

With Religious Persecution Rising Internationally Advocates Urge the Senate to Pass Religious Freedom Bill

Church of Scientology joins 90 religious freedom advocates asking for the US Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act to be passed

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, May 19, 2022

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Religious

persecution by governments and others around the world continues to be a crisis. The United States is a leading supporter of those who suffer

for their beliefs with a robust Office of International Religious Freedom and its Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom in the State Department. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent, bipartisan US government agency, is part of the vital infrastructure supporting religious freedom issues internationally.

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Rev. Susan Taylor, Church of Scientology National Affairs Office



International Religious Freedom Roundtable participants meeting on Capitol Hill

In a letter addressed to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 90 religious freedom advocates from the [International Religious Freedom Roundtable](#) urged the committee to pass Senate bill 3895, called the US Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2022. This act will ensure the commission continues to protect and defend religious freedom for all faiths internationally.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom ([USCIRF](#)) is an independent, bipartisan, US federal government commission created by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) that monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad. USCIRF uses international standards to monitor religious freedom violations globally and makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress.

The letter said, "From our various experiences, we've seen the Commission play a vital role as a pillar of U.S. foreign policy infrastructure by reporting on those around the world who suffer for their beliefs, conscience, or religion. Robust reporting products, advocating for prisoners of conscience, and resources such as prisoner lists are essential to international advancement of the fundamental right of religious freedom. As you know, this freedom is a foreign policy priority of the United States as defined by Congress in the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

"Additionally, being heard and respected by a prominent government commission is invaluable to those who have been persecuted for their beliefs. The impact of their story being told and published by the U.S. government encourages them, supports recovery, and inspires their broader community to become even greater advocates for those who are still harmed."

One of the signers of the letter, Rev. Susan Taylor, Public Affairs Director for the Church of Scientology National Affairs Office in Washington, DC, said, "With religious freedom continually under attack around the world, we must fully support those organizations that fight daily for our right to believe and practice our faiths. More voices are needed to speak out on abuses against individuals solely because of their religious belief. USCIRF is a vital part of this infrastructure. Congressional reauthorization of USCIRF is a vital step in ensuring that religious freedom is fought for globally."

In introducing the bill, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) said, "Freedom of religion is a God-given right afforded to all individuals. Our nation is blessed to have a constitution that protects this right and a proud tradition of defending this principle since its founding." He further commented, "Tragically, many around the world are deprived of this fundamental protection. Christians in Nigeria, Nicaragua, and Cuba, Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang, Buddhists in Tibet, and many more risk persecution and even death because of their beliefs. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom plays a critical role in shining a light on religious freedom violations worldwide. I'm proud to lead my colleagues in this bipartisan effort so that men and women across the globe are free to safely and peacefully worship."

Co-sponsor Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) stated, "As we bear witness to dangerous global trends toward authoritarianism and democratic backsliding, religious freedom, like other human rights, is increasingly imperiled worldwide." He added, "From China's genocide against the



May 16, 2022

The Honorable Bob Menendez
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable James E. Risch
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
483 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ben Cardin
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

cc:

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators,

We write as an informal group of 90 organizations and individuals who are scholars, religious and secular leaders, human rights advocates, and practitioners to express our gratitude for the time and attention paid to the reauthorization of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) by you and your staff members. Passing bill [S. 3895](#) is paramount to the advancement of religious freedom around the world.

From our various experiences, we've seen the Commission play a vital role as a pillar of U.S. foreign policy infrastructure by reporting on those around the world who suffer for their beliefs, conscience, or religion. Robust reporting products, advocating for prisoners of conscience, and resources such as prisoner lists are essential to international advancement of the fundamental right of religious freedom. As you know, this freedom is a foreign policy priority of the United States as defined by Congress in the [International Religious Freedom Act of 1998](#).

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Letter to Congress supporting the US
Commission on International
Religious Freedom

Uyghurs in Xinjiang and horrific abuses against Buddhists in Tibet, to Iran's totalitarian restrictions and undeniable violence against religious minorities, the United States' action to advance and support free religious expression is more crucial than ever. Today's reauthorization of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom reflects our enduring commitment to safeguard human rights, and I remain deeply committed to continue our work to build on and strengthen the ways the US government elevates the voices and causes of marginalized religious communities everywhere."

Another co-sponsor, Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) remarked, "The United States has a long tradition of promoting religious freedom abroad, and this Commission is dedicated to advising Congress and the Executive Branch about how to successfully ensure religious freedom is protected and that religion is not exploited to justify human-rights abuses. As the global refugee crisis worsens, the United States must do more to address the scourge of religious persecution, including holding perpetrators accountable and providing a safe haven to refugees. It's heartening to see a bipartisan group of Senators come together on this pressing issue to ensure that the Commission can effectively fulfill its mission."

Founded in 2010, the IRF Roundtable is an informal group of individuals from all faiths and none who gather regularly to discuss IRF issues on an off-the-record basis. The IRF Roundtable which meets weekly has and will continue to advocate and advise on policies regarding international religious freedom around the world and in the United States.

The Church of Scientology National Affairs Office in Washington, DC, has been a participant in the IRF Roundtable since its early days. The Church of Scientology has stood for basic human rights, as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, since its founding by L. Ron Hubbard in Washington, DC, in 1955.

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