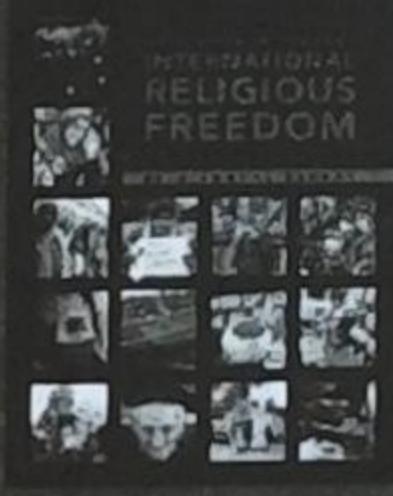
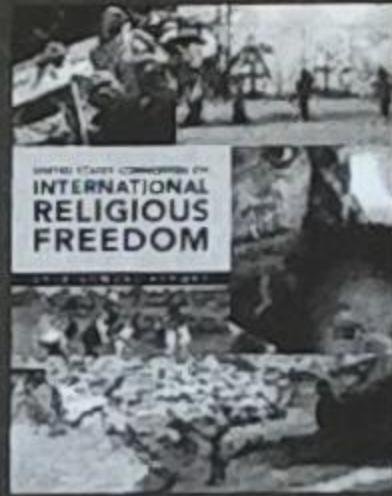
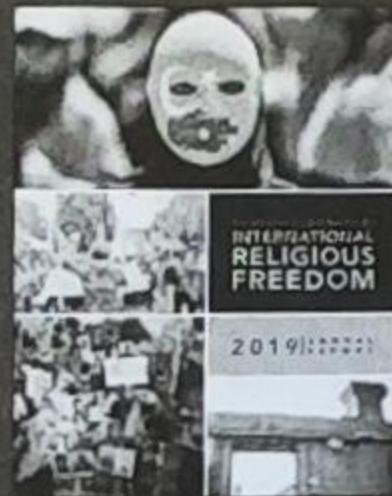
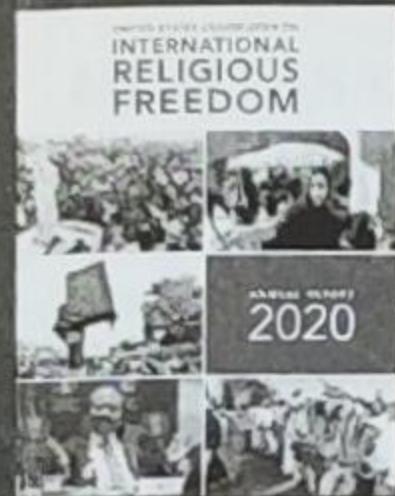
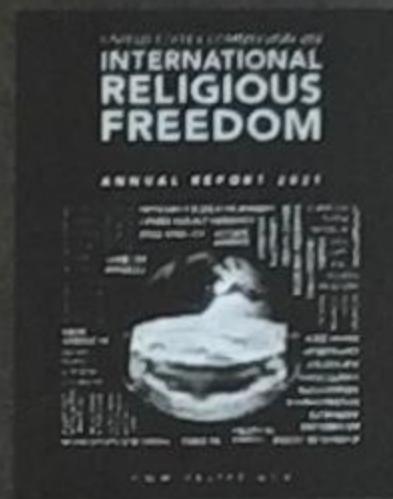
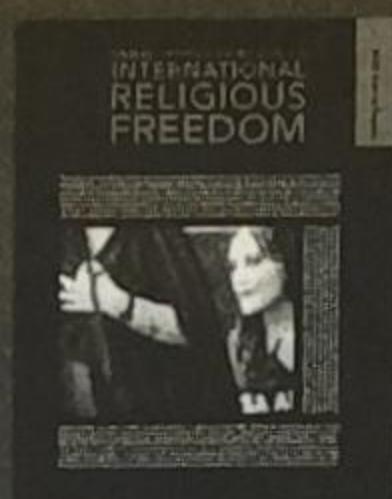
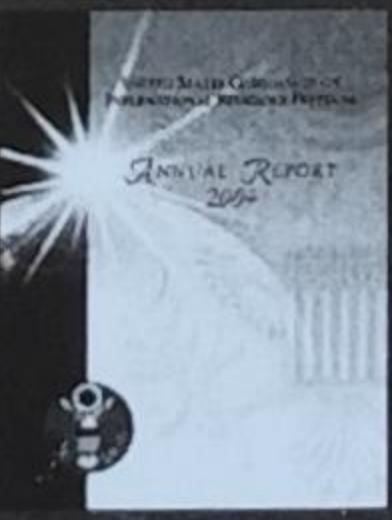
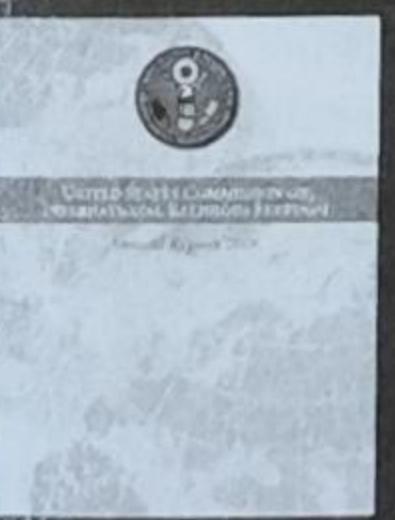
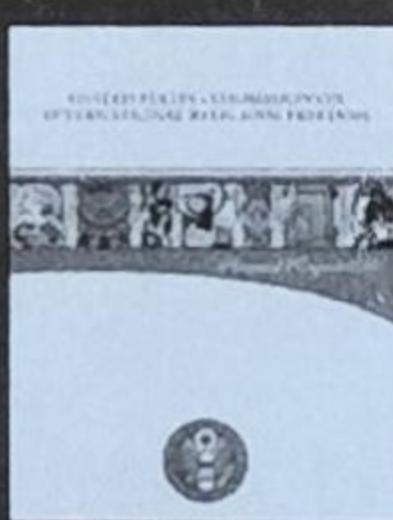
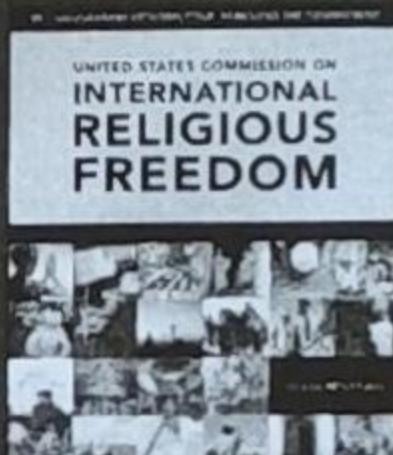


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2024 ANNUAL REPORT



UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



25TH
ANNIVERSARY OF IRFA

2024 ANNUAL REPORT INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

October 27, 2023 marked the 25th anniversary of the enactment of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). This landmark law made promoting the internationally guaranteed right to freedom of religion or belief a priority in U.S. foreign policy. IRFA mandates that U.S. policy includes condemning violations of religious freedom abroad and assisting foreign governments to protect this fundamental human right. It established the U.S. Department of State's Ambassador at Large and Office for International Religious Freedom and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), required monitoring and annual reporting, delineated consequences for the worst violators, and incorporated religious freedom concerns into U.S. bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, programs, training, and refugee and asylum policies.

In honor of this important anniversary, the cover of this year's Annual Report—USCIRF's 25th such report—is a collage of cover images from previous USCIRF Annual Reports. Those covers, and the underlying reports, have documented both the persecution and the progress that USCIRF has seen in countries around the globe over the past quarter century of carrying out its mandate. Unfortunately, some egregious situations have remained constant or even worsened during this period, and several countries with periods of notable progress have regressed. Yet at the same time, there have been many important successes.

USCIRF's first annual report, issued in May 2000, focused primarily on China, Russia, and Sudan. Today, the governments of China and Russia remain among the world's worst violators of their people's religious freedom, as well as among the most active perpetrators of cross-border repression and other malign activities abroad, including in the United States. Indeed, Chinese authorities' repression of Uyghur and other Turkic Muslims has reached such extremes that the U.S. government recognized it as genocide and crimes against humanity in 2021. The two other recent situations that the United States has recognized as genocide and crimes against humanity also targeted religious minority groups whose persecution USCIRF has long been documenting and decrying—Yazidis, Christians, and Shi'a Muslims in Iraq and Rohingya Muslims in Burma. In all three cases, regrettably, justice for the survivors and accountability for the perpetrators remain elusive to date. By contrast, Sudan saw real religious freedom improvements during the period of civilian-led transitional rule that began in 2019. However, the 2021 military coup and subsequent civil war in 2023 have jeopardized that progress and resulted in a

humanitarian crisis impacting all Sudanese. Over the years, USCIRF also has recognized improvements but continues to have ongoing concerns and has seen backsliding in other countries, including Egypt, India, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

Twenty-five years after IRFA's passage, various state and nonstate actors continue to perpetrate or tolerate severe religious persecution. Governments enforce laws and policies to restrict or punish peaceful religious activity and expression, to impose official religious interpretations, or to discriminate on the basis of religion. Societal

actors, including individuals, mobs, and violent groups, often purporting to act in the name of religion, target those they deem the religious other. Derogatory and dangerous rhetoric against members of religious groups, including from government officials and religious leaders, heightens intolerance and can provoke violence. In too many countries, individuals and communities continue to suffer for their religious beliefs, activity, or identity or for their religious freedom advocacy. Those indi-

viduals and communities are why IRFA was enacted. They are also why the U.S. government's efforts to promote freedom of religion or belief for all—in partnership with like-minded governments, parliamentarians, and nongovernmental organizations—remain essential today and in the future.

About This Report

Created by IRFA, USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. government advisory body, separate from the State Department, that monitors and reports on religious freedom abroad and makes policy recommendations to the president, secretary of state, and Congress. USCIRF bases these recommendations on the provisions of its authorizing legislation and the standards in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and other international documents. USCIRF's mandate and annual reports are different from, and complementary to, the mandate and annual reports of the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom.

USCIRF's 2024 Annual Report assesses religious freedom violations and progress in 28 countries during calendar year 2023 and makes independent recommendations for U.S. policy. The key findings, recommendations, and analysis in this report are based on a year's research by USCIRF, including travel, hearings, meetings, and

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Legal Framework

IRFA, as amended by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016, seeks to make religious freedom a higher priority in U.S. foreign policy through a range of mechanisms and tools. These

IRFA includes religious freedom as an element of U.S. foreign assistance, cultural exchange, and international broadcasting programs and requires training on religious freedom and religious persecution for State Department foreign service officers and U.S. immigration officials.

The consequences set forth in IRFA consist of CPC designations and related actions, placement on the State Department's SWL, the ability to bar entry to the United States of foreign officials responsible for particularly severe religious freedom violations, and EPC designations for nonstate actors.

IRFA includes religious freedom as an element of U.S. foreign assistance, cultural exchange, and international broadcasting programs and requires training on religious freedom and religious persecution for State Department foreign service officers and U.S. immigration officials. Further, it includes provisions on U.S. refugee and asylum policy. It also specifically cites U.S. participation in multilateral organizations as an avenue for advancing religious freedom abroad. IRFA is centered on the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief as recognized in international law and as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international instruments and regional agreements.

For a more detailed description of IRFA, its legislative history, and its implementation, see USCIRF's Factsheet: IRFA.

Alongside IRFA, other laws provide tools to sanction individual religious freedom abusers. Some apply to specific countries, such as the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Countability, and Divestment Act (CISADA, P.L. 111-195). More broadly, the permanently reauthorized

2016 Global Magnitsky Act allows the president, who has delegated these authorities to the secretaries of the treasury and state, to deny U.S. visas to and freeze the U.S.-based assets of any foreigner responsible for "extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally protected human rights" against someone seeking to expose illegal government activity or to exercise or defend internationally protected rights. Executive Order (E.O.) 13818, issued in December 2017 to implement and build on the Global Magnitsky Act, authorizes visa bans and asset freezes against foreign persons involved in "serious human rights abuse," providing an even more expansive basis for targeted sanctions.

In addition, Section 7031(c) of the State Department's FY

2023 annual appropriations (P.L. 117-328) requires the secretary of state to make foreign officials and their immediate family members ineligible for U.S. entry if there is credible evidence that such individuals have been involved in "a gross violation of human rights." Unlike the visa ineligibility provision enacted in IRFA, visa bans under this provision may be announced publicly.

Key Developments in 2023

Key U.S. Government IRF Positions

Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain continued implementing his mandate through public speeches and meetings, including with the nongovernmental organization (NGO) IRF Roundtable and other stakeholders. In addition, Ambassador Hussain traveled to Mauritania, Germany, Israel and the West Bank, Qatar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan, and Czechia to meet with governmental officials and faith communities to advance religious freedom and combat religious intolerance, including antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred.

Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism Deborah E. Lipstadt traveled to Poland, Spain, Tunisia, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Israel twice, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Italy,

KEY USCIRF RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES

- **Press Release:** USCIRF Calls for Congressional Hearing after State Department Fails to Designate Nigeria and India as Countries of Particular Concern
- **Podcast:** Shortcomings of the State Department's CPC Designations
- **Factsheet:** Marking 25 Years of IRFA
- **Event:** The First 25 Years: IRFA Accomplishments and Next Steps
- **Hearing:** Transnational Repression of Freedom of Religion or Belief
- **Policy Update:** Countering China's Techno-Authoritarianism, Transnational Repression, and Malign Political Influence
- **Compendiums:** Anti-Conversion Laws and Blasphemy Laws
- **Factsheet:** African Traditional and Indigenous Religions
- **Special Reports:** Religious Freedom for Indigenous Communities in Latin America, The Bureaucratization of Religion in Southeast Asia, and A Retrospective: 25th Anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act

France, Germany, and Canada. During 2023, Special Envoy Lipstadt also spoke twice at the UN in New York on combating antisemitism, issued two joint statements in the wake of Hamas's October 7 terrorist attack, and addressed the Forum of Special Envoys and Coordinators Combating Antisemitism at the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. The Office of the Special Envoy also released a report on policies, programs, and actions across the globe to combat antisemitism. Special Envoy Lipstadt's efforts came amid a surge of antisemitism in Europe, including a reported quadrupling of antisemitic acts in France.

In 2023, Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Uzra Zeya, who also serves concurrently as the U.S. Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, spoke at a Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day event, highlighted the Chinese government's arbitrary imprisonment of Tibetan monk Go Sherab Gyatso, and delivered remarks at a side event at the IRFBA Ministerial Conference on the Chinese government's religious freedom violations in Tibet.

The State Department did not designate Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, Syria, or Vietnam as CPCs in 2023 despite USCIRF's recommendations and the State Department's own reporting on the particularly severe religious freedom violations in those countries.

Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List such as Gulshan Abbas, Rolando Álvarez, Ekpar Asat, and Go Sherab Gyatso.

Malign Foreign Influence

The Lobbying Disclosure Act and the Foreign Agent Registration Act of 1938 regulate the employment of lobbyists by malign foreign actors. This regulatory framework does not prevent lobbyists from working on behalf of foreign adversaries who engage in gross violations of human rights. As such, foreign adversaries such as China and Iran can legally attempt to promote their interests or influence U.S. government policy on human rights and international religious freedom issues. In 2023, a bipartisan group of senators introduced the Disclosing Foreign Influence in Lobbying Act, which would require registered lobbyists to disclose any foreign countries or political parties that are involved in the direction, planning, supervision, or control of a lobbyist's activities. The Senate passed the Disclosing Foreign Influence in Lobbying Act; the House did not vote on the Act.

No member of Congress reintroduced the bipartisan Stop Helping Adversaries Manipulate Everything Act (SHAME Act), which would prohibit lobbyists from receiving compensation from countries designated as foreign adversaries by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Most of the designated countries, which include China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Russia, engage in particularly severe religious freedom violations and other egregious human rights abuses. The SHAME Act would considerably strengthen the existing regulatory framework around lobbying on behalf of foreign governments.

Multilateral Engagement

The State Department continued to serve as the Secretariat of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (IRFBA). During the year, IRFBA made multicity statements, including on combating antisemitism, the persecution of Christians worldwide, and Chinese religious prisoner of conscience Wang Yi. In addition, the U.S. government cosponsored a UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution on freedom of religion or belief.

In 2023, the United States served the second year of a three-year term as a member of the UNHRC. The U.S. government cosponsored a resolution on freedom of religion or belief and held a side event on combating antisemitism worldwide. The U.S. government also joined a multicity statement condemning Iran for its religiously motivated persecution of women and girls, delivered a statement speaking out against blasphemy laws, and supported resolutions mandating investigations into human rights violations in Iran, Syria, Nicaragua, Ukraine, Eritrea, Belarus, Burma, and Afghanistan. At the UN Security Council, the U.S. government supported two resolutions condemning the Taliban's religiously motivated persecution of women and girls.

Commissioner dissent on IRFA Implementation by Commissioner Eric Ueland

USCIRF's work is critical in holding violators of religious freedom to account, and demanding religious freedom for all be as respected as other human rights. On the welcome day USCIRF and the many fighting for international religious freedom succeed, there will no longer be the need for programs by the United States to provide succor and refuge to those whose freedom of religion is under threat.

Until then, America's generosity towards refugees who suffer religious freedom violations has been consistent across multiple administrations, providing an option to those whose religious freedom is extinguished, restricted, or threatened. I believe lower than recommended levels for religious refugees along with a rigorous review process deliver optimal results to those with religious freedom needs who flee oppression, suppression, relocation, revocation, terror, imprisonment, torture, or looming death. These refugees come to the United States free to practice their faith without fear or favor under our Constitution and laws.

The United States should work to expand the number of countries who can, if they choose, adopt religiously based refugee admittance programs, so more countries provide refuge to those fleeing in the face of threats to their religious freedom. Well-grounded religiously based refugee programs in other countries would meet the need of advancing religious freedom opportunities around the globe, and protect those whose religious freedom is threatened. In key bilateral relationships, it would be worthy work on behalf of religious freedom to diplommatize this priority.

Additional view on IRFA Implementation by Vice Chair Frederick A. Davie, and Commissioners Susie Gelman, Mohamed Magid, and Stephen Schneck

USCIRF has a commendable track record of recommending a strong and robust refugee program. The importance of USCIRF's recommendation that the Biden administration continue to strengthen the mechanisms of this program to increase the ability to meet the admissions ceiling for refugees, along with prioritizing survivors of egregious religious persecution, cannot be overstated.

The United States has long been a leader in the resettlement of refugees from abroad, including victims of religious persecution. While USCIRF's focus is on individuals and groups being persecuted for their religion or belief, we strongly believe that the United States must also continue to resettle those fleeing persecution on all of the grounds recognized by U.S. and international law. Protecting refugees and giving them hope for the future is a core tenet of the United States' history and values.

Unlike the previous administration, the Biden administration has returned the United States to a global leadership role on refugee resettlement. We also strongly support the United States and its partners continuing their generous humanitarian aid to the vast and growing number of refugees and internally displaced people around the globe. Given the scale of today's world crises, it is crucial that the administration continue to work with other countries to expand their own resettlement programs.

KEY FINDINGS

In 2023, religious freedom conditions in China deteriorated. The government intensified the implementation of its multifaceted "sinicization of religion" policy, demanding that all major religious groups obey the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its ideology and policies. Sinicization requires groups to follow the CCP's Marxist interpretation of religion, including by altering religious scriptures and doctrines to conform to that interpretation. Authorities demolished and forcibly modified Christian churches and Muslim mosques because of architectural features they deemed "foreign." In the ethnoreligious minority regions of Xinjiang and Tibet, sinicization entailed forced assimilation of local populations that threatened their religious and cultural identities. In September, the government implemented its new Measures for the Management of Religious Activity Venues, further restricting religious freedom.

During the year, top CCP officials Xi Jinping and Wang Huning vowed to strengthen repressive policies and continue sinicizing Islam in Xinjiang. Authorities continued to detain and imprison Uyghurs. According to reports, some became critically ill in custody while others died in prison or shortly after release. The government continued to subject Uyghurs to forced labor, including in prisons. Authorities heavily surveilled and prevented Uyghurs from fasting during Ramadan and rebranded Xinjiang as a tourist destination. The government also increased its repression of Hui Muslims across several provinces, subjecting them to similar mistreatments experienced by Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims.

The government intensified its suppression and sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism. Authorities increased surveillance and security measures on Tibetan Buddhists, restricting their peaceful religious activities, arresting and imprisoning them for engaging in such activities and possessing the Dalai Lama's portraits or teachings, and placing them in "political re-education" camps to prevent self-immolation. Some Tibetan Buddhist monks died in prison. The

government separated one million Tibetan children from parents, putting them in state-run boarding schools to forcibly assimilate them. Some local authorities banned parents from teaching religion to Tibetan children. The government controlled the ordination of Tibetan monks and reiterated its intent to interfere in the Dalai Lama's reincarnation and appoint his successor.

Despite the Vatican-China agreement on bishop appointments, in April the government installed a bishop without Vatican approval. Authorities continued to forcibly disappear and convict underground Catholic priests—including Bishop Augustine Cui Tai and Joseph Yang Xiaoming—who refused to join the state-controlled Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

Nation wide

Persecution of Protestant house church Christians intensified. The government continued its nationwide crackdown on house churches, detaining, arresting, and sentencing independent Protestants on security and criminal charges. Authorities tortured Christians held in secret detention centers and prisons. Authorities in Henan Province required Protestants to register on a government "smart-religion" app to attend worship services. Authorities also continued to persecute ethnic minority Protestants, such as Miao, Lisu, and Nu Christians.

The government continued its persecution of Falun Gong and the Church of Almighty God (CAG), often using "anti-cult" provisions under Article 300 of China's Criminal Law. In 2023, Falun Gong sources documented 6,514 cases of harassment and arrest, 1,190 prison sentences, and 209 deaths because of persecution. Across China, authorities arrested and tortured thousands of CAG members, some of whom reportedly died due to abuses.

The government engages in sophisticated and comprehensive campaigns of transnational repression, using a wide array of physical, digital, and psychological tactics to attempt to silence those it views as threats, such as Uyghurs.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

- Redesignate China as a "country of particular concern," or CPC, for engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA);
- Continue imposing sanctions, in coordination with partners, to target Chinese officials and entities responsible for severe religious freedom violations, especially within the CCP's United Front Work Department and the public security and state security apparatus;
- Work with like-minded partners to address China's technology-enabled

religious freedom and other human rights violations by strengthening the effectiveness of existing export control regimes—including by establishing a formal, binding, multilateral export control regime—countering China's economic coercion, reducing economic and trade dependence on China, and diversifying supply chains;

- Expand the network of countries that abide by U.S.-led technology governance regimes that respect and protect religious freedom and other related human rights, including rules governing the development and use of AI systems

- and other emerging critical technologies; and
- Work in close coordination with international partners to exchange intelligence and to continue prosecuting those engaging in transnational repression against religious minorities on behalf of the Chinese government.

The U.S. Congress should:

- Ban foreign lobbying by agents representing the Chinese government and its state-affiliated commercial entities that undermine religious freedom and related human rights.

Background

China is officially an atheist state. China's religious regulations and policies explicitly require state-controlled religious organizations to be loyal to the CCP and to serve its political objectives and interests. Of China's estimated 1.4 billion people, approximately 18 percent are Buddhist, including Tibetan Buddhists; five percent are Christian; and two percent are Muslim. Other significant religious traditions include Taoism, Falun Gong, and folk religion practices.

International Accountability in the United Nations

In March 2023, the United Nations (UN) Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights expressed concern over the Chinese government's use of forced labor and restriction and criminalization of religious practices in Xinjiang. The committee also noted China's sinicization and forced assimilation policy imposed on Tibetan children and its destruction of religious sites in Xinjiang and Tibet. In April, six UN special rapporteurs expressed concern that China's "labor transfer" and "vocational training" programs in Tibet could lead to forced labor and that Tibetans placed in such programs are "discouraged from expressing their religious identity," violating international law. They urged China to dismantle its "discriminatory ideas and practices."

In September, three UN special rapporteurs raised grave concerns over China's forced assimilation of Uyghur children in state-run boarding schools, leading to "a loss of connection with their families and communities" and undermining "their ties to their cultural, religious and linguistic identities." Also in September, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk called on China to take "strong remedial action" in Xinjiang, per his office's recommendations. Following China's election to the UN Human Rights Council (2024–2026) in October, 51 countries delivered a joint statement at the UN Third Committee, urging China to end its human rights and religious freedom violations in Xinjiang.

Religious Freedom in Hong Kong

According to a Hong Kong Watch report, religious freedom in Hong Kong is slowly being undermined. Chinese and Hong Kong authorities continued to implement the draconian National Security Law, which severely restricts related human rights such as the freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and press. This increased political pressure has led to self-censorship among Hong Kong's religious leaders and closures of some religious groups. In 2023, Catholic religious freedom advocate and democracy activist Jimmy Lai remained imprisoned in solitary confinement.

Transnational Repression and Malign Influence

The Chinese government engages in transnational repression against diaspora religious communities with ties to China, including in the United States. During 2023, the U.S. government prosecuted individuals who engaged in these illegal activities on behalf of the Chinese government. In April, the U.S. Department of Justice arrested and

charged Lu Jianwang and Chen Jinping in connection with operating an illegal Chinese overseas police station in New York City. Lu has a history of engaging in transnational repression on behalf of the Chinese government, targeting religious groups and dissidents in the U.S. soil. In May, the Justice Department charged John Chen and Feng for furthering the Chinese government's transnational repression against Falun Gong practitioners in the United States. The Chinese government's malign political influence campaigns, particularly lobbying efforts in the U.S. Congress, represent a particularly insidious form of political influence, aimed at shaping federal policymaking to further the Chinese government's interests and goals.

Key U.S. Policy

In August, the U.S. Department of State imposed visa restrictions on Chinese officials involved in the forced assimilation of more than one million Tibetan children in state-run boarding schools. In September, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security restricted the import of three Xinjiang companies, pursuant to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (P.L. 117-78). Also in August, the administration of President Joseph R. Biden signed an executive order prohibiting certain U.S. investment in China and other countries of concern in the sensitive technology sectors of semiconductors and microelectronics, quantum information technologies, and artificial intelligence (AI). In October, the Biden administration updated and strengthened existing export controls rules to more effectively ban exports of high-end chips used in AI for human rights violations and military applications.

In November, President Biden met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in California and raised concerns regarding China's human rights abuses, including in Xinjiang—which the administration affirmed as genocide and crimes against humanity—Tibet, and Hong Kong. In December, the U.S. Department of the Treasury sanctioned Chinese officials Gao Qi and Hu Lianhe for their connection to ongoing serious human rights abuses in Xinjiang, pursuant to the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act (P.L. 116-145). On December 29, 2023, the State Department redesignated China as a CPC under IRFA and reimposed existing restrictions on exports of crime control or detection instruments and equipment to China. In fiscal year 2023, the U.S. government obligated approximately \$12 million in assistance for programs in China.

In February, Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ) introduced the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act of 2023 (H.R.1154), which passed the U.S. House of Representatives in March. In April, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Representative Young Kim (R-CA) introduced the Uyghur Policy Act of 2023 (S.1252/H.R.2766) to support the human rights—including freedom of religion or belief—of Uyghurs and other minority groups in Xinjiang. In July, Representative Jennifer Wexton (D-VA) introduced the Uyghur Forced Labor Disclosure Act (H.R.4840), requiring publicly traded companies to review and disclose all information about links between their products and Uyghur forced labor in Xinjiang. In October, Representative Mark Alford (R-MO) introduced the Combatting the Persecution of Religious Groups in China Act (H.R.6069).

KEY USCIRF RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES

- **Policy Update:** Countering China's Techno-Authoritarianism, Transnational Repression, and Malign Political Influence
- **Op-Ed:** Congress Must Act to Stop the China Lobby
- **Hearing:** Transnational Repression of Freedom of Religion or Belief
- **Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List:** China

**Additional View on China by
Chair Abraham Cooper, Vice Chair Frederick A.
Davie, and Commissioners David Curry, Susie
Gelman, Mohamed Magid, Stephen Schneck, Eric
Ueland, and Frank Wolf**

Religious communities are suffering under Chinese Communist oppression. We have seen Chinese officials target anyone advancing religious freedom and human rights for persecuted religious and ethnic groups, in particular Uyghurs. USCIRF has experienced this first-hand, as Chinese authorities sanctioned seven USCIRF Commissioners in 2021, including current Commissioner Nury A. Turkel. It is part of an alarming pattern of Chinese transnational repression against American citizens serving the U.S. Government that requires urgent attention and action. Not only have Chinese officials attempted to intimidate individuals directly, but Chinese security officials also regularly harassed and intimidated family members as a form of retaliation.

The government of a world power does not have the right to threaten anyone advocating for religious freedom and human rights. There must be consequences for the trampling of anyone's fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief.

As a friend and admirer of the people of China, we promise to continue to lend our voices, on behalf of all suffering religious communities, and to continue to raise, on a humanitarian basis, Mr. Turkel's mother's case, at every opportunity.

The Chinese government should allow this ailing, elderly woman to travel to the United States to see her children and grandchildren. It is our hope that such gestures will encourage the Chinese government to allow all of its population to be able to freely practice their religion in the future.

**Additional view on China by
Chair Abraham Cooper, Vice Chair Frederick A.
Davie, and Commissioners David Curry, Susie
Gelman, Mohamed Magid, Stephen Schneck,
Nury Turkel, Eric Ueland, and Frank Wolf**

It is imperative to ban lobbying for the Chinese government, its state-affiliated commercial entities, and their interests while the government continues its egregious acts of religious persecution. These harsh actions impact every faith group in China with leaders of the Catholic Church and Protestant house churches imprisoned and even "disappeared."

Cultural genocide devastates Tibet where Buddhist monks die in prison. Physical genocide ravages Uyghur Muslims, with millions in detention camps and children taken from their parents. Organs are harvested from Falun Gong and Uyghurs, some while still alive. Hong Kong represses Christians, including 92-year-old Cardinal Zen.

China's influence spreads worldwide. China supports Iran, which provided training and weapons for the attacks on Israel by Hamas and they supply arms to Hezbollah and the Houthis.

China aids Russia in its war on Ukraine and supports North Korea, one of the world's worst religious persecutors. China supports both Nicaragua and Cuba where Christians are being aggressively persecuted.

Concerns are rising over China threatening to attack Taiwan, which many experts believe may lead to direct U.S. involvement and the loss of American military lives.

Amidst all of this, the words of 18th-century British parliamentarian William Wilberforce about the evils of the slave trade come to mind: "You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you do not know."

Congress cannot look the other way. For the good of our country and religious freedom worldwide, Congress must ban lobbying for the Chinese government and its interests.

Asylum Seekers in Expedited Removal

- USCIRF recommended that the Joseph R. Biden administration address longstanding flaws in the treatment of asylum seekers in expedited removal. USCIRF has long monitored the subject, including in comprehensive reports released in 2005, 2007, 2013, and 2016 that document major problems successive administrations have not addressed. Specifically, USCIRF found that U.S. Department of Homeland Security officials often fail to follow required procedures to identify asylum seekers and refer them for credible fear determinations; that they detain asylum seekers in inappropriate, prison-like conditions; and that funding disparities and a lack of high-level oversight hamper the complicated, multiagency process.
- In May, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced changes that may allow families seeking asylum in expedited removal proceedings to access alternatives to detention while awaiting the processing of their claim.

Refugee Resettlement

- USCIRF has consistently recommended that the U.S. government maintain a robust refugee resettlement program and that victims of the most severe forms of religious persecution be prioritized. In September 2023, the Biden administration maintained the annual refugee ceiling at 125,000 for fiscal year 2024. Also in September, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) extended temporary protected status for Afghan nationals living in the United States. The administration also designated members of religious minority groups in Eurasia, the Baltics, and Iran for priority access. In December, at the Global Refugee Forum, the U.S. government announced new pledges, including increasing the resettlement of Rohingya to the United States.

APPENDIX 2 FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF VICTIMS LIST

Perpetrator	Not Released	Released	Died in Custody	Unknown	Total
Nigeria	5	4			9
North Korea	3		8		11
Pakistan	61	25		1	87
Russia	371	105	6	1	483
Saudi Arabia	43	6			49
Sri Lanka		1			1
Tajikistan	9	4			13
Turkmenistan	10	21			31
Uzbekistan	49	38			87
Vietnam	57	9	12	2	80
Total	1,311	618	290	9	2,228

The most documented violation on the FoRB Victims List was imprisonment, followed by detention, house arrest, enforced disappearance, and forced renunciation of faith. USCIRF also documented a case of forced psychiatric treatment and another involving compulsory labor. The chart below does not reflect whether a victim is in custody or released.

Perpetrator	Imprisonment	Detention	House Arrest	Enforced Disappearance	Forced Renunciation of Faith	Other	Total
Algeria	5						5
Azerbaijan	7	4					11
Burma	3	2					5
China	572	213	4	6			795
Cuba	6	1	4				11
Egypt	3	15					18
Eritrea		60	1				61
Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)		2					2
Houthis	2	1					3
India	1	53	1				55
Indonesia	6	2					8
Iran	198	140	9				347
Iraq		2					2
Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)				1			1
Kazakhstan	15	1					16
Malaysia				4			4
Nicaragua	18	15					33
Nigeria	3	6					9
North Korea	8	3					11
Pakistan	31	50			6		87
Russia	383	57	30	11		2	483
Saudi Arabia	31	16		2			49
Sri Lanka		1					1

Religion or Belief

Number of Victims Documented

Adivasi	1
Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light	3
Baha'i	166
Bon	1
Buddhist - Hoa Hao	6
Buddhist - Theravada	3
Buddhist - Tibetan	93
Buddhist - Unspecified/Other	32
Christian - Catholic	57
Christian - Church of Almighty God	236
Christian - Jehovah's Witness	282
Christian - Orthodox	20
Christian - Protestant	139
Christian - Unspecified/Other	64
Duong Van Minh	4
ECKist (Eckankar)	1
Erfan-e Halgheh Practitioner	3
Falun Gong	217
Hindu	10
Humanist	1
Jewish	1
Muslim - Ahmadiyya	20
Muslim - Qur'anist	1
Muslim - Shi'a	39
Muslim - Sufi	63
Muslim - Sunni	406
Muslim - Unspecified/Other	232
Santería	5
Scientologist	1
Shaman	1
Sikh	1
Yarsani	38
Unknown/Unspecified	81

Nature of Charges

Individuals included on the FoRB Victims List face a range of charges in several different legal contexts. USCIRF created groupings for similar charges to identify how foreign governments and entities justify the incarceration of the individuals included on the FoRB Victims List. USCIRF's categories are not mutually exclusive, and individuals are often included in more than one category based on varying charges brought against them. While USCIRF excludes from the FoRB Victims List individuals known to have committed or promoted violence, many individuals on the list face unsubstantiated accusations of violent crimes by the foreign government.

USCIRF is in the process of identifying charges for more than a quarter of the victims. Dozens of victims are not facing any charges, yet they remain imprisoned or have been subjected to other violations included on the FoRB Victims List that may not involve legal charges, such as enforced disappearance or forced renunciation of faith.

~~Charged~~ の 球

Nature of Charges Categories	Number of Individuals Charged	Percentage of Individuals Charged
Abuse (Physical, Sexual, Psychological)	1	<1%
Aid & Abetment	14	1%
Apostasy	4	<1%
Arms Trafficking & Illicit Use of Weapons	19	1%
Assault & Battery	10	<1%
<u>Banned Organization</u>	616	<u>28%</u>
Blasphemy	112	5%
Breach of Privacy & Disclosure	2	<1%
Conversion	29	1%
Crimes Involving Minors	5	<1%
Criminal Premeditation & Conspiracy	25	1%
<u>Cult</u>	312	<u>14%</u>
Defamation	2	<1%
Drug Trafficking & Illicit Drug Use	12	1%
Embezzlement & Fraud	20	1%
Environmental Crimes	1	<1%
Espionage	7	<1%
Extremism	306	14%
Fabricating & Destroying Evidence	3	<1%
Filing a False Police Report	1	<1%
Forgery	5	<1%
Harboring a Fugitive	5	<1%
Hate Speech	110	5%
<u>Illegal Assembly</u>	152	7%
<u>Illegal Business Activity</u>	5	<1%
<u>Illegal Migration & Entry/Exit of Country</u>	7	<1%
Illicit Financing	65	3%
Immorality	12	1%
Incitement to Commit Crime & Violence	54	2%

Nature of Charges Categories	Number of Individuals Charged	Percentage of Individuals Charged
Insulting Public Officials & Institutions	33	1%
Leaking State Secrets	5	<1%
Mercenarism	2	<1%
Miscellaneous Religious Crimes	15	1%
Murder & Attempted Murder	28	1%
Negligence	1	<1%
Not Applicable	76	3%
Public Disorder	118	5%
Refusing & Absconding Military Service	25	1%
Separatism	31	1%
<u>Spreading Propaganda & False or Misleading Ideas, Information, or Materials</u>	218	10%
Subversion	85	4%
Terrorism	328	15%
Theft & Robbery	4	<1%
Threat	3	<1%
<u>Treason & Sedition</u>	248	11%
Unknown	603	27%
Unlawful Disobedience	51	2%

The following chart highlights the top 10 most common types of charges for individuals on the FoRB Victims List.

TOP TEN MOST COMMON CHARGES

