

Statement on the 25th Anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act
October 27, 2023

Twenty-five years ago, as a United States Senator, I proudly supported the International Religious Freedom Act, a landmark bipartisan law that cemented America's commitment to promoting religious freedom around the world. This right to practice, pray, and preach our faiths peacefully and openly is enshrined in our Constitution. And today, in a moment of so much conflict and disagreement, we must renew our pledge to protect that right. It's more important than ever.

Here at home, we are facing a rising tide of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination that are fueling violence and hate across our country. And around the world, billions of people live in countries where they are either persecuted or prevented from freely choosing, practicing, teaching, or leaving their faith. That's especially true for members of religious minority communities too often endure intimidation, violence, and unequal protection under the law, while also facing restrictions on their movement, constraints on their access to education and health care, and the fear that their children will be taken and their faith erased. We have seen attacks on Christians in some countries. And we also continue to see repressive governments and violent extremists reach across borders and to target groups for their beliefs, an abhorrent abuse of the human rights and dignity entitled to all people.

The United States will continue to defend religious freedom, today and always. On day one of my administration, we rescinded the discriminatory travel ban against majority-Muslim countries, which betrayed our long history of welcoming people of all faiths and no faith at all. We established a new Governmentwide group to counter Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of religious discrimination within the United States, and released the first National Strategy To Counter Antisemitism. Working together with Congress, we implemented the largest-ever increase in funding for physical security of nonprofits, including houses of worship. And in the wake of Hamas' brutal terrorist assault against Israel, we are working with community partners to identify, prevent, and disrupt any threats that could harm the Jewish, Muslim, Arab American, Palestinian American, or any other communities.

Around the world, we have provided more than \$100 million to promote religious freedom since the beginning of my administration and hundreds of millions more to provide lifesaving, humanitarian assistance to victims fleeing religious repression, including genocide. We are also denying the entry of goods into the United States that are made with forced labor, too often associated with a genocide of religious minorities. And we have imposed sanctions, visa restrictions, and export controls on actors and entities that are responsible for human rights abuses, including religious persecution.

Like so many others, faith has sustained me throughout my life, serving as a reminder of both our collective purpose and our responsibilities to one another. But for far too many people within our borders and beyond, practicing their faith still means facing fear. Today, on this milestone anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act, we rededicate ourselves to ensuring that people of all religions, and no religion, feel safe to live out their deepest convictions of conscience with dignity and respect.

Categories: Statements by the President : International Religious Freedom Act, 25th anniversary.

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