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H. RES. 738

Expressing concern regarding severe restrictions on religious freedom abroad.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 18, 2025

Mr. HILL of Arkansas (for himself and Mr. MCGOVERN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Expressing concern regarding severe restrictions on religious freedom abroad.

Whereas the free exercise of religion is an inalienable right belonging to all people;

Whereas Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching”;

Whereas the United States contributes meaningfully and materially to the cause of religious freedom and the protection of religious minorities around the world;

Whereas the United States has strong bilateral relationships and many diplomatic engagements with the governments of foreign countries that engage in or tolerate severe violations of religious freedom;

Whereas engaging sincerely with foreign countries to promote religious freedom for their people serves to support both the enduring prosperity of their societies and the long-term stability of United States strategic partnerships;

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has recommended to the Department of State the nations of Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Turkey, and Uzbekistan for designation on the Special Watch List for severe religious freedom violations;

Whereas the Government of Algeria—

(1) systematically prosecutes Christian and Muslim minority communities under blasphemy laws;

(2) forcibly closes Evangelical Protestant Association churches and requires state permission to establish a non-Muslim place of worship;

(3) systemically persecutes members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community;

(4) targets members of the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light; and

(5) tolerates antisemitism in ways that restrict Jews' ability to openly practice their religion;

Whereas the Government of Azerbaijan—

(1) engages in and tolerates severe violations of religious freedom such as detaining religious minorities;

(2) fails to investigate credible claims of abuse against freedom of religion or belief; and

(3) destroyed Armenian religious and cultural sites in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh;

Whereas the Government of Egypt—

(1) arrests, tries, and imprisons people for blasphemy;

(2) denies unrecognized religious minorities the right to declare their religion on national identity cards, presenting administrative obstacles to marriage and gathering for worship, impacting Baha'is, and Jehovah's Witnesses; and

(3) fails to thoroughly investigate or prosecute kidnappings, forced marriages, and forced conversions, impacting Coptic Christians;

Whereas the Government of Indonesia—

(1) signed into law a criminal code in January 2023, which is scheduled for implementation in 2026, that will deepen the systematic repression of religious freedom; and

(2) tolerates discrimination and harsh treatment for religious minorities such as shutting down or banning religious meetings and activities;

Whereas the Government of Iraq—

(1) lacks the ability or will to curtail state-affiliated and Iran-backed militias which target religious minorities for harassment, property appropriation, extortion, detention, and torture; and

(2) is advancing policy to block content perceived to be insulting to scriptures or prophets, restricting freedom of religion or belief for Yazidis, Christians, and Shi'a and Sunni Muslims;

Whereas the Government of Kazakhstan—

(1) penalizes religious activities of all groups;

- (2) systematically restricts religious activities;
- (3) bans unregistered religious activities;
- (4) requires official examinations of religious materials;
- (5) restricts religious education, proselytization, and events; and
- (6) wrongly imprisons individuals for religious activities or beliefs;

Whereas the Government of Kyrgyzstan—

- (1) penalizes peaceful religious practices by banning organizations under vague standards of “extremism”; and
- (2) raids religious schools, religious camps, and places of worship;

Whereas the Government of Malaysia tolerates and engages in religious freedom violations against individuals whose religious expression diverges from the Government’s favored interpretation of Islam and allows violators to be fined or imprisoned;

Whereas the Government of Sri Lanka—

- (1) has used discriminatory legislation to harass, detain, and target religious minorities;
- (2) denied religious minorities access to houses of worship; and
- (3) expropriated land from religious minority communities under the guise of “protecting Buddhism”;

Whereas transitional authorities in Syria have failed to adequately investigate, document, and bring to justice those responsible for sectarian massacres of Alawi in Latakia and Tartus, sustained violence against Druze residents in the Damascus suburbs and Suweida, and a suicide bombing of a Greek Orthodox Church in Damascus, and al-

lowed Islamist militia members to intimidate, taunt, and loot the homes of Christians;

Whereas the Government of Turkey has tolerated the persecution of religious minorities such as obstacles to places of worship, barriers to continued legal residency, and restrictions on clerical institutions including the Theological School of Halki;

Whereas the Government of Uzbekistan restricts and penalizes the practices of many religious groups by placing bureaucratic restrictions on the registration process for religious communities, banning missionary activity and proselytism, prohibiting unregistered religious education, and mandating government examination and approval for all religious materials; and repeatedly arrests individuals for peaceful religious activities; and

Whereas the Department of State made such recommended Special Watch List designations for Algeria, Azerbaijan, the Central African Republic, Comoros, and Vietnam on December 29, 2023: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) affirms that the United States should ac-
3 tively maintain its position of global leadership in
4 the advancement of freedom of religion abroad;

5 (2) urges the Secretary of State to engage
6 robustly with allies and partners on religious free-
7 dom; and

8 (3) affirms the importance of the offices of the
9 Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious

- 1 Freedom and the Special Envoy to Monitor and
- 2 Combat Antisemitism.

