

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4821

To hold accountable senior officials of the Government of the People's Republic of China who are responsible for, complicit in, or have directly persecuted Christians in China, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 29, 2021

Mrs. HARTZLER (for herself, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. GALLAGHER, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. LATTA, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. WEBER of Texas, Ms. SALAZAR, Mr. TIMMONS, Mr. GOOD of Virginia, Mr. HICE of Georgia, Mr. BUDD, Mr. HARRIS, Mr. STEUBE, Mr. GUEST, Mr. GOHMERT, Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS, Mr. GAETZ, Mr. BABIN, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. BROOKS, Mrs. WAGNER, Mr. PFLUGER, Mr. RESCHENTHALER, Mr. GROTHMAN, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Ms. LETLOW, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. MANN, Mr. WALTZ, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. OWENS, Mr. BUCK, Mrs. MILLER of Illinois, and Ms. STEFANIK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committees on the Judiciary, and Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To hold accountable senior officials of the Government of the People's Republic of China who are responsible for, complicit in, or have directly persecuted Christians in China, and for other purposes.

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

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Combating the Perse-
3 cution of Christians in China Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress makes the following findings:

6 (1) According to the Department of State’s
7 International Religious Freedom reports, there are
8 an estimated 12,000,000 Chinese Catholics and
9 60,000,000 to 80,000,000 Chinese Protestants wor-
10 shipping in both officially registered and unregistered
11 churches in China.

12 (2) The practice of Christianity is overseen by
13 four major entities: Three-Self Patriotic Movement,
14 the China Christian Council, the Chinese Patriotic
15 Catholic Association, and the Bishops Conference of
16 Catholic Church in China.

17 (3) The activities of state-sanctioned religious
18 organizations are regulated by the Chinese Com-
19 munist Party, which manages all aspects of religious
20 life.

21 (4) The Chinese Communist Party is actively
22 seeking to control, govern, and manipulate all as-
23 pects of faith through the “Sinicization of Religion”,
24 a process intended to shape religious traditions and
25 doctrines so they conform with the objectives of the
26 Chinese Communist Party.

1 (5) On February 1, 2018, the Chinese govern-
2 ment implemented new religious regulations that im-
3 posed restrictions on Chinese contacts with overseas
4 religious organizations, required government ap-
5 proval for religious schools, websites, and any online
6 religious service, and effectively banned unauthorized
7 religious gatherings and teachings.

8 (6) Since February 1, 2018, forced closures of
9 churches, arbitrary detention, and arrest of Chris-
10 tian clergy and practitioners have steadily increased,
11 including the arrest and 9-year prison sentence of
12 Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain Covenant
13 Church.

14 (7) In September 2018, the Holy See an-
15 nounced that a Provisional Agreement on the ap-
16 pointment of bishops had been signed with the Chi-
17 nese government; however, several news sources have
18 reported that since the agreement was signed Chi-
19 nese authorities have detained clergy, pressured
20 them to join an “independent church”, closed unreg-
21 istered churches, and removed children from church-
22 es.

23 (8) There are credible reports of Chinese au-
24 thorities raiding house churches, removing crosses,
25 confiscating religious paraphernalia, installing sur-

1 veillance cameras on church property, pressuring
2 churches to sing songs of the Chinese Communist
3 Party and display the national flag during commu-
4 nity worship, forcing churches to replace images of
5 Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary with pictures of
6 President Xi Jinping, and banning children and stu-
7 dents from attending church services.

8 (9) It has been reported that China is rewriting
9 and will issue a version of the Bible with the “cor-
10 rect understanding” of the text according to the Chi-
11 nese Communist Party.

12 (10) According to the Department of State’s
13 International Religious Freedom reports, the Chi-
14 nese government has imprisoned thousands of indi-
15 viduals of all faiths for practicing their religious be-
16 liefs and often labels them as “cults”.

17 (11) Prisoners include Pastor Zhang Shaojie, a
18 Three-Self church pastor from Nanle County in Chi-
19 na’s central Henan was sentenced in July 2014 to
20 12 years in prison for “gathering a crowd to disrupt
21 the public order”, and Pastor John Cao, a United
22 States permanent resident from Greensboro, North
23 Carolina, who was sentenced for 7 years in prison in
24 March 2018 under contrived charges of organizing
25 illegal border crossings.

1 (12) Since 1999, the Department of State has
2 designated China as a country of particular concern
3 under the International Religious Freedom Act of
4 1998.

5 (13) The Bipartisan Congressional Trade Prior-
6 ities and Accountability Act of 2015 states that the
7 United States overall trade negotiating objectives
8 must “take into account conditions relating to reli-
9 gious freedom of any party to negotiations for a
10 trade agreement with the United States”.

11 (14) The National Security Strategy of the
12 United States issued in 2017, 2015, 2006, 2002,
13 1999, 1998, and 1997, committed the United States
14 to promoting international religious freedom to ad-
15 vance the security, economic, and other national in-
16 terests of the United States.

17 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

18 (a) HOLDING CHINESE OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE
19 FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ABUSES TARGETING CHINESE
20 CHRISTIANS.—It is the policy of the United States to con-
21 sider senior officials of the Government of the People’s
22 Republic of China who are responsible for, complicit in,
23 or have directly persecuted Christians in China to have
24 committed—

1 (1) a gross violation of internationally recog-
2 nized human rights for purposes of imposing sanc-
3 tions with respect to such officials under the Global
4 Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (22
5 U.S.C. 2656 note); and

6 (2) a particularly severe violation of religious
7 freedom for purposes of applying section
8 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality
9 Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to such
10 officials.

11 (b) ENSURING TRADE NEGOTIATIONS CONSIDER RE-
12 LIGIOUS FREEDOM CONDITIONS.—It is the policy of the
13 United States to ensure that trade negotiations with
14 China include religious freedom conditions as mandated
15 by the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Ac-
16 countability Act of 2015 (19 U.S.C. 4201 et seq.).

17 (c) DEPARTMENT OF STATE PROGRAMMING TO PRO-
18 MOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR CHINESE CHRIS-
19 TIAN.—Consistent with section 401 of the Frank R. Wolf
20 International Religious Freedom Act (Public Law 114–
21 281; 130 Stat. 1436), of the funds available to the Depart-
22 ment of State for international religious freedom pro-
23 grams, the Ambassador-at-Large for International Reli-
24 gious Freedom should support efforts to protect and pro-
25 mote international religious freedom in China and for pro-

1 grams to protect Christians in China and other religious
2 groups.

3 (d) REDESIGNATION OF CHINA AS A COUNTRY OF
4 PARTICULAR CONCERN.—It is the policy of the United
5 States to continue to redesignate China as a “country of
6 particular concern”, as long as China continues to engage
7 in systematic and egregious religious freedom violations,
8 as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act of
9 1998 (Public Law 105–292).

10 (e) INTERNATIONAL MINISTERIAL TO ADVANCE RE-
11 LIGIOUS FREEDOM.—It is the policy of the United States
12 that the Department of State will host once every two
13 years the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in
14 order to bring together leaders from around the world to
15 discuss the challenges facing religious freedom, identify
16 means to address religious persecution and discrimination
17 worldwide, and promote great respect for and preservation
18 of religious liberty.

19 **SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

20 It is the sense of Congress that the United States
21 should promote religious freedom in China by—

22 (1) strengthening religious freedom diplomacy
23 on behalf of Christians and other religious minorities
24 facing restrictions in China;

1 (2) raising cases relating to religious or political
2 prisoners at the highest levels with Chinese officials
3 because experience demonstrates that consistently
4 raising prisoner cases can result in improved treat-
5 ment, reduced sentences, or in some cases, release
6 from custody, detention, or imprisonment;

7 (3) encouraging Members of Congress to
8 “adopt” a prisoner of conscience in China through
9 the Lantos Human Rights Commission’s “Defending
10 Freedom Project”, raise the case with Chinese offi-
11 cials, and work publicly for their release;

12 (4) calling on the Chinese Government to un-
13 conditionally release religious and political prisoners
14 or, at the very least, ensure that detainees are treat-
15 ed humanely with access to family, the lawyer of
16 their choice, independent medical care, and the abil-
17 ity to practice their faith while in detention; and

18 (5) encouraging the global faith community to
19 speak in solidarity with the persecuted religious
20 groups in China, including Christians.

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