

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 653

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 SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 22, 2013

Mr. BLUNT (for himself, Mr. LEVIN, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Near East and South
5 Central Asia Religious Freedom Act of 2013”.

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 may 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. The Special Envoy shall have the
9 rank of ambassador and shall hold the office at the pleas-
10 ure of the President.

11 (b) QUALIFICATIONS.—The Special Envoy should be
12 a person of recognized distinction in the field of human
13 rights and religious freedom and with expertise in the
14 Near East and South Central Asia.

15 **SEC. 3. DUTIES.**

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

18 (1) Promote the right of religious freedom of
19 religious minorities in the countries of the Near
20 East and the countries of South Central Asia, de-
21 nounce the violation of such right, and recommend
22 appropriate responses by the United States Govern-
23 ment when such right is violated.

24 (2) Monitor and combat acts of religious intoler-
25 erance and incitement targeted against religious mi-

1 norities in the countries of the Near East and the
2 countries of South Central Asia.

3 (3) Work to ensure that the unique needs of re-
4 ligious minority communities in the countries of the
5 Near East and the countries of South Central Asia
6 are addressed, including the economic and security
7 needs of such communities.

8 (4) Work with foreign governments of the coun-
9 tries of the Near East and the countries of South
10 Central Asia to address laws that are discriminatory
11 toward religious minority communities in such coun-
12 tries.

13 (5) Coordinate and assist in the preparation of
14 that portion of the report required by sections
15 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act
16 of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151n(d) and 2304(b)) relating
17 to the nature and extent of religious freedom of reli-
18 gious minorities in the countries of the Near East
19 and the countries of South Central Asia.

20 (6) Coordinate and assist in the preparation of
21 that portion of the report required by section 102(b)
22 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998
23 (22 U.S.C. 6412(b)) relating to the nature and ex-
24 tent of religious freedom of religious minorities in

1 the countries of the Near East and the countries of
2 South Central Asia.

3 (b) COORDINATION.—In carrying out the duties
4 under subsection (a), the Special Envoy shall, to the max-
5 imum extent practicable, coordinate with the Assistant
6 Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migra-
7 tion, the Ambassador at Large for International Religious
8 Freedom, the United States Commission on International
9 Religious Freedom, and other relevant Federal agencies
10 and officials.

11 **SEC. 4. DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION.**

12 Subject to the direction of the President and the Sec-
13 retary of State, the Special Envoy is authorized to rep-
14 resent the United States in matters and cases relevant to
15 religious freedom in the countries of the Near East and
16 the countries of South Central Asia in—

17 (1) contacts with foreign governments, intergov-
18 ernmental organizations, and specialized agencies of
19 the United Nations, the Organization of Security
20 and Cooperation in Europe, and other international
21 organizations of which the United States is a mem-
22 ber; and

23 (2) multilateral conferences and meetings rel-
24 evant to religious freedom in the countries of the
25 Near East and the countries of South Central Asia.

1 **SEC. 5. CONSULTATIONS.**

2 The Special Envoy shall consult with domestic and
3 international nongovernmental organizations and multilat-
4 eral organizations and institutions, as the Special Envoy
5 considers appropriate to fulfill the purposes of this Act.

6 **SEC. 6. FUNDING.**

7 Of the amounts appropriated or otherwise made
8 available to the Secretary of State for “Diplomatic and
9 Consular Programs” for fiscal years 2013 through 2017,
10 the Secretary of State is authorized to provide to the Spe-
11 cial Envoy \$1,000,000 for each such fiscal year for the
12 hiring of staff, the conduct of investigations, and nec-
13 essary travel to carry out the provisions of this Act.

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