

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 301

To provide for the establishment of the Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 15, 2013

Mr. WOLF (for himself, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. HOLT, Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia, Mr. PETERS of Michigan, Mr. PITTS, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To provide for the establishment of the Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds the following:

5 (1) More than 500 Baha'is in Iran have been
6 arbitrarily arrested since 2005. Roughly 100 Baha'is
7 are presently imprisoned because of their religious
8 beliefs.

1 (2) In May 2010, suspected terrorists attacked
2 two mosques in Pakistan belonging to the Ahmad-
3 diya minority Muslim sect, killing at least 80 people.
4 Ahmadis consider themselves Muslim, but Pakistani
5 law does not recognize them as such.

6 (3) Said Musa, an Afghan Christian convert,
7 was arrested in May 2010 on charges of apostasy,
8 a crime which can carry the death sentence, and was
9 released in February 2011 only after sustained
10 international pressure.

11 (4) On October 31, 2010, gunmen laid siege on
12 Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad, Iraq,
13 killing at least 52 police and worshipers, including
14 two priests, making it the worst massacre of Iraqi
15 Christians since 2003.

16 (5) Iraq's ancient and once vibrant Christian
17 population that numbered an estimated 1,500,000
18 out of a total population in Iraq of 30,000,000 in
19 2003 has been reduced by at least one half, due in
20 significant part to Christians fleeing the violence.

21 (6) In November 2010, a Pakistani court sen-
22 tenced Aasia Bibi, a Christian mother of five, to
23 death under the country's blasphemy law for insult-
24 ing the Prophet Muhammad.

1 (7) Since early 2011, violent sectarian attacks
2 targeting Coptic Orthodox Christians and their prop-
3 erty increased significantly, resulting in nearly 100
4 deaths, mostly Coptic Christians, surpassing the
5 death toll of the 10 previous years combined.

6 (8) In Egypt, with the ascent of the Muslim
7 Brotherhood, Coptic Christians, numbering roughly
8 8 to 10 million, are leaving in droves.

9 (9) On March 2, 2011, Pakistani Federal Mi-
10 norities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti, the only Christian
11 member of the Cabinet, who was outspoken in his
12 opposition to Pakistan’s blasphemy laws was assas-
13 sinated by extremists.

14 (10) The Special Envoy for Anti-Semitism,
15 Hannah Rosenthal, has noted that Holocaust glorifi-
16 cation “is especially virulent in Middle Eastern
17 media, some of which is state-owned and operated,
18 which calls for a new Holocaust to finish the job”.

19 (11) In the midst of a devastating civil war,
20 Syrian Christians and other religious minorities,
21 which comprise roughly 10 percent of the popu-
22 lation, are particularly vulnerable lacking their own
23 militias and regional protectors.

1 (12) Many of these ancient faith communities
2 are being forced to flee the lands which they have
3 inhabited for centuries.

4 (13) The United States Commission on Inter-
5 national Religious Freedom has recommended that
6 Egypt, Tajikistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Saudi Ara-
7 bia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan be designated by
8 the Department of State as Countries of Particular
9 Concern in accordance with the International Reli-
10 gious Freedom Act of 1998.

11 (14) The situation on the ground in the region
12 continues to develop rapidly and the United States
13 Government needs an individual who can respond in
14 kind and focus on the critical situation of religious
15 minorities in these countries.

16 (15) There are historical precedents, including
17 the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-
18 Semitism, the Special Envoy for North Korea
19 Human Rights Issues, and the South Sudan and
20 Sudan Special Envoy, for the Department of State,
21 either as a result of legislative mandate or initiative
22 of the Secretary of State, to create positions with a
23 targeted focus on an area or issue of recognized im-
24 port.

1 **SEC. 2. SPECIAL ENVOY TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS FREE-**
2 **DOM OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE**
3 **NEAR EAST AND SOUTH CENTRAL ASIA.**

4 (a) APPOINTMENT.—The President shall appoint a
5 Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious
6 Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia (in
7 this Act referred to as the “Special Envoy”) within the
8 Department of State.

9 (b) QUALIFICATIONS.—The Special Envoy should be
10 a person of recognized distinction in the field of human
11 rights and religious freedom and with expertise in the
12 Near East and South Central Asia regions. The Special
13 Envoy shall have the rank of ambassador and shall hold
14 the office at the pleasure of the President.

15 (c) PROHIBITION.—The person appointed as Special
16 Envoy may not hold any other position of Federal employ-
17 ment for the period of time during which the person holds
18 the position of Special Envoy.

19 **SEC. 3. DUTIES.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Special Envoy shall carry out
21 the following duties:

22 (1) Promote the right of religious freedom of
23 religious minorities in the countries of the Near
24 East and the countries of South Central Asia, de-
25 nounce the violation of such right, and recommend

1 appropriate responses by the United States Govern-
2 ment when such right is violated.

3 (2) Monitor and combat acts of religious intol-
4 erance and incitement targeted against religious mi-
5 norities in the countries of the Near East and the
6 countries of South Central Asia.

7 (3) Work to ensure that the unique needs of re-
8 ligious minority communities in the countries of the
9 Near East and the countries of South Central Asia
10 are addressed, including the economic and security
11 needs of such communities to the extent that such
12 needs are directly tied to religious-based discrimina-
13 tion and persecution.

14 (4) Work with foreign governments of the coun-
15 tries of the Near East and the countries of South
16 Central Asia to address laws that are inherently dis-
17 criminatory toward religious minority communities
18 in such countries.

19 (5) Coordinate and assist in the preparation of
20 that portion of the report required by sections
21 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act
22 of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151n(d) and 2304(b)) relating
23 to the nature and extent of religious freedom of reli-
24 gious minorities in the countries of the Near East
25 and the countries of South Central Asia.

1 (6) Coordinate and assist in the preparation of
2 that portion of the report required by section 102(b)
3 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998
4 (22 U.S.C. 6412(b)) relating to the nature and ex-
5 tent of religious freedom of religious minorities in
6 the countries of the Near East and the countries of
7 South Central Asia.

8 (b) COORDINATION.—In carrying out the duties
9 under subsection (a), the Special Envoy shall, to the max-
10 imum extent practicable, coordinate with the Bureau of
11 Population, Refugees and Migration of the Department of
12 State, the Ambassador at Large for International Reli-
13 gious Freedom, the United States Commission on Inter-
14 national Religious Freedom, and other relevant Federal
15 agencies and officials.

16 **SEC. 4. DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION.**

17 Subject to the direction of the President and the Sec-
18 retary of State, the Special Envoy is authorized to rep-
19 resent the United States in matters and cases relevant to
20 religious freedom in the countries of the Near East and
21 the countries of South Central Asia in—

22 (1) contacts with foreign governments, intergov-
23 ernmental organizations, and specialized agencies of
24 the United Nations, the Organization of Security
25 and Cooperation in Europe, and other international

1 organizations of which the United States is a mem-
2 ber; and

3 (2) multilateral conferences and meetings rel-
4 evant to religious freedom in the countries of the
5 Near East and the countries of South Central Asia.

6 **SEC. 5. PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND CONSULTATION.**

7 (a) PRIORITY COUNTRIES.—In carrying out this Act,
8 the Special Envoy shall give priority to programs, projects,
9 and activities for Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and
10 Pakistan.

11 (b) CONSULTATION.—The Special Envoy shall con-
12 sult with domestic and international nongovernmental or-
13 ganizations and multilateral organizations and institu-
14 tions, as the Special Envoy considers appropriate to fulfill
15 the purposes of this Act.

16 **SEC. 6. FUNDING.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—Of the amounts made available
18 for “Diplomatic and Consular Programs” for fiscal years
19 2014 through 2018, \$1,000,000 is authorized to be appro-
20 priated for each such fiscal year to carry out the provisions
21 of this Act.

22 (b) FUNDING OFFSET.—To offset the costs to be in-
23 curred by the Department of State to carry out the provi-
24 sions of this Act for fiscal years 2014 through 2018, the
25 Secretary of State shall eliminate such positions within the

1 Department of State, unless otherwise authorized or re-
2 quired by law, as the Secretary determines to be necessary
3 to fully offset such costs.

4 (c) LIMITATION.—No additional funds are authorized
5 to be appropriated for “Diplomatic and Consular Pro-
6 grams” to carry out the provisions of this Act.

7 **SEC. 7. SUNSET.**

8 This Act shall cease to be effective beginning on Octo-
9 ber 1, 2018.

○