
Resolution Condemning Religious Persecution of Christians Worldwide

Whereas the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401 et seq.) found that religious persecution is not confined to a particular region or regime and reaffirmed the commitment of the United States that religious freedom is the right of every individual and should never be arbitrarily abridged by any government;

Whereas the persecution of Christians and members of other religions is a global problem, occurring in countries across Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas;

Whereas 2018 reports from international non-governmental organizations state that 215 million Christians experience high levels of persecution—amounting to 1 in 12 Christians worldwide; and that in the most recent 12-month reporting period 3,066 Christians were killed, 1,252 were abducted, 1,020 were raped or sexually harassed, and 793 churches were attacked;

Whereas Christians and members of other religions face persecution not only from Islamic extremist groups, like the Islamic State and Boko Haram, but also from other religious extremist groups, atheistic regimes, and from officials at all levels of government in numerous countries worldwide;

Whereas such persecution ranges from social harassment and discrimination to physical violence, imprisonment, torture, enslavement, rape, death, and genocide;

Whereas the Middle East has been a home to Christians since the first century A.D., but the Christian population in the Middle East has significantly decreased over the past few decades as a result of persecution, displacement, and genocide;

Whereas Christians and members of other religions in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere have faced assault, torture, imprisonment, enslavement, and execution in a genocidal campaign by the Islamic State and other religious extremists;

Whereas according to 2017 reports from international non-governmental organizations, the Christian population in Iraq decreased from 1,400,000 people in 2003 to just 275,000 people in 2016, as a result of displacement and genocide caused by religious extremism;

Whereas Christian and other religious holy sites in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere have been destroyed by the Islamic State and other religious extremists;

Whereas in 2016, approximately 200 Christians in Iran were arrested, while others have been beaten, tortured, subjected to feigned public executions, and even sentenced to death for their faith, and at least 90 remain in illegal detention;

Whereas in Saudi Arabia, Christians as well as other religious minorities face imprisonment, torture, and deportation and must practice their faith in secrecy because their houses of worship are not allowed;

Whereas on April 9, 2017, Palm Sunday, 44 people were killed in bomb attacks by the Islamic State on Coptic churches in Egypt;

Whereas the Islamic State has also claimed responsibility for the attack on a bus on May 26, 2017, in which 29 Coptic Christians were killed while traveling to a monastery in Minya, Egypt;

Whereas since the fall of the Gaddafi regime, Libya has served as a haven for militant Islamist extremist groups, like the Islamic State, which has resulted in more violent forms of Christian persecution;

Whereas the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the killing of 51 Coptic Christians in Libya in February and March of 2015;

Whereas Christian migrants from northern Africa traveling through Libya on their way to Europe have been abducted, trafficked, and forced to convert to Islam at the hands of the Islamic State;

Whereas in Afghanistan there are reports that converts to Christianity have been murdered or sent to mental hospitals;

Whereas Christians in Pakistan face accusations of blasphemy, punishable by death, and convictions and sentences for blasphemy are given despite little or no evidence;

Whereas in Pakistan, the government and police turn a blind eye as female Christians are being beaten, attacked, kidnapped, and murdered for refusing to give up their faith and being forced to marry Muslim men;

Whereas according to Open Doors USA, approximately 600 Christian churches were attacked in Pakistan in 2016;

Whereas Christians in Nigeria have been massacred by Islamic extremist groups like Boko Haram and Fulani militias while government security forces either cannot or will not protect its citizens, and Christian leaders are calling the violence, which has caused at least 6,000 Christian deaths in 2018, “pure genocide”;

Whereas in September 2018 more than 20 Nigerian Christians, including Reverend Gerison Ezekiel Killa, were drowned in the Benue River trying to escape persecution from Fulani militia attacks;

Whereas Christian converts in Somalia often face public execution;

Whereas Rwanda has closed more than 8,000 churches in 2018 and passed laws heavily regulating churches and believers;

Whereas in 2017, a mob of 100 men attacked a Christian church in Uganda, beating and raping members of the congregation;

Whereas in September 2018 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Islamic jihadists stormed the town of Beni and murdered more than 27 at a church;

Whereas in Kenya, Christians are being stoned as a way of persecution for practicing their faith;

Whereas in Sudan, the Islamist government is trying to eradicate Christians by destroying their churches, villages, hospitals, and schools;

Whereas in May 2017, a Christian governor in Indonesia was found guilty of blasphemy and sentenced to 2 years in prison, in what was widely seen as a challenge to religious pluralism in Indonesia;

Whereas Communist regimes have a strong history of oppressing and persecuting Christians as well as members of other religions;

Whereas since 2013, in the Zhejiang Province of China, crosses have been removed from over 1,500 churches as part of that province's anti-cross campaign;

Whereas in China, members of Christian churches, as well as members of other religions, that are not registered with the government face increased persecution from the Chinese state, including the risk of imprisonment and torture;

Whereas in China, Communist officials are confiscating church belongings and burning them along with murdering priests who continue to preach the Gospel;

Whereas in North Korea, the practice of Christianity is prohibited and if caught, Christians are sent to forced labor camps;

Whereas in November 2016, Vietnam adopted a new "Law on Belief and Religion" that falls dramatically short of internationally accepted standards for human rights and curtails the right to religious freedom for over 8 million Christians in that country;

Whereas in Mexico, Nicaragua, and Colombia, Christian church leaders have been assaulted, threatened, and in some cases killed by transnational criminal organizations and paramilitary armed groups attempting to intimidate and silence them;

Whereas Mexico is reportedly the most dangerous place in the world to be a priest, with at least 6 priests killed in 2018, and 22 priests killed in the past three years due to increased secularism, organized crime, and lawlessness;

Whereas thousands of Christians and members of other religions are held as prisoners around the world, merely for believing in and worshiping according to their faith;

Whereas in Turkey, U.S. Pastor Andrew Brunson is indicted for "Christianization" as a terrorism and espionage charge, since 2016;

Whereas in Pakistan, Asia Bibi has, for almost a decade, been separated from her family, imprisoned, and sentenced to death for blasphemy after arguing with a Muslim co-worker about sharing water with a Christian;

Whereas Pastor John Cao, a Chinese pastor and legal permanent resident of the U.S., was arrested in China in March, 2017 and is facing 7 years of imprisonment for his prominent work in the Chinese “house church” movement;

Whereas, in Sri Lanka, India, the Central African Republic, and elsewhere, Muslims are subject to severe religious persecution;

Whereas, India’s 170 million Muslims live in an environment of constant local violence without meaningful government deterrence;

Whereas, in China’s Xinjiang province, the Uighur population is subject to official harassment, arbitrary detention, and draconian laws on religious dress;

Whereas, there is widespread Muslim-on-Muslim violence in the Middle East, most commonly along the Shia-Sunni divide;

Whereas, there are reports of Muslim genocide in Myanmar;

Whereas religious discrimination is a global human rights problem; and

Whereas the right to religious freedom is a universal right recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Legislature of [State, County, Town or City]—

(1) condemns all violations of religious freedom and affirms that religious freedom is a fundamental right of every individual that should never be arbitrarily abridged by any government;

(2) condemns religious persecution of Christians around the world;

(3) urges and calls on the President of the United States and Congress to urge, discriminatory countries to cease their religious persecution and combat religious persecution carried out by extremist non-state actors; and

(4) urges and calls on the President of the United States and Congress to urge, the heads of the governments of all countries around the world to uphold the right to religious freedom and condemn the global persecution of any religious group.