep-11	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)				Dervish
6	Mohsen Esmaili	Male		May-13	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)				Dervish
7	Amir Ali Mehran Nia	Male		25-Dec-13					Kurdish, Dervish
8	Bakhshali Mohammadi	Male		2004	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	15 years and 6 months			Dervish
9	Hamid Reza Moradi Sarvestani	Male		4-Sep-11	Propaganda against the system (Clause 500), Insulting the Supreme Leader (Clause 514), Agitating the public consciousness(clause 698), Disruption of public order (Clause 618)	10 years and 6 months			Dervish
10	Saleh Moradi Sarvestani	Male		6-Sep-11		3 years and 3 years exile to Hormozgan	June/July 2013		Fars, Dervish
11	Ali Mortezaei	Male		11-Jan-12					Fars, Dervish
12	Kasra Nouri	Male		14-Mar-13					Dervish
13	Mohammad Ali Sadeghi	Male		May-13	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)				Dervish
14	Ali Shafiei	Male		17-Jun-12					Fars, Dervish

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED SUNNI MUSLIMS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)

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LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED SUNNI MUSLIMS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)								
	NAME	GENDER	DATE OF BIRTH	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE OF SENTENCING	ETHNICITY
1	Abdollah Abadian	Male		Mar-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)			Baluchi
2	Hadi Abadian	Male		Mar-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	12 years and exile to Qazvin		Baluchi
3	Jaber Abadian	Male		Mar-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	Death		Baluchi
4	Javad Abadian	Male		Mar-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	Death		Baluchi
5	Malek Mohammad Abadian	Male		Mar-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	Death		Baluchi
6	Nezam Abadian	Male		Mar-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	Death		Baluchi
7	Kambiz Abbasi	Male				8 years		Kurdish
8	Ahmad Abdollahi	Male		Jun-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	5 years		Kurdish
9	Davood Abdollahi	Male		Feb-10				Kurdish
10	Ghasem Abeste	Male						Kurdish
11	Hekmat Ahmad Sharifi	Male		2010	Undermining national security (Clause 498)Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)		23-Jul-13	Kurdish
12	Hamed Ahmadi	Male	1981	2009	Involvement in Salafi and terrorist groups	Death	June/July 2011	Kurdish
13	Shahram Ahmadi	Male		Jan-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	Death		Kurdish
14	Osman Ahsani	Male		Aug-09	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610)	5 years		Kurdish
15	Souran Alipour	Male		Jan-11	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610)	5 years		Kurdish
16	Hejar Alizadeh	Male		Jan-11	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610)	5 years		Kurdish
17	Hossein Amini	Male		21-Feb-11	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610)	5 years		Kurdish
18	Borhan Asgharian	Male			Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	5 years	22-Jul-13	Kurdish
19	Fakhrodin Azizi	Male		Aug-10	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	7 years		Kurdish
20	Abdollah (Molavi) Baladahi	Male		Mar-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)			Baluchi
21	Gol-mohammad Baladahi	Male		Mar-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	15 years in prison and exiled		Baluchi
22	Mamusta Mohammad Baraei	Male		May/ June 2009	Undermining national security (Clause 498)	11 years		Kurdish
23	Khosro Besharat	Male		8-Feb-10				Kurdish
24	Mohammad Amin Darki	Male		Jan-10	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	3 years		Kurdish
25	Jahangir Dehghani	Male	1984	2009	Involvement in Salafi and terrorist groups	Death	June/July 2011	Kurdish
26	Jamshid Dehghani	Male	1981	2009	Involvement in Salafi and terrorist groups	Death	June/July 2011	Kurdish

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED SUNNI MUSLIMS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)								
	NAME	GENDER	DATE OF BIRTH	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE OF SENTENCING	ETHNICITY
27	Seyed Shahoo Ebrahimi	Male	1985	12-Apr-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		Kurdish
28	(Mamosta) Ayoub Ganji	Male		28-Mar-09	Undermining national security (Clause 498)	10 years and permanent deprivation of cleric garb		Kurdish
29	Hossein Ghaderi	Male		Aug-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	2 years	13-Nov-13	Kurdish
30	Jamal Ghaderi	Male		Feb-12	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	8 years		Kurdish
31	Voria Ghaderifard	Male		Jun-10	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		Kurdish
32	Mohammad Gharibi	Male		Jun-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	Death		Kurdish
33	Khaled Hajizadeh	Male		Feb-11	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)	6 years		Kurdish
34	Firooz Hamidi	Male			Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	20 years	22-Jul-13	Kurdish
35	Abdoljabbar Hasani	Male		Apr-09		10 years	22-Jul-13	Kurdish
36	Farzad Honerjou	Male		Jun-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		Kurdish
37	Seyed Hadi Hosseini	Male	1983	Jun-09	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		Kurdish
38	Hashem Hossein-panahi	Male		3-Dec-13	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	6 months		Kurdish
39	Ali Kalhor	Male		Jan-11		5 years		Kurdish
40	Mulla Ali Karami	Male		Oct-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Relations or collaboration with organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	8 years		Kurdish
41	Ramin Karami	Male		Aug-09	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	6 years		Kurdish
42	Keyvan Karimi	Male			Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		Kurdish
43	Mohammad Kazemi	Male		Nov-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	4 years		Kurdish
44	Abdolali Kheirshahi	Male	1979	5-Apr-08	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	4 years and 6 months and permanently banned from public speech	11-Feb-09	Baluchi
45	Anvar Khezri	Male		8-Feb-10				Kurdish
46	Abdollah Khosro Zadeh	Male		5-Dec-09		5 years	14-Jun-11	Kurdish

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED SUNNI MUSLIMS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)								
	NAME	GENDER	DATE OF BIRTH	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE OF SENTENCING	ETHNICITY
47	Layegh Kordpour	Male		Jan-11	Undermining national security (Clause 498)	5 years		Kurdish
48	Himan Mahmoud Takhti	Male	1987	Jun-09	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	5 years		Kurdish
49	Seyed Hassan Majidi	Male			Undermining national security (Clause 498)	11 years		Kurdish
50	Taleb Maleki	Male		Oct-09	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		Kurdish
51	Moslem Marivani	Male	1990	Sep-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)			Kurdish
52	Aram Mikaili	Male		Nov-10		8 years		Kurdish
53	Hesam Mohammadi	Male		Jun-09	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)	5 years	5-Dec-10	Kurdish
54	Omid Mohammadi	Male		Jan-11	Undermining national security (Clause 498)	Death		Kurdish
55	Sedigh Mohammadi	Male		Jan-10		Death		Kurdish
56	Kamal Molai	Male	1984	2009	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	Death	June/July 2011	Kurdish
57	Mohammad Esmail Molla Zehi	Male		1-Nov-10	Involvement in Salafi and terrorist groups	6 years and 4 years suspended		Baluchi
58	Keyvan Momenifarid	Male	1983	Jun-10	Espionage (clause 501)	Death		Kurdish
59	Namegh Naderi	Male		Feb-11	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	3 years and 6 months		Kurdish
60	Erfan Naderizadeh	Male		Jan-11		8 years		Kurdish
61	Teymoor Naderizadeh	Male		18-Jun-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death	16-Nov-13	Kurdish
62	Abdolghafar Naghshebandi	Male		14-May-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Relations or collaboration with organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	15 years and exile to Ilam		Baluchi
63	Fathi Mohammad (Molavi) Naghshebandi			10-Apr-12	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	15 years and exile to Khalkhal		Baluchi
64	Farshid Naseri	Male	1987	Nov-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	Death	16-Nov-13	Kurdish
65	Ahmad Naseri	Male		Apr-11	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Relations or collaboration with organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		Kurdish
66	Barzan Nasrollahzadeh	Male	1-Nov-92	29-May-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	Death	23-Jul-13	Kurdish
67	Parviz Osmani	Male		Jun-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Relations or collaboration with organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	5 years		Kurdish
68	Omid Peyvand	Male		Jun-10	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		Kurdish

LIST OF CURRENTLY IMPRISONED SUNNI MUSLIMS IN IRAN (AS OF JANUARY 2014)								
	NAME	GENDER	DATE OF BIRTH	ARREST DATE	CHARGES	SENTENCE	DATE OF SENTENCING	ETHNICITY
69	Mohammad Yavar Rahimi	Male		Jun-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		Kurdish
70	Mokhtar Rahimi	Male		16-Oct-09	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)	Death		Kurdish
71	Masoud Rasouli	Male		Jan-11	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	5 years		Kurdish
72	Foad Rezazadeh	Male			Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)			
73	Farhad Salimi	Male		8-Feb-10				Kurdish
74	Abdolrahman Sangani	Male				Death		
75	Mohammad Javan Shahbaksh	Male			Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	5 years		Baluchi
76	Behrooz Shahnazari	Male		Jan-11	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)	Death		Kurdish
77	Farzad Shahnazari	Male		Jun-10		Death		Kurdish
78	Khosro Sharafipour	Male		Jun-09	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	8 years		Kurdish
79	Mohammad Yaser Sharafipour	Male			Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	8 years		Kurdish
80	Vahed Sharafipour	Male		Jun-10	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	8 years		Kurdish
81	Arash Sharifi	Male		Oct-09	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		
82	Kaveh Sharifi	Male		Oct-09	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Relations or collaboration with organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)	Death		Kurdish
83	Shovane Sharifi	Male		25-Dec-11	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187), Membership in organizations that aim to disrupt national security (Clause 499)			
84	Kamran Sheikhe	Male		8-Feb-10				Kurdish
85	Naser Sheikhe	Male		Jan-12		3 years		Kurdish
86	Jamal Soleimani	Male		Apr-10	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610), Propaganda against the system (Clause 500)	11 years		Kurdish
87	Mamusta Kaveh Veisi	Male	1984	11-Jun-09	Assembly and collusion against national security (Clause 610)	Death		Kurdish
88	Foad Yosefi	Male		Jan-11	Enmity against God [Moharebeh] (Clauses 183 186 and 187)	Death		Kurdish

APPENDIX 8 LIST OF KNOWN RELIGIOUS PRISONERS IN UZBEKISTAN

INITIATIVE GROUP OF INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS OF UZBEKISTAN (IGIHRDU)					
	NAME	DATE OF ACCUSATION, ARREST OR SENTENCE	TRIAL LOCATION	SECTION OF CRIMINAL CODE	SENTENCE
1.	Akhmedov Bakhodir	Arrested: October 10th, 2013	Tashkent Oblast	"Religious reasons"	15 days or \$100 fine
2.	Rakhmatullaev Ravshan Kamilovich	Sentenced: July 17th, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	216, 244-1, 246 ¹	6 years
3.	Eminov Azimzhon Atkhamovich	Sentenced: July 17th, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	244-1, 246	3 years suspended
4.	Bazarbaev Zhamshid Almatovich	Sentenced: July 17th, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	216	2 years suspended
5.	Musaev Mirkamil Miratkhamovich	Sentenced: July 17th, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	216	2 years suspended
6.	Umarbekov Zhablon Ismat-ugli	Sentenced: July 17th, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	216	2 years suspended
7.	Shokirov Dilshod Takhirovich	Sentenced: July 17th, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	216	2 years suspended
8.	Nosirova Dinara Abdurashadovna	Convicted: January 7, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	159, 216, 244-1, 244-2 ²	8.5 years
9.	Soipov Abdurakhim Turgunovich	Convicted: January 7, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	159, 216, 244-1, 244-2	18 years
10.	Askarov Obydkhon Abdurasilovich	Convicted: January 7, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	159, 216, 244-1, 244-2	12 years
11.	Kulbekov Riskul Tursunmuradovich	Convicted: January 7, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	159, 216, 244-1, 244-2	10 years
12.	Salmatov Farkhad Nabievich	Convicted: January 7, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	159, 216, 244-1, 244-2	10 years
13.	Yusupov Furkat Kocimovich	Convicted: January 7, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	159, 216, 244-1, 244-2	10 years
14.	Muminova Shokhida Abdumazkidovna	Convicted: January 7, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	159, 216, 244-1, 244-2	8 years
15.	Yusupova Mukarram Kosimovna	Convicted: January 7, 2013	Taskhent Oblast	159, 216, 244-1, 244-2	8 years
16.	Obidov Odilzhon	Convicted: January 21, 2013	Tashkent	244-2 ³	8 years
17.	Nizamutdinov Fazliddin	Convicted: January 21, 2013	Tashkent	216	Fined 100 Minimum Financial Indicators (~\$3600)
18.	Ushmukhamedov Davron	Convicted: January 21, 2013	Tashkent	216	Fined 100 Minimum Financial Indicators (~\$3600)
19.	Zokirov Davronzhon	Convicted: January 21, 2013	Tashkent	216	Fined 100 Minimum Financial Indicators (~\$3600)
20.	Khazhiev Adkham	Granted amnesty: January 21, 2013	Tashkent	241	Granted amnesty

¹ Rakhmatullaev Ravshan Kamilovich, Eminov Azimzhon Atkhamovich, Bazarbaev Zhamshid Almatovich, Musaev Mirkamil Miratkhamovich, Umarbekov Zhablon Ismat-ugli, and Shokirov Dilshod Takhirovich were arrested December 2012/January 2013 based on accusations of participating in Wahhabism. IGIHRDU reported in May 2013 that shortly after their arrest they were subjected to torture by electrocution. In May they were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for violating Articles 216, 244-1, and 246.

² Nosirova Dinara Abdurashadovna, Soipov Abdurakhim Turgunovich, Askarov Obydkhon Abdurasilovich, Kulbekov Riskul Tursunmuradovich, Salmatov Farkhad Nabievich, Yusupov Furkat Kocimovich, Muminova Shokhida Abdumazkidovna, and Yusupova Mukarram Kosimovna were convicted of violating Articles 159, 216, 244-1, and 244-2. They were accused of being members of a "Wahhabi" sect.

³ Obidov Odilzhon, Nizamutdinov Fazliddin, Ushmukhamedov Davron, Zokirov Davronzhon, and Khazhiev Adkham were accused of being members of the "Islamic Movement of Turkestan."

UZBEK MUSLIMS ARRESTED/SENTENCED DUE TO THEIR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OR AFFILIATIONS BASED ON NGO REPORTING FROM

FEBRUARY 2011-MARCH 2014 BY

INITIATIVE GROUP OF INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS OF UZBEKISTAN (IGIHRDU)

	NAME	DATE OF ACCUSATION, ARREST OR SENTENCE	TRIAL LOCATION	SECTION OF CRIMINAL CODE	SENTENCE
21.	Khusanov Gairat	Convicted: November 22, 2012	Yangibazar District	244-1	7 years
22.	Yunusov Shukhrat	Convicted: November 22, 2012	Yangibazar District	244-1	7 years
23.	Ikromov Botir	Convicted: November 22, 2012	Yangibazar District	216	3 years probation
24.	Rakhimboev Alisher	Convicted: November 22, 2012	Yangibazar District	216	3 years probation
25.	Oripov Otabek	Convicted: November 22, 2012	Yangibazar District	216	3 years probation
26.	Miraliiev Muzaffar	Convicted: November 22, 2012	Yangibazar District	216	3 years probation
27.	Salimov Dilshod	Convicted: November 22, 2012	Yangibazar District	216	3 years probation
28.	Mykhammedov Fazliddin	Convicted: November 22, 2012	Yangibazar District	216	3 years probation
29.	Abdiev Khasan	Convicted: November 22, 2012	Yangibazar District	216	3 years probation
30.	Nurmatov Shovkatzhon Abdumannopovich	Detained: November 5, 2012	Tashkent Oblast	Not charged	Died in custody November 14, 2012
31.	Khorunov Abdurashid	December 26/29, 2012	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	*4
32.	Tadzhibaev Shukhrat	December 26/29, 2012	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	*
33.	Karimov Bobur	December 26/29, 2012	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	*
34.	Karimov Akhmadzhon	December 26/29, 2012	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	*
35.	Satvaldiev Saizharbek	Sentenced: January 26, 2012	Andijon	223, 228, 242, 244-2;	7 ½ years
36.	Yusupov Mamirzhan	Sentenced: January 26, 2012	Andijon	223, 228, 242, 244-2;	8 years
37.	Bekpulatov Akhmadzhon	Sentenced: January 26, 2012	Andijon	223, 228, 242, 244-2;	5 years
38.	Sadirzhanov Sobir	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	6 years
39.	Ungarbaev Saken	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	6 years
40.	Madaminov Ali	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	6 years
41.	Nazarov Abdyrakhmon	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	6 years
42.	Sadirzhanov Nabi	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	3-years suspended
43.	Sadirzhanov Gani	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	3-years suspended
44.	Sadirzhanov Akmal	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	3-years suspended
45.	Balikboev Botir	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	3-years suspended
46.	Teshaboev Nodarzhon	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	3-years suspended
47.	Mirzaboboev Abdulaziz	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	3-years suspended
48.	Turabaev Kamoliddin	Sentenced: December 27, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	216, 244-2	3-years suspended
49.	Madaminov Ali	Arrested: September 13, 2011	Yangiyulsky region	244-2	*
50.	Erkabaev Khabibulla	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	159, 223, 244-2	12 years
51.	Yusupov Saidmurod	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
52.	Saparniyazov Aliboy	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
53.	Dzhaldabaev Khoziakbar	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
54.	Khalilov Mukhtor	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
55.	Mirsaidov Akrom	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
56.	Makhamatov Farkhad	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
57.	Erkabaev Abdurakhim	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
58.	Turabekov Doniyor	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
59.	Khalilov Isroilzhon	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
60.	Makhamatullaev Makhmud	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
61.	Murtazaev Shavkat	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
62.	Melibaev Azizbek	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
63.	Kuchkarov Isroi	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
64.	Giyasov Omonulla	Trial Started: November 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
65.	Ishmanov O.M.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	8 years
66.	Asilov K.T.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	7 years
67.	Pulatov B.M.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	7 years
68.	Rasulmatov B.B.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
69.	Khalilov A.A.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
70.	Takhirov F.U.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	7 years
71.	Faizullaev Kh. A.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
72.	Rakhimov F.P.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
73.	Yuldashev O.Z.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
74.	Saidov D.Zh.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	7 years

4 According to a Russian language news source, "Birzhevoi Lider", Khorunov Abdurashid, Tadzhibaev Shukhrat, Karimov Bobur, and Karimov Akhmadzhon were found guilty and sentenced to lengthy prison sentences in October 2013.

UZBEK MUSLIMS ARRESTED/SENTENCED DUE TO THEIR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OR AFFILIATIONS BASED ON NGO REPORTING FROM

FEBRUARY 2011-MARCH 2014 BY

INITIATIVE GROUP OF INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS OF UZBEKISTAN (IGIHRDU)

NAME	DATE OF ACCUSATION, ARREST OR SENTENCE	TRIAL LOCATION	SECTION OF CRIMINAL CODE	SENTENCE
75. Kukanbaev A.O.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	6 years
76. Abdugurov K.M.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	7 years
77. Mirfaiziev Sh.Sh.	Sentence Started: January 4, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	244-2	5 years
78. Dzhakhongirov Saidafzal	Arrested: September 20, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	Religious Extremism	*
79. Dzhakhongirov Abdulmuzafar	Arrested: September 20, 2011	Tashkent Oblast	Religious Extremism	*
80. Irmurzaev Botir	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	244-2	12 years
81. Tulyaganov Nodir	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	244-2	12 years
82. Inagamov Khozhiakbar	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	244-2	12 years
83. Sultonov Sarvar	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	244-2	12 years
84. Irmurzaev Farkhod	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	244-2	12 years
85. Kamilov Kudrat	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	216	3 years
86. Yusupov Khusher	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	216	3 years
87. Yusupov Bilolzhon	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	216	3 years
88. Kuchkarov Daniyar	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	216	3 years
89. Yakubov Mukhammadzhon	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	216	3 years
90. Askarov Akbarkuzha	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	216	3 years
91. Umarov Abduraim	Sentenced: May 19, 2011	Tashkent	216	3 years
92. Siddikov Adkham	Arrested: September 13, 2011	Zangiatsky region, Tashkent oblast	*	*
93. Saidvaliev Akhrol	Arrested: September 13, 2011	Zangiatsky region, Tashkent oblast	*	*
94. Shokirov Kholmurod	Arrested: July/early August, 2011	Bukinsky region, Tashkent oblast	*	*
95. Mamatov Zaynabiddin	Arrested: July 2011	Bukinsky region, Tashkent oblast	*	*
96. Akhmadzhonov Otobek	Arrested: July 2011	Tashkent	"Religious reasons"	*
97. Kosimov Bakhodir	Arrested: July 2011	Tashkent	"Religious reasons"	*
98. Kurolov Bakhodir	Arrested: February 4, 2011	Khaklabad, Narinsky region	159, 244-2	*
99. Umarov Ulugbek	Arrested: February 6, 2011	Khaklabad, Narinsky region	159, 244-2	*

ARTICLES OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN'S CRIMINAL CODE: DESCRIPTION AND NUMBER OF ACCUSATIONS

ARTICLE	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF ACCUSATIONS
159	Anti-constitutional activity	11
216	Illegal establishment of public associations or religious organizations	41
223	Illegal exit from or entry into the Republic of Uzbekistan	4
228	Production, forgery of documents, stamps, seals, blanks and their sale or use	3
241	Failure to report a crime or its concealment	1
242	Organization of a criminal community	3
244-1	Production and distribution of materials that create a threat to public security and public order	12
244-2	Establishment, direction of, or participation in religious extremist, separatist, fundamentalist, or other banned organizations	63
246	Smuggling	2

