

**RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST;  
FACES OF THE PERSECUTED**

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**HEARINGS**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND  
SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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May 1 and June 10, 1997  
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## **RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

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**THURSDAY, MAY 1, 1997**

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND SOUTH ASIAN  
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:07 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Sam Brownback, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Brownback and Smith.

Senator BROWNBACK. We will go ahead and get this hearing started.

Thank you all for joining me this morning on this first hearing on religious persecution in the Middle East. I think it is particularly appropriate that we are having this hearing today, on the National Day of Prayer in our country, and that we recognize the issues of religious persecution taking place in the world.

Intolerance knows few boundaries. It is a problem that, in one form or another, plagues most of the world. Men and women of faith endure harassment, discrimination, imprisonment, torture, and risk death; because they choose to practice their faith, whatever that faith may be. From the Copts in Egypt to Shiites in Iraq, to Christians and Baha'is in Iran, systematic persecution and discrimination directed against religious minorities occurs throughout the region.

Because of many diplomatic reasons and sometimes, unfortunately, just sheer indifference, our government and others in our country have not chosen to speak out in some cases. The press is always hyper-sensitive to the observation of civil and human rights, but finds the idea sometimes of religious freedom less interesting. Our silence has only emboldened the persecutors.

I thought it particularly interesting in a column that A.M. Rosenthal put forward in Tuesday's *New York Times* that he underscored this point. He specifically warned that American Christians' lack of knowledge about the persecution of Christians in the Middle East "tends to make Americans passive about the persecution of Christians. As long as passivity lasts, so long will persecution continue."

[The information referred to follows:]

## THE WELL POISONERS

[by A.M. Rosenthal]

*The New York Times/April 29, 1997.*—They are outsiders among us. They use their foreign religion to poison our wells, and destroy our belief in ourselves and the God we must follow.

Throughout the persecution of Jews, that has been the accusation and justification: an evil religion of the evil outsider.

In their terror and helplessness, sometimes victims pleaded that the charge of foreignness was not true—look at us, we are like you—almost as if being different made their persecution at least explicable to the human mind.

Now foreignness is the weapon used by persecutors of Christians in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Islamicist inquisitors use the weapon in the name of heavenly righteousness, the Chinese political police in the name of their frightened, last-ditch nationalism.

Both types of persecutors of Christians benefit from a peculiar protection—the attitude of many Western Christians that Christianity is indeed foreign to Asia and Africa, a valuable export certainly, but not really, well, indigenous, to the soil. So they see faraway Christianity as separate from themselves. This profits persecutors, by preventing the persecuted from getting the succor they need, and due them.

The aloofness of Christians to their distant persecuted is a denial of the reality that Christianity was not only born in the Mideast but spread wide and deep in Asia and Africa long before Islam or Western Christian missionaries arrived.

By now, according to David B. Barret's Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission, 1996, there are 300 million church-affiliated Christians in Asia, the same number in Africa—and 200 million in all of North America.

Americans are waking up to the persecution of Christians in Communist China. Their own Government, however, gives it zero priority compared with Washington's lust for the bizarre privilege of trade with China granted by Beijing: to buy eight times more from China than China does from America.

But how many Americans know or care about the increasing persecution of Mideast Christians, like the 10 million Copts of Egypt—the largest Christian community in the region? Copts are vilified as outsiders, though they have lived in Egypt since the seventh century.

In February and March, 25 Copts were shot to death in Islamicist attacks on a church and a school. The attacks were part of the worst outbreak of Christian-killing in 25 years. And Islamic fundamentalists have been allowed to carry out year-round harassment of Copts, including destruction of churches that Copts then are not allowed to rebuild.

In early April Mustapha Mashour, “general guide” of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, a fountain of Mideast terrorism for 50 years, announced a new goal: to bar Copts from the army, police and senior government positions on the grounds that they were a fifth column. He also demanded that a “protection tax” be imposed on Christians, as in the time of the Prophet.

Elsewhere in the Mideast, persecution includes the Sudan's trade in Christian slaves. But the Egyptian Government boasts of fighting extremists and has received praise and billions from America.

In the U.S., a coalition of 60 human rights and ethnic organizations watches out for persecution of minorities under “Islamization.” The coalition's definition is a political and cultural process to establish Islamic law, the Sharia, as the ruling principle of all society, to which all must conform.

This is what the Very Rev. Keith Roderick, an Episcopal priest, who is secretary general of the coalition, reports about Egypt:

“The government has created an atmosphere of bigotry and hatred toward the Coptic minority, allowing the Copts to become human safety valves for Islamic militants. . . . A significant reduction in [U.S. foreign aid] for Egypt would send a strong signal that the U.S. has adopted a serious priority objective in its foreign policy to eliminate Christian persecution.”

Ignorance of the history or huge number of Christian worshipers in faraway countries tends to make American Christians, and Jews too, passive about the persecution of Christians. As long as passivity lasts, so long will persecution continue. It has always been so.

Senator BROWNBACK. And persecution does, indeed, continue. In Iran, two men were recently sentenced to death because they are Baha'is. In Egypt, Coptic Christians were gunned down in a church by Islamic militants. In Iraq, since 1991, thousands of Shiite Mus-

lims have been slaughtered by Saddam Hussein's troops and had their mosques destroyed.

In other countries in the region, believers have been imprisoned for attending worship services and religious minorities have suffered lootings, burnings, and beatings at the hands of mobs.

Less violent discrimination also persists. In many countries in the region, persons may not freely change their religion, religious minorities are prevented from building new places of worship, and some religious literature is banned.

With the help of our distinguished witnesses here today, I want to bring these abuses to the attention of the American people, the Congress, and to the administration. I will not tolerate at this hearing any religion being made a scapegoat for this problem. The answer to the problem of religious persecution does not lie in blaming another theology. It lies in the actions of individuals and governments who do not value freedom of worship for all.

I hope our witnesses will address specifically what the United States should do to promote and protect religious freedom in the Middle East. But I have no doubt that action must be taken.

As Americans, I believe that we have a unique obligation to speak out against religious persecution. The right to freely practice the religion of one's choice is a freedom central to democracy. We must not fail to defend a principle that our Founding Fathers viewed as fundamental to our democracy. We are a people grounded in faith, yet tolerant of different manifestations of belief. To fail to protect those who suffer persecution would be to repudiate our convictions before the world.

I look forward to the testimony from the various witnesses here today. I look forward to particularly focusing on two areas. Number one is what is specifically occurring in the world, in the Middle East region, or in other areas that people would like to identify. But what specifically is occurring that we can identify and raise the visibility on.

Second, what should we do? What should we do as a government, what should we do as a people in trying to address this particular issue?

We look forward to the testimony. We have appearing first a very good friend of mine, Representative Wolf, Frank Wolf, from Virginia, who in the Congress is one of the leading, if not the leading, expert about this issue. He has traveled around the world. It is a passion of his. It is in his heart and in his soul. He is very knowledgeable about it as well.

Representative Wolf, welcome to the committee, and thank you for all you have done. The microphone is yours.

**STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK WOLF, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE  
FROM VIRGINIA**

Mr. WOLF. Thank you very much, Senator. Thank you for inviting me, and I really want to thank you particularly for having these hearings. They are very, very important. In fact, just having the hearings will set the tone in a way that I think maybe people do not even understand. Just by having them I think raises the visibility of this issue.

I do not come before the panel to give you all the facts and figures on persecution, the historical reasons behind the violence, or even to tell you all the stories about the cases. The experts you have assembled today are more than capable of doing that. I have had the privilege of meeting and working with all of them, and they are very capable and very knowledgeable people.

Once you have heard the testimony, I hope you will agree that the facts speak for themselves. In the world today, and particularly in the Middle East, Christians are being persecuted in great numbers. In many of the countries under this subcommittee's jurisdiction, Christians are being murdered; they are being raped; they are being beaten; they are being mutilated, and they are being imprisoned.

Copts in Egypt face daily terror by militants. Evangelicals in Iran have watched in sorrow as key leaders have been mysteriously assassinated in recent years. The year before last, three Evangelical pastors were killed.

Assyrian and Chaldean Christians in Iraq face persecution by Saddam Hussein and some Kurdish factions. For Saudis, non-Muslim worship is out of the question for fear of execution.

Christians also face discrimination and harassment. They are pressured to convert to other religions. They are refused the right to build or repair churches, and as Bat Ye'or will later describe today, they are subjugated to second class status.

Persecution and discrimination is not unique to Christians, and I appreciate the chairman's opening statement with regard to not blaming any particular faith. Similar treatment is given to members of other religious minorities, such as the Baha'is or those of the Jewish faith. It should be said that persecution of political dissidents, and women, and others is also prevalent in many of these same countries where human rights standards are not in line with international norms.

Though we are talking about countries where Islam is the predominant religion, I want to stress up front and categorically that I am not condemning Islam or people who practice the Islamic faith. There are many, many good, overwhelmingly decent Muslims who desire nothing more than to raise their family, earn a living, and participate in the democratic political process.

What I am condemning are the governments or the radical militants who persecute and oppress the people.

It is important to note that in these same countries, many moderate Muslims or Muslims of different denominations than the majority of the people, such as the Sunni Muslims in Iran, are also falling victim to the violent acts of authoritarian regimes or radical factions seeking to overthrow fragile democratic governments.

We must be honest when and where persecution occurs. Otherwise we do a disservice to all Christians, Muslims, Baha'is, and other religious believers who suffer at the hands of thugs. If you are a Muslim, your right to practice religion should be respected. If you are Baha'i, your right to practice should also be respected. If you are a Christian, your right to practice religion should also be respected.

Where it is not, we should recognize the fact and speak out boldly and courageously. Where there are countries that are our allies

and friends, we even bear a greater burden. Where we give foreign aid, we bear a greater burden.

By speaking out on behalf of the least of these, society's vulnerable victims, we also raise the comfort level of moderate Muslims and others seeking to live in peace and promote democracy, thereby making the world safer.

I learned this lesson in 1989, when Congressman Chris Smith and I visited Perm Camp 35, the last gulag in the Soviet Union, deep in the heart of the Ural Mountains. Many of the political prisoners told Congressman Smith and myself—this is in the Ural Mountains in Perm Camp 35, where Sharansky had been in there for years, and, in fact, we even saw and interviewed Sharansky's cellmate—they told us that they knew that President Reagan had taken a strong stand on behalf of human rights and religious freedom and it gave them hope.

I can never understand how. They didn't have fax machines or telephones. This is a gulag in the Soviet Union, and they knew of the position that President Reagan had taken on this issue. Even in the darkest places, one of the darkest places in the Soviet totalitarian system, these prisoners knew. It gave them hope. It gave them hope that someone was brave enough to stand up to the dictators. It gave them hope that somebody was brave enough to stand up for freedom, and it gave them hope that people were willing to go and visit those places.

So by having a hearing like this, to put the Congress on record, the Senate on record, the administration on record, the House on record, sends a message.

I can still remember after we denied MFN to Ceaucescu in 1987. When I visited, Romanians told us that the next day they heard on Radio Free Europe that the House of Representatives, the people's House, had taken away MFN from Ceaucescu, and it gave them hope.

Now they don't have to listen to the little crystal sets. Now they have fax machines, they have E-mail, they have all of these things, and it is very hard for any government to shut it down.

So by doing this and hoping the AP, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and all of the others that cover this will cover that this hearing is held, it will give a message of hope to these people. Does the United States care? Does anybody in the Congress care? This really makes a big difference.

The shining example was in Perm Camp 35, where Sharansky spent 5, 6, or 7 years. They knew of this and knew of the actions that the Congress took. In those days, in the days of Jackson-Vanik, the House and the Senate, in a bipartisan effort, Republicans and Democrats came together to make this an issue of no partisanship. Hopefully we are able now to put together the same coalition—Republicans, Democrats, liberals, conservatives, moderates, all religious faiths—to come together to speak out on these issues.

This is because when we come to the defense of the least of these, we really come to the defense of everybody in the world.

In the Middle East today, my instinct tells me that those suffering at the hands of today's dictators will be encouraged by a sign of support from the United States. Congress needs to speak out.



We know the facts about Christian persecution in Iraq. We know it. It is not something we have to read a story about or get a briefing from the CIA on. Just read the paper. We know it.

We know what is taking place in Iran. We know what is taking place in some of these other places. Now we must take decisive action.

Frankly, our conscience demands it. The members of this body ought to think about it, that 10 or 20 years from now, when they leave here, did they use their position in Congress to do what they should have done or did they just take a quiet way and not look at these tough issues?

The American Christian community is also now beginning a growing concern with regard to this issue. Understand, this fall tens of thousands of church-goers will participate in a second annual International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Christian leaders from Don Argue, President of the National Association of Evangelicals, to Richard Land, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, to many, many others will be joining together whereby on one Sunday they will pray for the persecuted church around the United States.

In January 1996, the National Association of Evangelicals issued a *Statement of Conscience and Call to Action* on Christian persecution.

Let me quote from its conclusions.

Religious liberty is not a privilege to be granted or denied by an all powerful state, but a God-given human right. Indeed, religious liberty is the bedrock principle that animates our republic and defines us as a people. We must share our love of religious liberty with other people who, in the eyes of God, are our neighbors. Hence, it is our responsibility and those of the government that represent us to do everything we can to secure the blessings of religious liberty to all those suffering religious persecution.

Last year, the House and Senate unanimously passed resolutions condemning the growing problem. That was a positive step, but there is much more to do.

In the coming weeks, along with Senator Specter, a group of us in the House plan to introduce the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act. It tracks the NAE statement of conscience and will be what I hope will be landmark legislation addressing this very issue. It is not country-specific, but it creates a mechanism in our government to determine which countries are engaged in state-sponsored persecution and which countries turn a blind eye while anti-democratic thugs roam the countryside killing, raping, and mutilating innocent victims.

This bill sets targeted, limited sanctions aimed at pressuring offending governments to rein in the vigilantes or cease its state-sponsored persecution.

Today, in closing, Mr. Chairman, is the National Day of Prayer. Many people of all faiths have gathered here in Washington to pray for our country and its freedom. It is our obligation as a country which has been blessed so abundantly. It says in the Bible, "To whom much is given much is expected." There is even a version, I think, which says, "To whom much is given, much is required." Maybe it is not just "expected," but it is "required."

So I think this is our opportunity to continue to use our freedom to help the Egyptian Copts, the Iranian Evangelicals, the Algerian

Catholics, the Assyrian Christians in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, help people to convert and to acquire their freedom or do whatever they want to do but where there will not be pressure against them.

This starts with condemning persecution, killing, rape, imprisonment, torture, and abductions wherever they occur.

I just want to again thank you for holding this hearing. This hearing actually will probably—we will never find out about its effect. It's like sometimes you do things and you never hear about it.

But this hearing, if covered well, will probably mean that somebody does not go to jail. This hearing, if covered well, may mean that somebody may get out of jail quicker in some other country.

You will remember during the days when there was persecution of those of the Jewish faith in the Soviet Union. When we would send letters to the Soviet Union, the prisoners would tell us that it would actually change their lives in prison. Sharansky would say that when the warden got all the letters coming in, they knew that there was somebody or a lot of people in the United States who were concerned with their individual cases.

So just little things like this can make a big difference. We won't know whom we have helped by this hearing, but I can guarantee you from previous experience that just holding this hearing will have helped a lot of people. I thank you very, very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wolf follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN FRANK R. WOLF

Mr. Chairman, Senator Robb and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to present my views on the issue of anti-Christian persecution—the untold human rights story of the decade. I commend you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on this important and timely issue. I wish such hearings did not have to be held.

I do not come before this panel to give you facts and figures on persecution, historical reasons behind the violence or even to tell you stories about cases. The experts you have assembled today are more than capable of doing that. I have had the privilege of meeting and working with all of them.

Once you have heard their testimony, I hope you will agree that the facts speak for themselves. In the world today, and particularly in the Middle East, Christians are being persecuted in great numbers. In many of the countries under this subcommittee's jurisdiction, Christians are being murdered, raped, beaten, mutilated and imprisoned. Copts in Egypt face daily terror by militants. Evangelicals in Iran have watched in sorrow as key leaders have been mysteriously assassinated in recent years. Assyrian and Chaldean Christians in Iraq face persecution by Saddam Hussein and some Kurdish factions. For Saudis, non-Muslim worship is out of the question for fear of execution.

Christians also face discrimination and harassment. They are pressured to convert to other religions, refused the right to build or repair churches and, as Bat Ye'Or will describe later, subjugated to second-class status of "dhimmitude."

Persecution and discrimination is not unique to Christians. Similar treatment is given to members of other religious minorities such as the Bahai's or Ahmadi's or those of the Jewish faith. And, it should be said, that persecution of political dissidents, women and others is also prevalent in many of these same countries where human rights standards are not in line with international norms.

Though we are talking about countries where Islam is the predominate religion, I want to stress up front and categorically that I am not condemning Islam or people who practice Islam. There are many good and decent Muslims who desire nothing more than to raise their family, earn a living and participate in the democratic political process. I am condemning governments or radical militants who persecute and oppress people.

It is important to note that in these same countries many moderate Muslims or Muslims of different denomination than the majority of the people (such as Sunni

Muslims in Iran) are also falling victim to the violent acts of authoritarian regimes or radical factions seeking to overthrow fragile democratic governments.

We must be honest when and where persecution occurs. Otherwise we do a disservice to all Christians, Muslims, Bahai's and other religious believers who suffer at the hands of thugs. If you are a Muslim, your right to religious practice should be respected. If you are a Baha'i, your right to religious practice should be respected. And if you are a Christian, your right to religious practice should be respected. Where it is not, we should recognize that fact and speak out boldly and courageously. Where these countries are our allies and friends, we bear an even greater burden.

By speaking out on behalf of the "least of these," society's vulnerable victims, we also raise the comfort level of moderate Muslims and others seeking to live in peace and promote democracy. That helps make the world safer.

I learned this lesson in 1989 when Rep. Chris Smith and I visited Perm Camp 35, the Soviet gulag deep in the heart of the Ural Mountains. Many of the political prisoners told us that they knew President Ronald Reagan had taken a strong stand on behalf of human rights and religious freedom and it gave them hope. Even in one of darkest places in the Soviet totalitarian system, these prisoners knew. It gave them hope that someone was brave enough to stand up to the dictators. It gave them hope that someone was brave enough to stand up for freedom.

In the Middle East today, my instinct tells me that those suffering at the hands of today's dictators or persecutors would be encouraged by a sign of support from the United States.

Congress needs to speak out. We know the facts about Christian persecution in Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and elsewhere. Now we must take decisive action. Our conscience demands it.

The American Christian community is also beginning to understand this growing scourge and demand action. This fall, tens of thousands of church-goers will participate in the second annual International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Christian leaders from Don Argue, President of the National Association of Evangelicals, to Richard Land, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, to Ralph Reed, President of the Christian Coalition, to Dr. Jim Dobson, President of Focus on the Family, have begun to speak out and call for action. In January 1996, the National Association of Evangelicals issued a Statement of Conscience and Call to Action on Christian persecution.

Let me quote from its conclusions "Religious liberty is not a privilege to be granted or denied by an all-powerful State, but a God-given human right. Indeed, religious liberty is the bedrock principle that animates our republic and defines us as a people. We must share our love of religious liberty with other people, who in the eyes of God are our neighbors. Hence, it is our responsibility, and those of the government that represents us, to do everything we can to secure the blessings of religious liberty to all those suffering religious persecution."

Last year, the House and Senate unanimously endorsed resolutions condemning this growing problem. That was a positive step, but there is more we can do.

In the coming weeks along with Senator Specter, I plan to introduce the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act. It tracks the NAE Statement of Conscience and will be, what I hope will be, landmark legislation addressing this very issue. It is not country-specific, but it creates a mechanism in our government to determine which countries are engaged in state-sponsored persecution and which countries turn a blind eye while anti-democratic thugs roam the countryside killing, raping and mutilating innocent victims. The bill sets up targeted, limited sanctions aimed at pressuring offending governments to rein in the vigilantes or cease its state sponsored persecution.

Today is the National Day of Prayer. Many people of faith have gathered on the Washington Mall to pray for our country and its freedoms. It is our obligation, as a country which has been blessed abundantly, to continue to use our freedom to help Egyptian Copts, Iranian Evangelicals, Algerian Catholics, Assyrian Christians in Iraq and Saudi Arabian converts acquire their freedom.

This starts with condemning persecution—killing, rape, imprisonment, torture and abduction—wherever it occurs. I hope you will join me in this effort.

Thank you.

Senator BROWNBACK. We thank you, Representative Wolf, for your passion, your commitment, and your knowledge of these subjects. I have held you up as a model legislator to a number of people over the years just because of the way you treat issues and how you know them. You have heart and soul about it.

Let me ask you, if I could, about this. You will be bringing out the Freedom From Religious Persecution Act. You identified, Frank, that a lot of what we need to do is just lift this issue up. We need to get it to the light of day, being seen by those who are being persecuted in different places around the world.

You also identify a legislative component on this. Could you generally outline what you think we ought to be doing legislatively or providing what sort of tools to the administration to be able to use?

Mr. WOLF. The bill will set up, will create, an Office of Religious Persecution in the White House. It will either have someone called a Director or a Special Advisor. That person will look at all these issues, will write reports, and make statements to the President so that it is forced to be monitored.

Right now, the country by country reports really do not get into religious persecution. They get into some human rights issues. But sometimes, because of different issues, they kind of don't want to get into them too deeply.

There will be an annual report that the President or that the Director or Special—whatever you want to call him—will be required to submit to Congress as a report indicating whether or not there are different types of discrimination or persecution. Category 1 are countries directly; category 2 are activities in those countries that the government itself will be involved with.

The sanctions will be very, very narrow. It will not be the sledgehammer of cutting off MFN to an entire country if the secret police of that country—and I'm not going to use a particular country—does something. It will have a narrow, narrow scope.

There will be sanctions, and we will also, then, urge our international representatives on groups such as the IMF and World Bank to begin to use their vote to speak up on behalf of those who are being persecuted.

That is what Reagan did so well. Frankly, I must say that Reagan and also the Democratic Congress in the 1980's and the 1970's called attention to it. They focused in narrowly, and the spotlight really made a difference.

If you will recall, in 1985 or 1986, 250,000 people rallied on the Mall on a Sunday afternoon on behalf of those who were persecuted—those of the Jewish faith, the Pentecostals, and others in the Soviet Union. That rally made a tremendous difference.

Then they began to focus in on different activities.

This will be putting the spotlight on narrow sanctions, on class 1, government sponsored, and class 2, whereby the government knows that activity is taking place. For instance, this is where the government is not directly involved in persecuting, but they know there is a group in their country that is doing this activity, and then they speak out.

Senator BROWNBACK. I want to turn the microphone over to Senator Gordon Smith for questions or comments, as he would like.

Congressman—I'm sorry—Senator Smith.

Senator SMITH. "Congressman" is fine, too.

Representative Wolf, it is very nice to meet you. I know of you. I thank you for your work in this area.

Do you have any comment upon a recent article in the *New York Times* about persecution of Catholics in China. Do you have anything to elaborate on the truthfulness of that?

Mr. WOLF. I do. Yes, I can.

But before I answer that, I would say that I know very well of you. I used to work for your dad.

Senator SMITH. I am aware of that.

Mr. WOLF. I remember you when you were much smaller. I worked at the National Cannery Association when Senator Smith's dad, Marlon Smith, was the head of it. Our motto in those days was "Nature's best is best canned."

I now know you moved into frozen foods.

Senator SMITH. So I would say it's best frozen now.

Mr. WOLF. Yes, best frozen. But I remember your dad and I remember you. I was very, very pleased to see you get elected.

Yes, there is tremendous persecution. I will put together a letter and send it to you.

There are Catholic priests who are in jail and have been in jail in China for a number of years. There are Catholic bishops who have been in jail for a large number of years.

Nina Shea, who will testify, can document the length of time and the number of bishops.

We have a document which Nina will perhaps submit for the record and if not, I will, from a certain province in China whereby the goal of the Communist Party of that province is to eradicate the Catholic Church.

[The information referred to by Mr. Wolf appears in Appendix A on page 77.]

Mr. WOLF. There are two Catholic Churches. There is one that is above ground, which are those who are controlled and selected by the leaders of Beijing. Then there is the underground church, whereby they are selected, as they should be, from Rome.

There is great discrimination against the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has been very bold and the Pope has been very bold in speaking out. So I think that the Chinese Government fears the Catholic Church very, very deeply.

There also is persecution of Evangelicals and Protestants. Literally not a week goes by whereby they do not raid house churches and take people away.

There is also, though, in fairness, persecution of Buddhists. They have plundered Tibet, have destroyed monasteries in Tibet. They have expelled the Dalai Lama, they have captured the Panchan Lama, who is scheduled to succeed the Dalai Lama, and they are trying to eradicate Buddhism there.

Last, they are persecuting the Muslim faith. In the Northwest portion of the country, the Muslims, the Yegors that no one seems to be focusing on or caring anything about are under tremendous pressure.

So they are trying to eradicate the Catholic Church, they are hurting the Protestant Church, they are bulldozing monasteries with regard to Buddhism, and the poor Muslims just have nobody to speak up for them. Frankly, I don't think people know that they are there and there may be 50 million to 80 million of them there. But they are in a very remote area. So yes.

Senator SMITH. Are there things, Congressman—I happened to have had the privilege to meet the Dalai Lama last week in Washington. I had hoped to ask him a question. Are they—Tibetans—forming coalitions with the Catholics to help address the issue of persecution in China?

Mr. WOLF. Yes.

There is a coalition developing in the United States today of the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, the Dalai Lama, and a lot of different human rights groups. They are beginning to come together, just as on this legislation. All groups are beginning to come together.

If you just wait until you are the one they go after, then it is too late. It's just like in Nazi Germany. They came after this group and I said nothing; they came after that group and I said nothing. Then they came after me. I think it was Banhofer who said that.

It's the same thing here. We are trying to develop a coalition of the Jewish groups, the Christian groups, the Buddhist groups, the Baha'i faith, for all of these to come together to where you go after the least of these.

It's like for Jesus in Matthew 25. When you go to the last of these, you do it unto me. Well, it's the same way that we say if you go after the least of these groups, even if it is a little denomination that maybe nobody has heard about, we still stand with them.

As a young boy, I stuttered very, very badly. I remember in the class how people would kind of come after me and give me a hard time. When the teacher came to my defense, she literally came to the defense of the whole class, because the whole class had its comfort level raised when somebody would come to the defense of somebody who was having a difficult time.

It's the same way here. Every religious denomination, whatever it may be, whatever faith, has its comfort level raised when we come to the defense of anybody.

So yes, there is a coalition developing. What the Chinese Government is trying to do is they are legally trying to eradicate Buddhism from Tibet.

We have had testimony from Buddhist monks and nuns that tell you of the horrible conditions they have to go through.

Senator SMITH. I have heard of those recently on a Christian radio station and was asked at great length about religious freedom in China. I have discussed the issue with Ambassador Li, China's Ambassador to this country, because I am concerned about it.

I am looking for other recourse. What can we do beyond holding hearings? I am here, because I care about this issue and want to lend my voice in support of sort of this threshold issue of religious tolerance among civilized people. I think that to be a nation among civilized nations you have to guarantee religious freedom.

You mentioned Ceaucescu and what we did to withhold MFN. That has serious consequences to this country and to the world if we do that with respect to China. Are there other things that we can do or is that our only and best recourse as it relates to trying to change internal politics in China?

Mr. WOLF. Well, no. There are other mechanisms.

I, personally, am at the point now where I favor—and I know this is not the issue of the hearing—denying MFN. There are some fundamental values here. Not to be overly emotional about it, but coming from Virginia, Thomas Jefferson wrote the words, “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men and women are created equal, endowed by their Creator”—by God, not by the House, the Senate, or by an Executive Order—“life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Those words were not just for people in Charlottesville, Virginia, or just in the United States. They are for everybody.

The fact is if you meet with the dissidents, if you meet with the students in Tiananmen, they look to Jefferson more than sometimes we do. So I am at the point now where it has gone on for too long.

What I say to those who say we cannot deny MFN to them is this. I say this. There are good men and women on both sides. There is no official good position for MFN or against. But for those who favor granting it, why are they silent? Why does Boeing not speak out for the Catholic bishops? Why do they go there and meet with the butchers of Beijing, Li Pong and people like that, and never speak out?

When Harry Wu, who is an American citizen, was arrested, I tried to get Harry’s wife in to see President Clinton. Clinton wouldn’t see Mrs. Wu, but he saw the thugs who were trying to sell the guns to the L.A. street mobs.

All of a sudden our values become different. I went to some of the companies. I went to Boeing through another member and asked Boeing to speak out. Boeing wouldn’t speak out.

So for those who favor MFN, which is a valid position though not the one that I agree with, they are silent. And their silence is deafening. The silence of Boeing and the people who favor MFN is deafening.

It is the sound of this silence that resonates. So the dissidents come to me and say why don’t we speak out.

No, that is not the only thing that we can do, but it is the only mechanism that we now have been given. Quite frankly, this Congress, even if it votes to deny MFN, which I think it should do and I pray that we do it, but even if we do it, we are not probably going to take it away from them, because the President will override our votes.

But if we would not give MFN to the Soviet Union in the 1980’s, and we didn’t give it to any Eastern Bloc countries, we didn’t even give it to Poland when Lech Walesa and Solidarity was moving, I don’t understand now why we would then turn, when militarily there is a threat from the Chinese. But forget the military. They are selling weapons to Saddam Hussein. Forget that. They are selling weapons to Iran. Forget that.

They sold weapons that were used against American soldiers. Forget that. They are aiding the Sudanese Government which has been responsible for a million and a half Christians dying in the south of Sudan. But forget that.

Still, on this issue of religious freedom, I don’t understand how we made that decision then and not now. But for those who want to continue granting it, I would hope that at least the business

community would speak up and be bold. And if they are afraid to speak up publicly, I would hope that they would at least speak up privately.

But if you are not willing to make a public confession, to say this, then I wonder when the day comes what does that really, really mean.

So there are two positions. I don't know the right one or the wrong one. But if they favor granting it, let them at least speak up.

Senator SMITH. Let me just make one other comment, Representative Wolf. I am sympathetic to that. I have been saying to Americans who do business there to do what you have done, that is, to speak up about it. Don't just put profits before our principles, our fundamental principles.

I hope there is another way other than MFN with China, because I think it has enormous ramifications beyond this issue, which is a threshold and a very, very important issue.

I am here to find new ways to help highlight this problem. I would, for the record, note one other emerging problem or potential problem. It wasn't that long ago that General Lebed, of Russia, made the comment to the *New York Times*, I believe, or it was reported in the *New York Times* that Mormons and Jews are scum. That is a real concern.

If this man, who may well be the next President of Russia, is making such a comment, it is a real concern.

We are not beyond the day where we can rest and feel like persecution of people of faith is behind us. America needs to stand up for this issue.

Let's keep working together and find out the best ways to do that.

Mr. WOLF. Senator, you are absolutely right. I remember when General Lebed made that statement. I signed a letter in the House. I think Matt Salmon circulated it, though I forget. It was condemning General Lebed on that point.

There are evil people who will always be pushing and pulling, and only when good people speak out and are vigilant will it stop.

There is more persecution of people of faith, of all faiths, today than perhaps there has been at any other time in the history of the world in modern times. That is why these hearings are important, because many people believe that when the Soviet Union fell and when the Wall fell down, it all stopped. But it's quite the contrary. It has been broken up into little areas, but it has gone on big, big time—not only there but in so many other countries which we do not even have the time to document, and that certainly do not even come before this subcommittee.

But I appreciate it. I am pleased you are interested.

Senator SMITH. I had occasion with Senator Roth to confront General Lebed with this issue. For the record, he did say that he had been misquoted, and he has become much more tolerant since he made those comments.

Senator BROWNBACK. Good visibility does that.

I particularly would invite you, Congressman Wolf, on Egypt and particularly toward Coptic Christians, if you have specific items that you think we ought to be doing in Egypt, that is a country



where we have substantial foreign aid and substantial relationships, and yet a very documented situation taking place of religious persecution. If there are narrow, specific items you think we should do toward Egypt, I would invite you to submit that to the committee.

Mr. WOLF. One thing you could do is you could call the Egyptian ambassador in. I saw the Anti-Defamation League send out about a month ago some very anti-Semitic cartoons that are now appearing in the Egyptian press. Their press is somewhat controlled. It is unacceptable that they go there.

I think the first thing our government ought to do is to call in their Ambassador and say it is unacceptable, these anti-Semitic cartoons to be in your paper, and it is unacceptable what you are doing to the Copts.

I mean, maybe there are a lot of good, decent people in the Egyptian Government. So they may, if hearing from us, be willing to speak out. But if they never hear, then they may say maybe they don't really care.

So I say that would be a good starting point. We don't always need to use the club and the hammer to go after things. I think we are dealing with a lot of good people in a lot of these governments, who, to be brought in, they may say hey, I didn't really know you were that interested in it, and we are now going to go back and look at it. So we will look at it with regard to some things.

But I think a good step would be to meet with their Ambassador. And when President Mubarak comes over here, or our people go over there, we should sit down with them.

That is the problem in China. When our people go to China, they only meet with the leadership. They only meet with Li Pong or they only meet with these people. They don't meet with others.

When under Ronald Reagan—God bless him—when the Reagan people, and also before that Jimmy Carter, when our people, when our Secretary of State, whether it be Shultz, Jim Baker, or whoever, used to go to Moscow, they met with Brezhnev. They met with him. But they'd also meet in the American Embassy with the Jewish community who wanted to emigrate. They met in Solidarity. And the Russian Government, the Soviet Government, knew that our people were meeting with these people. They knew that Shultz was meeting with them and talking about it.

So that, I think, can go a long, long way without clubs, hammers, sanctions, and things of that like.

Senator BROWNBACK. Congressman Wolf, thank you very much. We appreciate it a great deal.

Mr. WOLF. Thank you, Senator.

Senator BROWNBACK. The next panel will be Mr. Steven Coffey. He is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, representing the administration on this issue.

We certainly appreciate, Mr. Coffey, your willingness to come and to testify in front of us. If you want to submit a longer statement for the record, you can, and you may condense your overall statement.

Again, as I mentioned to Congressman Wolf, our objective here is to hear what is taking place and what we can do to be of assistance. Mr. Coffey, the microphone is yours.

**STATEMENT OF STEVEN J. COFFEY, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE, BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR**

Mr. COFFEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to begin by associating myself with Congressman Wolf's remark to you, that you certainly are to be commended for convening this session devoted to this very, very important topic. It is a great honor and privilege for me to represent the administration here before your committee.

I would like to submit my full remarks to the committee, and I will try to abbreviate them. But I would like to make a few key points.

Religious freedom is an issue, and I think this is the first key point, to which the Department of State has been devoting increasing attention. It is a complex problem. Issues of religious freedom are often laden with emotion, misunderstanding, political overtones, ethnic implications, and deep historical wounds.

This is especially true in the Middle East, where three of the world's major religions trace their origins and where it is often difficult to separate religion and politics.

The promotion of religious freedom in the Middle East and elsewhere is a growing priority in our foreign policy. Religious liberty is, after all, a core American value.

Our Nation was founded in large part by refugees fleeing from persecution, and the Framers of our Constitution enshrined religious freedom among the most sacred of the rights guaranteed to our citizens. And America today is a country where people freely worship and where hundreds of religions flourish.

We have to remember that our religious liberties do not thrive in a vacuum. They thrive in the context of a free society, a society that guarantees full personal liberties to all its citizens—freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly. These are among the basic elements of any democratic society. As we look around the world we see that where political freedom, individual rights, and democracy are on the rise, so is religious freedom.

We need to look no further than the revival of religious activities in Russia and Central Europe for all the problems that were just talked about following the fall of communism, to see how increased political freedom leads to increased religious activity.

This, then, is the context in which we must formulate and implement our policy in the Middle East and around the world. Where political freedoms thrive, so do religious freedoms. Where political freedoms are constrained or repressed, the same is often true for religious freedom.

Religious freedom can only truly flourish in free societies.

So one of our operating principles, therefore, is that when we work to expand the family of democracies around the world, to build free societies, to encourage tolerance, and to defend all fundamental human rights, we are also working to promote religious freedom.

Our global policy seeks to build a framework of peace, freedom, and respect for law, in which all human rights can thrive, including religious liberty.

Very serious issues of religious restrictions, discrimination, persecution, and conflict exist in the Middle East. The region is diverse; and as I pointed out, we should be careful not to make too many sweeping generalizations about the region.

In most of the Middle East, there is little or no separation of religion and state as we practice it here in the United States. Although this is manifested differently in each nation, the close association of religion and the state in the Middle East and the lack of tolerance and pluralism poses a special challenge to protect adherents of religions other than the state religion.

In most countries of the Middle East, Islam is the official state religion. In some countries, such as Jordan and Morocco, the King derives his legitimacy in part because his heritage is traced back to the Prophet Mohammed and the beginnings of Islam.

In many countries, religious law is imposed by the state. In others, civil law and religious law exist side by side. In some, such as Israel, religious political parties are active in government. In others, such as Algeria, religious parties are banned. In Lebanon, the most senior government positions are allocated according to religious affiliation.

With these variations in mind, it is worth highlighting the following issues. Most Middle Eastern states impose significant legal obstacles to religious freedom, contrary to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Some governments, such as Saudi Arabia, prohibit entirely the practice of religions other than Islam. This prohibition on non-Muslim religions forces Christian and other expatriates who seek to worship to do so only at great personal risk and under extremely discreet circumstances.

In others, from Israel to Kuwait, religious affiliation is a prerequisite of granting citizenship to new immigrants.

One of the most serious issues concerning religious freedom in most Middle Eastern countries is a strict prohibition on proselytizing. Conversion of Muslims to other religions is often illegal. Apostasy can carry heavy penalties, including in some countries death. Iran, for example, has issued a decree seeking the death of writer Salman Rushdie, who is called an apostate for authoring *The Satanic Verses*.

In addition, the Government of Iran has decreed all Baha'is to be apostates, regardless of whether they were born Baha'i or are converts. Four Baha'is have been sentenced to death for apostasy, and Christian evangelists have died in Iran under extremely suspicious circumstances.

Most countries in the region prohibit or restrict proselytizing, and there is serious societal discrimination and intolerance against converts. This, of course, is contrary to the Universal Declaration's provision that protects the right of all people to change their religion or belief.

In some states, specific religious groups are persecuted or their practices restricted. For example, in Iraq, the government has severely restricted its majority Shi'a Muslim population, banning the

broadcast of Shi'a programming on government television and radio, the publication of Shi'a books, and even the commemoration of Shi'a holy days.

The Assyrian Christian community has suffered various forms of persecution and abuses by Iraqi forces, including harassment and killings.

Even where legal obstacles do not exist, societal discrimination on a religious basis does. Jews throughout the Middle East, especially since the creation of the State of Israel, have experienced societal discrimination or repression, resulting in the large-scale emigration of traditional communities.

Anti-Semitism remains a widespread problem in many Middle Eastern countries today. The Coptic Christian community in Egypt is subject to discriminatory practices in addition to a number of legal restrictions. And, discrimination against women remains a pervasive problem throughout much of the Middle East; in some instances, discriminatory actions against women resulting from societal traditions are erroneously attributed to Islamic doctrine.

Some Middle Eastern states legislate in ways that discriminate against religious groups. In some cases, legal restrictions on a particular community exist, but are not enforced in practice. In Israel, Orthodox religious authorities have exclusive control over marriage, divorce, and burial of all Jews regardless of the individual's orthodoxy.

In Iran, Baha'is are legally restricted in their educational and employment opportunities as well as in almost all other ways.

Violence, which chooses religion as its standard bearer, is all too common in the region. The 16 year Lebanese civil war included elements of sectarian violence. In Algeria and Egypt, armed groups have carried out acts of terror against both Muslims and Christians in the name of religion.

In Algeria alone, thousands have been murdered, hundreds in the past 2 weeks, purportedly to advance a certain Islamic agenda.

And, of course, the Arab-Israeli conflict, while not a religious conflict per se, is laden with religious overtones and has provided grist to extremist groups, some of which, such as Hamas, use religion to rally supporters.

Given the absence of separation of religion and state, it bears highlighting that Middle Eastern governments are often active in regulating and restricting the practice of Islam as well as of other religions. This is an important element of the religious context in the region that is sometimes overlooked.

For example, it is common in many Middle Eastern states for governments to be involved in appointing Islamic clergy, funding mosques and religious workers' salaries, providing guidance for sermons, and monitoring Islamic religious services for unacceptable content. Such restrictions on Islam sometimes exist even in states that accept the free and open practice of other faiths.

I raise the issue of restrictions on the practice of Islam in the Middle East to underscore the same point that Congressman Wolf made, that it is not just religious minorities in the region which face constraints on religious liberty. In some instances, the restrictions placed on minorities are mirrored by similar restrictions or regulations of the Islamic majority. Some of these restrictions,

moreover, overlap with constraints on other freedoms, such as freedom of speech or freedom of assembly, reinforcing the key point I made earlier that religious freedom is only likely to thrive in free societies; and where political freedoms are restricted or repressed, the same is often true for religious freedoms.

In my remarks so far, I have tried to lay out for you the general basis of our policy on religious freedom and the context and priorities of the situation regarding religious intolerance in the Middle East. I would now like to address the crucial question of what are we trying to do about it.

In fact, we are trying to deal with the question of religious freedom on several fronts.

First, we are speaking out for religious freedom. President Clinton has issued several proclamations on religious freedom and Secretary of State Albright, soon after taking office, stated that freedom of religion is a priority human rights concern for her and made it clear that it should be treated as an important issue in our human rights policy.

Religious freedom, as I said before, is one of our core human rights basic to American values, and it is more than an American value. International human rights instruments in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrine religious freedom as one of the basic internationally recognized rights of all men and women.

One of the reasons I am pleased to be here, Mr. Chairman, is the opportunity this gives us to reiterate our message on religious freedom and to do so in a way that will be heard around the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Second, we are making it clear when there is a problem in a country. Our annual human rights reports to Congress each contains a section on freedom of religion. Here I do take some exception to Congressman Wolf's remarks that this is not a required section of our human rights reports. It is. These human rights reports, the religious section in particular, spell out in detail the situation in every country in the world, highlighting the problems we see. This is a public document that gets wide distribution, and we bring the reports and our concerns directly to the attention of the governments concerned.

This year, we will also be presenting a report to Congress on persecution of Christians around the world, which will include portions on the Middle Eastern countries.

Beyond these reports, the State Department comments regularly and publicly on instances of religious intolerance and persecution that come to our attention in all countries, including the Middle East.

Third, we have begun to take a much more activist approach in the field on questions of religious freedom. I think we all recognize that more needs to be done. In the past not enough was done.

But in December, the Department of State instructed all U.S. Embassies around the world, including in the Middle East, to be alert to the high priority we attach to religious freedom. We asked our posts to report more actively on these issues, to identify religions, denominations, or sects being discriminated against or persecuted, and to provide suggestions about how the United States

might most effectively address questions of religious freedom and religious persecution in their countries.

This initiative has already begun to show results, with more information coming our way and some useful suggestions on how to approach certain governments on this issue.

Fourth, in February we convened the first session of the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad. This new committee brings together 20 of America's most prominent religious leaders, activists, and thinkers to help us forge new policy directions on religious freedom.

The creation of the advisory committee reflects our recognition that more can and should be done to promote religious freedom abroad. Already the committee's members are hard at work and have formed subgroups on religious persecution and on conflict resolution.

By this summer, we hope to have the committee's first recommendations for action.

Fifth, we have taken an increasingly active approach in raising with Middle Eastern and other governments specific cases of individuals and groups who are suffering discrimination or persecution on religious grounds. Generally, we have done this quietly and through diplomatic channels. We have also encouraged governments to state publicly their opposition to acts of violence and discrimination aimed at individuals or groups because of their religion or belief.

In a number of cases, we have seen positive results.

Sixth, we have been active in multilateral fora in raising questions of religious freedom. In the United Nations Human Rights Commission earlier this month, for example, we co-sponsored a resolution on religious intolerance and delivered a strong statement on religious freedom. The United States was instrumental in the creation of a Human Rights Commission Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, and we have been strongly supportive of the Special Rapporteur's activities.

We have also drawn attention to specific cases of gross abuse including Iran's treatment of the Baha'i community and Iraqi persecution of several religious groups.

Seventh, we have sponsored and funded programs to promote religious liberty and tolerance. Some of these programs are specifically targeted at this issue while others are broader in scope but still have an impact positively on the problem.

For example, USIS posts in Arab countries have sent clerics, journalists, politicians, and academics to the United States to participate in the annual International Visitor Program on Religion in America, in which they meet with American Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Ecumenical groups to discuss ways of promoting religious tolerance.

Participants have returned impressed with the extent of religious freedom in the United States and the possibilities for cooperative relationships among people of different faiths.

With the National Endowment for Democracy, we are funding several programs to support tolerance and secularism—for example, a project to enable an independent literary journal to organize debates on religion and democracy among theologians, historians,

and lawyers; and another project to translate into Arabic and publish important works on democracy, tolerance, and pluralism.

Beyond programs focused specifically on religious issues, we are also actively pursuing democracy building programs around the world on the basis that building open, democratic societies will lead to improved respect for all human rights, including religious freedom. We have some democracy building programs in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Morocco, and the West Bank and Gaza.

Some additional programs also focus on related issues, such as conflict resolution and the human rights of women.

Eighth, we have reached out to religious groups and leaders throughout the Middle East. Our embassies maintain close contacts with a broad spectrum of Middle Eastern religious leaders, especially those representing groups suffering discrimination, to reassure them of American interest and see how we can be helpful.

Finally, our overall policy toward the Middle East, while not determined by questions of religious freedom, in fact is aimed at creating the kind of conditions under which religious freedom has a chance to emerge and to prosper.

I've spoken, for example, about how the Arab-Israeli conflict has given rise to extremist groups, such as Hamas, that have exacerbated religious tensions and intolerance in the region.

I have pointed out that our chief emphasis is on the Middle East peace process when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict. By establishing peace in the region and building bridges between communities previously at war, we are also establishing a framework for greater tolerance.

Likewise, our effort to build open societies and encourage the growth of democratic institutions in the Middle East will contribute over time to a climate for greater religious freedom.

Our efforts to fight terrorism also help strike at the roots of intolerance and religious persecution and also play a role here.

And, our work to isolate rogue regimes will help weaken many of the leaders most responsible for severe repression in the region.

In these ways, our general approach to the Middle East policy is helping to build a framework in which religious tolerance will be more likely to emerge and to grow.

Mr. Chairman, there is a long way to go to resolve the many aspects of religious intolerance, restriction, and persecution in the Middle East, and I won't sit here before you to tell you that we in the executive branch have all the answers. Nor can I assert that the United States has the power to bring about changes in religious practices abroad even if we did have the answers.

What I can tell you, however, is that we are committed to making the effort and to working with you in this regard. We have structured a broad policy toward the Middle East that is helping to lay the framework for peace and democratic societies which are essential components of an atmosphere conducive to religious freedom.

We are speaking out for religious freedom. We are raising the issue with governments, and we are undertaking a range of policy initiatives to advance our goal of a world where every individual

would be at liberty to follow their beliefs and to practice their religion freely.

We appreciate your interest in this issue and would welcome your comments and suggestions. As I have said at the outset, freedom of religion is a basic American value. I believe it is an issue on which the administration and the Congress can see eye to eye and one on which we can cooperate together effectively.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Coffey appears the Appendix B on page 88.]

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you, Mr. Coffey. I appreciate that and I appreciate the background of your statement as well as the context in which you have put it all forward. We appreciate that a great deal.

What else should we be providing to you, to the administration, as additional tools? You outlined a very active agenda and a number of points that you are pursuing. Are there additional policy tools that we need to be providing you from the Congress?

You heard Congressman Wolf talk about some that he has suggested. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. COFFEY. Well, I very much agree with Congressman Wolf that one of the key, the key instruments in this effort to improve the climate for religious liberty and religious tolerance is publicity. I think that these hearings and others like them that bring public focus on this issue are very valuable.

I think it is helpful for Members of Congress to speak out on this issue, just as the members of the executive branch intend to speak out.

As I mentioned in my remarks, this is a key priority for Secretary of State Albright. She was at the opening session of the Advisory Commission on Religious Freedom Abroad and she is very committed to this.

We would like to see similar expressions such as those made here today from Members of Congress. I think that Members of Congress in their own contacts—

Senator BROWNBACK. What about policy tools? I appreciate your point about we can speak out and do these sorts of things, and the administration is. I appreciate them doing that. But what about specific policy tools? Should we be bringing more of those forward? Do you need more to be able to address those issues?

Mr. COFFEY [continuing]. Well, I don't know if you consider this a policy tool, but certainly we in the executive branch consider resources a key policy tool. I think we certainly need the resources to do a lot of the things I mentioned that USIS is doing. A lot of the democracy building programs around the world have an impact on this issue. So it is very, very important to fund those issues.

In terms of specific pieces of legislation, I am not sure that we need new legislation in this area because there is a lot of legislation currently existing.

In terms of the things that Congressman Wolf mentioned, in terms of setting up an office in the White House to look into these issues, frankly, our position has been in the State Department that this is not necessary. What we are trying to do in the State Department is trying to integrate this concern for religious liberty into the



fabric of our foreign policy. This is a responsibility of the State Department. In particular, it is a responsibility of the bureau that I represent, because we consider religious liberty to be a key human rights issue.

We have set up the special advisory commission precisely to look at this question of what more instrumentalities are necessary, if any, and how we can better go about using the instrumentalities that we have.

Senator BROWNBACK. So to date you are saying that you will be coming forward with additional requests for policy changes, that that is still maturing in the system? Did I understand that last statement correctly?

Mr. COFFEY. Yes. I think that that is very much the work of the advisory committee. It is going to look at and make very specific recommendations on policy. There is a sub-group set up on specifically this question of religious freedom and they will be making some very specific recommendations.

These will be made to the Secretary and those will be reviewed. But we do expect to energize and to come forth with initiatives to give enhanced priority to this issue.

Senator BROWNBACK. Do you have any sort of timeframe that you can give us that those might mature forward, those initiatives?

Mr. COFFEY. We are hoping that there will be at least a tentative report this summer.

Senator BROWNBACK. To the Secretary?

Mr. COFFEY. To the Secretary.

Senator BROWNBACK. Good. Certainly I would want to know the administration's position as they look toward pieces of legislation like Frank Wolf or others have proposed in consideration in these areas.

Mr. COFFEY. Mr. Chairman, I have not had a chance, and the department has not had a chance to review the final text of this legislation which, as I understand it, will be presented next week. But we will look at this, and we want to work with the Congress on this legislation.

Senator BROWNBACK. Or tell us of additional things that you identify that you think would be useful, that you disagree with this point within that drafted legislation, or that you know what would be helpful, or that we are blocked by virtue of what Congress has done previously.

I was really struck by what Frank said, that in the early 1980's, a Republican President and a Democratic Congress worked very carefully together on a number of these issues and were highly successful in the things that they did.

I would certainly like to see us be able to create the same sorts of synergies or the same sort of dual purpose and united focus between the Congress and the President as we look at these issues.

It looks to me like there is a growing list of them in places around the world, in places where we have significant relationships, that are not just isolated regimes in a particular area.

So I want to be able to do that with you and I assume you will be our first point of contact. I hope as well that the Secretary will be completely engaged and the President as well.

May I ask you on that line, what about his comment that when we send top people around the world, when the President goes somewhere, when the Vice President goes somewhere, what about them meeting with some of these persecuted groups in various regions around the world, such as the Catholics in China? What about pushing that forward within the administration?

Mr. COFFEY. I think that is an interesting idea. I want to stress that the President has been very actively involved on this issue, the President and the Vice President. In fact, the President was very actively involved in setting up the advisory committee, and their recommendations will, in fact, be going to the President through the Secretary.

The question of contact with these religious groups is, I think, an important one. I think that a lot of this contact is going on. You know, every situation, every mission has to be considered on its own terms. But a good example of this, though not an example from the Middle East, is the Secretary's and President's meeting with the Dalai Lama. When President Mubarak was here earlier these spring, these issues were very much discussed with him and particularly the question of anti-Semitism. I know that those issues were discussed with him both in the executive branch and also up here on the Hill.

I think that those contacts had a very, very beneficial effect, because when President Mubarak went back, he made it clear publicly that there is a distinction to be made between criticizing the policies of Israel, which the Egyptian press is free to do, and anti-Semitism.

I think that that was a very, very helpful statement. So I think these contacts do take place and do play a role.

Senator BROWNBACK. I hope you will keep working with us on those and will keep putting pressure forward on that.

Mr. COFFEY. I will definitely keep working with you and, Mr. Chairman, we very much share your spirit of bipartisanship on this.

This is an issue that really cuts across all party lines and encompasses all groups of Americans.

Senator BROWNBACK. Good. Mr. Coffey, thank you very much for joining us and for your presentation. We may be submitting some additional questions to you in writing and we would appreciate it if you would get back to us in a timely fashion on those.

I would now ask our third panel to please come forward. They are Bat Ye'or, author, from Geneva, Switzerland, who will be testifying; Ms. Nina Shea, Director of Puebla Program on Religious Freedom, Freedom House, Washington, D.C.; and Dr. Walid Phares, Professor of International Relations, Florida Atlantic University of Miami, Florida.

If you will excuse me for just a moment while the panel is convening, I will be right back.

[Pause]

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you all for joining us. I appreciate that a great deal.

We will start with Bat Ye'or, and I understand that that name in English translates into "Daughter of the Nile." Bat Ye'or is a distinguished author on the subject of what this hearing is about.

The microphone is yours. Welcome to our committee. We are delighted you are here.

If you would like to, you can submit your written statement for the record and summarize. It is up to you. It's your choice.

**STATEMENT OF BAT YE'OR, AUTHOR, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

BAT YE'OR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As time is short, I would like to only highlight the main points of my statement. I request you to put it in the record in its entirety.

Senator BROWNBACK. Without objection, it will be done.

BAT YE'OR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am most grateful for having been invited to give testimony on religious persecutions, especially on the religious persecutions of Christians and other minorities, which is a very grave phenomenon now in many Muslim countries.

But I would like first to stress that many Muslim political trends and Muslim individuals are strongly opposed to religious persecutions since it is written in the Koran, "No compulsion in religion."

However, the religious persecutions against Christians and other religious groups exist in some Muslim countries. They are inscribed in a historical and ideological pattern that we must know in order to be able to refute it and to eliminate those prejudices which provoke persecutions.

This pattern is already a millennium old. So it means that the efforts to eliminate these prejudices that have survived to the present time—the historical prejudices against religious groups other than Muslims—this struggle will be very difficult. However, it must be done.

I think that this hearing is very important, because I hope it will start the struggle for the implementation of religious rights.

The persecution of Christians in Muslim countries is of two sorts: military and legal.

The military aspect comprises military aggression, like in Sudan, for instance, or in other parts of the Muslim world, in order to "Islamize" Christians and, in the case of Sudan, the Christian and Animist population.

The tactics of the *Jihad* war which is waged in Sudan allows extermination, destruction, slavery, deportation, and also abduction and slavery of Christian and Animist women and children.

Muslims who are opposed to the regime in Khartoum are also victims of those practices.

The second aspect that is conducive to the discrimination and oppression of Christians and other religious groups is the legal one. Those laws that allow discrimination are *Shariah* laws. They were written down by Muslim jurisconsults from the 8th and 9th centuries onward. They impose legal discriminations and inferiority on the "People of the Book"—that means Jews and Christians—as well as other non-Muslim groups.

Here it is important to stress that the condition of Jews and Christians in Islamic legal codes is exactly the same. Therefore, all kinds of demonization of Jews or contestation of their right to live in security and dignity is also a contestation of Christian rights. One cannot separate the two groups.

Those *Shariah* regulations, which enforce persecution in the legal domain, remained in force until the 19th and 20th centuries, when they were abolished and replaced by European legislation. Now we see that the Islamist trends are trying to impose again those *Shariah* provisions.

These rules concern the law of apostasy, of blasphemy, the refusal of Christian and Jewish testimony in some cases, an inequality—according to the difference of religion—in financial compensation for crimes or for punishments, and discrimination in education and the professions.

It is important to understand that religious rights must be respected in those countries and we should, therefore, organize a campaign to denounce religious oppression. The reason why this oppression of Christians and other religious groups is not well known is because of the economic interests of the West, the implications of the cold war, a policy of appeasement with Muslim governments, and also—in the Church leadership—a trend toward the building of an Islamic-Christian peaceful coexistence. And, of course, this is a very important political agenda, to create those elements of peaceful coexistence.

But, nevertheless, this effort of the Churches to always appease the Moslem world has led them to overlook the persecution of Christians and to try to find a scapegoat, like, for instance, the State of Israel or the Israeli-Arab conflict, so as to blame on the Jews and on Israel the persecutions of the Christians in the Muslim world. But, in fact, the persecutions of Christians, Jews, and other groups are the consequence of those *Shariah* laws which were written down in the 8th and 9th centuries.

So it is very important to understand the roots of this persecution so that one can bring an adequate response to it.

Now I suggest in order to remedy this ongoing human tragedy that the silence on this human suffering should be broken, that the policy of appeasement should be abandoned, that the real culprits should be denounced, that these laws and prejudices should be addressed, that economic sanctions should be brought against the countries who are practicing these oppressions, and I propose the creation of an office that will monitor the religious persecution, as has been suggested by Congressman Frank Wolf.

I suggest also that the present campaign of delegitimization and demonization of Jews, Christians, and Baha'is should cease and, instead, be replaced—encouraged in the West—with a campaign promoting esteem for every religion and respect for all religious rights. We should understand that it is in our interest in the West that Muslim countries respect those rights, because if those rights are not recognized and respected, then our own rights in Europe, in the West, will also be threatened by the same terrorist campaign and religious fanaticism.

[The prepared statement and an article by Bat Ye'or appear in Appendix C on page 93]

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much, Bat Ye'or. I appreciate your testimony.

I look forward to our exchange in questions.

Next will be Ms. Nina Shea, who is well known in this country for her work in this area of religious persecution and what we need

to be doing as the United States, and what we need to be doing as a people and as a government. Ms. Shea.

**STATEMENT OF NINA SHEA, DIRECTOR, PUEBLA PROGRAM ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, FREEDOM HOUSE, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Ms. SHEA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to express Freedom House's deep gratitude to you for holding these hearings on this important topic today and for inviting me to testify on the long neglected atrocity of the religious persecution against Christians in the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman, when Freedom House sent a fact finding team to Sudan a couple of years ago, they brought back a film documentation of children who had been redeemed from slavery, Christian children. They were bearing scars on their bodies from brands they had received from their Muslim masters while they were in captivity.

We brought back a sensational film, took it around to the different television news magazines, and the producers told us well, this is all very interesting, but what is the peg, what is the angle, we don't get it—we can't use it.

I just want to say that your hearing helps give a peg and an angle to this important story.

Christians in many parts of the world suffer brutal torture, arrest, imprisonment, and even death, their homes and communities laid waste for no other reason than that they are Christians.

Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world today.

In my new book, *In the Lion's Den*, I have identified and given reasons for why militant Islam is one of the two political ideologies—the other being communism—that have consistently oppressed Christians as well as other independence groups and individuals.

I want to stress that Islam is a diverse religion and has been at periods extremely tolerant relative to other religions. It was during the religious repression of the Hapsburg Empire or the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain, for example, that Jews and even minority Christian groups fled to Muslim lands for protection.

So what I am looking at today is the strain within Islam that is highly politicized and militant.

It is important to understand the distinction between persecution and discrimination or bigotry. The most egregious human rights atrocities are being committed against Christians living in militant Islamic societies solely because of their religious beliefs and activities. These atrocities include torture, enslavement, rape, imprisonment, forcible separation of children from parents, killings and massacres, abuses that threaten the very survival of entire Christian communities, many of which have existed for hundreds or even 2,000 years.

Right before this hearing I was talking to Bat Ye'or about the cousins of the Jews in the Middle East. I thought it was shocking that she revealed to me that there are less than 50 Jews in Egypt, in the country of Egypt. Fifty years ago, there were 85,000 Jews. It goes on throughout the countries of the Middle East.

We are seeing the same thing happening right now with the Christian communities. They are vanishing before our eyes under the relentless persecution.

At the beginning of the century, most Middle Eastern countries had a Christian population in the 30th percentile. Now it is down to single digits in practically every country in the Middle East.

In Iran, just for example, the Christian population has shrunk from 15 percent at the beginning of this century to 2 percent today.

In some cases, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, it is the regime that is the oppressor. In other cases, including Pakistan and Egypt, societal forces are at work while the government, out of weakness, acquiesces, failing to stop the persecution despite well organized assaults or known instigators.

In the countries of the Middle East that are under scrutiny at today's hearings, Christians are vulnerable minorities within the society. I will start with Saudi Arabia, which completely bans Christianity. There are no churches, Bibles, Christian artifacts, symbols or literature permitted there. Religious police seek out secret worship services by raids on private homes.

It is important to remember that a quarter of the population in Saudi Arabia are foreign workers, many of whom are Christian. Hundreds of these people are in prison for Christian worship, secret Christian worship. Some are sentenced to be beheaded.

Amnesty International reports that the oppression against Christians has worsened in Saudi Arabia since the Gulf War.

Egypt's Coptic community, believed to have been evangelized by Mark in the in the 1st century is vanishing under a violent onslaught by Muslim extremists. Thousands of Coptic Christians have been forced to flee their homes or convert to Islam after large mobs of fanatical Muslim youth laid waste their villages in Upper Egypt in 1996.

In February and March this year, two more pogroms by Islamic terrorists were directed against the Copts in Upper Egypt, leaving over 30 dead, including select young people being groomed for leadership roles in the church. They were massacred, by the way, while they were meeting in their church.

According to statistics reported by the Center of Egyptian Human Rights for National Unity, there have been 543 incidences of violence against Christians during the past 5 years in Egypt. As many Christians have already been killed in the first quarter of this year as had been killed in the 20 year period starting in 1973.

Reverend Keith Roderick, the Secretary General of the Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights Under Islamization, reports that the Egyptian Government has failed to stop the surge of terrorism against the vulnerable Christian minority and has helped create an atmosphere of bigotry and hatred toward them.

Various Egyptian human rights groups report that there have been no prosecutions and convictions for the murders of the Coptic Christians. Over 70 were detained in those murders and they were all soon released. And 1½ years ago, Egyptian authorities withdrew police protection from the mainly Christian towns where the massacres took place.

Egypt also has laws that ban repairs or constructions on Christian churches unless a decree is signed and issued in each case by

the President of the Republic. During the 1980's, only 10 buildings and 25 repair permits were granted to the Coptic Orthodox community which comprises about 90 percent of Egypt's Christian population.

As a result of these laws, just last December an army unit bulldozed the Christian Cheerful Heart Center for disabled children without any warning. The army just came in and flattened it. It is located 15 miles outside of Cairo. This was done even though the center possessed the necessary permits, because there was a rumor that they did not.

Converts from Islam to Christianity are considered apostates and are treated very harshly, including many cases of forcible reconversion through kidnapping and forcing women into marriage.

Pakistan has blasphemy laws that mandate the death penalty against "whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly defiles the Prophet Mohammed."

Hundreds of blasphemy cases are pending against Christians and others in Pakistan's courts.

Amnesty reports that in all known cases, "the charges appear to have been arbitrarily brought, founded solely on the individual's minority religious beliefs or on malicious accusations against individuals who advocate novel ideas."

The minorities being affected, of course, are Christians and also Ahmadis.

In February, inflamed about a rumor of blasphemy, a Muslim mob 30,000 strong went on a rampage in Pakistan's Punjab province setting fires in the Christian village of Shantinagar. The town of 15,000 was nearly razed, and thousands of Christians were left homeless. When Pakistani Christians marched on the capital a few days later to protest the destruction and demand greater protection, they were brutalized and arrested by police, that is, the Christians were.

Iran's militant Islamic president delivered a fiery sermon in 1994 declaring that "there is no longer validity to other religions," and that "Iran and the entire Muslim world must adopt the Prophet and *Jihad*, or holy war, as a model."

Soon after that, Iran's tiny Protestant community was devastated by the brutal murders of three key pastors. Terror struck the Christian community again last October. The body of a fourth prominent leader from the Assemblies of God church was found hanging from a tree near his home. He had been a convert from Islam. We believe that he was murdered.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the Baha'is have suffered terribly in Iran as well. They have no legal rights. Killing a Baha'i is not considered homicide. In the last 20 years, 200 Baha'is have been murdered.

The persecution of Christians is on the rise as advances are made by a militantly politicized strain of Islam where extremists, distorting Islam's tolerant values, seek to use religion to grab state power. It is no accident that the places where Christians are most severely persecuted are also among the countries rated as being the least free in Freedom House's annual survey, "Freedom in the World."

If Christians are being persecuted and even martyred on such a massive scale throughout the world, why don't we know about it? Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that our own discriminatory attitudes and secular myopia have prevented us from recognizing the problem of persecution of Christians abroad.

With various exceptions, our political leaders have been unaware or else have turned a blind eye. Our Presidents in recent years have repeatedly spoken out about human rights abuses against vulnerable minorities throughout the world, but they have failed to address the persecution of Christians, even though it is among the most pervasive international human rights problem.

After the pogrom against the Christians in Egypt in March, President Mubarak visited President Clinton in Washington. I wonder if he raised our concern for this religious repression.

I know my time is up. I refer you to my written text. Let me just say that I want to point out just two quick examples. One is Saudi Arabia, where the U.S. Government has repeatedly failed to speak up for the religious rights for even American citizens there and has capitulated to Saudi demands to restrict Christian worship services on U.S. Embassy soil in Saudi Arabia.

Our soldiers in the Gulf War were told that they had to hide their Bibles and their crucifixes. They were also restricted in their worship while they were defending Saudi sovereignty.

Also in the matter of asylum, this is an area where there can definitely be steps taken, reforms taken in the United States. There is a case currently that I am involved in of an Iranian Evangelical woman who managed to flee to Turkey and asked for political asylum based on religious repression. She was considered an apostate in her own country and would be killed.

The U.N. certified that she had refugee designation, but she was turned down by the U.S. asylum officer. I reviewed her transcript and, apparently, he had never heard of adult baptism.

Her case was so strong that she has been given political asylum based on religion by Canada but not the United States.

My time is up. I thank you very much and maybe we can get back to some of the other points I make in my testimony in the question and answer session.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Shea appears in Appendix D on page 103.]

Senator BROWNBACK. Good. Thank you very much, Ms. Shea. You paint a very discouraging picture, but we are happy that you are here to present that and we look forward to further questions.

Mr. Walid Phares is Professor of International Relations at Florida Atlantic University. Thank you very much for joining us and the microphone is yours.

**STATEMENT OF DR. WALID PHARES, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY, MIAMI, FLORIDA**

Dr. PHARES. Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to be a part of this panel. I am honored, first of all, because I have been researching the matter for the last 16 years; and, second, because I am Middle Eastern and I am from a Christian background. I can



assure you that back in the Middle East, 18 million Christians will consider this hearing as an historic moment.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to cover four issues: first, understanding the fact; second, I will try to answer the question of why is it happening; third, why is there a silence about it; and, fourth, what can the U.S. Government do about it.

But first, allow me to make a few remarks.

While the United States leads the international community in many diplomatic and rescue initiatives, such as in Bosnia, many here and overseas wonder why parallel action is not taken in similar, sometimes worse, nightmares, such as the tragedies in Southern Sudan, Upper Egypt, and Central Lebanon to name a few.

Of course, United States resources are limited to a certain extent and world hotspots must be evaluated for their priority within American interests and capabilities.

When should Washington get involved? Of late, the United States participated in treaties to stop the massacres in Bosnia and to convey political rights to the Palestinians. The problems within these groups and the delicacy with which they had to be handled are well known. Less known, however, are the plights of various Christian minorities.

Not supporting the rights of the Christians while supporting the rights of other communities has, at times, seemed ironic, particularly given the Judeo-Christian religious roots of most citizens as well as Members of Congress.

Minimally, it had sent a message of indifference. In some cases, this disregard has been construed as a "green light," a green light to proceed in actions taken against minorities in the region. At worst, the silence in the United States has actually caused an increase in persecutions against the 18 million Christians in the Middle East.

Over the past decades, the persecutions and oppression of Middle East Christians were rarely reported in Western media. While other accusations of abuse in the region have been investigated exhaustively by audio-visual and printed media, the suffering of millions of Christians has been downplayed or simply ignored.

It is only now and after persecution has reached its zenith that fact finding is underway, such as today's hearing.

Another problem stems from that lack of information. The groups which have a natural tie to the Middle East Christians have done little despite their vast resources and commitment to activism on better known topics. Domestic, as well as international, Christian churches have not paid enough attention in the past to the large scale persecution of Christians in the Middle East. Their resources can make a significant difference if they raised the issue nationwide with all their strength.

Even those who do not need the media to illuminate them have all too often by-passed the problems of Christians in the Middle East. I am now talking about many in the academic community of this country.

Despite easy access to facts, many Middle East experts have chosen to research and write about the "majority" rather than the minorities in the region. This course of study has been facilitated by cooperation and financial support, either from governments or busi-

ness with interests abroad, to institutions or researchers who published about topics deemed “acceptable.”

Now let me go to the questions. First is understanding the facts. I have five points, quick points. First is size, location and background. What are we talking about in the Middle East?

The Christians in the Middle East are not a monolithic group. They are the descendants of the first Christians in the world and the heirs of the ancient and native people of the region. While many Christians are recent converts, the overwhelming majority of the Middle East Christians came from nationalities which did not convert to Islam after the Arab conquest of the 7th century.

The largest Christian community of the Middle East is found in Egypt, which has 10 to 12 million Copts. This Christian group comprises one-fifth or one-sixth of the country's population. The Southern Sudanese have about 6 million. Christians are the largest monotheist group. As for the Christians of Lebanon, about 1.5 million still reside there, and more than 6 million live in the Diaspora, including about a quarter of that number in North America.

Among the Lebanese Christians, the largest group is the Maronites, which are Catholics which follow Rome. Other smaller religious entities include Melchites, Orthodox, and Protestants.

The Assyrian Chaldeans, around 1 million in Iraq and in the Diaspora, have a large concentration in the Kurdish zone and, of course, in Chicago and Detroit. The Christians of Syria, about 1.2 million, include Aramaic, Armenians, Melchites, Orthodox, Evangelicals. There are small, but significant, Christian communities in other countries, such as Iran, Jordan, and Israel, and less significant in Turkey and Algeria. By law, there are no Christians in Saudi Arabia.

Point 2 is types of persecution. There are various types of persecution of Christians in the Middle East. We can sort them into two categories.

First, religious persecution of individuals, technically human rights abuses. This persecution is conducted against individuals because of their religious affiliation. In Saudi Arabia and Iran, as highlighted by many speakers, for example, individuals are punished for displaying crosses or stars of David. They are jailed for praying in public and, in some cases, are punished by death for not complying with the religious tenets.

In these countries, as well as in Egypt and Sudan, converts to Christianity are sentenced to death.

More important, perhaps more tragic, there is a political oppression of religious communities which I call ethno-religious cleansing.

In this case, ruling regimes are oppressing entire religious communities on political, security, and economic levels. The objectives of such oppression is to reduce the influence of Christian communities and, in certain cases, to reduce it physically.

The ethno-religious cleansing of Christian peoples in the Middle East alternate between military suppression and political oppression. In Egypt, the large Coptic nation is systematically discriminated against on the constitutional, political, administrative, and cultural levels. Moreover, paramilitary fundamentalist groups are conducting pogroms against the Christians, which include burning churches and assassinating civilians.

In Sudan, the stated objective of the ruling regime is to Arabize and Islamize the African Christian and Animist population of the South. Since 1992, the Sudanese Government has been waging a military campaign aimed at dispersing, enslaving, and subduing the southern blacks.

Last, but not least, let us review the third largest Christian community of the region, the Lebanese, who are under political and security oppression in their own homeland. Under occupation by a Muslim power, Syria, the Christian community is systematically being suppressed by the Syrian controlled regime of Beirut.

The smaller Christian groups do no better. In Iraq, for example, the Assyrians are another group targeted by the Saddam regime.

Third is slavery. Religious persecution of Christians in the Middle East has reached extreme forms of human degradation. In Sudan, for example, abundant reports by international human rights organizations have documented the enslavement by the northern fundamentalist forces of southern African Christians. According to the experts and to reports, there are today between 600,000 to 1 million black slaves from Sudan who have either been taken to the north of that country to work as domestics or sold in other Arab countries.

Fourth is the authors of the persecutions.

One religious group can act against another religious group. For Christians, this has been the case in Egypt, Sudan, Iran, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Pakistan. Of course, persecution can also be conducted by members of one particular group against other members of the same religious group on the basis of religious fundamentalism—against women and seculars in Algeria, in Afghanistan, and in Iran, of course; or racism in Mauritania. But this is not the topic of today's discussion.

Persecution of ethno-religious groups, the Mideast Christians in particular, is conducted by legal governments—Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Sudan—or by organizations—the National Islamic Front in Sudan, the Front Islamique de Salut in Algeria, the Hizbollah in Lebanon, *et cetera*.

Point number 5 is evolution. It is interesting to notice that under the cold war, the oppression of Christians was mostly, but not exclusively, conducted under pro-Soviet regimes in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Sudan, and in the PLO-Islamic controlled areas during Lebanon's civil war. Since the Iranian revolution and after the end of the cold war, persecution has spread in most of the region's countries. Ironically, in the wake of the Arab-Israeli peace process, persecution has reached larger scales and was conducted with bolder ideological attitudes.

Why is it happening, Mr. Chairman? There are four reasons.

First is the historical pattern. Persecution of non-Muslims in the Middle East is deeply rooted in history, as Bat Ye'or has said. It is the result of 13 centuries of dominance by regimes which legally and politically discriminate against Christians.

Ideological patterns exist, too. More recently, Christians have become a specific target of radical Islamic fundamentalism. The more political fundamentalism grows, the more Christians are persecuted.

There is a regional pattern. In many cases, the increase of persecution is caused by regional government toleration and sometimes participation.

The most important is international patterns. A less investigated factor is the American and Western political, intellectual, and moral abandonment of human rights policies as a priority. The less the United States intervenes in protecting the rights of Christians and others, the more these communities will suffer.

Why is there a silence about it? The victims of the persecution in the Middle East are denied the right to raise their plight by their oppressors. While other minorities, amazingly, or non-state communities in the Middle East are allowed by their dominant regimes to express their cause, not one, single Christian community is able to articulate its claim and protest peacefully.

Have you seen one Christian demonstration in the Middle East, just one? Never.

Two, as indicated above, the victims of the persecution have little access to American and international press. While the dominant national-religious movements from the Middle East have easy access to TV, radio, and newspapers, Mideast Christians do not. Because they lack the resources to purchase time, to have department chairs in universities, or expensive lobbyists, their message is not getting out.

Three, their problems are not "convenient" ones, either. Because of regional, diplomatic, and economic considerations, the causes of these persecutions are marginalized in the political and academic world of the United States.

Finally, because of a variety of factors, including the above-mentioned, oppressed Christian communities in the Middle East did not, historically speaking, obtain a credible support from worldwide Christians.

As a result of the factors I mentioned, grassroots of American churches and the general public in the United States are simply not aware of the persecutions and, therefore, cannot support these unknown and unpublicized causes.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, what can the U.S. Government do about it?

I would like to commend the current initiative which allowed this hearing to occur and other similar initiatives in Congress. I also commend President Clinton for forming a special advisory commission to investigate the subject and report to the White House.

However, I believe the U.S. Government should take further steps. The U.S. Congress must, in my mind, (1) take the leadership on this issue and encourage the administration to take practical measures which would have effect in the region; (2) hold additional hearings and organize a conference on the rights of religious minorities in the region here in Congress. It is crucial that representatives of these communities will be invited to express their concerns. Invite the persecuted people.

Third, and finally, we must legislate. We should legislate linkage between foreign policy issues, such as foreign aid and trade and human rights abuse. Those countries and organizations responsible for this persecution should be held responsible for their behavior.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the U.S. Government can act in order to save the lives and preserve the individual rights of millions of individuals in the Middle East. There is little hope for the 18 million Christians in the Middle East if the United States does not take a leadership role.

Thank you.

Senator BROWNBACk. Boy, you make me grieve with the testimony that you put here in front of me about the extent and the breadth of what is taking place to people in that region of the world, or, for that matter, in many places around the world, but particularly in the Middle East, which is the subject of this hearing.

Do I hear you correctly to state that the level of persecution of Christians is at the highest level in recorded history? Is that a correct statement?

Ms. SHEA. That is correct. Yes. This is the worst century of anti-Christian persecution in history.

Senator BROWNBACk. What level are we talking about total number-wise? I am hearing, unfortunately, so many numbers that you are putting out. What could the number be placed at of those being persecuted by death, or slavery, or torture?

Ms. SHEA. The century opened up with the massacre of the Armenians in Turkey. We then moved on to Stalinism, Maoism, and Nazism took its toll on Christians as well as Jews and some others. There is also Pol Potism. This has been a dreadful century.

Right now the Catholic bishop of El Obeid province in Sudan has come out saying that there is genocide against the Christian population in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan. 1.5 million people have died in the 10 year war there, a war of forcible conversion, by the way, and most of those people are Christians and non-Muslims.

Senator BROWNBACk. Currently, in 1997, are we experiencing now in the world the highest level of Christian persecution in recorded history—period?

Ms. SHEA. I don't know if this year so far is higher than any other previous year. But certainly we have seen an increase in this decade in the Middle East.

One of the lessons absorbed by the dictators and tyrants of the world from the collapse of the Soviet Union was that it was the churches and the Christian community who helped to bring them down; that the Christian population of the then Soviet empire could never accept the notion that there was an absolute power called "The Communist Party" and that individuals did not have dignity and human rights. That is a very Christian notion there.

So they have come to crack down on the churches within their borders during the 1990's. We see an increase in Egypt, and the last 5 years has been worse than the previous 20 years.

The Sudan has a genocidal situation in the Nuba Mountains. There are slavery and massive human rights abuses in general.

In Pakistan it seems to be on the ascendancy as well. In Iran there is a greater intolerance against Christians. There has always been intolerance against Baha'is, but so-called "People of the Book," Christians and Jews, had some protection under Iranian law. It does not seem that they have that kind of protection anymore.

For Saudi Arabia, Amnesty International has documented that it has gotten worse since the Gulf War for Christians.

Senator BROWNBACk. So we are talking of millions in the Middle East being persecuted?

Ms. SHEA. We're talking about millions and we're talking of a downward trend.

Senator BROWNBACk. Currently.

Ms. SHEA. Currently.

Senator BROWNBACk. And it could be at the highest level ever.

Dr. PHARES.

Dr. PHARES. If we look at it from a historical point of view and in slow motion, yes, we are at the peak now.

I would like to make just one note here. We should distinguish between individual persecution and ethnic-religious persecution. The Christians in the Middle East are oppressed under these two items.

If you look at individual persecution, you have hundreds, by hundreds—the numbers are in the hundreds—of cases, separate cases, of either assassination, or jailing, or sentencing.

If you look at the collective question, we are talking about the entirety of Christians in the Middle East. 18 million Christians are suffering—the same way the Muslims in Bosnia are suffering; the same way other communities worldwide are suffering politically.

Senator BROWNBACk. And you would consider all 18 million of the Christians in the Middle East being persecuted in some way, either by the regime or by the regime turning its head the other way and not noticing what is happening? All 18 million are being persecuted in some way or another?

Dr. PHARES. There were only two areas in the Middle East where Christians were able to practice freely. One was Lebanon, the second is Israel.

Lebanon is gone in the 1990's, under Syrian occupation today. So there is no more Christian freedom in Lebanon. In Israel, the Christian community is too small and their problems are not of an ethnic background but of a religious background and political background. Therefore, there is no place in the Middle East, in the entire Middle East, where Christians can breathe freely. Therefore yes, I would agree with you.

BAT YE'OR. I would like to stress that it is very important for the West that the Middle East should not become monolithically Islamic because the Middle East was the cradle of Judeo-Christian civilizations, mainly Christian, which had flourished there. The West should encourage the remnants of Christian and Jewish populations to remain—they are mainly Christian because the Jews have disappeared now from the Arab countries. The West, in encouraging those populations to remain there is, in fact, affirming that Muslims must respect the human rights and religious rights of the Christians. Otherwise, if Islamists will refuse these rights to Christians and Jews, they will threaten the liberty of the Western World also.

So, in fact, we have to consider that it is in our interest, not only in the interest of those remnant populations but in our interest, to struggle for the respect of their rights.

I would like to add also one word, that if the Christians have not expressed their sorrow and their grief in public, it is because they are afraid of terrorism and reprisals in their own country. It is absolutely forbidden for a Christian or a Jew to criticize any aspect of Islamic law. This is part of the blasphemy law.

If they do so, they are condemned to death. So they are afraid of criticizing the regime under which they are living.

Senator BROWNBACK. The other thing that is so striking about it, that is so stunning, is the silence on our part. It is almost stunning if you think of the numbers that we are talking about and the horridness of the crime. You are talking about slavery, child slavery, and murder taking place. And yet the deafening silence really is absolutely striking.

Are we embarrassed to raise this?

BAT YE'OR. Yes.

Senator BROWNBACK. Do we have too many commercial interests at stake?

BAT YE'OR. It is an ideological problem, because the Western World has turned away from its Judeo-Christian roots; and we have seen it from the beginning of the century with Communism, then with Nazism, then with the trend of Islamization, which is very strong in Europe and which has led to total censorship on all the suffering of the Christians under Islam because the focus was only on anti-Zionism in the media and in the policy of European states.

So criticizing the Arab countries with which Europe was allied would undermine this alliance with Arab-Muslim regimes. Therefore, the Christian communities, unfortunately, were abandoned through this policy, this anti-Zionist policy, which in some ways was anti-Jewish.

Dr. PHARES. Mr. Chairman, in answering your question I would like to say it is an organized silence. There are many walls that suppress the voices of those who are suffering, and if you do not hear these voices, then you cannot act or react.

The first wall is in the regimes. Have you ever seen a Christian persecuted in the Middle East being interviewed on CNN? When you have incidents in the West Bank, when you have incidents in any other region in the Middle East, you have the victim interviewed, the son-in-law, the father, and the grandfather. When you have massacres in Egypt, CNN does not even mention it nor does the major media. It is only lately, when the *New York Times* and other brave voices are starting to talk about it that now you are holding these hearings.

So you have this wall from the Middle East. We have another intellectual wall here. The academic community is not responding. It is their moral and intellectual duty to address these issues and they are not.

Third, the third wall is the U.S. Government. Of course the U.S. Government is under the pressure of not raising these issues. I heard the report of the State Department—an excellent report—I would like to mention this.

It is not just a question of getting some people out of jails in the Middle East. It is a question of getting nations out of captivity. We

are talking about a major, Biblical-sized, from a historical point of view, cause.

Senator BROWNBACK. I want to reiterate my statement at the outset, that this hearing is not here to blame any particular religion, not here to blame Islam at all for any of this. It is to notice what is taking place and that much of it is governmentally sponsored in a region. As I read and as a number of you have testified, Islam is a very peaceful and loving religion as well.

Let me ask you this. Do we need symbols of what is taking place? Do we need an Alexander Solzhenytsyn? Do we need a person there to symbolize what is taking place to so many? Is the problem because there are so many there is not a face to it?

Ms. Shea?

Ms. SHEA. I don't think that is the problem. We know of cases. There are symbols. There is Salamat Masih, a 12 year old Christian boy in Pakistan who was charged with blasphemy with absolutely no evidence. This was a couple of years ago. His case became well known, because one of his co-defendants was gunned down in the streets after they emerged from a court hearing. He survived that attack with some wounds, went on, got convicted, and there is a mandatory death penalty for blasphemy.

Again, there was no evidence. The imam who charged him with the crime refused to repeat what the alleged blasphemy was. There were no witnesses, and he claimed it was some kind of blasphemous graffiti, and the kid was semi-illiterate.

Anyhow, under international pressure he was eventually acquitted of the crime. But then radical Islamists within Pakistan put a \$30,000 bounty on his head, and the 12 year old fled into hiding, to live in Germany where he lives today.

This is directly parallel with the Salman Rushdie case. We know about this child. We have his picture. We have film footage. CBN had film footage of his court hearing. But for some reason it does not catch on.

In fact, I think the reason was well articulated by Richard Land, President of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. He said that too often people in the West, peering through the selective prism of Christian history in the West, reflexively think of Christians as the persecutors rather than as the persecuted, and, further, an increasingly secularized West and its leadership elite tend to be indifferent and often uncomprehending of a spiritual world view, which endures persecution and death for the sake of belief.

We just cannot comprehend that anymore in the West. It is the old example of the young man in front of the tank in Tiananmen Square, who was recognized by the West, rightly, as a hero, a hero for democracy. But if a person were to lay down his or her life for Jesus Christ, for the Bible, he would be considered a fanatic, crazy, and as not worthy of our intervention.

But there is no dearth of individual cases. We know about them.

Senator BROWNBACK. But do you not make my point, perhaps, which is I don't see, as you described this young man, I don't see his face coming up in my mind. Is it that we need to have a face?

Ms. SHEA. That is because our media elite don't pick it up and our political leaders don't pick it up. If President Clinton were to



pick up that case and were to talk about it, or Mrs. Clinton, people would know about it.

Senator BROWNBACK. I think maybe that is my point, that we need to pick out faces in the crowd to make them symbols of what is taking place in our broader cross section.

You all have been very instructive to me. I hope that you will be willing to work with us on this committee to identify perhaps some who are persecuted throughout the region of various faiths that may be willing to come forward and testify so that we can get their clear story and put it in front of the American people and, hopefully, in front of the world community.

You each have done your job in doing that and I greatly appreciate it, from the writings that you have done, from the speaking and the study that you have put forward. Also, as we consider legislative action, please apprise us of your ideas. Particularly, Ms. Shea, I think of your comments on asylum laws and some things that we may be able to do in that particular area. I took note of that.

This is the first of a number of looks at this and work in this area.

Thank you all very much for coming. Thank you as a panel.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:05 p.m., the subcommittee adjourned.]

## RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION: FACES OF THE PERSECUTED

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 1997

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND SOUTH ASIAN  
AFFAIRS, COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met at 2:06 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Sam Brownback, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Brownback and Robb.

Senator BROWNBACK. I would like to welcome everyone to this hearing on religious persecution in the Middle East. Our hearing today will focus on the faces of the persecuted. In addition to witnesses who have dedicated their lives to the betterment of the lot of oppressed Christians, we have a few witnesses today who will provide first hand testimony to the persecution they have endured for their faith.

We greatly appreciate the courage of these witnesses in speaking out. They do so at potential risk to themselves and their families and yet they remain committed to getting out word of the persecution being perpetrated in their countries.

Indeed, this is a subject that for too long has remained unnoticed or deliberately ignored. But silence has only served to give free rein to the persecutors.

Today's hearing is the second one on this subject held by this subcommittee and we are planning more. This is a subject about which—unfortunately—there is much to say.

After the last hearing I chaired on religious persecution, I received critiques to the effect that our hearings deal only with Christians. I would like to say that this hearing, like the last one, is one of a series that this subcommittee will be holding. Future hearings will not only focus on the persecution of Christians but also that of other religious minorities in the Middle East.

As I mentioned at the last hearing, I believe that as Americans, we have a unique obligation to speak out against religious persecution. The right to freely practice the religion of one's choice is a freedom central to our republic. We must not fail to defend a principle that our founding fathers viewed as fundamental to our democracy.

We have Dr. Bennett, who is co-director of Empower America, who has done a number of very good things for the United States on cultural renewal and cultural reform and has now taken up the picture and the issue of religious persecution who will soon be hold-

ing a forum through Empower America on the issues of religious persecution.

He is joined by Senator Joe Lieberman, and Joe and I have been kidding each other about whether he is becoming a Republican or I am a Democrat. We agree on so many issues any more that it gets embarrassing to both of us. But he has spoken out strongly as well on the issue of religious persecution.

So, we are delighted to have them as a panel laying out this issue first to us overall, and we appreciate them coming. As I understand by previous agreement, Senator Lieberman, you have some other obligations you need to go to and so we would put you forward first and invite your testimony in front of the committee. Thank you for being here.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN, U.S. SENATOR  
FROM CONNECTICUT**

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman, for your kind introduction, for your interest in this problem, and I am delighted to be here and share this table with my friend and—well, occasionally I refer to him—I hope he does not mind—as my rabbi, Bill Bennett.

Secretary Bennett and I, under the sponsorship of Empower America, as you indicated, recently committed ourselves to lead an effort to raise public awareness about ongoing religious persecution around the world. These hearings that you have chosen to hold are a welcome and very important step toward addressing this very serious problem by raising public awareness of it.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak about those who literally today around the world are dying for their faith. The fact is that in too many corners of the globe innocent men, women, and children are being suppressed, tortured, imprisoned, and murdered simply because of their religious beliefs. They number at least in the thousands, perhaps in the tens and hundreds of thousands. The persecution they suffer is familiar and it is often fatal.

It did not stop, sadly, with the defeat of Nazism or the cease-fire in Bosnia. It goes on today. The fact is it goes on today mainly targeted against Christians and mostly occurring in a few remnant communist countries in what I would describe, choosing my words carefully, as fanatical Islamic states. In fact, it seems to be gaining strength as the millennium approaches.

Some of the most awful persecution is being perpetrated against, for instance, Coptic Christians in Egypt, the Bahais in Iran, and Christians in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and other parts of the Middle East, that region which this subcommittee you chair focuses on.

According to knowledgeable observers, including Amnesty International and the U.N. Special Representatives, and as documented by Nina Shea of Freedom House and others, the persecution of Christians and others who refuse to convert to a fanatical brand of Islam is on the increase in too many countries in the Middle East. While much of the evidence is anecdotal—these governments, after all, are not anxious to catalog and share this damning information—it is nonetheless compelling.

Where we can quantify this problem, it is shocking enough. For instance, we have enough evidence to conclude that in Saudi Ara-

bia more than 1,000 Christian expatriates have been arrested and imprisoned since 1990 for simply participating in private worship services. And where we can only describe it without quantifying it, it is a call to action, branding Christian children in Sudan, driving Copts from their homes in Egypt, beating and then murdering evangelical pastors and Bahais in Iran.

But the question will be asked naturally, why should we care? Why should this subcommittee care? Why should you as chairman of this distinguished subcommittee care?

I think the answer is contained in what you suggested in your opening remarks. We Americans cannot help but be repulsed by the kind of savagery that turns faith into a death sentence. Our Nation was founded by religious people seeking freedom to follow their faith. Their political vision, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, was based on their spiritual conviction that freedom and especially freedom of religion is an endowment from our creator, not a gift to be granted or taken away by governments. This is at heart of what it means to be an American, and it has to be at the heart of what it means to be America, a nation leader of the world. As Americans we have a unique obligation I think to speak out and to act against religious persecution wherever we find it.

We are here to ask you to help put an end to this tragedy. Persecution of people of faith must stop and America by her very nature and convictions must lead the effort to stop it.

Raising public awareness, which is what we are about here today under your leadership, will clearly do part of the job, and so will energizing the churches and synagogues and temples of the United States to stand up and cry out against the persecution of our brothers and sisters around the world.

Part of the effort we must make is to collect reliable information about this issue and to disseminate it widely. We need to marshal the facts here, to get them reliably, and then to make them known.

But public awareness is not enough. We also need to make sure that the many arms of our Government become more actively involved in this fight to put it at the center of our relations with the countries of the world in multilateral and bilateral discussions from the President and Secretary of State to Ambassador or a consular officer or an INS inspector or even intelligence analyst. We need to make sure that the people who set and enforce and implement our foreign policies understand that one of their priorities must be to take seriously these claims of religious persecution and thereby to help stop the flow of innocent blood.

Congress needs to establish that expectation through hearings of this kind and, if necessary—and I believe it will be—through legislation. The legislation introduced by Senator Specter and Congressman Wolf is a very strong and comprehensive beginning in that regard.

Mr. Chairman, finally I believe it was Ambassador Paul Wolfowitz who suggested a while ago that the main goal of our foreign policy in this hour of our history should be to make sure that the 21st century is not a repeat of the 20th century. Two World Wars, a cold war, several genocides, and a host of smaller conflicts makes the last 100 years among the bloodiest in our history, al-

though in many other ways it was a glorious century for this country.

A frightening number of the victims of the 20th century have been perversely singled out because of their faith. In fact, according to reports that I have seen and believe, more Christians have died because of their religious beliefs in the 20th century than in the first 19 after the birth of Jesus.

For too long the world has ignored the plight and pain of these victims. It is time now for us to make clear once again, if I may paraphrase the words from Genesis, that God spoke to Cain that we in fact do hear the blood of our brothers and sisters crying out from the ground. It is time for us once again to embrace our most fundamental values and to put an end to the innocent suffering of the faithful.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the leadership role that you are playing in that effort.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much, Senator Lieberman for your testimony, and I look forward to some questions here.

Dr. Bennett, thank you very much. You honor the committee by joining us and by being willing to be here as well today, and the microphone is yours.

**STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM J. BENNETT, CO-DIRECTOR,  
EMPOWER AMERICA, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Dr. BENNETT. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you as well for convening this hearing or meeting, whatever you determine it will be. It is very thoughtful of you, and as I will say several times in the next 4 minutes of my remarks, attention must be paid, and this is a very good place to start.

I am delighted to join my friend, collaborator, colleague, Joe Lieberman again. I am delighted to be called his rabbi, though I am not worthy. The other day, after I finished a speech, someone came up to me and said, "I knew you were Catholic, but I did not know you were that Catholic." I will now tell that person that I am your rabbi just to add further to the confusion. But we appreciate the ecumenical nature of this get-together.

As far as you and Joe Lieberman collaborating so often that it is becoming indistinguishable, let me suggest that this is not only very good for each of you, it is also very good for the country. Where Joe Lieberman and Sam Brownback meet might be a very good place for the country to be, and we may want to think about that as the next couple of years unfold.

I will be very brief. Could I ask, Mr. Chairman, if we could present the advertisement that Senator Lieberman and I made? It has now played. It has played some in different parts of the world. It has played principally in the United States, and we went to some trouble to present it. It will set up my remarks. If we could. It lasts 1 minute.

Senator BROWNBACK. Yes, please. [Videotape shown.]

Dr. BENNETT. Many people are playing many parts, Mr. Chairman, in this drama, attempting to get this story told. I think Joe would agree with me that in many ways our part is the easiest. There are people who are surviving this story and some who are not, suffering persecution daily, people who are dying for their

faith, people whose names we do not know, names we may not ever know, and they are indeed the real heart of this story.

Second, there are people who have worked long and anonymously in the vineyards on this issue, trying to identify it, trying to bring it to people's attention, trying to persuade a sometimes indifferent, even hostile world of the nature of this. In a few minutes you will get to the important part of the proceedings, which is talking to some of them, people behind me to my right and to my left. To stay with the religious allusion, I see our angel Michael here on my left shoulder who has been one of those people who has been so laboring.

Joe Lieberman and I come to this late, and we admit we come to it late, but we hope, coming to it late, we have at least tried to come to it loud. We have tried to raise our voices as best we can using whatever microphones or megaphones or means we have at our disposal, and one of the great means is this hearing today. Again, attention. Attention must be paid.

It was Lincoln who said that if you have public opinion on your side, you have everything. Get the public opinion of the American people and your answer will be found.

Our job, as Joe Lieberman and I see it, is to try in whatever way we can that seems sensible and hopeful to bring the message, to bring the word of this tragic and horrible story to the American people. In this we are aided by the people from whom you will soon hear. Indeed, without them we would have nothing to say.

It seems to me that in all the things that compete for the attention of the American people, there must be some sorting out. People must decide what merits attention today, what can wait till tomorrow, what can wait till next year, what can be deferred and what deserves attention immediately.

Saint Augustine talks about the *ordo amorum*, the order of the loves. It seems to me in the *ordo amorum* of today, there can be no higher priority. Much competes for our attention but little, it seems to me, could compete in terms of importance with the issue that we address today.

The blood of the faithful is being spilled around the world. It is an offense not only to the law of God and to the law of man, but to every reasonable person wherever he or she may live. It cries for justice. It cries for punishment in many cases, and it cries for resolution.

There are three main targets, it seems to me, as we go forward in our deliberations. I will just mention them briefly.

One is the media. One of the ways we get stories told in this country is for them to be told not one at a time, but through the mass media. It has been difficult frankly, Mr. Chairman, to get this story out. We have not been as successful as we would like in getting this story on the TV screens of America and in the newspapers of America. There are some notable exceptions, but it seems to us more efforts must be made.

We do not suggest an order of the Government. That would not be appropriate. That would not be right and certainly would not be constitutional. But what we would ask of the media is to look at the various things in their day book this week and next week and

the week after and decide how they stack up in importance to this question.

Second is the political realm and there we would urge the President of the United States, we would urge your colleagues in the Senate and House to take up this issue, to have more hearings, to bring in more testimony, and to make this issue an ingredient in the discussions that we have with our Ambassadors with representatives from other nations, with the heads of other nations, and to make it part and parcel of all our deliberations on the international front.

Third, of course, is the churches. This issue must be spoken out from the pulpit, the real pulpit, by those in position of authority. The faithful must come to the aid of the faithful around the world who are suffering for that faith, and we think in the end that will be the most important, the single most consequential kind of action that we can take.

Then finally just to come full circle, it is the American people, led by their political leaders, informed by the media, and instructed and counseled by their religious leaders as to what to do who will in the end I think take up this issue and see to its resolution as best they can.

It is in *Death of a Salesman* that Linda Loman says to her two boys about their father, "boys, attention, attention must be paid." Again, it is a world where so many things cry out for our attention. All of us have priorities. All of us have issues. All of us have things we need to do, but as we sort them out, can we fairly say, can we honestly say that there are many things more compelling and more demanding for our attention resolution than the problem we present to you and others will present to you more eloquently today? "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." That is not just something of 200 years ago. That issue is a life and blood issue today.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Senator Lieberman and Dr. Bennett follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN  
AND DR. WILLIAM J. BENNETT

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It is a pleasure to address this Committee on a subject of enormous importance. We commend the Committee decision to focus attention on this issue, and the commitment expressed by some Members to find ways to combat this widespread and terribly underreported problem of religious persecution.

More persecution of religious believers has taken place in this century than in any other. And instead of abating, the problem is intensifying. We are not talking about "persecution" as many Americans think of it (i.e., as biased or unfavorable news coverage, or ridicule of conservative Christians); we are talking about unspeakable acts of horror, including the imprisonment, slavery, starvation, torture and murder of many thousands of people. The vast majority of it is directed against Christians.

There are, of course, less gruesome but still serious forms of persecution. Paul Marshall, author of *Their Blood Cries Out*, has written that around 200 million Christians are suffering the denial of the basic human right of religious freedom and live under the threat of violence if they practice their faith. Other persecuted groups include the Bah'is in Iran and Buddhists in Tibet and Vietnam, among others. According to the International Campaign for Tibet, growing numbers of monks and nuns who have protested religious expression have been arrested and tortured. In

Iran, Baha'is are denied the right to organize and worship, and as "unprotected infidels" have no legal rights.

These are some of the terrible realities of the late twentieth century. Unfortunately, the issue has been largely ignored by much of the political class, by mainstream journalists, and by many churches and religious institutions. Indeed, with a few honorable exceptions, virtually no attention has been paid to this issue.

What accounts for this indifference? One explanation is that there is a reluctance among some people in influential positions to rally public opinion behind the issue of Christian persecution. To many opinion-makers in this country, there is a little sympathy for Christians as an oppressed group. They are not *de rigueur*. Other religious faiths do not have the influence to make their concerns known. Religious suffering is therefore neglected in ways that other kinds of suffering are not.

Today, many people look back at past generations and wonder how they could passively allow terrible atrocities to go unchallenged. But of course it is easier for us to muster condemnation against past generations than it is to muster moral resistance to present evils. Ultimately, however, we must answer for ourselves. And we cannot say that we do not know, for we know quite a bit.

We know, for example, that the worst religious oppressors include China, Cuba, Egypt, Laos, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. According to Nina Shea of Freedom House, Sudan is waging a *jihad* against its Christian and non-Muslim population. Christians in southern Sudan are sold into slavery; Catholic Bishop Macram Max Gassis from the Nuba mountains has determined that Khartoum's campaign against the Christians in his diocese has reached genocidal proportions. Egypt's Christian Coptic and evangelical community is the target of violent aggression by Muslim extremists. Between 60 million and 100 million Christians in China violate government edicts by worshipping in underground "house churches." Since 1979, more than 200 Baha'is in Iran have been executed because of their religion. And there is much more.

Recently we have begun a campaign with our colleague Jeane Kirkpatrick, under the auspices of Empower America, to draw attention to these and other examples of worldwide religious persecution. We hope this campaign, combined with the efforts of others, will help make this issue a prominent part of our national political debate. For philosophical and historical, as well as humanitarian reasons, this subject deserves our concentrated attention. This republic, after all, was founded on the self-evident truth that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." These are not just words; they are the American creed. When these "unalienable rights" are systematically violated, abroad as well as at home, we have a moral obligation to speak out. And because many of the first immigrants to set foot on American soil came to this nation in order to seek refuge from religious persecution, it is an issue to which we should be particularly sympathetic.

What, then, should be done? We recognize that there are intrinsic limits to what the United States can do to influence the internal policies of other nations. At the same time, there are practical, concrete actions available to the world's mightiest nation. We need to press the many arms of our government to become more actively involved in the fight against religious persecution. In multilateral and bilateral discussions, from President to Secretary of State and Ambassador, to consular officer, INS inspector, and intelligence analyst, we should insist that the people who set and execute our foreign policies understand that one of their priorities is to take seriously claims of religious persecution. Right now, that is not being done. Ambassadors and diplomatic officials should meet regularly with church and religious leaders. There should be comprehensive and updated reports on religious persecution. And where appropriate and effective, we should restrict trade and non-humanitarian aid to nations that sponsor religious persecution.

President Clinton would do tremendous good by delivering a major address on the problem and significance of religious persecution. When a president uses the "bully pulpit" to name names and cite specific examples, it has the effect of concentrating the mind of persecuting nations. Consider the remarkable influence Ronald Reagan exercised when he uttered two simple words: "evil empire." We should not hesitate to speak truth to power, and to tyrants.

We also need to energize the faithful themselves. They—we—are the natural American constituency to support a sustained campaign against worldwide persecution. The churches, synagogues, and temples of the United States have the resources and the moral authority to lift their congregations to the challenge. Religious leaders should speak out publicly on this issue; they should maintain contact with overseas believers who are persecuted, and regularly inform their congregations of the state of persecution abroad. And we should regularly pray for those enduring the real cost of discipleship.



Finally, we need to educate and illuminate, to let the American citizenry know what is happening. Here the media are critical; they are the ones who do so much to determine the issues that we talk about and care about. We hope the media pursues this story with the same intensity they pursued the story of apartheid in South Africa, or human rights violations in Central America, or, say, the "coming out" episode of the television comedy "Ellen." Attention must be paid.

In the fourth chapter of Genesis, the Lord asks Cain, "What have you done? Listen. Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." Today, in many parts of the world, the blood of Abel's descendants still cries out from the ground. Do we have the ears to hear? Do we have the courage to act? Now, as then, these questions need to be answered.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you, Dr. Bennett, I appreciate that testimony, and yours, Senator Lieberman, as well.

One thing that I was struck by, when we held the first hearing on this, is the thousands of people that have been murdered last year, and it just did not seem like there was anything out there on it or that anybody even noticed that any of this was going on. I was just struck by the amount of silence for how long.

I guess I am searching with this as to why has there been silence for so long, and working with you, how do we break through that silence? Hearings are one thing. Are there others that you see? You both have worked on issues of forming public opinion which seems like part of what this is about. If you can identify other specifics of what we can do in Congress using the pulpits that we have to try to get these issues on forward. Would you care to address that? Why the silence for so long?

Senator LIEBERMAN. Part of the problem here I think, Mr. Chairman, is that some of the worst perpetrators of persecution based on faith are dictators or despots who are running closed societies, so the proverbial CNN cameras do not get in there. Reporters do not cover it too much. So, that is a real problem and we have to try to break through it.

The other problem is—people in the media have been extremely courageous when they have been motivated to do so. Part of what I think we want to say here is that there is a story that has not been told. There is a need for some aggressive reporting to bring the truth back to the United States and the rest of the world from these closed societies. Maybe in some sense it was not fashionable. I do not know why, but it is a desperate situation. And you are right. Thousands of people are suffering or being killed as a result of it.

Part of what I hope we can do, and again maybe with the leadership of this committee, is to push the agencies of our Government to be aggressive themselves in seeking out the truth and assembling that information and disseminating it. That may include not only the formal diplomatic branches, but intelligence analysts as well to get them into the business of preparing reports on persecution based on faith and then publishing reports on a regular basis to Congress and to the public.

Those are two thoughts that I have about why this is happening.

The other part of it is a lot of us just have not known. What Bill said before—Mike Horowitz who is here, Nina Shea, these folks have issued a clarion call. They have opened our eyes. They have shown us something we had not seen. They have made us listen to cries that we had not heard. Now it is our obligation, having

seen and having heard, to echo their cry until something is done about this.

Dr. BENNETT. I think there is some laziness on the part of the media born of indifference. That is the only account I can give.

At the press conference that Joe Lieberman and I had on this, a member of the press said—a perfectly good question—well, you have talked about the Sudan, but we hear from people in the Sudan that it is not a problem. What do you say to that? Well, there is a lot to be said to that, but I think the real answer is go. Go and find out.

If we were talking about South African apartheid, when that was going on, many Afrikaners said things are fine here for blacks. There is no problem. What was the media's response to that? They went on their own.

If you had one case reported of one more case of sexual harassment at an Army base, the press would be there in force, as they should be.

If you had an incident of racial bigotry or of defamation or vandalizing a synagogue, the press would be there, as they should be.

Well, why when we hear reports of 50,000 or 60,000 or 100,000 people killed, is the press not in its busy and aggressive and nosy way that it can be—we all know that. We have all experienced that—getting into those places and finding out?

This country—what—3 months ago, 4 months ago, whenever it was, a large part of this country watched Schindler's List on television and said, never again, never again. Now, I am not suggesting what is going on now is of that scale because it is not of that scale, but when you are talking about the kinds of numbers we are talking about, when you are talking about 50,000 deaths perhaps, 100,000 deaths of Christians, you are not talking about something that is an inconvenience. You are talking about something that is real and present and must be addressed.

Again, what is the answer? Go there. Look. Talk to people. Bring back the pictures. Bring back the stories. Let us have debate about this topic.

I finally got some reaction. I was on CNN, which Joe referred to, the other night on the news, and talked about some problems in Saudi Arabia where Bibles are not allowed and other things, and I heard from some friends, or maybe former friends, from Saudi Arabia about this. So, I think we need to push.

Flannery O'Connor said once you need to push as hard as the age that pushes against you, and this age, in terms of religious persecution, is pushing pretty hard. We need to push back pretty hard.

Senator BROWNBACK. Legislative vehicles?

Senator LIEBERMAN. Well, I mentioned before, Senator Specter and Congressman Wolf have legislation which I have spent some time working on and discussing with them. A real good beginning I think. I hope that Mike Horowitz can talk to you more about it. He has worked on it. I hope that perhaps this committee—did it go to this committee? It was sent to a number of committees, but perhaps this is the appropriate one to take the lead on this with a series of requirements for fact determination and then a series of sanctions.

I think it is time to put this concern into law as a measure of our seriousness.

Senator BROWNBACk. Dr. Bennett, you would agree with that?

Dr. BENNETT. Yes, absolutely.

Senator BROWNBACk. Gentlemen, thank you both very much for coming. Sorry about the inconvenience as to what we call this. But the important thing frankly I think, as both you identified, is we have just got to get some visibility to this so people understand the clear and present issue that this is, and we have turned our head the other way for too long. So, thanks for stepping up. Thanks for the commercial. I hope it gets lots of airings across the country.

Dr. BENNETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BROWNBACk. The second panel will be Mr. Michael J. Horowitz. He is a senior fellow at Hudson Institute, Washington, D.C., has been an outstanding educator of what has taken place in this field and on these issues as well. Along with him will be Father Keith Roderick. He is with the Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights out of Illinois. Father Roderick will also be testifying in this panel.

Gentlemen, I am looking forward to your testimony. You are both well known advocates and, as I say, educators of the American public about what has taken place in these areas regarding religious persecution. I do not know if the two of you have agreed upon an order of presentation. Mr. Horowitz, I look forward to your testimony and some questioning afterwards. Thank you for joining us.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL J. HOROWITZ, SENIOR FELLOW,  
HUDSON INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Mr. HOROWITZ. Thank you, Senator, and thank you for conducting the hearing today, the second in a series that you have conducted. As I said in my prepared testimony, one of the reasons I have a sense of optimism—an important reason—is that we have got a young Senator, sure to be a leader in the Senate for years to come, whose feelings on this are those of implacable hostility to the kind of persecution we have been talking about.

I want to give this testimony on an optimistic note, because while it is possible to talk about how little has happened—I have earned what gray hairs I have in 20 or so years in Washington—I have never seen a movement come so far so fast as this one has. We are not much more than a year, year and a half or so from the time that some of us started to make a blaze of the flames that were just barely flickering, lit by the human rights advocates like Father Roderick over years when nobody did listen. The fact is the country is listening.

I think I would like to start my brief remarks, Senator, by addressing, if I may, the question you put to Joe Lieberman and Bill Bennett, why the silence to date. Silence is always there or there is a period of time before the terms of national consciousness, the terms of any national debate on great subjects begin. Nobody can wave a wand and make it happen overnight for nothing.

But we have had to saw some wood before we could get to the point now, and it is a point, Senator, where there is a prairie fire of passion within the Christian community. You do not see it reflected in the front pages of the newspapers, but they are not indic-

ative, as we know from elections and lots of other respects, sadly, of what the country is feeling, what it is thinking, and most importantly where it will shortly be going. That level of interest is extraordinary and growing and growing by orders of magnitude.

To put it simply, I think the American Christian community, whatever it is, the 30 percent of the American electorate, is in the process of raising the issue of Christian persecution as perhaps one of the two or three signature issues that define this movement. And it is very exciting for the Christian community because this issue is one that elicits followership and gratitude from the rest of the country. The feedback has been extraordinary, thereby building up the confidence of this community, that if they say something, people will listen.

That really brings me to the point of responding to your question. I think when some of us began this a year, year and a half ago to start to blow the trumpets, there were two problems we confronted. The first was in the media itself there is this caricature view of who Christians are. Are they not the ones who burned people at the stakes? Are they not the retrograde bigots? We do not like them much. They are not our kind of crowd.

They also could identify with the kid in front of the tank at Tiananmen Square as a symbol of bravery, but if you told them that there were people who were daily risking exactly the same kinds of threats and tortures for witnessing a belief in Christ and going to church on Sunday, they would look at you as if you were wrong because they did not know anybody of that kind, and if they did, they thought that these people probably brought it on in some way themselves.

So, separating the blind from the bigots about who Christians are and what Christianity is has been an important task. I can tell you, Senator—and you know this—the blind overwhelmingly outnumber the bigots and we are opening up their eyes.

The second thing I think we had to do was generate a measure of self-confidence within the Christian community, that they could ask on behalf of their own, and that if they did, they would not be caricatured; and that if they did, the people in the pulpits and the ministers and the people in the pews would follow. There was some fear that if the trumpet blew, nobody would respond and it might make matters worse.

I think that we now know that that is not so, that the ministers, that people, whether it is on the Christian radio shows or in a whole variety of ways, are hungry for information and for some leadership, some sense of where to go and how to make non-utopian, reasonable demands that our Government could meet that would begin to turn this one around and impose impossibly high prices on the thug regimes who were murdering their fellow believers.

So, we have cleared the field, as it were, over the year, created the hunger for information and for action on the part of the American Christian community and begun to open the eyes of the major national media so that you now begin to see interest. You have been around, Senator. I have in my own way been around. I have seen stories develop from nothing to front page stories. This cannot miss. It is happening now and it is going to happen, and they ain't

seen nothing yet because this is a story that touches us in terms of who we are as a people, what our history is, and the one point I wanted to make in this testimony, our self-interest as well is very much implicated by this whole undertaking.

Now, I want to give a couple of indices. I just want to say that as one looks at the indices of what is happening here, leadership like yours, like Bill Bennett's, Joe Lieberman's, much of it began with a very eloquent statement issued by the National Association of Evangelicals about a year and a half ago, a statement of conscience, again to give a sense of how this can be a bridge that will unite Jews and Christians and others in this country. If you believe in miracles, Senator, here is a statement of the National Association of Evangelicals that has been adopted not only by the Southern Baptist Convention but by the Episcopal and the Presbyterian churches. That is an index of where we are headed and the unity that is theirs. This issue has been posed.

The other thing that is exciting is this little explosion of books and articles. None of them make the establishment media's best seller list yet, but the book by Paul Marshall, referred to in today's Abe Rosenthal column, *Their Blood Cries Out*, is shaking up matters. If and as this book sells, as I expect it to, in the hundreds of thousands of copies, ministers will not know peace in their pulpits from their own congregants unless they address this issue and deal with it.

We have talked about the Wolf-Specter bill, and I expect, by the way, Senator, on this there is a timing issue that is taking place. This issue of Christian persecution is being debated in the context of the MFN China matter at this time, and by design of all of us, it is its time for center stage now. But after that issue is dealt with and the President's veto threat gives us some index of what will happen, whatever one thinks, on this much more complicated question of MFN, Wolf-Specter as amended, as modified, as strengthened, I hope, will be the vehicle in the fall. The chairman of the House International Relations Committee has indicated that there will be major hearings on that bill in September. China will be a focus, but not the only one. But Jiang Zemin will be here in October.

Then, Senator, I want to come to the last and the critical point and I think the exciting thing about this movement. This is not a political movement in its ordinary sense. When some of us started it, we could have gotten more publicity than we had by going to the usual sources, even to Bill Bennett whose capacity to draw media, given his eloquence and his passion, is real. Many of us chose not to do it in the immediate sense out of fear that it would be the story of the day without any base built into the movement. So, by design I think we tried to create a movement that was rooted in the churches of this country.

We had last year organized at the 11th hour a day of prayer in which thousands of churches participated. The key to this whole movement, Senator—and it is coming in November—is the day of prayer being planned on an interdenominational basis for November 16th. It will be a day of action, education, and prayer on behalf of persecuted Christians. Church bells will ring across the country. Other non-Christian groups will, I think, join, but modeled in part

on the campaign against Soviet anti-semitism. You remember those signs in front of every synagogue that said Save Soviet Jewry. I think the churches are going to act, and that is as it should be. The world is going to be watching.

As important as this hearing is, there is a young man in Wheaton, Illinois now, Steven Haas. He is the coordinator of the day of prayer. He has done an extraordinary amount in organizing churches to participate. They are getting together primers, video material, model sermons, scripture passages, all for this explosive day on November 16th which will be a culminating day. What we need to do is follow that wave. It will be there, and I think we will make history in the process.

So, my note is one of optimism not of pessimism. The press is coming along. We do not need the press to get the press. They are there. They know it is a big story. You see columnists beginning to write about it. It has not quite crashed the front pages as news yet. Senators, as the night follows the day it will happen, and if the day of prayer is what I expect it to be, men like you who have led when there were not big parades that were visible will thrill, as we all will. You will not be able to do enough to make a difference on this score, and your colleagues who are indifferent to this issue will not be able to vote against the kind of legislative initiatives that you will be proposing as this day of prayer forms. This is a prairie fire, and it is growing.

Now, I wanted to make, if I might, Senator, one last point pertinent particularly to the jurisdiction of this committee. It is the one thing I would add to Senator Lieberman and Bill Bennett's otherwise customarily superb testimony.

We talked about this issue in terms of our moral obligation to care for the lambs, to protect the underdog, of our American tradition of being a country that was a haven for victims of religious persecution, of our moral obligation. All this is so, but it is interesting to me that when we pursue our moral obligation and do what is right, right gets done by us as well.

One of the things that inhibited this effort at the beginning was this presumptive charge, sometimes explicit, oh, this is Muslim bashing they are engaged in here. One of the things I want to tell you in particular, Senator, as chairman of this subcommittee, is that the most poignant expressions of gratitude that we have received since beginning this effort have come from Muslims. What is going on today in the world is a battle for the soul of Islam between the modern day Kharajites who struggled and lost for control of that great faith in the first century of Islam's history. We are now trying again to capture the soul of Islam.

We patronize that faith when we say, oh, that is the way they are. They kill people. The faith requires them to kill people they disagree with. Historically Islam has been as hospitable to strangers as Judaism and Christianity. There are sins committed in the names of all of our faiths, but Islam is a great faith that the thugs are looking to take over right now.

One of the things I understand as a Jew and one of the things that has moved me in this is an understanding of how thugs use scapegoats. The thugs need to get those Christian communities who are beyond the reach of the bribes and threats on which they

rely to stay in power because a vibrant Christian community by itself poses a threat to them.

But there is another thing that goes on at the same time. As they are persecuting the Christian communities, as they are burning churches, as they engage as they do in murder, rape, torture, assassination, crucifixion, starvation, the whole litany of persecutions of the lambs, of the vulnerable Christian communities, they are saying to the moderate Muslims, look the West is silent as we kill their own. What do you think they are going to say when we turn to you? You best start saluting right now.

That is how Hitler made it. He did not attack the Protestant churches first. He attacked the lambs, and the world was silent, and everybody else fell into his arms.

That is really the message, and that is the good news about this undertaking; and it is the story of the campaign against Soviet anti-semitism. We focused on the Jews particularly who were being tortured in the Soviet Union even though they were torturing everybody else. But it is almost a leverage device. When the word went out that those big, powerful communists could not even beat up a bunch of Jews, walls that the communists had built around the churches and around political dissidents started to crumble. They were cut down to size.

That is why the moderate Muslims have come to us and said thank you. You are developing a political domestic constituency in this country that recognizes who these people are. They are not the Muslims. Anwar Sadat—his brand of Islam did not think of them as the radicals.

Now, I may say, Senator, that as we remain silent, as we patronize the faith of Islam and say that is who they are and how dare we intrude as they murder anyone they disagree with, we empower the radicals; and we force even good men, as in countries like Egypt, to appease the radicals, because the radicals are the only voices being raised. We have gotten some extraordinary back channel comments from senior officials of governments now engaged in appeasement of radicals saying keep it up. We cannot say so publicly. That will give us the means to take on the radicals who are the only voices, and the loudest voices at least, being heard.

So, Senator, we are in the midst today of an extraordinary phenomenon. It is the largest, greatest explosion and rise in Christianity in all of its history. Twenty years ago the Christian model would have been a white Western male. Today it is probably a Philippine or a Pakistani woman. This is a religion that is disproportionately female, even when you assume that there are more women than men. It is perhaps the largest religion in the world today, surely the most widely distributed. It is growing explosively and in areas particularly subject to the jurisdiction of your committee, Christians—Paul Marshall numbers them at about 225 million—largely in the radical Islamic territories, live under threat of literal torture of the sort we have spoken.

So, you are addressing the national interests. We are stepping in and stopping the thugs from beating up the lambs and offering possibility for everybody else there. If we let them go, if we appease them now, if we say, oh, the Christians are not our crowd, or they do not really count, we only put back the day when we are going

to have to confront that kind of radicalism, and as history teaches us, it is going to be a darned sight harder to do it then. These are people on the margin in the battle between staying in the dark ages and entering the 21st century.

This would be a great lesson to some of the media who put down Christians. Christian communities are today the greatest forces for modernity, for dignity in that world. That is what they really stand for beyond their own security, dignity for all of us.

So, I thank you. I commend you for your leadership. With the aid of an aroused conscience in this country, I think we are going to make history over the course of this year. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Horowitz appears in Appendix E on page 108.]

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much, Mr. Horowitz, for that uplifting suggestion; because as I first started into this, I was stunned by the silence, but the perspective that you give is an encouragement.

Father Roderick, thank you very much for joining this committee and for being here and for your work that you have given, and the microphone is yours.

**STATEMENT OF FATHER KEITH RODERICK, COALITION FOR  
THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, MACOMB, ILLINOIS**

Father RODERICK. Well, thank you very much, Senator Brownback. On behalf of the Coalition, I want to thank you for providing this opportunity that you have provided for witnesses to testify in the subsequent sessions because indeed they are the faces of persecution, and their personal histories, more than any analysis or overview or statistic that we might be able to offer here, really pale in comparison to the betrayal of the suffering that they faced themselves.

The Coalition consists of 60 human rights and ethnic-national organizations which are Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim. Members include nationalities such as the Assyrians, Armenians, Copts, Lebanese, Pakistanis, Kashmiris, Indonesians, Iranians, and Sudanese.

What we are doing is advocating basic human rights in areas where the cultural and political process of Islamization, not the religion, but the process which Mr. Horowitz spoke about, is creating great tension not only between Muslims and non-Muslims, but also within the Muslim community itself.

The character of this persecution may be personal or it may be corporate. Some of the persecution is a product of government policy. Some governments perpetuate discriminatory practices which create environments that nurture religious-based hatred against minorities, and in others persecution is perpetrated by radical ideological movements themselves.

Christians of the Near East are the indigenous inhabitants of the countries of the region. Their Christianity was not imported by Western colonial movements or missionaries. In most parts of the Near East, the Christian culture predates the expansion of the Islamic empire by 7 centuries, and today that population, which is a minority in all the countries of the Near East, is that risk of extinction.



The ministry, Open Doors, reported dramatic changes in the Christian population which have occurred in this century since 1900. The average Christian percentage of the general population in the countries of the Near East was over 20 percent. Today it is just about 7 percent. The most dramatic changes have occurred in Turkey. Here the Christian population dropped from 22 percent to .15 percent, largely as a result of this century's first genocide in the early part of the 1900's when 1.5 million Armenians were murdered and 750,000 Assyrian Christians lost their lives.

In Lebanon, the only country which did have a majority population prior to 1980, Christians comprised 67 percent of the population in 1900. Today it is under 40 percent.

In the Holy Land, the Christian population is estimated to be only 125,000, or 1.8 percent of the population, as compared to 2.3 million Muslims, or 34 percent, of the population.

So, in every country of the Near East, the Christian population has decreased, and there are a number of factors for this occurring, and one of the factors is the intensification of religious persecution.

A number of the countries of the Near East such as Iran and Saudi Arabia are instrumentally involved in a systematic persecution of religious minorities. Other governments such as Egypt and Turkey and Pakistan facilitate persecution *de facto* by allowing the radical Islamic groups to terrorize Christians without fear of prosecution.

There are identifiable problems which contribute systemically to persecution and which detrimentally affect the minority religious ethnic groups of the Near East, and I would just like to review those. I will be very disciplined in my report. You have the written document before you.

Apostasy laws, laws which arise from Islamic law itself, prohibit the legal/social recognition of a person's conversion to Islam to another religion. In countries of the Near East, with the exception of Pakistan, there is a requirement for religious identity to be put on everyone's identification card. What this does is encourages discrimination, intimidation, virtually makes intermarriage between Muslims and non-Muslims illegal.

Most recently, October 29, 1996, a Christian Lebanese national was convicted by a *Shari'ah* court in the UAE for marrying a Muslim woman. He was sentenced to 39 lashes and 1 year's imprisonment. He had already served a year of imprisonment before his sentence; and, as reported by Amnesty International, had suffered several beatings and been flogged before the formal sentence was pronounced.

Islamic law prescribes death as the punishment for apostasy, but only in Saudi Arabia and Iran is the full penalty imposed on offenders. Nevertheless, in other countries such as Egypt, there is the denial of civil rights directly related to the charge of apostasy. In fact, in Egypt the Emergency Law is oftentimes invoked as a pretext for arresting those who have converted from Islam to other religions.

In Iran a Bahai was sentenced last year in a Revolutionary Court for being a Bahai. The charge was national apostasy. He was sentenced to death. Most recently, in fact last year, May 1996, Iran initiated an expansion to its penal code which was approved by the

Islamic Assembly adding espionage as an area which was covered under the section enmity against God clause, and it specified a mandatory death penalty. A number of Bahais, as well as Christians, who have been arrested for apostasy have also experienced the fact that the charge of espionage has been levied against them.

Iran has perpetrated a systematic effort to eradicate the leadership of the Iranian Council of Protestant Ministers, murdering most of its leadership and virtually silencing its leadership today. Last September, a Christian pastor was found hanged in a forest near Tehran and the government stated it was suicide. However, those who prepared his body for burial noted that he had 20 stab wounds in his body. An order for death had been issued by the Islamic Revolutionary Court judge Sheikh Reza Rezaian, and this seems to be a fairly persistent pattern in Iran.

The second area of problems which arise in persecution include blasphemy laws. Pakistan retains an insidious law which prescribes the death penalty for anyone convicted of insulting the Quran or the Prophet Mohammed. Oftentimes religious fundamentalists use this to incite mobs to violence against Christians on the pretext that Christians are described as blasphemers, because they believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God, which is contrary to Islamic teaching. So, the following cases which I have reported in the written form of the testimony illustrate the terror that this legislation continues to hold over the 15 million Christian Pakistanis.

Saudi Arabia instrumentally persecutes non-Muslims more comprehensively than any country of the Near East. No religion other than Islam is allowed to be practiced within its borders, and there is even great pressure upon Shi'ites in the north of Saudi Arabia.

However, it has been estimated that 27 percent of the Saudi population consist of expatriate guest workers, three-fourths of whom are non-Muslim. The religious police closely monitor foreigners for the public expression of their Christian faith; and those who seek to practice their faith, even within the private confines of their own home, are subject to harassment, beatings, arrests, or deportation.

Unfortunately, Saudi Arabia is a closed society in which accurate statistics for documenting the effects of this kind of policy is very difficult to obtain, but it is severe. But it is important to note that there are indigenous Saudis who are Christian, but their churches must remain hidden. They are at the most risk, because they are considered apostates and subject to the full penalty of death if they are discovered.

The third area of persecution involves promotion of religious-based hatred and violence. The violence has intensified in many places in the Near East in this past year. In the Arab Republic of Egypt, which has the largest Christian population in the Middle East, the Copts number between 8 million and 10 million, or 12 to 15 percent of the population. Targeted violence perpetrated by Islamic fundamentalists has increased.

In March, 13 Christians were killed in the village of Dawood.

On February 12th, a most horrendous act and unprecedented act was carried out by four to five masked gunmen who broke into the St. George's Orthodox Coptic Church in Abu Qurqas. A group of 50 students, ranging in age from 13 to 22, had gathered for a prayer meeting, for fellowship. Some were having their confessions heard.

Others were there preparing for marriage. After the aftermath of the massacre, over 200 bullet holes were found in the church. Nine students were immediately killed. Three others died from their wounds, and three other people were found dead later probably killed by the fleeing gunmen.

More Christians have been murdered by Islamic extremists in the first 6 months of 1997 than in the past 25 years in Egypt, and I have those statistics.

Even though the Egyptian Government has made claims that they have, in fact, opposed the surge of violence, there tends to still be a continuing problem of security for the Coptic Christians. During the past 5 years, in fact, a number of government reports and newspaper reports have shown that the infiltration of police by extremists has increased to as much as 60 percent and of that 60 percent, 80 percent had been involved in actions of violence perpetrated against minorities.

In Pakistan, 80 percent of the Christian population still live in small villages, and there is a systematic destruction of many of these villages and the confiscation of the poor farms and agricultural lands which has been underway for the past 20 years. I outline several of the villages which have been confiscated or destroyed.

Most recently in January 1997, a Christian village of Shanti-Nagar was attacked by 10,000 radicals. The villages were alerted of the impending attack and requested police assistance. The police withdrew from the village. Nearly 1,500 homes were destroyed. The women suffered most gravely. Over 70 Christian women and girls were kidnapped, and because of the mistreatment by their captors, their emotional scars will be much more difficult to heal than the rebuilding of their homes. The Government of Pakistan has promised to assist in the rebuilding of their homes, but as of this date only \$20 per family has been received from the government.

This is also happening with the Assyrians. The Assyrians are an indigenous Christian minority who live amongst the Kurds in northern Iraq, and they have also reported the systematic confiscation of traditional Assyrian lands by well-armed Kurdish groups, and there have been at least 52 Assyrian villages since 1991 who have had their lands confiscated.

Some of these confiscations lead to violence. In fact, on February 10th, a father and a son were both murdered by radical Kurds, and so it continues to be a problem there as well.

In Lebanon, the government has chosen to shut down a number of church-operated radio stations and television stations, which is in contradiction to its own constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion. In south Lebanon, the area which is occupied by Syria, Christians have been subjected to escalating threats by Islamists associated with Hizbollah; and the Christians of south Lebanon presently operate the only independent television station in Lebanon.

Also in other areas there are other forms of discrimination and persecution which creates tension in Egypt. Churches continue to be denied the permission to build or rebuild or repair, even paint or repair a bathroom, unless they receive a Presidential decree. This continues to be a problem.

Perhaps the most insidious form of persecution which has arisen over the past 5 years are the kidnappings and shame rapes of Christian women, seeking their conversion to Islam. This has occurred in many parts of the Middle East. In Pakistan, I outline in the testimony a number of cases; in Egypt, the Coptic Orthodox Church is presently investigating 200 cases. There are reportedly upwards of 1,000.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, the persecution of Christians and other minorities does exist in such countries as Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Kuwait. The religious persecution in the context of the examples which have been presented stands out as something which is tragically unique. The discriminatory policies, the arrests, the destruction of property, violence, torture, or murder are targeted against certain groups solely on the basis of their belief and their religious culture.

Even though governments which are normally friendly to us do not officially condone the violence against minorities, they do bear responsibility for it by their *de facto* support of the Islamists by failing to prosecute sufficiently those who perpetrate the acts of violence and to promote full integration of their societies. Their own callous support of the very attitudes and institutions that perpetuate an environment in which religious bigotry flourishes and where unruly mobs, motivated by radical ideologues, hurt and kill those whose beliefs are different than their own truly must be challenged.

I think of the victims which have arisen in the last year, and I think how long will it be that the blood has to flow through the churches, through the small villages of the countries which we have mentioned before we say it is enough. How long will the screams of the innocent victims be muffled by indifference or political expediency before it becomes an unbearable din in the ears of our moral conscience and we join their cry and say it is enough?

It is important for this legislative body to incorporate as part of its foreign policy perspective the fact that the countries of the Middle East are not homogeneously Arab or Islamic, that there are sizable and vibrant indigenous Christian cultures throughout the region, and that the Christians in the Middle East do not want to abandon their homelands. They want to feel secure in them. They want to be an integral part of the cultural, political, and economic life in their own country, and they do not want to be second class citizens subjected to a form of religious apartheid by their government or societies at large.

So, Mr. Chairman, we must not allow the U.S. to make accommodation with this evil. God help us if we settle for anything less than justice from our friends. The United States enjoys important interdependent relationships with a number of the countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and it is sometimes difficult to criticize our friends, but it is time that we begin a serious engagement of these countries because friendship depends upon similar values and like-mindedness. By our silence and unwillingness to demand the highest form of civility from these countries we give tacit permission for them to impose even graver hardships on those minorities who are already suffering.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Father Roderick appears in Appendix F on page 111.]

Senator BROWNBACk. Thank you, Father. Although I have to say your testimony is not encouraging, it certainly is enlightening and appreciated, the work you have done and what you have focused on.

We have another panel that is coming up and I am concerned a bit about time. What I would like to do, if I could, is ask you a couple of very narrow questions and then if you could, I would appreciate it if you could stay around and hear the next panel and maybe we could bring you back up at that time for a more direct question or two.

What were the numbers last year? How many Christians were murdered last year?

Father RODERICK. The number is very difficult to determine because it is a broad area, but I think the number which has been discussed as 1,000 may be in the general realm considering Sudan in the mix as well. There are other areas which—

Senator BROWNBACk. What was the number you used? 100,000?

Father RODERICK. 1,000.

Mr. HOROWITZ. Senator, I used to be the general counsel of the Office of Management and Budget, so numbers just can flow very easily and I have grown mistrustful of them. I have tried very, very hard—because I think the numbers are soft for the reasons Senator Lieberman indicated. These are not open societies. It is sometimes hard to know whether you are being murdered as a Christian if a Christian village is targeted or whether there is a more ambiguous explanation.

I think the critical number is Paul Marshall's number and that one is a hard number. We are talking 400 million Christians around the world live subject to intense discrimination and somewhere around—and I think this is a conservative number—225 million Christians live subject to intense persecution, murder, assassination, rape, forced resettlement, and the like. In those societies, particularly when nobody is listening to what goes on and there is a sense that the world out there does not care, it does not take many murders for the thugs to keep everybody in line.

I am not satisfied at this point with any count other than the 225 million number, which I think is quite a conservative number.

Father RODERICK. I do have some statistics in here in regards to a couple of the countries which may be helpful. Mr. Horowitz is correct. It is very difficult to determine because there is such great silence.

Senator BROWNBACk. When did the systematic policies to rid some of these countries, particularly in the nations that we are interested in in this subcommittee, begin?

Father RODERICK. I think it began really with the renaissance of the Islamization as a political movement in the Middle East. I think that in a sense set in motion a process which, even though it is ideological in its nature, incorporates religious attitudes as well as other cultural attitudes in a detrimental fashion. So, I would say probably in the early 1980's.

Senator BROWNBACk. 1979, 1980 and through that?

Father RODERICK. Yes.

Senator BROWNBAC. And is this continuing to grow? Is it subsidizing? Is it leveling?

Father RODERICK. It is intensifying, yes. The stakes are higher. It is intensifying.

Senator BROWNBAC. Would you anticipate more murders in the future with the intensity and the expansion of this?

Father RODERICK. Of course.

Mr. HOROWITZ. I do not, Senator, for this reason, and it is in your hands in part, but in the end, as I indicated, it is in the hands of the American Christian community, what signs they show on November 16th, because it is possible for us to make the price for that kind of policy impossibly high, particularly in those countries where they feel the need to appease the radicals and there are no counter force pressures put on them.

I have seen signs myself from some of the governments in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, Egypt. The first sign is that they are hiring lobbyists, lots of them, on this issue. There was a time, Senator, where I could not walk into a supermarket without being bumped into by an old high school classmate who would tell me he had heard about the wonderful work I was doing and, oh, by the way, he was working for the Saudis and would I meet with Prince So-and-So. So, that is a sign that they know change is coming and they have got to try and manage that change.

If we keep the demands non-utopian, if we are shrewd in applying the pressure, we have the leverage to cut it back. I think it intensifies and gets worse as silence meets it, and the more silence there is in the face of this persecution, the more murder that goes on.

One thing that David Forte has pointed out that is particularly true is that these are countries that think of America as a Christian country and they see our silence, would that we were, but they see our silence and say, gee, Americans are hypocritical materialists. They do not believe in anything because if they did, they would be jumping to the support of their fellow believers that we are murdering.

So, I think there is a kind of openness and almost anticipation and, in the case of the moderates, an invitation, sometimes explicit, for us to come in because they are ready to take charge of the country if they have got some support and sensible pressure placed on them to do so.

The President of Egypt, Mr. Chairman, is a man that, whatever the radical Muslims may think of you, they are out to murder him. He knows that and they have tried it, and yet he has got to appease them I think, in significant part, because we have been silent.

So, I anticipate that the numbers are going to go down but only if hearings like this and days of prayer continue.

Senator BROWNBAC. If we intensify here.

Mr. HOROWITZ. Yes.

Senator BROWNBAC. Thank you, gentlemen, very much. If you could stay around, I would appreciate it, with the possibility of bringing you back up.

We have our third panel. We stated at the outset the hearing was titled Faces of the Persecuted and we bring forward several of those who have faced persecution. We are going to need a little bit of time because one person has requested anonymity and we are going to have to accommodate and put up a screen for that particular individual.

I want to emphasize as well, that we have done a lot of calling and searching around; and there are a lot of people who have faced the persecution and many of which have just not been willing to come forward, because of what it would do to their family, what it would mean to them and the threats that they are under. The people that have stepped forward here today are absolutely bold and convicting and willing to put their lives and their fortunes on the line to say the truth and to say it out in public and to say it to the world. I absolutely commend them and recognize them for their boldness and for their heroic stand that they are taking. We really appreciate it. We need to put this forward.

We are going to need a couple of minutes here I understand to get this all set up, so we might just want to take a very short break and then when we come back, we will be ready to go with this. So, we will be in recess for about 3 minutes here.

[Recess.]

Senator BROWNBACK. We will reconvene the hearing. As you know and as you can see, we have got a third panel up that is testifying; and we have a witness who, because of fear for his own family, and rightfully so unfortunately, has requested anonymity. He is a gentleman from Pakistan. I have asked him to be here to testify, and he will be up here and testifying. We will take his testimony first and then excuse him, and we will go on with the rest of the panel.

Again, I want to say these are not only people who have been persecuted, they are heroes for being willing to step forward and to testify in a most difficult circumstance.

So, I would ask the gentleman here in front of me to please proceed with his testimony and what he has faced in persecution. Sir, please speak directly into the microphone, if you would.

#### **STATEMENT OF ANONYMOUS WITNESS FROM PAKISTAN**

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. I am Christian male and I am from Pakistan.

I attend a Christian school until the Pakistan Government took control of the schools and colleges. I was denied admission to government school because I was a Christian.

I was admitted to a private Muslim school with a Muslim teacher who forced Christian students to study education Islam.

Same problem in college. I request separate Bible study for the Christian students and was refused by the principal. I was then beaten by several Muslim students and warned by the principal that I will expelled I will ever mention Christian studies again.

The Muslims believe that America is a Christian country filled by the people who want to kill the Muslim people. Some Muslim preachers say Pakistan is a Muslim country for Muslim people not for Christian people.

This happened with me. Four men—they come to church, evening prayer, and I answer the knock on the door and was ordered to remove the cross and speaker from outside the church building. They force their way inside and ripped out the speaker wires. When I protest their actions, they beat me and left.

I called Pakistani police who arrest me and put in jail and beat me continually all night. I was released the next day and warned never to state anything against the Muslim people. I will be put back in jail forever.

One week later, as I found my way home from work, a car stopped me and two men jumped out and grabbed me. They hold me while another man tied my hands and grabbed me. They pushed me into their car and used chloroform soaked cloths over my mouth and nose until I lost consciousness.

When I wake, I was in an unfamiliar part of my country. I had been stripped down to my undershirt and my wallet was gone. One of the three men held a gun on me as the other two men threw me out from the vehicle.

The people in this area speak different language, make it nearly impossible to communication. I was taken by several people to a house where I was locked a small room, given very little food, frequently beat me and forced to work, cutting of wood from early in the morning until late night.

After 2 weeks, I was able to escape by climbing up through the chimney in my room to the outside. I was able to get a ride with a passing truck driver who was giving me food and let me stay at his farm for the night. And the following day, I made my city and attempt to report to Pakistani police. I was told, Christian, we will kill you if you tell us lie.

Shortly after, I get a visa and come in the United States.

There are a lot of problem with Christians in my country right now. They are wanting to change the ID for Christian people. They want to change the ID. They mention that they are Christian. They want to change the—to the uniform if they know that they are Christian, and all the college and school is already taken. In the medical college, we have one seat. So, we do not have really education. We do not have really jobs. So, our future is going to die. So, we request for give us attention for these problems.

Thank you.

Senator BROWNBACk. Thank you very much for testifying. Let me ask you a couple of questions if I may.

Do you know of many other Christians who have been treated as you have, beaten, kidnapped, imprisoned in Pakistan?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. Yes, I know there is some on my area they have it happened, that is the same things, but is a different way.

Right now, after 3, 4 months, they have burned a village in Shanti-Nagar. This is very new news and a lot of people, you know, they have no home. They are sitting in the farm and no food, no nothing. So, they have a lot of problem going on there.

Senator BROWNBACk. And the village, was it a Christian village that was burned?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. Yes. It is called Shanti-Nagar.

Senator BROWNBACk. It was called what?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. Shanti-Nagar.



Senator BROWNBACk. Shanti-Nagar?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. Yes.

Senator BROWNBACk. Was anybody prosecuted in Pakistan for burning the village?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. They say that they are making allow for Christian people if anybody says something against for Mohammed and Muslim so they can kill, they can give punishment, whatever they wanted. So, they have a problem with that, so they action for the religion and they say that he said for Mohammed against something. So, they take the action and whole community, whole country is, you know, against that person.

Senator BROWNBACk. The village that was burned—

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. Yes, sir.

Senator BROWNBACk [continuing]. Did the police arrest anybody for burning the village?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. No. There is a lot of Muslim groups. They come there and they burn it. So, actually I am here. I really, you know, do not know about very much, but I hear that, you know, they have a lot of problem there. And they have no food. They have no clothes, and police, they do not take any action for nothing. They did not take action for that peoples—what they did.

Senator BROWNBACk. Has the persecution of Christians increased in recent years in Pakistan or is it about the same as you have always seen it or decreased?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. Until I left that country, every day is going a problem, every day. So, it is just going increase every day.

Senator BROWNBACk. Why was it increasing so much here in recent times?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. They are thinking that a Muslim country is just for Muslim not for Christian. If they have a law, it is a law for Muslim law, no nothing for Christian law, anything. No right for anything. If there is anything, it is for rights for Muslim people. If they give a donation, something, so that donation just can be go for Muslim, not for Christians.

Senator BROWNBACk. Do you raise these issues with, say, for instance, some of the elected officials in Pakistan? Has the Christian community raised this with people who are elected in Pakistan to represent all of the people?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. I do not understand.

Senator BROWNBACk. Has anybody in the Christian community talked with somebody that was elected in Pakistan about these problems?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. Actually we have some member in our Congress, but they do not listen for that, for that people. So, that is nothing happened, you know, whatever they say that.

Senator BROWNBACk. Are more Christians leaving Pakistan now and being forced out like you left because of the persecution?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. Yes. There is have a problem for—because poor people, they have no good job, they do not have a good education, and they have no good job, so they do not have very much money. Another problem, they try to get the visa and it is very hard to get the visa for coming to—go to the Christian country right now.

Senator BROWNBACk. What can we do in the U.S. Senate to stop this persecution from happening?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. I think if they can force that, they can change the rules, regulations for they give the rights for Christian people. So, I think that is the best so that people can live freedom and happy like in the United States. So, no take like a person what his religion about.

Senator BROWNBACk. So, for us to encourage the Government of Pakistan to ensure religious freedoms for all people?

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. Yes. And if can be possible, you know, to give to the chance to Christian people for education, and if they want to come here, if they do not starve for their problems, so give opportunity that they can come—go to Christian country.

Senator BROWNBACk. Thank you very much and thank you for your willingness to come forward in spite of having been beaten and kidnapped and taken to jail for what you have done. We deeply appreciate your willingness to speak out for those who have been persecuted in Pakistan.

ANONYMOUS WITNESS. Thank you, sir, for your attention.

Senator BROWNBACk. Thank you.

Our next two members of this panel are Colonel Sharbel Barakat from Lebanon, and I hope I am pronouncing these names correctly, Colonel. I very much appreciate your willingness to be here and to testify. And from Iran, Esmaeil Ebrahimi?

Ms. CARRERA. Ebrahimi.

Senator BROWNBACk. Ebrahimi is here to testify as well.

I want to thank again both of you in advance for your courage and your willingness to come forward to testify. It is very important that we get information from those who have seen and witnessed this firsthand.

With that, Colonel, we would turn the microphone over to you first. Please speak, if you would, very slowly and clearly into the microphone so we can gain the information. Thank you for coming.

#### **STATEMENT OF COLONEL SHARBEL BARAKAT, LEBANON**

Colonel BARAKAT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you. I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify about the persecution of the Christian population in south Lebanon. This historic achievement will allow me to share with you, the representatives of the American people, a truth which was hidden for years by both the oppressors in the Middle East and their protectors in the Western world.

My name is Sharbel Barakat. I was born and raised in the Christian village of Ain Ebel in south Lebanon. I became an officer of the Lebanese army, got married, and had four children. I currently live in my village which is under siege by terrorist groups such as Hizbollah. I cannot travel in my country, nor I can go to the capital Beirut. I cannot leave my country through the airport nor through seaports.

Hizbollah has issued death sentences against large numbers of Christians in south Lebanon. We live under the constant threat of shelling, roadside explosions, kidnapping, and torture in an area, home to 150,000 Christians and other minorities. Our fault: We are Christians surrounded by Islamist fundamentalists.

In order to respond to your invitation, Mr. Chairman, I had to cross the border into Israel and leave the Middle East through the only airport that connects us to the free world.

Throughout my life, my relatives, friends, and community have been subjected to various forms of oppression and persecution for the mere reason that we are Christians. Today I would like to testify about my own experience, the experience of my community, the present state of harassment, and what we expect in the future. I would like also to make few suggestions to the United States and world governments.

My experience. Throughout my young years, I was raised in the fear of massacres, as our village's population was butchered in 1920 by Muslims. At the end of 1958, and before the U.S. Marines intervened to put an end to the Islamic uprising, backed by Abdel Nasser of Egypt, then I lost my eldest brother, a young Lebanese army officer. When Benoit was killed, I was 6 years old.

In the 1970's, the PLO systematically brutalized the youth and elders of Ain Ebel and other villages, installing terror checkpoints, arresting, kidnapping, and killing some of the villagers. On many occasions, graffiti were written on the walls such as "no place for Christians in this land."

Since 1977, our village was encircled by the PLO. Our world shrank to less than 3 square miles. We were in a collective prison, more like a Christian ghetto surrounded by *Jihad* forces.

On New Year's Eve of 1979, the day my wife gave birth to my older son, her two parents were kidnapped by the elements of Abu Nidal for 3 months.

On Christmas Day of 1981, my brother-in-law, a middle school teacher, was kidnapped to the Ain El Helweh Camp and tortured for a whole month by the armed elements of Abul Abbas.

In 1984, a new organization, Hizbollah, took over from the PLO. Manipulated by the Iranians, protected by the Syrians, legitimized after 1990 by the current Lebanese regime, the terrorists of Hizbollah were bolder in their designs. They openly called for the establishment of an Islamic republic.

For 6 years, we had to use fishing boats to exit Ain Ebel's region in order to reach Beirut before it fell to the Syrians in 1990. Children, women, and elderly were packed like cattle under Hizbollah's fire. In 1985 a ship carrying 200 Christians sank off Beirut's shores. I personally was on many of these horror trips. Life was forbidden to us, so was freedom.

During the time we were oppressed by the fundamentalists, other Christians suffered as well: the Western and American hostages held by the same Hizbollah in Lebanon.

In 1990, three civilians were kidnapped from my village, were kidnapped by Hizbollah. Marun Nassif Atmeh was killed and his body was left in the valley of Wadi el-Sluki for 15 days. The United Nations soldiers found him defaced and maimed. We were able to recognize him with the help of the x-rays taken of his leg a few weeks prior. Butros Nassif Atmeh died months after his release as a result of severe beating to his head during the kidnapping. The third Christian was reduced to a living martyr. This environment of extreme violence caused us to live in constant fear. We even con-

sidered emigrating, emptying the villages. However, we remained on our land.

Since 1979, under Syrian pressures, our wages from the Lebanese Army were suspended by Beirut's government. Furthermore, a great number of us are denied passports.

The experience of my community. The Christian community in that area was submitted to a number of massacres throughout this century. Since the massacre of 1920, incidents occurred frequently. Mr. Chairman, the present Speaker of the House in Lebanon, Mr. Nabih Berri, who is considered as a moderate Shi'ite, publicly threatened by reminding us of this 1920 massacre three times.

Targeting Christians is not specific to south Lebanon. The Lebanese Christians have been resisting the tide of Islamism since the 7th century. Our ancestors have paid the price for their faith. Lebanon is the only country in the Middle East where Christians from all denominations have been able to form a safe haven for over 13 centuries.

In modern times, attempts were made to create a coexistence between Lebanon's religious communities. Successful for a short period of time, this peaceful coexistence fell under the terrorism of the PLO, the Syrian occupation, and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

Professor Walid Phares, an expert of the Middle East, said the "Christians of Lebanon were and are still targeted because of their Christians identity and their determination to remain Christians."

Since 1975, about 150,000 Christians were killed during the war. Thousands of Lebanese Muslims died as well. Entire Christian villages were erased and their populations were ethnically cleansed. In Damur, south of Beirut, for example, a thousand Christian civilians were killed while the armed bands shouted *Allahu Akbar* and *Jihad*. Churches were burned down by dozens. An account of the horrors is too long to include in this testimony. Here are a few examples of massacres.

1975: Beit Mellat, Deir Eshash, Tall Abbas in north Lebanon, Damur, Mount Lebanon.

1976: Chekka, north Lebanon, Qaa, Terbol, Bekaa Valley.

1977: Aishye, south Lebanon, Maaser el-Shuf, Shuf Mountain.

1978: Ras Baalbeck, Shleefa, Bekaa Valley.

1983: major massacres in Aley and the Shuf Mountains, in addition to the 241 U.S. Marines and 78 French paratroopers savagely assassinated by Hizbollah.

1984: Iqlim el-Kharrub, Mount Lebanon.

1985: East Sidon, south Lebanon.

1990: Matn district.

The present state of harassment. Here are some of the flagrant abuses of human rights against Christians around the country.

Constant and arbitrary arrests of young men and women. Armed elements break into their homes by night and kidnap them to security centers. In December 1996, 450 young Christians were thrown in jail and beaten for days. They spent Christmas alone in helplessness.

Christians are tried by military courts for forming Christian associations, opposing Syria, or allegedly for contacting Israelis or Jews.

Christians are severely tortured in Lebanese or Syrian jails or in detention centers by Hizbollah. Some of them died under torture.

In the so-called security zone of south Lebanon, Christians live under the fear of Hizbollah's terror. In 1996, Hizbollah issued a public fatwah, religious edict, calling for the murder of all those who have been in contact with Jews. As we know, there are thousands of Christians who work inside Israel. All of these civilians will be put to death if Israel withdraws. As of today, neither the Lebanese nor the Syrian Governments have issued a rebuttal to this fatwah. We, therefore, assume that Beirut and Damascus are endorsing the massacre of the Christians in south Lebanon by Hizbollah.

What to expect in the future. Mr. Chairman, it is certain that my community is under present and real danger. Christians are presently safe because of the presence of Israeli troops and the local defense force known as South Lebanon Army, SLA. However, in the case of an Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the area and disbanding of the SLA, we expect a generalized massacre and de-christianization of south Lebanon. This potential holocaust of Christians will have a tremendous impact on the region's Christians, for Lebanon has always been the hope for Middle East Christianity.

Suggestions. For the short term, I present the following suggestions aimed at saving the Christians of south Lebanon as long as Hizbollah and the Syrian occupation forces are present in that area.

One, that the U.S. Government formally ask the Israeli Government not to withdraw from the security zone before a solution is found for the protection of the Christian community in south Lebanon.

Two, that the U.S. Government help the Christians of south Lebanon to form a local authority which will enable them to face the administrative, economic, social, and security challenges.

Three, that the U.S. Government extend a direct humanitarian support to the encircled Christian community in south Lebanon and help them establish a safe haven until the regional problem is solved.

Four, that the U.S. Congress extend invitations to the Maronite Patriarch of Lebanon and other Christian leaders in south Lebanon and in exile to testify about the fate of their community. Such message can bring about the truth of persecution to the American people and allow Christians worldwide to extend their support to their brethren in faith in our tormented country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Barakat appears in Appendix G on page 118.]

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much, Colonel. I appreciate that.

I have just been buzzed that we may have a vote in the next 10 minutes. So, what I would like to do is go to our next witness, and we will see how long we can go before we would have to take a short recess and come back, but we may have a vote coming up here. So, let us go ahead and we will get started with this, and then let us see how long we can go. Thank you very much for coming, Mr. Ebrahimi.

**STATEMENT OF ESMAEIL EBRAHIMI, IRAN, THROUGH HIS  
INTERPRETER, FANNOOSH CARRERA**

Mr. EBRAHIMI. I wanted to thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on this subject. It is very encouraging to me to know that the Government of the United States cares for the persecution of Christians in other countries. And I thank the Government of the United States to give me the refugee status to come to the United States where I can be a free Christian.

Due to the lack of time, I will summarize my testimony. Of course, a written statement has been submitted for your review.

When I was born in a strict Islamic family in Iran, when I was a child, there were a couple of incidents where I was close to death. However, I was saved and I knew there was a force protecting me. I even joined the military because of the draft; and during the intensive Iran-Iraq war, however, I was still protected, and I did not die.

In 1985 my brother invited me to a church that he attended in Tehran after I got out of the military because he had already come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

After I viewed the movie *Jesus of Nazareth*, I came to realize that I had found what I was looking for all my life.

A few weeks later I met another Christian who spoke to me further about God, and I then surrendered my life to Jesus, and I became a Christian.

In 1988, with 12 other Iranian Muslims, with the leadership of Reverend Sepehri, in Emmanuel church in Tehran I was baptized.

Due to the extreme joy that I had found in Jesus Christ, I wanted to share my faith with others, and this was the beginning of the persecution that came my way by the Government of Iran.

I was warned many, many times not to speak about Jesus to others. Even though I was careful about this, however, two government officials came to my shop [he was a tailor] and they arrested me. Even though they were very careful so no one else would recognize that they were arresting me, they put me in an unmarked car and took me to jail.

Three days later I was interrogated again but this time in the Revolutionary Court building. They were interrogating me further. They said because you had left Islam and had converted, you will be put to death.

My family had no idea where I was, and an unrecognized person called one of the believers in the church and said that we had killed Esmaeil.

Three days later again, even though my family had no idea what was going on with me, again they interrogated me. They took me to the Revolutionary Court building. After more interrogation and about 3 months of imprisonment and much psychological and physical abuse, I was forced to sign a statement not to preach Christianity and was released on October 1990.

He was wondering why they let him go. I found out that my release was due to the intervention of the late Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr, then Superintendent of the Assemblies of God Church and the President of the Council of Protestant Churches in Iran, and to the upcoming visit to Iran of Mr. Galindo Pohl, the U.N. Special Representative of the Commission on Human Rights.

Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr, who was killed by the government agents in January 1994 after he led an international campaign to free Reverend Mehdi Dibaj, Iranian Muslim, convert, evangelist who had been imprisoned for nearly 10 years and sentenced to be executed for apostasy. Reverend Dibaj and Reverend Tatavous Mikaelian were killed by the government agents in June 1994. Reverend Mikaelian took over the position of President of the Council of Protestant Churches in Iran after Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr's death.

I married my wife, also a convert from Islam to Christianity, in 1991. When my wife converted to Christianity, her neighbors learned about it and began to persecute her by saying unkind things. When she converted, a government official, who was dressed in civilian clothes, came to the home and threatened her that I have the power to kill you.

When our son was born in 1992, we had a difficult time to get his birth certificate identification card.

Later we went to Turkey and worked with the Iranian Christian organization in that country.

When we returned to Iran, we lived in a basement for 2 and a half years because we had to be under cover. The persecution of the Christians, the converts, had increased at this time. We feared that it would only be a matter of time before I would be arrested, imprisoned, and charged again with abandoning Islam; because the government no longer even brought these cases to the courts, because they would have paper-trail evidence that they were doing these persecutions.

The Iranian Christians were warning us and encouraging us to leave the country because our life was in danger. We were told that all the ground borders had our names on their lists. They believed that we would probably cross the border to Turkey because there was no need for a visa.

We found out that the Embassy of India was granting visas, and that is where we went. Without informing any of our family and relatives, we quietly left Iran.

Prior to 1986, my older brother Ebrahim had converted from Islam to Christianity. He received instruction from Transworld Radio in Monte Carlo that broadcasts Persian Christian programs into Iran, and he worked for the Iran Bible Society. After the government authorities closed the Iran Bible Society in 1990, Ebrahim worked for Campus Crusade for Christ. That is an American organization. He was imprisoned in Kermanshah in 1992 because of his conversion from Islam to Christianity and because of his evangelistic activities. Ebrahim and his wife were forced to flee Iran in 1994 and were accepted as refugees in Canada.

My younger brother, also a Muslim convert to Christianity, had to discontinue his graduate studies in Iran. Because of the persecution he received for his Christian faith he fled Iran in 1994 and was accepted as a refugee in Canada.

My mother also who was Muslim born and converted to Christianity is living in Canada now.

Seven months after arrival in India with the help of Iranian Christians International, Incorporated, a Colorado-based organization who assists Iranian Christian refugees, my wife, son, and I

were recognized by the UNHCR in New Delhi as refugees. Because the UNHCR monthly stipend is so little, we were forced to live in a one-room apartment in a poor and fanatically Muslim part of New Delhi.

A number of Iranian government agents and embassy personnel lived near us, including embassy officials who lived in the apartment below us. Because I did not receive any mail that had been sent to me since these officials moved into our building, I believe that they had asked the postman to deliver all my mail and perhaps the mail of other Iranian tenants to them.

Other Iranian and Afghan refugee Muslim converts to Christianity in New Delhi were severely persecuted by Iranian and Afghan government agents while I lived in India. There were several kidnapping attempts, severe beatings requiring hospitalization, attempts to run over the converts with motorcycles and automobiles, and death threats—death threats. The motorcycles and the cars had Iran/Afghanistan embassy license plates. Although reports of these incidents were submitted to the U.S. Immigration and the UNHCR, the truth of these reports had not been accepted by the U.S. INS and the UNHCR.

After being recognized as a refugee by the UNHCR in July 1995, I immediately applied to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, INS, at the American Embassy in New Delhi. Although most U.S. INS interviews at refugee processing posts are scheduled within 2 months of filing, I was not interviewed until 8 months later. I was told that since my mother lived in Canada, although I had a U.S. sponsor, I must apply to Canada.

In May 1996, Iranian Christians International, Inc. contacted U.S. Congressman Frank Wolf's office requesting his intervention for another Iranian Christian refugee and me. Congressman Wolf faxed a letter to the Honorable Frank G. Wisner, U.S. Ambassador to India, requesting detailed information why the other family and mine were rejected.

A month later Mr. Johnson, U.S. INS officer, gave me a second interview. However, he was very hostile and abusive. Now I submit the description and content of my interview with the U.S. INS in New Delhi for your information.

Senator BROWNBACK. Without objection, we will accept that. Please proceed.

Mr. EBRAHIMI. I went to the U.S. Embassy with my wife and son at 10 a.m., June 6, 1996. At 10:30 a.m., Mr. Manouch, an employee of the U.S. INS, took us to the U.S. INS section of the embassy and the office of Mr. Johnson. My wife and son were directed to the next room, and only I was allowed into Mr. Johnson's office.

Mr. Johnson was standing in his office with a very angry expression on his face. After I sat down, Mr. Johnson said, why did you not apply to the Canadian Embassy?

I thought he was referring to July 1995 when I first applied for immigration to the U.S. So, I said, as soon as I was recognized as a refugee in July 1995, I applied to the U.S. INS.

Mr. Johnson became angry and screamed, did I not tell you to apply to the Canadian Embassy?

I responded, it is illegal to concurrently apply to two countries for resettlement as a refugee.



Mr. Johnson shouted, how do you know it is illegal? Have you been in contact with an immigration officer?

I replied, no. I asked the receptionist at the information desk.

Mr. Johnson said, who is the receptionist? You must have obtained information from an officer.

I responded, that is not the case as refugee applicants are not allowed inside to obtain such information from an officer.

Mr. Johnson angrily said, who do you think you are that you are trying to teach me immigration law? When I ordered you to apply to Canada, you should have done it. Who do you think you are? You are nobody. You have no status. Who gave you the right to complain about the U.S. INS, New Delhi?

I said I did not complain to any place. Before my response was translated, Mr. Johnson said with anger, I am independent person here. No one in America can write to me and tell me what to do. I can decide whom to accept and who to reject as refugee. No one is allowed to tell me what to do. This statement was evidently in response to Congressman Wolf's letter to Ambassador Wisner.

He then looked at my file and asked the date of my baptism. I gave him the date, 1989. Then he said, where were you baptized? I said in Tehran, Iran. He said, why then the letter affirming your baptism is from a church in Germany? I responded, Reverend Sepehri who wrote the affirmation letter was formerly my pastor in Iran and the Director of the Iran Bible Society. Due to danger to his life, he fled from Iran to Germany.

Senator BROWNBAC. Could I just interrupt here a second, because I am really getting worried about time constraints of what we are going to hit? If there is a way we can shorten in on what specifically we could do from the United States that would be helpful as Mr. Ebrahimi would see, I would appreciate that so that we could have a few minutes to talk with some questions, if possible, because I am afraid we are going to be buzzed for a vote and I think we only have the committee room until 4:30 as well. So, if you can, I would appreciate that and that way we can get to a few questions as well.

Ms. CARRERA. OK. I believe there is a conclusion here. Am I allowed to read that?

Senator BROWNBAC. Oh, please, please. I do not want to stop you. You have been very kind to come here and very bold in coming here. I want to make sure we get some chance to be able to have a dialog back and forth to—

Ms. CARRERA. OK. I will read the conclusion, if you do not mind.

The adversarial attitude of the U.S. INS officials and the inconsistent refugee processing has led to Iranian Christian refugees finding themselves between a rock and a hard place. They cannot go back to Iran, yet spend months or years in limbo, living in hostile and impoverished conditions before being processed to the U.S. First a refugee must go through a long and difficult ordeal to obtain UNHCR status and financial assistance and then go through another lengthy and arduous process with the U.S. INS to be accepted for resettlement as a refugee in the U.S. During the time I was going through this process, an Afghan refugee set herself afire because the UNHCR refused to provide adequate medical care for her family.

Many of the refugees are financially destitute and cannot survive unnecessarily drawn-out appeals. The complete refugee processing procedures at the U.S. INS in New Delhi must be thoroughly investigated and changes made so that other Iranian Christian refugees currently stranded in India can be speedily processed to the U.S. and so that other fleeing refugees in the future will not need to go through the severe hardship that my family and I faced.

This subcommittee must continue to pressure the Iranian Government to discontinue its persecution, arrest, imprisonment, torture, and killing of Iranian Christians, to reopen churches and the Iranian Bible Society, and to allow Muslim converts to attend church and pastors to preach in Persian, the language of 90 percent of Iranians, and to allow Iranian Christians to leave Iran. This subcommittee must take the lead in applying international pressure.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ebrahimi appears in Appendix H on page 121.]

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you very much, and thank both of you for testifying here today that you have done at both risk and expense to both of you gentlemen. I appreciate that a great deal.

If I could in asking some questions of specifically what all we can do from here—and both of you have been very good about being specific on some items that would be helpful to you. It strikes me that you are both in situations where there is religious cleansing that is taking place and in a region of the world where there is a great deal of religious cleansing that is taking place.

What are the most helpful things we can do from here to stop that from occurring? Are hearings—is that a key thing that we should do? In Lebanon, is it trying to get more people in there? Is it opening up the travel ban in Lebanon? Or is that a harmful thing to do? You have identified some things, Colonel, that you think would be good. Are these the most helpful things that we can do to try to stop this from occurring?

Colonel BARAKAT. I think the hearing that you are doing let the people believe that the United States, which is the power now worldwide, became interested about what is happening to the Christians in Lebanon. It will give them more hope.

The other side is that the Syrian and the Hizbollah and the puppet government now in Lebanon will feel that they are not free to do whatever they are doing against the freedom of the people, against the persecution of the Christians.

What you are doing, these hearings, are helpful.

On the other side what we ask for is for south Lebanon specifically. It is clear I think.

Senator BROWNBACK. Should we have more Americans traveling to Lebanon? Would that be helpful?

Colonel BARAKAT. I do not think.

Senator BROWNBACK. You do not know?

Colonel BARAKAT. At this time I do not think it is safe yet because Hizbollah is still there. Nobody knows from a day to tomorrow if they will come and catch 5 or 10 other Americans and they will kidnap them as they did in the first time.

Senator BROWNBACK. Because we did just, I think, get buzzed for this vote, Senator Robb, if you would care for either a statement or a question to ask of these gentlemen, I would be happy to turn it over to you for that at this point.

Senator ROBB. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate it and I apologized to you earlier because of the late notification as to when this hearing was going to take place; I had others, including several groups of international visitors from the region and the jurisdiction of this subcommittee, as it turns out. I will rely on the record. You shared with me some of the testimony, and it is certainly important.

I think that the point that you have made and the two witnesses here have made as to the importance of giving public exposure to practices that the international community can make independent judgments as to whether or not they want to take a position or attempt to influence.

I might ask Mr. Ebrahimi, with the recent election in Iran, which is approximately 90 percent Shi'ite and about 10 percent Suni, is there any prospect in your judgment of a change with respect to the persecution of religious minorities or Christians based on the election that has just taken place in Iran?

Ms. CARRERA. He doesn't believe so, because this new prime minister is continuing on with the same hard line that the previous leaders have had.

Senator ROBB. Is there anything that the international community can do in your judgment to influence the actions that the government in Iran takes toward religious tolerance or religious persecution? It is not dissimilar to the chairman asked.

Ms. CARRERA. He says this is definitely a political issue and he is not a man of much political knowledge. However, the fact that you are listening to the cries of the people who are being persecuted and if the people of America and other governments are willing to listen and know that these things are happening, he believes that people themselves can make the difference and put pressure on governments like Iran.

Senator ROBB. Let me just ask one other question to both of our witnesses. This hearing has focused on persecution of Christians in Islamic countries. Are you aware of specific instances where Muslims or members of other religious faiths have experienced persecution that is at all similar to the kinds of persecution that you have faced?

Mr. EBRAHIMI. There are Jewish citizens of Iran who have been under major persecution to the point that they had to leave Iran or they were certain to die, so are the Bahais in Iran, they just like the Christians. The government has given any Muslim in Iran the right to kill any Bahai or Christian converts, and as a matter of fact, they will receive much exultation by doing so.

Senator ROBB. Colonel Barakat, could you respond to that same question with respect to Lebanon?

Colonel BARAKAT. I did not understand the question.

Senator ROBB. Are there instances of persecution of those who profess a faith other than Christianity that is similar to the kinds of persecution that you have experienced as a Christian?

Colonel BARAKAT. In Lebanon?

Senator ROBB. In Lebanon.

Colonel BARAKAT. Yes, all the Jewish people are in some way persecuted in Lebanon. They are denied anything in Lebanon now, these times, not before the war. But also all those who are against Hizbollah, for example, against those fundamentalists, suffer sometimes from them.

Senator ROBB. But it is based on religion or on political opposition?

Colonel BARAKAT. It is based sometimes on beliefs because they believe differently from them. They think they are heretics, something like this. They do not believe like they believe.

Senator ROBB. One final question. Are either of you aware of persecution of the type that you have described against Christians in either Iran or in Lebanon that has been used against minority members, i.e., Suni or Shi'ites or whatever the case might be in the countries, in other words, the non-majority Muslim faction?

Mr. EBRAHIMI. The Muslims who convert to Christianity—it is very obvious that they will be persecuted. However, among the Muslims themselves, the majority of the trouble that comes their way, you cannot call persecution; but you can call it that they are economically held back, jobs, trouble that has caused them with schools and their children and their family, but not so much persecution to the way that they persecute people of other faiths.

Senator ROBB. Thank you.

Colonel Barakat, any persecution of Muslims by a different sect that you have observed?

Colonel BARAKAT. No. And the case in Lebanon is different. It is more political between Muslims. It is not religious.

Senator ROBB. I join the chairman in thanking you both for coming and testifying this afternoon, and Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Senator BROWNBACK. Thank you, Senator Robb, and thank you both for your heroism in coming forward and standing up for your faith. I appreciate your doing that.

This is the second of a number of hearings we are going to be holding and looking at this subject and moving forward. If any other country in the world, America must stand up to this religious cleansing that is taking place. We were founded by people fleeing religious persecution and we must stand up for that around the world. We are trying to shed a light on this now to bring this issue on more in front of the American people and to move forward as a Nation on it.

Thank you very much for joining us. I thank all of you for being here today.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:28 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]



## **APPENDIX**

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**A. Documents Detailing Efforts of the Chinese Communist Party to Suppress "Illegal" Religious Activities**

A DOCUMENT OF THE DONGLAI TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

*Translated and Released on January 1997 by The Cardinal Kung Foundation*

[EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE 2000 HRS GMT JANUARY 10, 1997]

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DOCUMENT (1996) No. 42

FOR THE COUNTY COMMITTEE OF CHONGREN XIAN IN THE FUZHOU DISTRICT (OF JIANGXI PROVINCE)

REFERENCING THE DISPATCH OF

"THE PROCEDURES LEGALLY TO IMPLEMENT THE ERADICATION OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES/OPERATIONS OF THE UNDERGROUND CATHOLIC CHURCH"

TO

THE DONGLAI TOWNSHIP LEADERSHIP FOR LEGALLY ERADICATING THE ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNDERGROUND CATHOLIC CHURCH

*The Objective of the Notice:*

- (1) The Religious Administration;
- (2) "Struggle" on Eradication of the Illegal Activities, (Underground Catholic Church) and
- (3) Implementadon Procedures

**Copy To:**

The County Committee of the Communist Party  
The County Political & Judicial Committee of the Communist Party  
November 20, 1996  
80 Copies Made (in China)

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

- Words in between parenthesis are the translator's note. These words are not included in the original text.
- When the text was illegible and/or the phrase was not understood, the words were replaced by a string of x's (xxxxxxxxxxxx).
- A few sentences or phrases were printed in bold characters or placed within quotation marks when the translator felt the message conveyed was critical.
- A few paragraphs were divided into sub-paragraphs for easier reading.
- Copies of the Chinese text are available upon request.

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**To: All units of the village branch of the Party, and All units directly under the Township Authority:**

In accordance with the approved study, attached herewith for your use is Donglai's—

**"Procedure to Legally Implement the Eradication of Illegal Activities of the Underground Catholic Church"**

Please be practical, thorough, and serious in your implementation.

In recent years, the population of religious believers in our villages has increased due to the intensified infiltration of overseas religious enemy and opposition forces, and due to the influence of the illegal activities of the underground religious force in our country. Some have used religion to commit criminal activities, seriously disturbing the social order and affecting political stability. Therefore, every unit in this



entire township must be highly vigilant in and politically attuned to the gravity and danger of the overall situation. You must strengthen the leadership, and, with resolute, decisive and organized measures, to legally develop this special “struggle” in order to **eradicate the illegal activities of the underground Catholic Church.**

Eradicating the illegal activities of the underground Catholic Church is a decisive and critical political work. In developing this special “struggle”, we will proceed according to the facts, abide by the law, recognize two different types of contradictions (*Note: The two different contradictions are (1) contradiction among people and (2) contradiction between enemy and defender—Mao’s Thought*), be vigilant of the enemy’s power and of public instigation by religious believers, assure smooth development of “Eradicating Illegal Activities” work, and achieve the projected objectives. Any important and sensitive issues as well as the progress of all units’ assignment must be reported promptly for directives.

November 20, 1996

PROCEDURES TO LEGALLY IMPLEMENT THE ERADICATION OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES OF  
THE UNDERGROUND CATHOLIC CHURCH

In order to truly unify the thorough enforcement of the Party’s religious policy, to strengthen the administration of religious affairs in the township, to standardize the conduct of religious activities, and to reflect closely the circumstances of this town, effective immediately, we have decided to employ a united action to destroy the organization of the underground Catholic Church in Shanbei, Leifang, and Donglai, and to stop its illegal assembly activities. The following operation procedures are proposed:

**A. Guidelines**

In the spirit of the 6th meeting of the 14th Party Conference, and in order to mobilize the vast number of people including religious believers, we learn from the document: **“Decision of the Central Communist Party on Certain Important Resolutions Relating to the Strengthening of the Spirit of Socialism to Establish Civilization”**

For promotion of social stability and for successful eradication of the illegal religious activities by law, we must:

- (1) Raise the banners: “Protect the Dignity of the Law”, and “Self Administer an Independent and Autonomous Church”,
- (2) Achieve the objectives: “Protect the Legal (Official Patriotic Association), Stop the Illegal (Unofficial underground Roman Catholic Church), Strike the Illegal, and Resist the Infiltration”,
- (3) Use the strategy of “Conversion Through Re-Education, Disintegration, Unification of the Majority and Attacking the Individuals”, and
- (4) Proceed steadily and proactively with meticulous planning, and decisive attitude to avoid major problems.

**B. Objectives**

- Destroy the organization of the Catholic underground forces in the township.
- Cut off foreign contacts with local illegal elements
- Destroy the Church’s illegal assembly place
- Thoroughly clear all religious propaganda posters
- Strengthen the establishment of spiritual civilization and grassroots organization
- xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
- Coordinate all security implementations.

Three stages are necessary to achieve the above objectives.

**(I) Planning Stage: (November 20 to 25)**

- (1) Establish a strong organization for each rank. All personnel should report to duty and start working.
- (2) Carefully plan a highly secured procedure for overall implementation in this township.
- (3) Combine the township’s workforce to organize six teams of “spiritual civilization propaganda force” to be stationed and put to work in those villages where the underground Catholic Church has the most influence.
- (4) Define propaganda policy and customize the propaganda campaign to target different groups of underground believers: religious, core elements, and general public believers. Utilizing the authority of the government, print announcements of prohibition. Adopt a unified propaganda approach and prepare its materials.

(5) Be mentally and materially prepared to handle any unexpected incidents. Promptly report any such incidents to your supervisor.

**(II) Implementation Stage (November 25, 1996–March 31, 1997):**

*1. Before November 25, 1996*

All village “Spiritual Civilization Promotion Teams” must be stationed in the villages where the underground Catholic church believers live. The primary objective of the team is to develop an education propaganda offensive by utilizing radio broadcast to propagate the **“Decision of the Central Communist Party on Certain Important Resolutions Relating to the Strengthening of the Spirit of Socialism to Establish Civilization”**

We must propagate the Party’s religious policy and the code of law in addition to patriotism.

*(a) Laying the Foundation:*

In order to accomplish conversion through education, the team members should

- (1) Eat, live and labor together with the people,
- (2) Perform good public relations act by visiting every family, and
- (3) Sincerely offer them solutions to their practical production problems.

The above steps will re-educate the attitude (of the Catholics) to work for us (our favor).

*(b) Investigation*

In order to insure that this campaign of eradicating illegal religious activities is fully implemented,

(1) Thoroughly understand all basic characteristics of the vast group of religious believers. In cooperation with the local police department, develop a complete headcount of both local and transient populations. **Register and set up a file for each one of them.**

(2) Investigate and clearly understand the background of those out-of-town Catholics visiting the villages.

(3) Fully and legally utilize the grassroots organization of the Party as the center of operations for this campaign by:

(a) Strengthening the establishment of the leadership class for those villages most populated by religious believers, and

(b) Performing a thorough evaluation of the Party’s village branch. Make any adjustment or reinforcement to insure that the branch can serve as the fortress of this campaign.

*2. Before November 30, 1996*

(a) Thoroughly investigate and understand the underground Catholic religious, the core members of the underground force, the number of Catholics and the basic circumstances of the illegal activities.

(b) Investigate each one of the following groups, understand its activity schedules, overseas connections, the degree of its stubbornness, the traits that could be taken advantage of, and its psychological characteristics:

- (i) Underground Catholic religious
- (ii) Catholic believers in the Communist Party, Communist youth league, government cadre, militia, staff and their families, and
- (iii) The people responsible for illegal activities,

*3. Develop different class levels*

Each team must strengthen the target of education. Tailor the classes to the varying needs of the public audience.

(a) The first objective is for the Party. Its objective is to use the constitution of the Party to unify the thoughts of the member of the Party so that they could develop the influence as a model to stop the underground Catholic illegal activities.

(b) The second objective is to create a reserve force of zealous young people for the Party’s undertaking. This class is to help them:

- (i) to cultivate the life and world outlook of the proletarian thoughts,
- (ii) to be aware of the capacity of different ideas which could have infiltrated them from the non-proletarian people, and
- (iii) to be capable of resisting these ideas.

(c) The third objective is to induce underground Catholic religious and its core members to carry on their religious activities normally and legally by making them aware of those activities which are **in line with “theology”**, those which are unreasonable and illegal. This class is to indoctrinate them about the policies and objectives of the Party, and the law of the nation.

#### 4. *Make a big effort to disintegrate the underground religious influence*

Underground religious activities are illegal and dangerous. This should be explained clearly in the class.

The policy of the government is to protect and support the autonomous church. Only through the autonomous church will there be hope.

Break up the underground religious influence by:

- (a) Uniting the majority through education,
- (b) Isolating and attacking the extremist,
- (c) Developing overall education,
- (d) Organizing specialists, and
- (e) Using any other conceivable means.

With the exception of the few stubborn and core members (of the underground Catholic Church) who must be prosecuted according to law, the remainder will be indoctrinated by education. Persistent effort should be applied to convince the believers to obey the government and no longer to join illegal religious activities. Settle those who join legal religious activities and provide them with a suitable assembly place.

Using the principle of uniting the majority and isolating the extremist, prompt the workers to take care of each person (underground Catholic), **forcing him (the underground Catholic) to write a statement of repentance (apostasy letter), to recognize the policy of independence and autonomy (of the church), and to join the legal religious activities (the Patriotic Association).**

#### 5. *Thoroughly and legally eliminate the assembly locations for illegal activities by the following means.*

- (a) Public relations,
- (b) Reliance on Party's grassroots organization,
- (c) Harvesting the power of the public (opinion), and
- (d) Adopting the procedure of settling the religious issue as non-religious.

Seal those places used for comparatively less serious illegal activities, and, through the workers, register them so that they could practice legal religious activities, and be brought into normal administration. In the mean time, if any underground seminary is discovered, it must be categorically eliminated.

#### 6. *Firmly eliminate large scale illegal assemble activities such as on (the Christmas day) "December 25".*

- (a) Control underground religious and core members' illegal activities.
- (b) All religious believers in the village must be well prepared for the task of interception. Firmly warn religious believers not to leave the village.
- (c) The procedure must be prepared early, and the propaganda must be completed early. Licenses or permits for vehicles and equipment used for religious activity are not only to be confiscated, but also their users be fined. In the meantime, be prepared to handle any sudden unexpected incidents.

#### 7. *Infiltrate Schools*

Must have a very strict policy. Adjust and strengthen the power of teachers in the religious believers' village.

- (a) Those teachers performing illegal religious activities must be punished, or even dismissed.
- (b) Do not allow any missionary activities in the school
- (c) Do not allow the study, observation, or visits of any form of religious activities.
- (d) Do not allow students to carry any religious goods and propaganda materials.

Disobedience must be punished most severely. Stop firmly the use of religion to interfere with this directive and with other policies such as birth control, Take care of these issues on a case by case basis.

**Through implementation of the above procedures, the objective of destroying the organization of underground Catholics and their assembly places must be achieved.** Breaking up the underground Catholic influence, preventing the underground Catholics from participating in large scale assemblies on Shitangshan, cutting off the relationship between the criminal elements and overseas enemy force are steps to normalizing legalized religious activity.

## II. Consolidation Stage (April 1, 1997–June 30, 1997)

In order to consolidate the hard-won results and to prevent the repetition of the illegal activities, we must make the struggle of stopping the illegal Catholic activities a long term political objective. After this unified and concentrated action, we must take advantage of these three months to consolidate the result, to insist on additional work on this project, and to insure that the illegal underground Catholic

influence and the illegal assemblies in our township are eradicated. Each village must also strengthen its systems and regulations.

### C. Leadership Organization

Establish “Donglai Leadership Team to Stop the Underground Catholic Church Illegal Activities According to the Law”

Officer-in Charge: Yang Shusen

Vice Officer in Charge: Chen Zemin

Team workers: Li Xianchang, Xong Yiaoqiu, Huang Lusun, Xiao Jingxing, Chen Guimin, Lu Yaomin, Huang Rongshun, Sun Guangrong, Zhou Kaiwu, Huang Xinmin.

Office Manager: Huang Xinming

### D. Matters Demanding Special Attention

1. Having a good grasp of policies, being particular about tactics, and strictly managing affairs according to the laws, the leaders of various levels must carry out the assignment of “stopping illegal activities” as an important “Engineering Task” by strengthening the spiritual build-up in order to manage and to put society in order. They must be firm and proactive in the strategy; active and steady in tactics. Political matters should be treated as non-political ones while the **problems of religious character should be so solved as non-religious ones**. Do not agitate the already conflicting situation; thereby irritating the restless factors and causing very serious social disturbances as the result of erroneous problem management.

2. Discipline must be observed, and commands must be obeyed. Decisions made by the leadership group of the county and township government must be carried out firmly. Mistakes caused by negligence must be investigated and dealt with seriously. Reporting and feedback systems must be strictly enforced. Each week, the working unit is to report to the township leadership group about its work in progress. In the meantime, confidentiality is to be strictly observed. Do not disclose the undisclosed. Those who negatively impact the overall strategy as the result of compromised secrets will have to be dismissed, or, if the situation is serious, criminally prosecuted according to the law.

3. In order to accomplish this difficult and **glorified assignment** from the county committee of the communist party and the county government, responsibility oriented systems must be put in place and enforced. Each village committee and unit should clearly understand its assignment in conformity with local practice. One must clearly understand and be responsible for one’s own obligation. Serious unfavorable consequences arising from disobedience, irresponsibility, and resulting in the undermining of the strategically planned objective must be conclusively investigated. All village committees and township units must work and support each other by coordinating all initiatives.

#### THE PROPAGANDA SLOGANS OF THE SPECIAL STRUGGLE OF “ERADICATING ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES” IN DONGLAI TOWNSHIP

(1) All religious activities must only be conducted within the scope of the national constitution, laws, regulations and policies!

(2) Actively expand the special struggle of eradicating illegal religious activities in accordance with the laws!

(3) Firmly attack and eradicate the unlawful and criminal activities committed through religion!

(4) Firmly attack and eradicate illegal missionary activities and unlawful assemblies!

(5) Do not offer sites, supplies for illegal religious activities! Offenders will be punished severely!

(6) Out of town religious visitors are not to be allowed! Offenders will be punished severely!

(7) Protect the lawful, stop the unlawful, and attack the illegal offenders!

(8) Gatherings are not permitted on Yujiashan, Shitangshan and Zen’s House. Offenders will be punished severely!

(9) Conducting religious activities are not allowed at the sites forbidden by the government. Offenders will be punished severely!

(10) Firmly eradicate all illegal religious activity sites!

#### DONGLAI TOWNSHIP SPIRITUAL ENHANCEMENT PROPAGANDA TEAM MEMBERSHIP LIST

##### *Shanbei Village Committee*

Group Leader: Li Yian Chang

Group Assistant Leader: Yiao Jing Ying

Members: Chen Zhengsun, Zhou Xiaogiu, Li Yonggen

*Leifang Village Committee*

Group Leader: Xong Xiaoqiu  
Group Assistant Leader: Chen Guimin  
Members: Le Guixiu, Zheng Xiaoping, Sun Guangrong

*Donglai Village Committee*

Group Leader: Huang Lusun  
Group Assistant Leader: Chen Zeming  
Members: Luo Chunfa, Deng Dongyu, Zeng Yonggao

*Tangren Village Committee*

Group Leader: Huang Rongshun  
Members: (xxx) Shuiming

*Chenjia Village Committee*

Group Leader: Lu Yaoming  
Members: Yuan Youxing

*Caochang Village Committee*

Group Leader: Zhou Kaiwu  
Members: Dai Xincheng

THE PLANNING OF "ERADICATING THE ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES" IN DONGLAI TOWNSHIP

**I. Propaganda & Initiative Stage (11/20/96-11/25/96)**

(1) The committee of the communist party and the government of the township summons a council meeting to strategize the "Eradicating the Illegal Activities" initiative and to set up definitive procedures.

(2) The government of the township convenes a meeting of all the township Party cadres.

(3) The village committee convene meetings of the Party Branch Committee, Party members and all the villagers.

(4) The village committees set up special subgroups.

(5) The units and committees of all villages produce banner - sized slogans (2 to 3 slogans per village unit).

**II. Investigation Stage (11/26/96-11/30/96)**

(1) Research and count the exact population of religion believers.

(2) Locate the key village committees (30 or more Catholic families in the village) and the key families (2 or more Catholics in the family).

(3) Clearly ascertain the locales of religious activities, i.e. the religious gathering sites.

(4) Fully investigate the background and illegal activities of the underground Catholic clergy population as well as key and active Catholics.

**III. Education and Transformation Stage (12/1/96-12/15/96)**

(1) Prepare the propaganda literature and "the three courses", i.e. the policy on religion, laws and regulations, and build-up of spiritual civilization.

(2) Establish the learning classes for Catholics.

(3) Convene mass meetings. Educate them in accordance with their (required) standards.

(4) Establish township regulations and civil disciplines.

(5) Account for the responsibility between the village subgroups and the village committee.

(6) Complete and sign an accountability system for mutual support between village committee and village subgroups.

(7) Strengthen the establishment of grassroots Party branch committee and the government.

**IV. Legal Control Stage (12/16/96-12/31/96)**

(1) Blockade the exits. **Guarantee that no one leaves the village and township on December 25.**

(2) Forbid out-of-town Catholics from entering the township.

(3) Tighten the surveillance and control of the area.

(4) Clamp down and seal the sites of illegal religious activities.

(5) Strictly forbid unlawful gatherings and activities in schools.

**V. Conclusion and Consolidation Stage (1/1/97-6/30/97)**

(1) Consolidate the achievement of “Stopping Illegal Activities”, undertake and implement the special struggle of lawfully eradicating illegal religious activities as **a long-term political project.**

(2) Strengthen the regime’s infrastructure. Establish a permanent religious surveillance group.

(3) Meticulously execute the phases of consolidations and re-examinations.

## GLOSSARY

Caochang	草場	Lu Yaoming	呂躍明
Chen Guimin	陳貴民	Luo Chunfa	羅春發
Chen Zhengsun	陳正孫	Shanbei	山背
Chenjia	陳家	Shitangshan	屎塘山
Chen Zemin	陳澤民	Sun Guangrong	孫光榮
Chongren Xian	崇仁縣	Tangren	塘仁
Dai Xinsheng	代新勝	XXX Shuiming	...水明
Deng Dongyu	鄧東宇	Xiao Jingxing	蕭景興
Donglai	東來	Xong Xiaoqiu	熊小球
Fuzhou	撫州	Yang Shusen	楊樹森
Huang Lusun	黃陸孫	Yuan Youxing	元幼興
Huang Rongshun	黃榮順	Yujiashan	喻家山
Huang Xinmin	黃新民	Zen	曾
Jiangxi	江西	Zeng Yonggao	曾永高
Leifang	雷坊	Zheng Xiaoping	鄭小平
Le Guixiu	樂桂秀	Zhou Kaiwu	周開武
Li Xianchang	黎縣昌	Zhou Xiaoqiu	周小球
Li Yonggen	李永根		

DOCUMENT OF THE TONG XIANG CITY MUNICIPAL PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU/CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY, TONG XIANG CITY COMMITTEE, UNITED FRONT WORKS DEPARTMENT

*Secret Document*

*Opinions concerning the implementation of the Special-Class Struggle (zhuan xiang dou zang) involving the Suppression of Catholic and Protestant Illegal Activities According to Law*

**Municipal CCP Committee, Municipal Government:**

In the last few years, under the correct leadership of the municipal Chinese Communist Party committee and the municipal government, the religious policy of the Party has been implemented to a further degree. The regulation of religious affairs in our city have moved toward a more legal and institutionalized process. In general, the situation concerning religion is stable. But there also exists some problems which cannot be ignored. In terms of the overall situation, there has been a steady increase, and no decrease, on the part of hostile forces outside our country, which uses religion to undergo subversive and destructive activities such as “westernization” and “division” (*fen hua*), to aggressively cultivate anti-government forces, to realize the “evangelization” (*fu yin hua*) of China, and to vainly seek to bring about the changes which occurred in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Inside our country the underground forces of Catholicism and Protestantism have responded to these, and worked together with these, to resist against the government and the government’s patriotic religious organizations. The illegal and criminal activities of Protestants in our city are more prominent. Some of the illegal, self-ordained preachers have stirred up the believers and masses to attack the “Three Self” patriotic organizations, to oppose the leadership of the government; they prevent the government from implementing its regulations, and control and influence almost 1,000 Protestant believers. They go everywhere and say “Don’t go with the Three Self,” and write all kinds of essays concerning the spiritual and the worldly. They spread the ideas that “To believe in Three Self is worldly, not spiritual,” “Once you believe in Three Self you will not be saved, and will definitely go to hell.” Mainly this concerns the “three-struggle, three-churches, and sixteen points” problem.

The Three Struggles are: struggle against materialism . . . , using illegal means, to go to homes and hospitals etc. to draw (*la long*) believers; struggle against “Three Self” patriotic organizations, establishing illegal meeting points near open churches. The struggle between factions (*jiao pai*). Protestant Christians and . . . Church of Christ in China (*zhong hua ji du jiao*) and True Jesus Church; they fight against one another to grab power.

The Three Churches are: . . . to be against “Three Self” patriotic organizations; to be against the Tong Xiang and Shi Men Christian Churches led by the government; to ask for . . . Three Self, but not submitting to the Wu Tong Christian Church which it (Three Self) regulates.

The Sixteen Points are: Lu Tou, . . . , Qian Lin, Qie Tang, Shi Qiao, Min Xing, . . . etc. sixteen places, where there are Christian meeting points illegally established. These illegal activities have affected the orderliness of the proper religious activities of our city, and the socialist spirit, and the construction of civilization and social stability in some of the regions.

The Catholic Churches in our city are dispersed at Wu Tong Cheng Nan, Niao Zhen, . . . , Shi Men, Tu Dian, Hu Xiao, Yong Xiao, Yong Xiu, Lu Tou etc., these eight fishing villages. There are 448 believers. Since there is a Catholic activity point only at Pu Yuan, most are dispersed in their homes . . . Chang An, . . . . Catholic Churches. Those under age and Party members . . . individual Catholic believers . . . oppose religious . . . organizations . . . . .

*(2 lines illegible)*

According to the requirements of the Provincial Party Committee Office, Provincial Government Office’s “Memorandum of the Opinions on Implementation of the Launching of the Special-Class Struggle against the Catholic and Protestant illegal Activities According to Law”, (we are to) integrate with the realities of our city, in the first half of this year, to begin the special-class struggle involving the suppression of Catholic and Protestant illegal activities according to law. We now report the opinions on the concrete implementation:

**1. Basic Mission**

Insist on eliminating the illegal meeting points (i.e. churches) which have background of foreign subversions, conduct illegal activities, and are controlled by underground clergy. Divide and dissolve the Protestant underground forces; strike (*da ji*)

against the illegal and criminal activities which are conducted in the name of religion, according to law. According to law, suppress the illegal activities of the three churches in Tong Xiang, Shi Men and Wu Tong. Divide and isolate the minority of self-ordained (*zi feng*) preachers who oppose "Three Self." Absorb these three churches into the "Three Self" structure. Strengthen the regulation of religious activities. Promote the work of registration of religious activity meeting points. Launch out an in-depth propaganda campaign concerning the Party's religious policy and the Government's regulations (concerning religion). Correct and turn around the opinion orientation of some of the believer masses who have been misled by the minority anti-Three Self forces. Unite believers and the masses around the Party and the Government. Use healthy, civilized, progress thought and moral mores to educate the great masses, to promote the stability of society.

## 2. Implementation Procedures

In order to strengthen the leadership of the special-class struggle involving the suppression of Catholic and Protestant illegal and criminal activities, (we) suggest the establishment of a Leadership Team (*ling dao xiao zhu*) including a chairman and leaders from Public Security, United Front, Religion, Propaganda, Inspectorate, Courts, Executive (*shi fa*), People's Rule (*min zheng*), educational committee member (*jiao wei*), municipal construction (*cheng jian*), . . . , women's league (*fu lian*) etc. This will be responsible to lead, coordinate, supervise, inspect the concrete situation of all the measures. Also establish a zheng-zhi-ban to eliminate illegal meeting points, and zheng-zhi-ban to deal with (?) the work of the three churches: Wu Tong, Shi Men, Niao Zhen, Lu Tou, Shi Qiao, Min Xing, Qie Tang, Pu Yuan, etc. In these locations, establish "Suppress the illegals Work Committee" (*zhi fei gong zuo zhu*), and concretely implement the various measures of "suppressing the illegals" work.

According to the overall plan for our province, this "suppress the illegals" special class struggle will be carried out in three stages.

Stage 1: Preparation Stage. From now to the end of February, do a good job in fully preparing for this special class struggle. The public security organizations and religion departments in all localities should consolidate all your energies and concentration to do an in-depth investigation of the Catholic and Protestant illegal religious activities in your locality. Clarify the present conditions of Catholicism and Protestantism; the situation concerning foreign subversion; illegal and criminal activities; and the illegal activity locations controlled by underground bishops, priests and Protestant self-ordained clergy, an those meeting points which did not register, or refuse to register in the year 1996. Collect and sort out evidences and data which has legal efficacy. Upon this foundation, and according to local concrete situations, design workable work plans, and convene "suppress the illegals" leadership team meetings, to make clear the functions, responsibilities, measures and requirements for each department.

Stage 2. Zheng zhi (taking measures) stage. From March to May, have a centralized arrangement, and concentrate all energy to proceed with this special-class measure. The work should be grasped well in terms of three focal points:

(1) Through patriotic religious organizations, start working on winning people over. Religion should be "united front-ed," (*tong zhan*), propaganda . . . (illegible) Convene and mobilize the Three Self Patriotic Movement committee and the China Christian Council, publicize the Party's religious policy and the related Government laws and regulations, through the pulpits of open churches and meeting points. Educate the believing masses concerning the regulations on the use of religious activity points. Lead those believers in illegal religious activity points to come to . . . churches and meeting points. . . Clarify the boundary between proper, legal religion and illegal religious activities. Divide and destroy illegal meeting points.

(2) Eliminate, according to law, the illegal religious meeting points. With great determination, suppress illegal religious activities. Strike (*da ji*) illegal and criminal conduct (April). Determinedly suppress and eliminate the large scale illegal meetings, both Catholic and Protestant illegal training classes; illegally published and printed propaganda (evangelistic?) materials; and activities and meeting points with foreign subversion . . . according to the "Assembly, Demonstration and Parade Law", "Regulations concerning the Management of Religious Activity Points." . . . Conduct "education classes" for the self-ordained clergy and moderators of illegal religious activity points; such classes shall be conducted by the People's Municipal Government. Concentrate on transformation through education (*jiao yu zhuan hua*). Rebuke them to stop illegal activities. Deal with illegal and self-erected religious meeting points according to law. Implement long-term control measures through the local police offices . . . Collect evidence of all kinds of illegal and criminal activities under the banner of religion. Punish according to law.



(3) Penetrate and fan out in a multi-faceted measure. Deal with the Protestant churches in Tong Xiang, Shi Men and Wu Tong who, after many efforts of education, still refused to register, and refused to obey regulations. First, the Religious Affairs Bureau will take the lead to organize “Three Self” patriotic organization members to temporarily take over the approval of restoring the churches in Wu Tong and Shi Men. Announce that Wu Tong Ba-zi-qiao church would not be given registration, it will not be protected by law. Rebuke it to stop activities. Concerning the church buildings which were built illegally on their own initiative, close up and deal with them according to regulations. Proceed to educate and control those minority clergy and moderators of churches which do not obey, who are obstacles to the implementation of regulations, and who oppose “Three Self.” Strictly prevent them to stir up trouble. When legally suppressing the illegal religious activities, educate, unite and win over the believing masses who worship at Tong Xiang, Shi Men and Wu Tong -make this the focus of your work. Religion, propaganda and other departments should do their work with different formats. With great effort, proceed to educate and spread propaganda among this segment of the believing masses. Help them be clear on the distinction between proper religious activities and illegal religious activities. Strengthen the self-initiative (*zi jue xing*) of believing masses to boycott illegal religious activities, that they may be good citizens and good believers who love their country, love their religion and abide by the law. Dispatch work teams, and fully depend on the basic party and government structures, and upgrade the scope of work. Approach this with leading and helping masses to develop economic ... small business. Unite this with the construction of spiritual civilization. Broadly, and deeply spread the propaganda concerning the Party’s religious policy and related laws and regulations. Shake out sharply reduce the influence of illegal religious activities.

Stage 3. In June, summarize ... , and receive the takeover by the city and local authorities. The standards for inspection: (1) That the Catholic and Protestant underground forces have been divided, and the absolute majority of believing masses have been won over by education and unification to of the way of “love of country and love of church” (*ai guo ai jiao*). (2) Illegal activities basically are suppressed, and illegal criminal elements have been punished according to law. (3) Illegal structures in religion are destroyed. The illegal meeting points which have subversive foreign background, and conduct illegal and criminal activities will be suppressed and supplanted. (4) List the underground Catholic bishops, priests, and Protestant self-ordained ministers who have not sufficiently been dealt with legally, into “primary-point management” (*zhong dian guan li*), and implement measures of investigation and indictment (*zeng kong cao si*). (5) At the most local/basic level of the Party, strengthen regulating of religious activities according to law; concretely have personnel to be responsible for it. Those responsible for religion work understand the basic religious situation at the local level, have some basic knowledge of religion, have a basic grasp of the Party’s religious policy and related legal knowledge. They should dare to really regulate religious activities; know how to regulate; and regulate well (*gan guan, hui guan, shan guan*).

### 3. The Requirements of Work

In all localities, the special-class struggle of legal suppression of Catholic and Protestant illegal activities should be a concrete measure to thoroughly implement the spirit of the 14th six-way combined Congress, and the 9th provincial party congress. Combine with the basic strategy of peasant education which our party in our province is launching out ... We must fully understand the significance, the complexity of this special-class struggle; and strictly take hold of the Party’s religious policy and the related laws and regulations. Correctly distinguish and handle the two categorically different kinds of contradictions. Guarantee the successful operation of the special-class struggle. As this struggle is implemented in various localities, the following points must be heeded and grasped:

(1) Work hard to do a good job in investigation (*diao cha*) and issuance of certificates (*qu zheng*). Fully make use of laws and regulations. The work of striking an suppressing should proceed legally, so that it may be accurate and powerful.

(2) The legal suppression of illegal religious activities should not affect the proper points of religious activities and meeting points. Those who are within the realm of this regulation, but are slow in registering, should not be considered within the target of elimination. Concerning the three churches (*Tong Xiang, Shi Men, and Wu Tong*) where the underground self-ordained pastors are in control, when legal measures are taken, ... conditions should be created, and patriotic clergy should be selected and sent to organize committees of church affairs to take charge of religious life, and to take over religious strongholds.

(3) Strengthen the work of intelligence and information. In fact, those who control Ton Xiang, Shi Men to conduct illegal religious activities are the same bunch of self-ordained clergy as those who struggle for power with “Three Self” and who establish ... meeting points. Have a firm grasp of the activities and movement of this bunch of core elements who conduct illegal activities. Strictly prevent them to stir up trouble. Once there are traces of stirring up trouble (*gao shi*), deal with it decisively under the united leadership of the party committee and the government. Suppress it while it is still in the budding stage.

(4) Encourage the patriotic religious organizations to become more effective. Educate and encourage patriotic clergy to positively work with this special class struggle, and take initiative to help the government do a good job in educating, uniting the believers and masses through religious sentiment and religious consciousness.

(5) As the special class struggle proceeds, all villages, cities and departments should coordinate with each other closely, strengthen communication, exchange information, and help each other in war.

(6) The situation of the work of this special class struggle will not be reported by the news media.

If there are no improper measures in the above opinions, please issue this to the various localities and departments for implementation.

*Tong Xiang City Public Security Bureau  
Chinese Communist Party Tong Xiang City United Front Works Department  
February 27, 1997*

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## B. Prepared Statement of Steven J. Coffey

Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to appear before you today to testify on the question of religious freedom in the Middle East.

### *The Foreign Policy Context*

Religious freedom is an issue to which the Department of State has been devoting increasing attention. It is a complex problem. Issues of religious freedom are often laden with emotion, misunderstanding, political overtones, ethnic implications, and deep historical wounds. From Northern Ireland to Bosnia to Tibet, the world is replete with examples of continuing religious intolerance and conflict, often spilling graphically on to the evening news and the front pages of our newspapers. Unfortunately, problems of religious persecution seldom lend themselves to simple remedies or easy solutions. This is especially true in the Middle East, where three of the world's major religions trace their origins, and where it is often difficult to separate religion and politics.

The promotion of religious freedom in the Middle East and elsewhere is a growing priority in our foreign policy. Religious liberty is, after all, a core American value. Our nation was founded in large part by refugees from persecution. The Framers of our Constitution enshrined religious freedom among the most sacred of the rights guaranteed to our citizens. And America today is a country where people freely worship and where hundreds of religions flourish. In fact, the United States today is a multi-religion society where more than twenty separate religions or denominations have over a million adherents each. Americans provide a living example of our conviction that people of diverse religions can coexist happily and that religious minorities can live together in harmony.

Our religious liberties don't thrive in a vacuum, however. They thrive in the context of a free society, a society that guarantees full personal liberties to all its citizens—freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly. These are among the basic elements of any democratic society. As we look around the world, we see that where political freedom, individual rights, and democracy are on the rise, so is religious freedom. We need to look no further than the revival of the religious activities in Russia and central Europe following the fall of Communism to see how increased political freedom leads to increased religious activity.

This, then, is the context in which we must formulate and implement our policy in the Middle East and around the world: where political freedoms thrive, so do religious freedoms; where political freedoms are constrained or repressed, the same is often true for religious freedom. Religious freedom can only truly flourish in free societies.

One of our operating principles, therefore, is that as we work to expand the family of democracies around the world, to build free societies, to encourage tolerance, and to defend all fundamental human rights, we are also working to promote religious freedom. Our global policy seeks to build a framework of peace, freedom and respect for law in which all human rights can thrive, including religious liberty.

### *The Context in the Middle East*

The region we're focusing on today is huge. It stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean. It comprises some twenty countries. Its systems of government range from democracy to theocracy to monarchy to dictatorship. It is a region of prosperity and of poverty, of vast resources and of barren deserts. It is a region that features economic growth in some areas and stagnation in others. Some of its governments have been stable for decades, while others have been much less so. In sum, the Middle East is not easily defined. It is a region of contrasts. We should be wary of drawing generalizations.

It is not my intention today to attempt a country-by-country analysis of the Middle East. I would, however, like to offer a very brief overview of U.S. interests and the policy that guides our activities in the region. U.S. goals in the Middle East are far-ranging.

- First, securing a just, lasting, comprehensive, Arab-Israeli peace is a cornerstone of U.S. policy. This is no longer a dream; it is attainable. The agreements reached over the last three years between Israel and Jordan, and between Israel and the Palestinians, the expansion of political and economic contacts between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and the long-standing peace between Israel and Egypt form the foundation of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. While much work remains ahead, building a basis for lasting peace will remain at the center of our Middle East policy.
- Beyond the Arab-Israeli peace process, the U.S. is committed to maintaining full and secure access to the energy resources of the Persian Gulf. It is in this

context that we work to contain the threat to regional stability posed by Iran, Iraq, and Libya.

- We are working to contain regional conflicts and prevent hostilities.
- We are working to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- We are actively combating the threats of terrorism, narcotics, and international crime.
- We are expanding trade and investment opportunities for the U.S. private sector.
- We are providing humanitarian assistance to aid millions of refugees and displaced persons throughout the region.
- And finally, but certainly not least, we are working throughout the region to encourage movement toward democratic political processes, strengthened rule of law, greater respect for human rights, improved opportunities for women, and expansion of civil society institutions. Democratization, human rights and political reform are important elements of our dialogue with governments of the region. They are a major focus of USIS activities and a central element in many of our AID programs. We have launched democracy-building assistance programs in seven Middle Eastern countries. In addition, the U.S. encourages and supports through IMET programs the development of professional, apolitical military forces trained to respect human rights. And, the Middle East Democracy Fund, inaugurated this year, will seek opportunities for developing democratic institutions in countries receiving little or no peace process-related economic assistance or AID-administered development assistance.

This, then, is the broad context in which we pursue our Middle East policy. Let me now focus more specifically on the question of religious freedom in the Middle East.

#### *The Religious Context*

Very serious issues of religious restrictions, discrimination, persecution, and conflict exist in the Middle East. The region is diverse, however, and, as I have pointed out, we should be careful not to make sweeping generalizations. In most of the Middle East there is little or no separation of religion and state as we practice it in the United States. Although this is manifested differently in each nation, the close association of religion and the state—and the lack of tolerance and pluralism—poses a special challenge to protect adherents of religions other than the state religion. In most countries of the Middle East, Islam is the official, state religion. In some countries, such as Jordan and Morocco, the King derives his legitimacy, in part, because his heritage is traced back to the Prophet Mohammed and the beginnings of Islam. In many countries, religious law is imposed by the state; in others, civil law and religious law exist side by side. In some, such as Israel, religious political parties are active in government; in others, such as Algeria, religious parties are banned. In Lebanon, the most senior government positions are allocated according to religious affiliation.

With these variations in mind, it is worth highlighting the following issues:

- Most Middle Eastern states impose significant legal obstacles to religious freedom, contrary to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Some governments, such as Saudi Arabia, prohibit entirely the practice of religions other than Islam. This prohibition on non-Muslim religions forces Christian and other expatriates who seek to worship to do so only at great personal risk and under extremely discrete circumstances. In others, from Israel to Kuwait, religious affiliation is a prerequisite of granting citizenship to new immigrants.
- One of the most serious issues concerning religious freedom in most Middle Eastern countries is a strict prohibition on proselytizing. Conversion of Muslims to other religions is often illegal. Apostasy can carry heavy penalties including, in some countries, death. Iran, for example, has issued a decree seeking the death of the writer Salman Rushdie, who is called an apostate for authoring *The Satanic Verses*. In addition, the government of Iran has decreed all Bahai's to be apostates, regardless of whether they were born Baha'i or are converts. Two Baha'is have been sentenced to death for apostasy, and Christian evangelists have died in Iran under extremely suspicious circumstances. Most countries in the region prohibit or restrict proselytizing, and there is serious societal discrimination and intolerance against converts. This, of course, is contrary to the Universal Declaration's provision that protects the right of all people to change their religion or belief.
- In some states, specific religious groups are persecuted or their practices restricted. For example, in Iraq the government has severely restricted its majority Shi'a Muslim population, banning the broadcast of Shi'a programming on

government television and radio, the publication of Shi'a books and even the commemoration of Shi'a holy days. The Assyrian Christian community has suffered various forms of persecution and abuses by Iraqi forces, including harassment and killings.

- Even where legal obstacles do not exist, societal discrimination on a religious basis does. Jews throughout the Middle East, especially since the creation of the State of Israel, have experienced societal discrimination or repression, resulting in the large scale emigration of traditional communities. Anti-Semitism remains a widespread problem in many Middle Eastern countries today. The Coptic Christian community in Egypt is subject to discriminatory practices, in addition to a number of legal restrictions. And, discrimination against women remains a pervasive problem throughout much of the Middle East; in some instances discriminatory actions against women resulting from societal traditions are incorrectly explained as resulting from traditional Islamic practice.
- Some Middle Eastern states legislate in ways that discriminate against religious groups. In some cases, legal restrictions on a particular community exist but are not enforced in practice. In Israel, Orthodox religious authorities have exclusive control over marriage, divorce, and burial of all Jews, regardless of the individual's orthodoxy. In Iran, Baha'is are legally restricted in their educational and employment opportunities, as well as in other ways.
- Violence which chooses religion as its standard bearer is all too common in the region. The sixteen-year Lebanese civil war included elements of sectarian violence. In Algeria and Egypt, armed groups have carried out acts of terror on both Muslims and Christians in the name of religion. In Algeria alone, thousands have been murdered—hundreds in just the past two weeks—purportedly to advance a certain Islamic agenda. And, of course, the Arab-Israeli conflict, while not a religious conflict per se, is laden with religious overtones and has provided grist to extremist groups, some of which—such as Hamas—use religion to rally supporters.

Given the absence of separation of religion and state, it bears highlighting that Middle Eastern governments are often active in regulating and restricting the practice of Islam, as well as of other religions. This is an important element of the religious context in the region that is sometimes overlooked. For example, it is common in many Middle Eastern states for governments to be involved in appointing Islamic clergy, funding mosques and religious workers' salaries, providing guidance for sermons, and monitoring Islamic religious services for unacceptable content. Such restrictions on Islam sometimes exist even in states that accept the free and open practice of other faiths. I raise the issue of restrictions on the practice of Islam in the Middle East to underscore that it is not just religious minorities in the region which face constraints on religious liberty. In some instances the restrictions placed on minorities are mirrored by similar restrictions or regulations of the Islamic majority. Some of these restrictions, moreover, overlap with constraints on other freedoms—such as freedom of speech or freedom of assembly—reinforcing the key point that religious freedom is only likely to thrive in free societies, and where political freedoms are restricted or repressed, the same is often true for religious freedoms.

#### *What Are We Doing About It?*

In my remarks so far, I have tried to lay out for you the general basis of our policy on religious freedom, the context and priorities of our Middle East policy, and the nature of the problem of religious intolerance in the Middle East. The remaining question I wish to deal with today is really the critical one: what are we doing about it? In fact, we are trying to deal with the question of religious freedom on several fronts.

- First, we're speaking out for religious freedom. President Clinton has issued several proclamations on religious freedom and Secretary of State Albright, soon after taking office, stated that freedom of religion is a priority human rights concern for her and made it clear that it should be treated as an important issue in our human rights policy. Religious freedom is one of the core human rights basic to American values. And it's more than just an American value—international human rights instruments and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrine religious freedom as one of the basic, internationally recognized rights of all men and women. One of the reasons I'm pleased to be here today is the opportunity it affords to reiterate our message on religious freedom and to do so in a way that it will be heard around the Middle East and elsewhere.
- Second, we're making it clear when there's a problem in a country. Our annual human rights reports to Congress each contain a section on freedom of religion; these spell out in detail the situation in every country in the world, highlighting

the problems we see. This is a public document that gets wide distribution. And we bring the reports and our concerns directly to the attention of the governments concerned. This year we will also be presenting a report to Congress on persecution of Christians around the world, which will include portions on Middle Eastern countries. And beyond these reports, the State Department comments regularly and publicly on instances of religious intolerance and persecution that come to our attention in all countries, including in the Middle East.

- Third, we have begun to take a much more activist approach in the field to questions of religious freedom. In December, the Department of State instructed all U.S. embassies around the world, including in the Middle East, to be alert to the high priority we attach to religious freedom. We asked our posts to report more actively on these issues, to identify religions, denominations, or sects being discriminated against or persecuted, and to provide suggestions about how the U.S. might most effectively address questions of religious freedom and religious persecution in their countries. This initiative has already begun to show results, with more information coming our way, and some useful suggestions on how to approach certain governments on this issue.
- Fourth, in February we convened the first session of the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom abroad. This new committee brings together twenty of America's most prominent religious leaders, activists, and thinkers to help us forge new policy directions on religious freedom. The creation of the Advisory Committee reflects our recognition that more can and should be done to promote religious freedom abroad. Already the Committee's members are hard at work, and have formed sub-groups on religious persecution and on conflict resolution. By this summer we hope to have the Committee's first recommendations for action.
- Fifth, we have taken an increasingly active approach in raising with Middle Eastern and other governments specific cases of individuals and groups who are suffering discrimination or persecution on religious grounds. Generally, we have done this quietly and through diplomatic channels. We have also encouraged governments to state publicly their opposition to acts of violence and discrimination aimed at individuals or groups because of their religion or belief. In a number of cases we have seen positive results.
- Sixth, we have been active in multilateral fora in raising questions of religious freedom. In the UN Human Rights Commission earlier this month, for example, we cosponsored a resolution on religious intolerance and delivered a strong statement on religious freedom. The United States was instrumental in the creation of a Human Rights Commission Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, and we have been strongly supportive of the Special Rapporteur's activities. We have also drawn attention to specific cases of gross abuse, including Iran's treatment of its Baha'i community and Iraqi persecution of several religious groups.
- Seventh, we have sponsored and funded programs to promote religious liberty and tolerance. Some of these programs are specifically targeted at the issue, while others are broader in scope but still impact positively on the problem. For example, USIS posts in Arab countries have sent clerics, journalists, politicians and academics to the United States to participate in an annual International Visitor program on "Religion in America," in which they meet with American Christian, Muslim, Jewish and ecumenical groups to discuss ways of promoting religious tolerance. Participants have returned impressed with the extent of religious freedom in the U.S. and the possibilities for cooperative relationships among people of different faiths. Through the National Endowment for Democracy we are funding several programs to support tolerance and secularism; for example, a project to enable an independent literary journal to organize debates on religion and democracy among theologians, historians, and lawyers, and another project to translate into Arabic and publish important works on democracy, tolerance and pluralism. Beyond programs focused specifically on religious issues, we are also actively pursuing democracy-building programs around the region, on the basis that building open democratic societies will lead to improved respect for all human rights, including religious freedom. We have such democracy-building programs in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Morocco, and the West Bank and Gaza; some additional programs also focus on related issues such as conflict resolution and the human rights of women.
- Eighth, we have reached out to religious groups and leaders throughout the Middle East. Our embassies maintain close contacts with a broad spectrum of Middle Eastern religious leaders, especially those representing groups suffering discrimination, to reassure them of American interest and see how we can be helpful.

Finally, our overall policy toward the Middle East—while not determined by questions of religious freedom—in fact is aimed at creating the kind of conditions under which religious freedom has a chance to emerge, and to prosper.

- I've spoken, for example, about how the Arab-Israeli conflict has given rise to extremist groups such as Hamas, and has exacerbated religious tensions and intolerance in the region. I have pointed out that our chief policy emphasis is on the Middle East peace process. By establishing peace in the region and building bridges between communities previously at war, we are also establishing a framework for greater tolerance.
- Likewise, our effort to build open societies and encourage the growth of democratic institutions in the Middle East will contribute over time to a climate for greater religious freedom.
- Our efforts to fight terrorism also help strike at the roots of intolerance and religious persecution.
- And, our work to isolate rogue regimes will help weaken many of the leaders most responsible for severe repression in the region.

In these ways, our general approach to Middle East policy is helping to build a framework in which religious tolerance will be more likely to emerge, and to grow.

Mr. Chairman, there is a long way to go to resolve the many aspects of religious intolerance, restriction, and persecution in the Middle East. I cannot tell you today that we have all the answers. Nor can I assert that the United States has the power to bring about changes in religious practices abroad even if we did have the answers. What I can tell you, however, is that we are committed to making the effort. We have structured a broad policy toward the Middle East that is helping to lay the framework for peace and democratic societies, which are essential components of an atmosphere conducive to religious freedom. We are speaking out for religious freedom. We are raising the issue with governments. And we are undertaking a range of policy initiatives to advance our goal of a world where every individual will be at liberty to follow their beliefs and to practice their religion freely. We appreciate your interest in this issue, and would welcome your comments and suggestions. As I said at the outset, freedom of religion is a basic American value; I believe it is an issue on which the Administration and the Congress can see eye to eye, and one on which we can cooperate together effectively.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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### C. Prepared Statement of Bat Ye'or

PAST IS PROLOGUE: THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAMISM TODAY

Mr. Chairman, Members of Congress, Ladies and Gentlemen:

"Past is Prologue." These words are engraved on the pediment of the Archives building in Washington. The English source is probably Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and the original perhaps Ecclesiastes (1:9). I have chosen this motto for my statement today and shall first give an historical overview of the persecution of Christians under Islam.

To fully understand the present tragic situation of Christians in Muslim lands, one must comprehend the ideological and historical pattern that is conducive to violations of human rights, even though this pattern does not seem to be a deliberate, monolithic, anti-Christian policy. However, as this structure is integrated into the corpus of Islamic law (the *shari'a*), it functions in those countries that either apply the *shari'a* in full, or whose laws are inspired by it.

The historical pattern of Muslim-Christian encounters developed soon after the Prophet Muhammad's death in 632. Muslim-Christian relations were then regulated by two legal-theological systems: one based on *jihad*, the other on the *shari'a*. A *Jihad* should not be compared to a Crusade—or to any other war. The strategy and tactics of *jihad* are minutely fixed by theological rules, which the calif or ruler—wielding both spiritual and political power—must obey. The *jihad* practised now in Sudan is conducted according to its traditional rules. One could affirm that all "*jihad*" groups today conform to these decrees.

It is an historical fact that all the Muslim countries around the southern and eastern Mediterranean were Christian lands before being conquered, during a millenium of *jihad* under the banner of Islam. Those vanquished populations—here I am referring only to Christians and Jews—were then "protected," providing they submitted to the Muslim ruler's conditions. Therefore, "protection" in the context of a conquest is the consequence of a war, and this is a very important notion.

In April 1992, for instance, religious leaders in Sudan's Southern Kordofan region—who were "publicly supported at the highest government level"—issued a *fatwa*, which stated: "An insurgent who was previously a Muslim is now an apostate; and a non-Muslim is a non-believer standing as a bulwark against the spread of Islam, and Islam has granted the freedom of killing both of them." This *fatwa* appears in a 1995 Report to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights by the U.N.'s Special Rapporteur on Sudan, Dr. Gaspar Biro. [ECOSOC, E/CN.4/1996/62, para.97a]

This religious text gives the traditional definition of a *harbi* (someone living in the *Dar al-harb*, the "region of war"), an infidel who has not been subjected by *jihad*, and therefore whose life and property—according to classical texts of Islamic jurists—is thus forfeited to any Muslim. (It also gives a definition of an apostate who can be killed—the cases of Salman Rushdie in 1989, Farag Foda in 1992 and Taslima Nasreen 1994 are other examples where the death sentence was decreed.)

Non-Muslims are protected only if they submit to Islamic domination by a "Pact"—or *Dhimma*—which imposes degrading and discriminatory regulations. In my books, I have provided documents from Islamic sources and from the vanquished peoples, establishing a sort of classification so that the origins, development and aims of these regulations can be recognized when they are revived nowadays. I am only referring to Christians and Jews, because they share the same Islamic theological and legal category, referred to in the Koran as "People of the Book"—the word "*people*" is in the singular. If they accept to submit to a Muslim ruler, they then become "protected *dhimmi* peoples"—tributaries, since their protection is linked to an obligatory payment of a koranic polltax (the *jizya*) to the Islamic community (the *umma*).

This protection is abolished—if the *dhimmis* should rebel against Islamic law; give allegiance to non-Muslim power; refuse to pay the koranic *jizya*; entice a Muslim from his faith; harm a Muslim or his property; commit blasphemy. Blasphemy includes denigration of the Prophet Muhammad, the Koran, the Muslim faith, the *shari'a* by suggesting that it has a defect, and by refusing the decision of the *ijma*—which is the consensus of the Islamic community or *umma* (Koran III: 106). The moment the "pact of protection" is abolished, the *jihad* resumes, which means that the lives of the *dhimmis* and their property are forfeited. Those Islamists in Egypt who kill and pillage Copts consider that these Christians—or *dhimmis*—have forfeited their "protection" because they do not pay the *jizya*.

In other words, this "protector-protected" relationship is typical of a war-treaty between the conqueror and the vanquished, and this situation remains valid for



Islamists because it is fixed in theological texts. But it should be emphasized that other texts in the Koran stress religious tolerance and peaceful relations, which frequently existed. [Nonetheless, early jurists and theologians—invoking the koranic principle of the “abrogation” of an earlier text by a later one—have established an extremist doctrine of *jihād*, which is a collective duty.]

The protection system presents both positive and negative aspects: it provides security and a measure of religious autonomy. On the other hand, *dhimmis* suffered many legal disabilities intended to reduce them to a condition of humiliation and segregation. Those rules were established as early as the 8th and 9th centuries by the founders of the four schools of Islamic law: Hanafi, Malaki, Shafi'i and Hanbali.

The *shari'a* is a complete compendium of laws based on theological sources, principally the Koran and *hadiths*—that is, the sayings and acts of the Prophet. The *shari'a* comprises the legal status of the *dhimmis*: what is permitted and what is forbidden to them. It sets the pattern of the Muslims' social and political behavior toward *dhimmis* and explains its theological, legal and political motivations.

It is this comprehensive system, which lasted for up to thirteen centuries, that I have analysed in my last book [*The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam*] as the “civilization of dhimmitude.” Its archetype—the dehumanized *dhimmi*—has permeated Islamic civilization, culture and thought and is being revived through the Islamist resurgence and the return of the *shari'a*.

The main principles of “dhimmitude” are:

- (1) the inequality of rights in all domains between Muslims and *dhimmis*;
- (2) the social and economic discrimination of the *dhimmis*;
- (3) the humiliation and vulnerability of the *dhimmis*.

Numerous laws were enacted over the centuries in order to implement these principles, which remained in practice throughout the 19th century and in some regions into the 20th century.

Arab-Islamic civilization developed in conquered Christian lands, among Christian majorities which were eventually reduced to minorities. The process of the Islamization of Christian societies appears at all levels. It is part and parcel of the Christian suffering embodied in laws, customs, behavior patterns and prejudices that were perpetuated during many centuries. Christianity could survive in some countries like Egypt and the Balkans where their situation was tolerable, but in other places they were wiped out physically, expelled or forced to emigrate.

[During the whole of the 19th century, European governments tried to convince Muslim rulers—from Constantinople to North Africa—to abolish the discriminations against *dhimmis*. This policy led to reforms in the Ottoman Empire from 1839—known as the Tanzimat—but it was only in Egypt, under the strong rule of Mohammed Ali, that real progress was made. Improvements in the Ottoman Empire and Persia, imposed by Europe, were bitterly resented by the populace and religious leaders.]

European laws were introduced in the process of Turkish modernization, and in some Arab countries, but it was only under colonial rule that Christian and Jewish minorities were truly liberated from centuries of opprobrium. Traditionalists however resented the Westernization of their countries, the emancipation of the *dhimmis* and the laws imported from infidel lands. The fight for decolonization was also a struggle by the Islamists to re-establish strict Islamic law.

*Why is this persecution ignored by the Churches, governments and media?*

The 19th century—and even after World War I—was a traumatizing period of genocidal slaughter of Christians, spreading from the Balkans (Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria) to Armenia and to the Middle East. In this context of death, the doctrine of an Islamic-Christian symbiosis was conceived toward the end of the 19th century by Eastern Christians as a desperate shield against terror and slavery. This doctrine—which also included anti-Zionism—had many facets, both political and religious. In the long term, its results were mostly negative.

It is this doctrine—still professed today—that is responsible for the general silence about the ongoing tragedy of Eastern Christians. Any mention of *jihād* and of the persecutions of Christians by Muslims was a taboo subject, because one could not denounce persecution and simultaneously proclaim that an Islamic-Christian symbiosis has always existed in the past and the present. It is in this cocoon of lies and of a deliberately imposed silence, solidly supported by the Churches, governments and the media—each for its own reasons—that persecution of Christians could develop freely, during this century, even until now, with little hindrance. Moreover, this doctrine also blocked the memory of dhimmitude, leaving a vacuum

of thirteen centuries whose emptiness was filled with a myth that was useless as a means to prevent the return of old prejudices and persecutions.

For this reason, dhimmitude—which covers several centuries of Christian and Jewish history, and which is a comprehensive civilization englobing legislation, customs, social behavior and prejudices—has never been analysed, nor publicly discussed. It is this silence—for which academia in Europe and America bear much responsibility—that allows the perpetuation of religious discrimination and persecution today. There are many factors that explain this silence of governments, Churches, academia and the media on such a tragic issue concerning persecuted Christians in the Muslim world; they are interrelated and although their motivations are different they have solidly cemented a wall of silence that has buried the historical reality.

*Proposals for redressing these violations of fundamental human rights:*

I. To define the ways and means to end this tragedy:

(1) Not to foster an anti-Islamic current which would be wrong, as the vast majority of Muslims are themselves victims of Islamists in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, etc.

(2) Christians must continue to live in their historical lands because it is their right, and only they can transform traditional Muslim mentalities. These dwindling communities should be encouraged to stay, as their presence will signify that Muslims have accepted that Jews and Christians also possess the right to life and dignity in their ancient homelands—and not under a *dhimmi* protection, but with human rights equal to those of Muslims. If they fail, it will be our loss in the West too. Islamic countries that once had a Judeo-Christian culture should not become monolithically Islamic—that is, *Christianrein*, as they have become virtually *Judenrein*—through a policy of ethnic cleansing that followed a long historical period of discrimination.

(3) If the human rights—and the minority rights—of Christians are not respected in those countries that formerly had Christian majorities, then the rights of all non-Muslims will be challenged by the Islamists' resurgence. It is for Christians worldwide—particularly in America and Europe, and for the international community also—to assure that the human rights for all religious minorities are respected worldwide.

II. We should realize that those populations are in grave danger and that even Muslim governments cannot protect them from mob violence—sometimes they pretend to be unable to do so, in order to stop foreign pressure or public campaigns. We should also remember that, from the late 1940's, the Jewish communities in the Arab-Muslim world—then more than a million, now 1 percent of that number, under 10,000 and fast dwindling—were the victims of persecution, terrorism, pillage and religious hatred that forced them to flee or emigrate. Christians were left as the only non-Muslims on whom religious fanaticism and hatred could be focused. Each Christian community tried to resist the return of the old order, following the path of secularism or communism.

The Islamists reproach Christians in their countries for:

- (1) being against the implementation of the *shari'a*;
- (2) demanding equal rights, basing themselves on International Covenants;
- (3) seeking foreign help to achieve equality with fellow Muslim citizens.

For the Islamists, these three accusations alone are tantamount to rebellion. It was these same motives that had justified the first great massacres of the Armenians a century ago in 1894–96, punished for having rebelled and for claiming the reforms that were promised.

This is why *dhimmis* communities were always careful to proclaim their enmity to Europe. An outward opposition to Christian countries being their life-saving shield against threats from their environment, they have interiorized this animosity to the point that they often strive for the triumph of Islam, some of them even becoming the best and most perfect tools of Islamic propaganda and interests in Europe and America. (The late Father Yoakim Moubarac and Georges Corm in France, and Edward Said in America, are but three examples out of many.)

III. In order to avoid mistakes and be more effective, one has to realize the difference of contexts between the campaign for Soviet Jewry in the 1970's and 1980's, and the promotion of human rights for Christians in Islamic lands today. The main difficulty arises because the discrimination or persecution in some countries cannot be ascribed to a deliberate government policy. It is rather a fact of civilization: the traditional contempt for *dhimmis*—not so different from that of African Americans in the past—and irritation because they are outstepping their rights and must be

obliged to return to their former status. Sometimes, however, it is imposed by the Islamists, and a weak government doesn't dare to protect the Christians, fearing to become even more unpopular, because anti-Western and anti-Christian prejudices have imbued Muslim culture and society for centuries.

(1) There are many ways to persecute Christians; some are by legal means, like the laws concerning the building or the repair of churches; others, by terror. A Christian can be killed, not because he committed a crime, but simply because he belongs to a group of infidels, who, allegedly, are in rebellion. Or for reasons of "spectacle-terrorism," that can serve as a deterrent policy to fulfill the terrorists' aims.

(2) Another point concerns the use of a *fatwa*. If a *fatwa* is decreed against an individual, any Muslim is authorized to kill him, and by so doing he is the executor of what is considered the sentence of Allah.

IV. The problem is multifarious; it is not only religious but also cultural. This aspect is more acute with Christian, than with Jewish, communities because Muslims conquered Christian lands and civilizations that were then subjected to a deliberate policy of Arabization and Islamization. Take, as an example, Christian pre-Islamic Coptic history: language and culture are neglected, if not a forbidden, domain because it would imply that Muslim history had been imperialistic. But culture and history are important elements of a group's identity and there are many Muslim intellectuals who are proud of Egypt's Pharaonic and Coptic past. It is the Islamists who reject this past, as an infidel culture—a part of the *jahaliyah*, what existed before Islam, considered taboo.

Therefore, I would also suggest further goals, such as:

(1) Recovering "Memory," the long history of the *dhimmi* peoples, of dhimmitude—the collective cultural patrimony of Jews and Christians—for without their memory, and their history, peoples fade away and die.

(2) Preventing the destruction of Christians' historical monuments, either by local governments, or by Unesco, as was done with Abu Simbel, and other sites that now belong to the World's cultural legacy.

V. Discussing "dhimmitude" in academia and elsewhere. This is a Judeo-Christian historical patrimony and those whose heritage it is are entitled to know about it. The discussion of dhimmitude with Muslims, however, is fraught with difficulties. In the eyes of Islamists, any criticism of Islamic law and history is assimilated to a blasphemy. For a *dhimmi*, it is forbidden to imply that Islamic law has a default, or to contradict the *ijma*, the consensus. Moreover, the court testimony of a *dhimmi* against a Muslim is not accepted. Therefore, as dhimmitude is the testimony of *dhimmi* history—of Christians and Jews—under Islamic oppression, it would not be considered valid in traditionalist circles. Besides, the unification of religious and political power transfers the political domain into the religious one, and therefore any criticism of Islamic civilization may become, for Islamists and others, a blasphemy.

[The case of Farag Foda, an Egyptian Muslim intellectual, who defended the Copts and strongly criticized some Muslim religious authorities was exemplary: he was assassinated in 1992, after a *fatwa*. In giving his testimony, the late Sheikh Muhammad El-Ghazali implicitly justified his assassination on the grounds of apostasy; he stated that anyone opposing the *shari'a* was an apostate and thus deserved death.]

VI. Encourage Muslim intellectuals to strive in their own countries, and in the West, for the defense of equal human rights for Christians and others. The 1981 UNESCO Declaration on Islamic Human Rights and that of Cairo in 1990, both conditional on the *shari'a*, are insufficient.

VII. Creation of a team of experts and lawyers—and not apologists—in order to discuss the problem, always stressing that the aim is not to foster anti-Muslim or anti-Islamic feelings, but to create peace and reconciliation between religions and peoples, without which the next century will become a bloodbath and a clash of civilizations.

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#### DHIMMITUDE: JEWS AND CHRISTIANS UNDER ISLAM

[by Bat Ye'or]

*Midstream/February–March 1997.*—Except for Asia, all the countries that were conquered by *jihād* (Muslim holy war) in the course of history—from Arabia to Spain and the Balkans, including Hungary and Poland—were peopled by innumerable Christians and by Jewish communities. This geographical context is therefore the true terrain of interaction between the three religions. Actually, it was in Is-

lamic lands that they opposed, or collaborated with, one another for up to 13 centuries. I have called this vast political, religious, and cultural span the realm of “dhimmitude,” from *dhimma*, a treaty of submission for each people conquered by *jihād*.

The historical field is generally studied in the context of “Islamic tolerance,” but “tolerance”—or “toleration”—is an ambiguous word since it implies a moral and subjective connotation. Moreover, this word “toleration” cannot encompass the historical density and the complexities of the numerous peoples vanquished by Islam over the centuries, as it is a vague and general notion used irrespective of space and time.

Instead of “toleration,” I have proposed the concept of “dhimmitude,” derived from the word *dhimma*. The vanquished, subject to Islamic law, become a *dhimmi* people, protected by the *dhimma* pact from destruction.

Islamic legislation governing *dhimmi* peoples was the same for Jews and Christians, although the latter suffered more from it—declining from majorities, at the dawn of the Islamic conquest, to tiny minorities in their own countries. The domain of dhimmitude comprises all aspects of the condition of the *dhimmis*: that is, the Jews and Christians tolerated under Islamic law. Dhimmitude as an historical category is common to, but not identical for, Jews and Christians under Islam.

Islamic law governing Christian *dhimmis* developed from Byzantine Christian legislation enacted from the fourth to the sixth century. It aimed at imposing legal inferiority on native Jews of Christianized countries—lands that were subsequently Islamized. These early Christian influences on Islamic law are not limited to the juridical domain but also appear at the theological level.

The study of the Jewish *dhimmi* condition necessarily encompasses the theological and political interaction between the three religions. During Vatican II (1963–1965), for instance, the Arab Churches—yielding to pressure from their governments—strongly objected to the proposed suppression of the “deicide” accusation against the Jews. Yet the crucifixion of Jesus is not recognized in the Koran; therefore, the accusation of deicide is meaningless for Islam. Such interferences by Arab governments in a strictly Judeo-Christian theological matter were intended to maintain the delegitimization of the State of Israel in a Christian context. Indeed, it was the deicide accusation that had structured Byzantine policy of Jerusalem’s dejudaization and the promulgation of a specific, degrading Jewish status. It was that same status that Muslim jurists adapted to the *jihād* context with harsher modifications, imposing it equally on Jews and Christians. Clearly, Jewish-Muslim relations also comprise those Jewish-Christian relations that were transposed within an Islamic context—particularly the Jewish status in Christian legislation. Similarly, the Islamic-Christian relationship cannot obscure its Jewish dimension because Islam associates Christians and Jews in the same *dhimmi* category—a specific category that was first enacted by Christians for Jews in a quite different theological context.

The study of dhimmitude comprises these multifarious aspects and requires an approach devoid of apriorisms. One can try to define the ideology that imposes dhimmitude on non-Muslim peoples: their obligatory submission by war or surrender to Islamic domination. One could examine its origin, the legal and political means used to dominate other peoples, the causes of its expansion or of its regression. Actually, it is a study of the ideology of *jihād*, whose jurisdiction—based on the modalities of battles and conquest—must be imposed on the vanquished peoples. How this or that land or city was conquered will determine for all time the laws to be applied there. Centuries after the Islamic conquest, Muslim jurists still consulted ancient chroniclers to determine whether churches and synagogues were legal or forbidden in towns or regions that had formerly been conquered, whether by surrender or by battles and treaties. Such regulations concerning religious buildings are still enforced in many Muslim countries today. So one discovers, throughout the ebb and flow of history, that dhimmitude is composed of a fixed ideological and legal structure. It constitutes an ideological, sociological, and political reality, since it is integrated into every aspect of those human societies which it characterizes. This is proved by its geographical development, its historical perennialism, and its present resurgence.

The body of law prescribing dhimmitude originated from a single source: Islamic power. Apart from a few minor differences regarding the *shari’a*’s (Islamic law’s) interpretation, the *dhimmi* status constituted a homogeneous unit applied in the *dar al-Islam*. But the peoples of dhimmitude comprised all the ethnic, religious, and cultural variations of the Islamized regions of Africa, Asia, and Europe—thereby implying regional differences. One must therefore study the local history of each *dhimmi* group in order to detect if the causes of differentiation were of a geographical or a demographical nature, or the result of pre-Islamic local factors. Thus, dhimmitude should encompass the comparative study of all *dhimmi* groups, for territories were

not just conquered; their Islamization could take three or even four centuries, while some regions had already been Islamized by migrations prior to their military and political conquest. The study of dhimmitude, then, is the study of the progressive Islamization of Christian civilizations. In this evolution, one detects permanent structures but also different local factors that facilitated or temporarily checked this process.

The confusion of the political and economic domain is an important element in the development of the mechanism of dhimmitude. In exchange for economic advantages, non-Muslim rulers conceded to the Islamic power an essential political asset: territory. This policy appears at the start of the Islamic-Christian encounter. In modern times, the financial interests of Lebanese Christian politicians with the Muslim world were decisive in the intercommunal struggle that led to the final destruction of Lebanese Christianity. In this context of political concessions in exchange for financial gains, one should emphasize that the economic domain belongs always to the short term and the conjunctural, while the political sphere is long-term and implies power, notably military power. Hence, this feature of corruption—paramount in the whole system of dhimmitude—which is, in fact, the surrender of political power (territorial independence) for the economic control by the *dhimmi* Church leaders over their communities.

It is evident that the civilizations of dhimmitude are extremely complex. The process of Islamization of such societies rested on several factors, the most important being the demographical one that transformed Christian majorities into minorities. This result was achieved through several means that combined legal disabilities and economic oppression in times of peace; and destruction, deportation, and slavery in wartime and during riots or recurrent political instability. Such a transformation of civilization and of peoples also implied an extensive mechanism of osmosis, including collaboration and collusion by the elites of those Christian nations that were engaged in the painful process of their self-destruction. Without this perennial collusion, the Islamic state could never have survived. Christians had collaborated in its development on all social levels and in every field, either by free choice or otherwise.

It was through Christian patriarchs and Jewish community leaders that the Islamic government imposed its authority, making of them its instruments in the control and oppression of their respective populations. Thus, entire *dhimmi* groups collaborated in the growth of the Islamic civilization. One could also investigate the way in which different Christian and Jewish groups reacted to dhimmitude. We know that there was a strong alliance between Arab-Muslim invading troops and the local Arab-Christian tribes, as well as with the Oriental Churches. Some members of the Christian clergy not only welcomed the Muslim armies, but also surrendered their cities. The Eastern Churches were always associated with Islamic rule and benefited from it, becoming thereby the sole administrators of millions of Christians. One can examine the role of the clergy, the military class, the politicians, and the intellectuals in assisting the Islamic advance that placed their own peoples under the yoke of dhimmitude. Documents of this kind abound concerning the later Ottoman conquest of the Balkans.

The conflict of interests within the *dhimmi* populations indicates that different forces were at work in each community: forces of collaboration and forces of resistance. Thus, dhimmitude encompasses various types of relationships at all levels between the Muslim community and the dominated, tolerated, *dhimmi*s—relationships that were regulated by laws ensuring Islamic protection and that embrace politics, history, and conjunctural situations. Modern studies on the Turkish advance in the Balkan peninsula have mentioned the mental climate that prepared a society for its surrender. One finds an evolution at all social levels, combining compromise, collusion, and the corruption that facilitated the final submission.

A similar process could have been detected in the modern history of Lebanon from the beginning of the 20th century to the recent disintegration of Christian resistance. Here, the internecine conflict between the forces of collusion and resistance brought about the collapse of the targeted Christian groups. The situation in southern Sudan and in the Philippines provides contemporary examples of such internecine conflicts that could lead to similar situations.

Dhimmitude also encompasses the relationship between each *dhimmi* group, the religious rivalry between Churches seeking to use the Muslim power in order to diminish or destroy rivals. This domain also overlaps with the dynastic, political, and national conflicts between Christian rulers who obtained power through Islamic help. Since the status of dhimmitude lasted from three to 13 centuries, depending upon regions, it allows one to study numerous cases of different peoples—all theoretically subject to the same Islamic jurisdiction, with differences here and there.

What were the results of Muslim interference on the inter-community relationships between the *dhimmi* peoples themselves? Did it keep their conflicts alive? How did the Muslim power manifest its protection? (The *dhimmi*s were, of course protected by Islamic law.) There is also the conflict between jurists, inclined toward a more severe interpretation of the law, and the caliphs or rulers whose policies were sometimes more lenient—a problem still topical today. Therefore, the domain of dhimmitude consists of the interaction of the *dhimmi* peoples among themselves, with the Muslim power, and with the outside world. What were the consequences of the protection afforded to each *dhimmi* group by the European Christian countries? How did their political and commercial rivalries affect the interrelationship of the *dhimmi* peoples and their situation within their Muslim environment? And to this should be added the consequences of proselytism among the various contending Churches.

One might think that the history of dhimmitude had long since disappeared into a forgotten past, but this is not so. Specialists have called political Islamic radicalism a “return,” thus implying the existence in the past of a political ideology that had disappeared and is now resurfacing. Optimistic analysts focus only on the economic and political factors that have contributed to the emergence of Islamic radicalism, although its ideologico-religious causes and traditional roots are so obvious that they alone would justify the use of the term “return.”

*Jihad* militancy and the reintroduction of some of the *shari'a*'s provisions in countries where they had been abolished are now threatening indigenous Christians and other non-Muslim populations. The most tragic cases are found in Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, and Upper Egypt (by Islamists). Aspects of the *dhimmi* condition—abolished under European pressure from the mid-19th century on—is returning in these countries, and elsewhere.

Even antisemitic statements made by Abbé Pierre in April 1996, firmly condemned by the French episcopate and public opinion, are a reminder of a pervasive Christian dhimmitude. Abbé Pierre—one of France's most popular public figures—reiterated that, because of their iniquities since the time of Joshua, the Jews had forfeited God's Promise. Apart from being a classic example of the Church's judeophobia, such a declaration was clearly aimed at pleasing the Muslims. Since the Judeo-Christian reconciliation initiated by Vatican II, the Arab Churches requested from the Vatican a strictly symmetrical attitude toward Jews and Muslims. This requirement establishes, in fact, a false symmetry between totally different theological, historical, and political contexts: the Judeo-Christian relationship and the Islamic-Christian relationship. The Jews were oppressed in Christian lands but never had any ambition to conquer them and impose their own laws there, whereas Islamic armies seized innumerable Christian lands in which only small, vulnerable, and scattered Christian communities survive today.

Abbé Pierre's earlier meditations at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem were thus symmetrically balanced by a visit to Yasir Arafat in Gaza, where he begged forgiveness for the West's creation of the State of Israel. But the good Abbé could have spared himself such scruples, for Israel's rebirth occurred despite the genocide of European Jewry, and from the start the Vatican only supported the Palestinian cause. But a “Palestinian genocide” has become a symbolic necessity to balance the genocide of the Jews. Overlooking a span of more than three millennia, Abbé Pierre chose to link—anachronistically and in a delirious amalgamation—today's Arab Palestinians with Biblical Philistines and Amalekites in the time of Joshua.

It is this desire for a specious symmetry that reduced to oblivion the tragic and painful domain of Christian dhimmitude, which could not be paralleled with a similar Jewish domination over Christian populations. Indeed, much effort has been deployed in Europe to establish similarities between Palestinians in Israel and *dhimmi*s, especially by blaming Israeli security measures to counter Palestinian terrorism, which was conveniently glossed over as “freedom fighting.” This attitude not only expresses a traditional Christian judeophobia—now totally rejected by the Vatican and other churches—but also the complexity of Europe's relations with Israel and with Arab countries, where Christian rights are challenged by Islamists. As Europe's policy is determined mainly by its own strategic and economic interests, it shows no more sympathy to Eastern Christians than it does to Israelis. Islamic radicalism is feared, as it could provoke in Europe anti-Muslim reactions leading to economic retaliation and terrorism from Muslim states.

Since the beginning of this century, starting with the Armenian genocide (1896–1917), then the massacres of Christians in Iraq (1933) and Syria (1937), the condition of the Eastern Christians (in spite of their involvement in Arab politics) has constantly deteriorated. Thus, one can see how dhimmitude still influences the interaction of different religious groups. To be sure, many scholars have studied

their histories separately, but the concept of dhimmitude provides a wider and unified framework for all those varied communities that have undergone the same experience throughout history.

It is interesting to examine the different paths that each *dhimmi* group felt compelled to adopt, either by historical circumstances or geography, to regain its liberty and dignity. The national liberation of *dhimmi* peoples meant that the jurisdiction of dhimmitude, imposed by *jihad*, was abolished; they could then recover their proscribed language, their history, and their culture. The Christian peoples of the Balkans fought for their national sovereignty, as did the Armenians later, and the Jews in their own homeland; but Christians of the Middle East chose assimilation in a secularized Islamic society and became arabized.

As a result of European colonialism in Arab lands, as well as the rebellions and struggle for the national liberation of Christian peoples in the Ottoman Empire, hundreds of thousands of Christians were killed during the 19th and early 20th centuries in Muslim-dominated regions. Christians lived in constant fear of further atrocities. The Greeks were saved from a genocide in the early 19th century by the intervention of the Anglo-French and Russian armies. Their uprisings throughout that century were punished by massacres and the slavery and conversion of women and children. Similar reprisals struck both Serbs and Bulgarians in their own lands.

The genocide of the Armenians and atrocities in Iraq and Syria compelled the Lebanese Christians to create a refuge country for their persecuted brethren from neighboring lands. Some Lebanese were favorable to the restoration of a Jewish state in its historical homeland and were sympathetic to the Zionist cause, for they knew that the position of Jews and Christians under Islam was similar. But this current, led by the Maronite Patriarch Antun Arida and Beirut's Archbishop Ignace Mubarak, represented a small minority among the Eastern Christians, who remained, like the Vatican, adamantly hostile to a Jewish state in Palestine, and especially to any Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem. Within the context of the Jewish national liberation movement, one should remember that Muslims and the Oriental Churches were hostile to a massive return of Jews to their homeland. Jews had been condemned to suffering and exile by both Christianity and Islam, and therefore Jewish sovereignty in Palestine-Israel was totally unacceptable. How much European opposition to a Jewish state had helped the execution of the Final Solution is a question that concerns historians of the Shoah. Clearly, antisemitism is intrinsically linked to the concept of Jewish evilness, which justifies a *judenrein* Palestine, especially Jerusalem.

Thus, one finds, in both the political and religious spheres, a hostile Islamic-Christian front against Zionism and later against the State of Israel. Many of these Oriental Christian leaders thought that this Islamic-Christian front against Zionism would help secure their position in the Arab world, first under the banner of pan-Arabism, and then under the slogan: "the just Palestinian cause." Palestinian anti-Zionist Christians, especially their clergy, were in the vanguard of the battle for the destruction of Israel. Some proudly participated in the worst acts of terrorism. Much of the anti-Israeli propaganda was formulated by Christian Palestinians in order to exacerbate traditional judeophobia in the West. Among them were clergymen from the Levant, such as Greek-Catholic Archbishop Hilarion Capucci. In fact, many in the West justified the *jihad* aims and tactics against Israel—and even against Jews everywhere.

The responsiveness of post-Shoah Europe to anti-Zionism has many geostrategic and economic reasons, but it also derives from the easy channeling of traditional judeophobia into anti-Zionism. Thus, it is not surprising that the PLO's official Christian representatives were much appreciated by politicians, intellectuals, and the European media. In antisemitic circles, they were endowed with a holy mission, embodied in the historic role of the Palestinian clergy. In Byzantine Palestine, the clergy had forbidden Jews to reside and pray in Jerusalem. One of the worst massacres of Jews occurred at the instigation of the Jerusalem Patriarch Sophronius, who suggested it in 628 to the Emperor Heraclius (610–641). Some years later, when the Arabs conquered Jerusalem from the Greeks, Sophronius tried to persuade Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab to forbid any Jewish presence in Jerusalem. So we see that even at this moment of the terrible defeat, slaughter, and anguish for Christians, the Palestinian Patriarch was obsessed by judeophobia. Sophronius, later canonized, died a few years after surrendering Jerusalem to the Muslim conquerors. When welcoming Yasir Arafat in 1995 to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem for the traditional Christmas Mass, Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah was happy to recall how Sophronius had delivered Jerusalem to Umar in 636; 40 years later—and until the 1860s—no cross could adorn a church in Jerusalem.

Throughout the centuries, Christian judeophobia in Jerusalem and Palestine was virulent. In my books, I have reproduced 19th-century reports from French and British consuls who were shocked by this hatred, which did lead to criminal acts. In this century, anti-Zionism cemented the Palestinian Islamic-Christian alliance with Hitler's ideology; this collaboration with Nazi Germany is well known.

Whereas the Shoah developed in a European context, anti-Zionism belongs to the domain of dhimmitude. Here the powerless Palestinian Christians—like Sophronius—had to rely on the Arab-Muslim force to prevent the restoration of a Jewish state. Among the multitude of events from the 20th century, historians in the next millennium may well be intrigued by two particularities: the first concerns the relentlessness shown by many European politicians in exterminating and pillaging European Jewry; the second concerns post-Shoah Europe, which is linked to the first by a similar desire of many to demonize Israel. Yet this 20th century has witnessed important Western strategic defeats in the Middle East. Armenian independence, promised at the end of World War I (Treaty of Sèvres) was never implemented; the same applies to the Kurds. Lebanon, considered as a paragon for the realization of an Islamic-Christian symbiosis, finally collapsed in a bloody tragedy. Massacres and slavery continue to ravage the Christian and Animist populations of southern Sudan; the war in the Philippines fueled by a secessionist Muslim minority group has claimed 120,000 lives over the past 20 years. Genocidal massacres have been perpetrated in numerous countries, but for 30 years the main target—constantly highlighted in the media—remained Israel. This extraordinary blindness was in part caused by the Palestinian clergy which, with its numerous religious and secular channels in Europe and elsewhere, helped to uphold the Palestinian issue as the world's first priority.

However, the militancy against Israel of the Islamic-Christian front paradoxically led to increased instability and anguish for Arab-Christians. The reasons are not difficult to find. In order to maintain this anti-Zionist front, Oriental Christians were obliged to make continual compromises. They were afraid to mention their own history of suffering and dhimmitude under Islam for fear of irritating the Muslim world; it became a taboo subject even in Europe. Eastern Christians, especially the Palestinians, thought that their support for the anti-Israeli *jihad* would secure their safety in a hostile environment. But this policy brought negative results: (1) The encouragement of an anti-Israeli *jihad* had fueled and developed a rhetoric of war-hatred against Christians because the dogma of *jihad* associates them with Jews. The more the Christians fought to delegitimize Israel, the more they weakened their own rights; (2) this factor had dramatic consequences for the Lebanese Christians. Like the Jews, their war for freedom in their own country was a struggle to impose on the Islamic world the respect for their rights to dignity—not to be considered as an inferior group, ready for a modernized dhimmitude. And as a result of their common destiny with Jews in Islamic dogma, the *jihad* aggressivity rebounded against the Lebanese Christians inadequately prepared for such a confrontation. And since the history of dhimmitude and *jihad* was obfuscated in Europe—thanks to the Christian pro-Islamic, anti-Zionist lobby—and as the Palestinian cause became *the* sacred cause of the international community, when the PLO fought the Christians in Lebanon, the latter were soon abandoned.

Hence, the concealment of *dhimmi* history, and of the ideology of *jihad*—a deliberate policy maintained for decades in the West—has facilitated a return of the past, as the same political system is now inscribed in the program of today's Islamists.

There is another, no less important, aspect of dhimmitude: the psychological and spiritual one. The *dhimmi* mentality appears with no great differences in its Christian or Jewish version. One could examine it either in relation to the concept of rights or to that of toleration. One should bear in mind that the study of dhimmitude necessitates an examination of the common condition of both Jews and Christians who form one entity: the "People of the Book." They are thus complementary, and the rules applied to one group concern likewise the other. Another aspect of this complex historical domain relates to their mutual relationship in the world of dhimmitude, and to the manner in which each group viewed the other. Solidarity and mutual aid in time of persecution existed, as did denunciation and revenge motivated by fear and greed. But, in general, a similar condition contributed to created mutual bonds of understanding.

Thus, one realizes that the concept of dhimmitude—rather than the term "tolerated minorities"—covers a wide domain of research. One can study its dynamic, its evolution, its modalities, and the interactions of diverse elements within this context that shed light on the areas of fusion, interdependence and confrontation between



Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Dhimmitude is a neutral concept and therefore a tool for historical investigation.

For me, as a Jew, this insight into Christian dhimmitude represented an intellectual experience that was not easy to undertake. This was not the domineering face of European Christendom, persecuting and triumphant, but the discovery of its persecuted, humiliated, and suffering *other* side. In short, Eastern Christianity's history of dhimmitude under Islam is a sort of "Jewish experience"—endured this time by Christians. This is why this history was so resolutely and intensely denied by most Eastern Christians, especially Palestinians. For a Jew, this quest constitutes a moral ascesis because it is no easy task to find expressions of the same suffering in one's persecutor. But this companionship gives a new approach to human trials and opens common perspectives of reconciliation with Muslims. It makes it easier for Jews and Christians to strive with liberal Muslims, thus freeing them from prejudices of the past and from the concepts of *jihad* and "tolerance," replacing them with new bonds of friendship and esteem between equals.

For the Jewish people—liberated from Christian antisemitism in its own homeland, as well as from dhimmitude imposed on them by Islam—this long task of reconciliation with Christianity and Islam could strengthen respect between the three religions and their respective peoples.

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### D. Prepared Statement of Nina Shea

Mr. Chairman, I wish to express Freedom House's gratitude to you and the Subcommittee for holding these important hearings today and for inviting me to testify on the long-neglected atrocity of religious persecution against Christians in the Middle East.

Christians in many parts of the world suffer brutal torture, arrest, imprisonment, and even death—their homes and communities laid waste—for no other reason than that they are Christians. Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world today.

Eleven countries where Christians are currently enduring great religious persecution are profiled in my new book *In the Lion's Den*. A number of Middle Eastern countries are included: Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan. Although these countries contain but a small sample of the Christians victimized throughout the world for their faith, they represent some of the worst—if not *the* worst—oppressors of Christianity in the world. Militant Islam is one of two political ideologies (the other being communism) that have consistently oppressed Christians, as well as other independent groups and individuals. While there are cases of persecution of Christian minorities by Hindus, Buddhists, and even by other dominant Christian groups, it is anti-Christian persecution by militant Islam and communism that, because of their global sweep and virulence, poses the greatest threat.

It is important to understand the distinction between persecution and discrimination or bigotry. The most egregious human rights atrocities are being committed against Christians living in militant Islamic societies solely because of their religious beliefs and activities. The atrocities include torture, enslavement, rape, imprisonment, forcible separation of children from parents, killings, and massacres—abuses that threaten the very survival of entire Christian communities, many of which have existed for hundreds or even two thousand years.

Persecution in the Middle East has led to a vastly diminished Christian presence. In Iraq the number of Christians has decreased from 35 percent to 5 percent of the overall population during this century; in Iran, from 15 percent to 2 percent; in Syria, from 40 percent to 10 percent; and in Turkey, from 32 percent to 0.2 percent since the early part of the twentieth century.

In some cases—such as in Iran and Saudi Arabia—it is the regime that is the oppressor. In others, including Pakistan and Egypt, societal forces are at work, while the government—out of weakness—acquiesces, failing to stop the persecution despite well-organized assaults or known instigators. In the countries of the Middle East that are under scrutiny at today's hearings, Christians are vulnerable minorities within the society.

The rights of Christians and other groups to practice their religion freely—irrespective of the culture and customs of an area, or a Christian community's minority status—is universally recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous other international treaties and instruments. In other words, the United Nations' world body has agreed that Christians have fundamental rights to express their Christianity; even in non-Christian parts of the world. The most specific of these documents is the *United Nations' Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*. This declaration guarantees the right of Christians and others to worship freely, as well as the right to teach religion, write and disseminate religious publications, designate religious leaders, communicate with coreligionists at home and abroad, solicit and receive charitable contributions, and educate children in religion and morality according to parents' wishes. In the country discussions that follow, these rights are honored primarily in the breach.

SAUDI ARABIA completely bans Christianity. No churches, bibles, Christian artifacts, symbols or literature are permitted. Religious police seek out secret worship services by raids on private homes. A quarter of the population are foreign workers and many are Christian. Hundreds are in prison for Christian worship, some are sentenced to be beheaded. Amnesty testified that the oppression against Christians has worsened since the Gulf War.

EGYPT'S Coptic community, believed to have been evangelized by Mark in the first century, is vanishing under a violent onslaught by Muslim extremists. Thousands of Coptic Christians have been forced to flee their homes or convert to Islam after large mobs of fanatical Muslim youths laid waste their villages in the Upper Egypt region in early 1996. In February and March this year, two more pogroms by Islamic terrorists were directed against the Copts in Upper Egypt, leaving over 30 dead, including select young people being groomed for leadership roles in the

Church. According to statistics reported by the Center of Egyptian Human Rights for National Unity there have been 543 incidences of violence against Christians during the past five years. As many Christians have already been killed in the first quarter of this year as had been in the twenty year period beginning in 1973. The Coptic community believes that the government is not doing enough to stop these persecutions. The Rev. Keith Roderick, Secretary General of the Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights Under Islamization, reports that the Egyptian government has failed to stop the surge of terrorism against the vulnerable Christian minority and has helped create an atmosphere of bigotry and hatred toward them. Various Egyptian human rights groups report there have been no prosecutions and convictions for the recent murders of Coptic Christians. Over 70 people were detained by the police following the March massacre, but reportedly all were soon released. One and a half years ago Egyptian authorities withdrew police protection from the mainly Christian towns where the massacres took place. Egypt's *Hamayonian* law bans repairs or construction of churches unless a decree is signed and issued in each case by the President of the Republic. During the 1980s only ten building and 25 repair permits were granted to the Coptic Orthodox Church, comprising 90 percent of Egypt's Christian community. On Dec. 15, 1996, an army unit bulldozed the Christian "Cheerful Heart Center" for disabled children, located 15 miles outside of Cairo, even though the Center possessed the necessary permits because of a rumor to the contrary. Converts from Islam to Christianity are considered "apostates" and treated very harshly, including forcible re-conversion through kidnapping and forced marriages for women.

PAKISTAN has blasphemy laws that mandate the death penalty against "whoever by words, either spoken or written ... or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles [the Prophet Mohammed]." Hundreds of blasphemy cases are pending against Christians and others in Pakistan's courts. Amnesty reports that in all known cases, "the charges appear to have been arbitrarily brought, founded solely on the individual's minority religious beliefs or on malicious accusations against individuals who advocate novel ideas." These blasphemy laws have created a hostile atmosphere and fanned hatred against the religious minorities. In February, inflamed about a rumor of blasphemy, a Muslim mob 30,000 strong went on a rampage in Pakistan's Punjab province, setting fires in the Christian village of Shantinagar. The town of 15,000 was nearly raised and thousands of Christians were left homeless. When Pakistani Christians marched in the capital a few days later to protest the destruction and demand greater protection, they were brutalized and arrested by police.

IRAN's militant Islamic president delivered a fiery sermon in 1994, declaring that "there is no longer validity to other religions," and that "Iran and the entire Muslim world must adopt the Prophet and Jihad (holy war) as a model." Soon after, Iran's tiny Protestant community was devastated by the brutal murders of three key pastors. The first to be killed was prominent evangelical pastor Haik Hovespian-Mehr, who launched an international campaign in 1993 on behalf of fellow pastor Mehdi Dibaj. Dibaj was imprisoned on death row on apostasy charges for converting from Islam to Christianity decades earlier. Dibaj was unexpectedly released from death row in January 1994, but Hovespian-Mehr disappeared a few days later. Authorities informed Hovespian-Mehr's family that he had been murdered by unknown assailants. On June 24, 1994, Dibaj himself disappeared. While Dibaj's fate remained unknown, Presbyterian minister Tateos Michaelian, who had replaced Hovespian-Mehr as head of the Protestant Council, was also mysteriously murdered. Three days later, on July 5, Iranian police announced that they had discovered Dibaj's murdered corpse "while searching for the killer of Michaelian." Terror struck the Christian community again in October 1996. The body of a fourth prominent leader, 34-year-old Assemblies of God pastor Mohammad Bagher Yusefi, was found hanging from a tree in a wooded area near his home in northwest Iran. A convert from Islam, he was close to the other murdered pastors and cared for Dibaj's children. It is no wonder, therefore, that Vatican officials are currently taking seriously the threats made by Islamic militants in April against the Pope after a Berlin court ruled that Iranian leaders had ordered the killing of an Iranian Kurdish opposition leader and three aides.

The persecution of Christians is on the rise as advances are made by a militantly politicized strain of Islam where extremists, distorting Islam's tolerant values, seek to use religion to grab state power. It is no accident that the places where Christians are most severely persecuted are also among the countries rated as being among the least free in Freedom House's annual survey, *Freedom in the World*.

It is difficult for Westerners to imagine the savageries encountered by these Christians—or the spiritual commitment necessary to endure persecution and death for the sake of faith.

Few in the West feel comfortable speaking about these human rights atrocities. But intolerant and authoritarian regimes everywhere are well aware of the punishment meted out to Christians for the simple act of being Christian.

Christians are targeted by ruthless dictators who demand total power and control, intolerant of those who believe in the inherent dignity of all persons created in God's image. They serve as scapegoats for societies that aim to vent, foment, and popularize hatred of the West and, most specifically, the United States. They are demonized by militant and xenophobic Islamist movements seeking to capture the soul of a historically tolerant Islamic faith. By their faith, Christians pose inherent threats to those regimes that rely on bribes and threats to maintain power.

In a series of columns this spring about the persecution of Christians, former executive editor of the *New York Times* A.M. Rosenthal makes the insightful observation: "Dictatorships, for all their brutish swagger, are terrified by free thoughts and minds. They threaten the control without which dictators fear to govern. By definition, free worship is an enemy."

If Christians are being persecuted and even martyred on such a massive scale throughout the world today, why don't we know about it?

Richard Land, president of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, recently attested before Congress to some of the reasons why we Americans have ignored the increasingly grim fates of brave Christians abroad:

The persecution of Christians in various parts of the world has not been a high profile item on America's agenda . . . First, too often people in the West, peering through the selective prism of Christian history in the West, reflexively think of Christians as persecutors rather than the persecuted. [Further], an increasingly secularized West and its leadership elite tend to be indifferent and often uncomprehending of a spiritual worldview which endures persecution and death for the sake of belief.

With rare exception, our political leaders have been unaware of or else they turned a blind eye to this unfolding tragedy. Since the end of the cold war, American political leaders have generally shown indifference—even hostility—to Christians abroad, rarely taking religious oppression against them into account when devising foreign policy. Our presidents in recent years have repeatedly spoken about human rights abuses against vulnerable minorities throughout the world, but they have failed to address the persecution of Christians, even though it is among the most pervasive international human rights problems.

In the fundamental matter of religious freedom, the United States is forfeiting its leadership. The President has not publicly decried the recent pogroms against the Coptic community in Egypt, the blasphemy laws in Pakistan or the bans against Christianity in Saudi Arabia. The U.S. government has repeatedly failed to speak up for the religious rights of American citizens abroad. Take, for example, those Americans working for the U.S. government in Saudi Arabia who are restricted from holding Christian services on *American embassy grounds* or the American soldiers in the Gulf War who were told they could not have bibles and crucifixes and who also were restricted in their worshiping while defending Saudi sovereignty.

There is also the matter of asylum for religious refugees. In violation of its own laws, the U.S. has largely closed its doors to Christians fleeing for their lives from religious persecution. In the case of Christian refugees from Iran, the U.S. simply turns over the asylum determination to the Muslim police in Turkey, who summarily deport them back to their persecutors in Iran. Not one of some twenty clerics and religious leaders who fled Iran in the last three years received asylum in the United States. Late last year, an Iranian evangelical who had converted from Islam and who fled to Turkey was turned down for political asylum on the basis of religious persecution in the U.S. Her case was so strong that she was granted refugee status by the UN and eventually received asylum from Canada.

Our country was founded as a haven from religious persecution. Our government is ignoring our origin as a nation. The Pilgrims, Quakers, Huguenots, Catholics, Jews, and legions of other religious minorities helped found and form this country as a safe haven from religious tyranny.

As Professor David Forte of Cleveland State University Law School wrote in *In the Lion's Den*:

"The U.S. has been an ineffective friend (if a friend at all) to persecuted Christians and other religious minorities under the thumb of Islamic radicals. By not using our substantial influence to inform our allies that the radicals' laws and ac-

tions are against international law and that they offend the basic sense of decency of the American people, we send the following messages:

“We don’t believe in protecting those religious adherents of the West, and we must be the materialist bankrupt culture the Islamic radicals claim we are.

“Radical Islam is a legitimate force in the world, and it is all right with us if—for reasons of state—Islamic governments give in to the radicals’ tyrannical agenda.

“We treat our Islamic friends with patronizing indifference. After all, we, in effect, say that this is not a human rights problem but a Muslim problem.”

America’s policy toward other nations should seek not only to meet the requirements of the oil trade and investors in new markets, but also to embody American values. Religious freedom is the bedrock value on which this country was founded. Religious liberty is not a privilege to be endowed by men, no matter how politically powerful they might be. It is a God-given human right—one that is recognized in the first clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution and in every major international agreement on civil and political rights.

America is a great power and wields tremendous influence. If the American president were to speak out on behalf of persecuted Christians and other religious minorities and exert pressure on their oppressors, it would bring dramatic results. Soviet refuseniks Anatoly Sharansky and Joseph Begun are alive today because the U.S. took up the campaign for Soviet Jewry.

In January 1996, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) issued an unprecedented and forceful *Statement of Conscience and Call to Action* in which it pledged to end “our own silence in the face of the suffering of all those persecuted for their religious faith . . . [and] to do what is within our power to the end that the government of the United States will take appropriate action to combat the intolerable religious persecution now victimizing fellow believers and those of other faiths.” The NAE *Statement of Conscience* lists simple policy recommendations for the U.S. government to ensure that persecuted Christians and other religious minorities are not betrayed by American foreign policy.

The NAE *Statement of Conscience* has since been endorsed or commended by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., and the United Methodist Church.

The NAE *Statement of Conscience* is extraordinary because it addresses the need for systematic reform in U.S. foreign policy. Too many times, dealing with Christian persecution on a case-by-case basis becomes an exercise in futility. As the oppressive regime releases one well-known prisoner under international pressure, it imprisons twenty more whose names and cases are not known. Countries around the world must be given the message that it is the firm and consistent policy of the U.S. to grant zero tolerance to the persecutors of Christians and other religious minorities.

Pope John Paul II has always been a stalwart defender of religious freedom. During the Second Vatican Council, he was the chief drafter of the Catholic Church’s “Declaration on Religious Liberty” and has since made it a central theme of his papacy. In his January 1996 address to the Diplomatic Corps, Pope John Paul II sounded an opening call against the persecution of Christians by Islamist and communist regimes in the name of “the most fundamental freedom—that of practicing one’s faith openly, which for human beings is their reason for living.”

The widely—endorsed NAE *Statement of Conscience* states: “We know that the United States government has within its power and discretion the capacity to adopt policies that would be dramatically effective in curbing such reigns of terror and protecting the rights of all religious dissidents.”

Specific, achievable reforms that American citizens can press for are outlined in the NAE *Statement of Conscience*. Those with priority are:

- Publicly condemning Christian persecution and showing greater concern for persecuted Christians by the president and all appropriate branches of his administration;
- Improving reporting by the State Department Human Rights Bureau to ensure that its annual reports and other publications accurately reflect the situation facing Christians, eliminating from the annual reporting any “option of silence” regarding persecution;
- Appointing a special presidential advisor for religious liberty;
- Reforming the ways in which the Immigration and Naturalization Service treats the petitions of escapees from anti-Christian persecution; and,
- Terminating non-humanitarian foreign assistance to governments of countries that fail to take vigorous action to end anti-Christian or other religious persecution.

Campaigning to end anti-Christian persecution will help protect other persecuted religious groups and minorities as well. Baha'is in Iran, Ahmadis in Pakistan, and animists in Sudan suffer persecution and death under the same practices and policies that oppress Christians in those countries. Moderate Muslims throughout northern Africa and the Middle East are now struggling against radical Islamists who seek to convert a historically tolerant Islam into an intolerant, anti-intellectual, anti-democratic faith. For all of these groups, Christian concern for religious freedom throughout the world offers the greatest prospect for freedom.

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## E. Prepared Statement of Michael J. Horowitz

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Today's hearing reflects a growing American awareness—and determination to deal with—one of the great and most unaddressed human rights problems of our time. In helping to shatter the silence that has for so long accompanied the persecution of Christian communities in the Middle East (and elsewhere), I believe that the Committee honors the highest American traditions precisely as it also protects America's vital interests.

The series of hearings being conducted by your Subcommittee, Mr. Chairman, are a powerful sign that our political system has finally cast off its prior reluctance to focus on—and put an end to—the mounting persecutions of Christian gulags of faith. It's hard to believe that only last year Christian leaders and concerned Members of Congress felt uneasy about addressing the issue. They then worried:

“Won't we appear selfish and unduly self-interested?”

“Won't we be charged with pandering to the ‘Christian right?’”

“Won't we risk making matters worse?”

“Won't it reveal an indifference on the part of American Christians to the sufferings of fellow believers around the world?”

And, long experienced in and partly intimidated by caricatures of Christian faith and Christian believers by the dominant culture, they worried:

“Who will believe us?”

That we are here today reflects the work done by key leaders in the Christian community, key Members of Congress, key media voices. It is a tribute to the small band of leaders like Father Keith Roderick who persisted in telling the truth about persecuted Christians when no one else seemed to care. Most importantly, however, today's hearing reflects a prairie fire of interest, knowledge and concern now sweeping through America's churches and searing the consciences of worshipers of all faiths. In sum, today's hearing reflects the following key items of a growing American consensus:

- That religious persecution must be seen as a far more serious and central human rights concern than the State Department and the human rights establishment have long thought it to be;
- That Christian communities have become major scapegoats of choice of thug regimes and would-be tyrants of the third world;
- That protecting the rights of Christian lambs protects the rights of all victims of human rights abuse in the third world and is a vital, strategic step to ensure that our children's Twenty-First Century will be far more hopeful, far less bloody than our Twentieth has been.

In short, democracy is working its customary magic on our country's policies as millions of Americans make increasingly clear that staggeringly prohibitive costs must be imposed on regimes that perpetrate or appease the torture, rape, forced resettlement, mass arrest, starvation, murder and even crucifixion of Christians and other vulnerable believing communities.

We've come a long way from the day when establishment human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch issued glossy reports advertising high priority and well-staffed special initiatives on behalf of children, women, drug users, academics, journalists, prisoners, gays and lesbians, and alleged victims of multi-national corporations while mounting no comparable initiatives for victims of religious persecution and dismissing campaigns on behalf of Christian victims as “special pleading.”

Here are but a few indices of how far we've come:

- This subcommittee is chaired by a vigorous young Senator, and a certain Senate leader for years to come, whose determination to end reigns of terror against Christian communities in the Near East, South Asia and elsewhere appears strong and implacable.
- The first panel at today's hearing consisted of two powerful voices, both friends whom I deeply admire, Bill Bennett and Joe Lieberman, whose lifelong passion against injustice has now caused them to become leaders in the battle against the persecution of Christians.
- The eloquent Statement of Conscience issued last year by the National Association of Evangelicals has received widespread support throughout the American Christian community, and has been endorsed to date by denominations as varied as the Southern Baptist Convention, the Presbyterian Church, and the Episcopal Church.
- A literal explosion of books, articles, radio and television programming (in both the “Christian” and “mainstream” media) has begun to educate millions of

Americans about the extent of today's anti-Christian persecutions occurring in the areas of this subcommittee's jurisdiction and throughout the world.

- Congressman Wolf, Senator Specter and a large number of co-sponsors have introduced the Freedom From Religious Persecution Act of 1997, which will reverse policies of indifference towards victims of anti-Christian persecution while simultaneously imposing sanctions against governments engaging in or appeasing ongoing and widespread persecution of Christians, B'hais, Tibetan Buddhists and other designated religious minorities, (The Wolf-Specter bill is built on Senate Resolution 71 and House Resolution 515 of the 104th Congress that explicitly condemned anti-Christian persecution, and is modeled on the NAE Statement of Conscience.) Serious debate on Wolf-Specter will begin in the Fall, after the China-MFN debate has concluded, under circumstances where America's Christian, Jewish and human rights communities will be as committed to its enactment as they were to the enactment of the Jackson-Vanik bill on behalf of the persecuted Soviet Jews.
- As we sit in this hearing room, the most important work of all is being done by an extraordinary young man in Wheaton, Illinois, the Rev. Steven Haas, who serves as Coordinator of a November 16 Day of Prayer, at which tens of thousands of American churches will participate in a solemn, coordinated, interdenominational process of education, action and prayer on behalf of persecuted Christians. The Day of Prayer will be a culminating and historic step in making the determination to end today's anti-Christian persecutions a signature issue for America's Christian voters and for others committed to strong American human rights advocacy.

In addition to all else, today's hearing offers an opportunity to lay a big lie allegation to rest once and for all: the claim that efforts to protect vulnerable Christians in radical Muslim communities is a form of "Muslim bashing," an expression of bias towards Islamic believers.

In fact, efforts on behalf of persecuted Christian communities in Islamist areas of the world are vital means of helping moderate Muslims who are also targeted by radicals seeking to capture the soul of their great, historically tolerant faith.

Islamist radicals and other terrorists purporting to speak in the name of Islam need to persecute vulnerable Christian communities, and for two reasons. First, communities of faith that live beyond the reach of the bribes and threats on which radicals rely in order to stay in power always pose grave threats to the survival of terrorist regimes. Next, if allowed to get away with persecuting Christian communities tyrants are able send "you're next" messages of intimidation to everyone else they seek to oppress: "See what I'm doing to today's Christian targets? Nobody cares about them, and they surely won't care about moderate Muslims and secular democrats if I turn on you."

If we are to understand the lessons of history—if we are to avoid the deadly trap of empowering radical, anti-Western Muslims—we need to remember this vital lesson of the successful campaign against Soviet anti-Semitism. *Whatever tyrants gain when the world allows them to tyrannize the powerless, they lose when the world draws a line and stops them from doing so.* How those seemingly all-powerful Communists of the Soviet Union became less formidable, were cut down to size in the eyes of all, when they couldn't even beat up a bunch of Jews! America's aroused, determined, implacable opposition to the persecution of Soviet Jews also caused walls built around Soviet churches and political dissidents to begin tumbling down. Similarly, stopping present-day Middle East tyrants from burning churches and persecuting Christians will allow beleaguered and presently isolated moderate Muslims to know that there is hope for them, that they are not alone.

Proof that protecting lambs saves all others can be seen from the poignant expressions of gratitude offered by moderate Muslims for today's efforts on behalf of Christian victims. The scholar David Forte has written of Islam's first hundred years during which a murderous, intolerant faction, the Kharajites, sought to dominate that faith. It took almost a century to defeat the Kharajites, after which Islam became a faith as generally hospitable to strangers as was Christianity and Judaism. What we have today, says Forte, are modern-day Kharajites renewing their fight for the soul of Islam. Forte notes that we offer moral legitimacy to murder and ensure the reign of the radicals when we silently accept the persecution of vulnerable Christians in the Islamic world—that we patronize Islam by wrongly assuming it to be rooted in the torture of nonbelievers. Vulnerable Christian communities are the battlegrounds on which the struggle for modern-day Islam's soul is waged. Today's hearing thus represents a debt of obligation to Muslims who often struggle with little support to leave the Dark Age prisons built for them by the modern-day Kharajites.



Here's a story about how Washington works and the cynicism that often animates it. The story is about Saudi Arabia, whose government pays bounties for identifying Bible study groups that are then arrested and tortured. (Observers have noted that Saudi anti-Christian persecutions have increased by orders of magnitude since the country was rescued by Desert Storm.) In a meeting requested by a senior Saudi official, I was told that Americans had little cause for concern over his government's policies—that overt Christian activism on the part of Americans was at most dealt with by deportation. The official went on to acknowledge that the Saudis do have “problems” with Christian “guest workers” from the Philippines and other third world countries, but asked: “That doesn't matter to Americans, does it? How is that your issue?”

The Saudi diplomat and others like him are now becoming increasingly aware that millions of Americans—and millions of American Christians in particular—do care about differently colored fellow believers living in distant lands. In his towering account of Christian persecution, *Their Blood Cries Out*, the scholar Paul Marshall points out that more than three-fourths of all Christians live in the third world, that its disproportionately female character makes its believers especially vulnerable and that “Christianity is growing rapidly in the world, perhaps undergoing its largest expansion in history,” Americans have always stood up against wanton terrorism, and they will surely do so against a terrorism practiced against those who share their faith. They will also do so because they know—as the Pope has eloquently made clear during the past year—that political freedoms ultimately rest on the right of men and women to worship without threat of being persecuted for doing so.

Clearly, the United States must address worldwide anti-Christian persecutions if and as we wish to play a major world role, and the Committee is thus to be commended for conducting a hearing so deeply rooted in American self-interest and American values. Today's hearing goes directly to the question of whether Islam of the 21st Century will be allowed to become an intolerant Kharajite caricature of its historic self. It will help determine whether leaders like Ayatollah Khomeini or terrorist organizations like Hamas will be permitted to define the nature of Islam, or whether vulnerable, tolerant Muslims can keep and regain their historic positions as leaders of a great faith. Burnt churches and martyred worshipers in the Middle East are symbols of an intra-Islamic struggle, battlegrounds on which Islam's future will be determined. By standing up for their fellow worshippers, American Christians oppose appeasement of radical forces always easier to stop sooner rather than later.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for standing with the lambs, in the process pointing the way for a more secure 21st Century for our children—for a world where Christians and Muslims and Jews find common bonds, a world where our children are spared the specter of a tyrannous, anti-Western Islamist leadership bent at every turn on confronting, terrorizing and challenging all who disagree with them.

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## F. Prepared Statement of Father Keith Roderick

As Secretary General of the Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights Under Islamization I will be presenting an overview of religious persecution in the Near East. Senator Brownback and the other members of the Near East Subcommittee are to be commended for creating this opportunity for those who have been persecuted to tell their stories. The witnesses who will testify in subsequent sessions are the faces of persecution. Their personal histories more than any overview, statistic or analysis portray the true nature of this terrible reality.

The Coalition is a cooperative effort of 60 human rights and ethnic-national organizations to advocate respect for human rights of religious minorities adversely effected by the process of Islamization. Its membership includes organizations who are Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, Hindu and Muslim. The members include Assyrians, Armenians, Copts, Lebanese, Pakistanis, Kashmiris, Indonesians, Iranians, and Sudanese. Our principles of advocacy are based upon those delineated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Islamization is a political and cultural process to establish Islamic law, *Shari'ah*, as the ruling principle of government and of the cultural institutions of society. Militant Islamists advocate a strict adherence to an inflexible interpretation of *Shari'ah*, pressing for a revival of the "ideal" Islamic society to which everyone must conform. This produces great tension between Muslims and non-Muslims, and in fact, within the Muslim community itself. In countries that recognize to some degree or another the primacy of Islam as the state religion, there is a greater tendency for segments of society to follow a more radical course leading to persecution of minority religious groups. The character of this persecution may be personal or corporate. Some persecution is the product of government policy. Some governments perpetuate discriminatory practices creating environments which nurture religious-based hatred against minorities. Still other persecution is perpetrated by radical ideological movements. According to the *Zwemer Institute*, no nation with an Islamic constitution, of which there are 22, meets the definition of "tolerance."

Christians of the Near East are the indigenous inhabitants of the countries of the region. Their Christianity was not imported by Western colonial movements or missionaries. In most parts of the Near East the Christian culture predates the expansion of the Islamic empire by seven centuries. Today that population, now a minority in all countries of the Near East, is at risk of extinction. The ministry, *Open Doors*, has reported dramatic changes in the Christian population of the Middle East since 1900. In 1900, the average Christian percentage of the general population in the countries of the Near East was over 20%. Today it is only 7%. The most dramatic changes have occurred in Turkey. Here the Christian population has dropped from 22% to .15% due to this century's first genocide in which 1.5 million Armenians and 750,000 Assyrians lost their lives in 1918. Today Turkey has a secular constitution, but it has recently begun to feel the pressure of Islamists to return to an Islamic law based society. In Lebanon, the only country with a Christian majority population prior to 1980, the Christians comprised 67% of the population at the beginning of the century. Today it is 40%. In the Holy Land, the Christian population is estimated to be 125,000 or 1.8% of the population of Israel as compared to 2.3 million Muslims or 34.3% of the population. In every country of the Near East the Christian population has decreased.

Three factors have contributed to this change: (1) increased emigration of non-Muslims because of the pressures of living in an Islamic society; (2) intensified persecution; and, (3) a higher birthrate among Muslims. It is clear that in the Near East Christians are a shrinking, marginalized minority.

A number of countries of the Near East such as Iran and Saudi Arabia are instrumentally involved in systematic persecution of religious minorities. Other governments such as Egypt facilitate religious persecution by *de facto*, allowing radical Islamic groups to terrorize Christians without fear of prosecution. There are identifiable problem areas which detrimentally affect minority religious-ethnic groups in the Near East:

(1) Apostasy Laws—Apostasy Laws are based on the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) which prohibit the legal/social recognition of a person's conversion from Islam to another religion. In the countries of the Near East, with the exception of Pakistan because of the tremendous protest of the Christian minority who opposed it, identification cards which include religious identification, are required for all public transactions, including marriage, employment, and educational services. A person who desires to change his/her religious affiliation from Islam is not allowed to change the designa-

tion on his/her legal identification card. This encourages discrimination, intimidation and virtually makes intermarriage between Muslims and non-Muslims illegal.

On October 29, 1996, a 30 year old Christian Lebanese national, Elis Dib Ghaleb, was convicted by a Shari'ah court in the United Arab Emirates in al-Ain for marrying a Muslim woman. He was sentenced to 39 lashes and one year's imprisonment. He had already been jailed for a year at the time of the sentence. *Amnesty International* received reports noting that he had been beaten and flogged several times prior to his formal sentence.

Islamic law prescribes death as the punishment for apostasy. Officially, only Iran and Saudi Arabia impose the full penalty of death to offenders. However, in such countries as Egypt, social pressures leave the "apostate" without the protection of the civil authorities. In certain situations marginalization of the convert results directly from government policy. For example, a memo issued by the Director of the Egyptian Military Intelligence Service refuses a Christian convert's request to travel abroad. The memo stated, "In as much as he is an apostate from the sublime Islamic law, he has no civil rights what so ever before the government with all its regulatory agencies." Court testimony offered in 1992 in Cairo by the Islamic Cleric Sheik Muhamad El-Ghazali advocated civil protections to all those who perpetrate violent retribution against apostates. He said, "Any person or group of people who kill an apostate should not be liable for punishment." For Islamists who advocate the primacy of Islamic law this was tantamount to the issuance of a death sentence to anyone who will not conform.

In Egypt, apostates are arrested routinely under the Emergency Law. The law suspends many legal rights of Egyptian citizens on the pretext of preserving social stability. The office of the Interior Ministry maintains a specific Religious Affairs Section in its local offices and national headquarters at the Lazoughli State Security Investigative Center in downtown Cairo. Reports of torture including electric shock, beatings, hanging from wire cords for hours, and threats of death are included as part of the process of interrogation. The arresting of converts from Islam to Christianity under the Emergency Law by the Egyptian security forces indicates that the Egyptian government is violating the universal right to freedom of conscience as agreed to under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In Iran, Dhabihullah Mahrami, 50, was sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Court in Yazd last year for "denouncing the blessed religion of Islam and accepting the beliefs of the wayward Baha'i sect (national apostasy)." The State Supreme Court returned the case back to the court in Yazd for reconsideration because the original court of investigation "was outside its competence."

The Iranian government continues to deny that the Baha'i religion is an authentic religion and according to *Amnesty International* the Baha'is are often accused of espionage. In May 1996 an amendment to the Penal Code was approved by the Islamic Consultative Assembly to include "espionage" as an area covered under the enmity against God clause, specifying a mandatory death penalty. This expands the scope of the death penalty in a dangerous way. Many persons arrested for apostasy or other religious activities have reported that "espionage" was included in the charges levied against them.

Iran has perpetrated a systematic effort to eradicate the leadership of the Iranian Council of Protestant Ministers and undermine the evangelical churches which contain the highest number of converts from Islam. On September 25, 1996, Pastor Mohammed Ravanbakhsh, a 35 year old Iranian Christian minister was murdered. His body was found hanging on a tree in a forest near Ghaem-Shahr. He had been detained by Iranian police prior to his death. He was a convert to Christianity from Islam. The Iranian government has publicly proclaimed that it will not tolerate apostates being ordained as Christian ministers. His death occurred four days prior to the commemoration of the annual International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians. The government stated that his death was a suicide, even though Christians who prepared his body for burial observed that he had been stabbed with a knife at least 20 times. An order for death had been issued by the Islamic Revolutionary Court judge, Sheikh Reza Rezaian. Since 1994 the Iranian government has avoided bringing church leaders and apostates to court. A pattern now exists of persons being detained then mysteriously being found dead.

(2) Blasphemy Laws—Pakistan retains an insidious law which prescribes the death penalty for anyone convicted of insulting the Quran or the Prophet Mohammed. Articles 295.B and 295.C of the Pakistan Penal Code. Religious fundamentalists often incite the misuse of these laws by preaching to the generally illiterate audiences that Christians are blasphemers because they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, a teaching contrary to that of Islam. The following cases occurring over the past two years illustrate the terror that this legislation continues to hold over the 15 million Christian Pakistanis:

(1) The acclaimed writer and teacher, Niamat Ahmar, was murdered in Faisalabad, Punjab in front of 200 witnesses. His killer stated that he was conducting a noble cause by killing a blasphemer. Ahmar's body was hacked to pieces by the murder's butcher knife by the rejoicing crowd. More recently his daughter was burnt to death in the same city by a similar crowd.

(2) Ighal Tahir, a converted Christian who had been arrested under the Blasphemy Law, was murdered by inmates as the warden and prison guards watched in Lahore.

(3) Mubarik Masih (Mukha), an elderly evangelist was tortured to death by police in Lahore. He had been arrested and charged with blasphemy.

(4) Bantoo Masih, an elderly Christian was stabbed to death by a Islamic fanatic while at the police station of Lahore Cantt being charged under the Blasphemy Law.

(5) Manzoor Masih, charged under the Blasphemy Law in Gujranwala, Pakistan was murdered by militants as he was leaving the High Court building in Lahore. He and two other Christian men, Rehmat Masih and Salat Masih, had been sentenced by a lower court to death. The High Court later reversed that judgment noting that the charges made were false.

(6) Anwar Masih, awaiting trial in a Faisalabad jail for four years under the charge of Blasphemy has had numerous attempts on his life.

(7) Roni Daniel, was murdered in March 1996.

(8) Rehmat Masih, died under police torture in April 1996 in Lahore.

(9) Rashid Masih, a young Christian man was murdered by police in Kot Lakhpat, Lahore Jail in April 1996.

(10) Munir Masih and his son, Emmanuel, were murdered by fanatics in Narowal, Punjab. The police did not even register a case report on the incident.

(11) Two Christian men were murdered in May 1996 in a Christian neighborhood, Basti Kasso-ke, District Hafizabad in Pujab, apparently related to blasphemy accusations.

(12) Javed Masih and Sohail Masih, were murdered by police in Lahore in cooperation with radical Muslims.

(13) Nawab Masih, was tortured to death by police in Lahore during interrogation.

Saudi Arabia instrumentally persecutes non-Muslims more comprehensively than any other country of the Near East. No religion other than Islam is allowed to be practiced within its borders. However, it has been estimated that 27% of the Saudi population consists of expatriate guest workers, three-fourths of whom are non-Muslim. The *Metowah* (religious police) closely monitor foreigners for public expression of their Christian faith. Those who seek to practice their faith even within the private confines of their own homes, are subject to harassment, beating, arrest, or deportation.

In December 1994, expatriates from England and the United States held a school Christmas pageant in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. To the horror of the families, the local *Metowah* invaded the play, chasing children and beating several parents. A parent videotaping the play caught the action on tape which was later broadcast on Britain's Independent Television Network. In November 1994, Mikhail Mikhail Cornelius, a Copt worker in Saudi Arabia, was arrested after being accused of blasphemy. He reportedly told a fellow worker that he believed in Jesus Christ. He was sentenced to flogging (1,000 lashes) and seven years imprisonment. International intervention prevented the sentence from being executed.

A *metowah* raid on a meeting of Philipino Christians in Riyadh resulted in the arrest of 75 persons in 1995. Several were severely beaten and one disappeared. In October of that same year another raid on a Korean fellowship in Riyadh was disrupted. The congregation of 130 adults and 50 children were held for 4 hours. Over a dozen were held for several days.

Unfortunately, Saudi Arabia is such a closed society that accurate statistics documenting the effect of the government's policy on religious minorities is difficult to obtain. There are Saudis who are Christian, but their churches remain hidden. They are at the most risk because they are considered apostates and subject to the sentence of death if discovered.

(3) Promotion of Religious Based Hatred and Violence—The Arab Republic of Egypt has the largest Christian population in the Middle East. The Copts, the indigenous Christian people of Egypt, number between 8–10 million or between 12–15% of the population. Targeted violence against Christians has increased dramatically during the past five years. On Thursday, March 13, 1997, Islamists launched attacks on Christians in the village of Ezbet Dawood (Village of David), killing 13. One month earlier, February 12, 1997, Islamists carried out an unprecedented atrocity against students meeting inside St. George's Church in Abu Qurqas and at a nearby village. Nine students, all between the ages of 13 and 22, were killed im-

mediately by 4–5 masked gunmen. Three others later died from their wounds. A fisherman, his son, and a policeman, who were believed to be standing near the church as the attack began, were also murdered by the fleeing gunmen. The bodies of the three men were found in a sugar cane field in the nearby village of Kom al-Zuheir. Gama'a al-Islamiya (Islamic Group) is suspected of perpetrating these murders.

More Christians have been murdered by Islamic extremists in the first six months of 1997 than in the past 25 years. According to statistics reported by the Center of Egyptian Human Rights for National Unity, there have been 543 incidences of violence against Christians during the past five years. At least 117 attacks were against Christian churches, 325 against Christian property and businesses, and 56 against Christian homes. In this onslaught at least 615 Copts have been injured and 106 killed.

#### COPTS MURDERED BY EXTREMISTS

1973–1991 .....	18
(1992 marks the beginning of the Egyptian government's "war" against Islamic Fundamentalists)	
1992 .....	13 (Massacre of 13 Copts in Daryut)
1993 .....	15
1994 .....	13
1995 .....	24
1996 .....	10
(Feb. 21–24, 1996 a mob of over 1,000 Muslims are incited by Muslim clerics to attack Christian churches and property in several villages including, Kafr Demian Gergi, Ibrahimeya, Negm, al-Bashawi, al-Mahmoudi, al-Zawaher, Om Said, and Mobashor.) According to the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, 30 Christians were killed in 1996.	
1997 .....	31

These are conservative estimates due to the fact that many incidences of violence against Christians are not reported for fear of retaliation against the community or family. Much of the violence has been focused in Upper Egypt in the cities of al-Minya and Assuit, which have Christian majority populations.

The Egyptian government has boasted of progress in its war against the Islamic militants. In fact, the government has failed to repulse the surge of violence. It argues that there is not a Coptic problem and that many more Muslim police and soldiers have been murdered by extremists than Christians. The latter statement is true. However, the police and soldiers are being murdered because they represent the Egyptian government. The Copts are being targeted and murdered because they are Christian. The Egyptian government has failed to recognize that their policies of isolation of the Copts in socioeconomic terms has created an atmosphere of bigotry and hatred toward the Coptic minority. Just this past week, during a campaign to pressure Islamists in the Cairo area, a large number of Christians were arrested also as an apparent effort to appear even handed. This is not an uncommon occurrence. The Egyptian government has allowed the Copts to be used as human safety valves in an attempt to deflect the Islamists anger against the Mubarak regime.

Egyptian based human rights organizations report the persistent failure of the Egyptian government to prosecute and convict anyone for the murders of Coptic Christians. Over 70 persons were detained by the police following the St. George's massacre of students, but families of the victims report that all of the suspects were released. The persons responsible for the murders are known to the community. The photographs of three of the gunmen were even published in *al-Ahram*, Egypt's most widely read daily newspaper. A young Coptic Christian, video taping the bloody aftermath of the massacre and the funerals of the victims, was arrested by security forces and detained for over a week, during which time he was severely beaten. The video tape was confiscated and not returned.

The Egyptian authorities had withdrawn permanent police protection from St. George's Church in Abu Qurqas one and a half years ago because it had proclaimed progress in controlling the terrorists. Many Christians believe the real reason for removing the police protection was because government losses by assassination of security personnel were too great. The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights has accused the Egyptian government of culpability in the increasing violence against Christians.

During the past five years Islamists have made significant gains in their numbers both in the ranks of military units and of the police. Copts have reported that on numerous occasions when attacks were being carried out on Christians, policemen seen in the vicinity refused to intercede. Some police are suspected of being inform-

ants to the extremists. A study conducted four years ago by the Police Institute for Research in cooperation with the National Institute of Planning found that a sizable segment of the police had engaged in terrorist activities against Copts. According to a report appearing in the *al-Dostour* newspaper on May 7, 1997, a recent study described the efforts of a prominent police officer to recruit for the terrorist organization, *Takfir-w-El-Higrah*. It was estimated that 60% of the extremist police officers had committed crimes of terror and that as much as 80% of the police force in upper Egypt had association with terrorist organizations. As further evidence of the Egyptian government's failure to deal effectively with the security issue for the Copts, the Egyptian magazine *Rose-Elyoussef* reported on March 24, 1997 that the Egyptian government had announced that it would be creating a Muslim Civilian Militia to protect the Coptic population. The Christians see this as an alarming prospect. They question how the government will be able to keep this militia in check when it has been unable to control its own military and police units.

On December 15, 1996, a Christian farm and center for disabled children, the Cheerful Heart Center, was attacked by 300 soldiers from a nearby unit of the Egyptian Army located about 15 miles outside of Cairo. The desert reclamation project, owned by Coptic Christians, was in the process of being created as a home and developmental center for over 1,000 children. At the time of the attack, it was assisting 45 children, none of whom were injured. The Center had previously received all necessary permits from the government for construction.

In Pakistan, 80% of the Christian population still live in villages. A systematic destruction of many of these villages and the confiscation of these poor farmers agricultural lands has been underway for the past twenty years. It is estimated that hundreds of Christian villages have been destroyed. Among them are the villages of Mattah, Bath, Jindre, Dogaich, China Basti, Dhobi Serai, Ahata Thanedar, and Raiwind, all in the Lahore district; Martinpur, youngsonabad, 113 Sasngula Hill, Singhara, Sacha Sauda, and Khan Jaja in the Shekhupura District and, Fauji Quarters in Peshawar.

In January 1997, a Christian village of Shanti-Nagar in the District of Khanewal in the Punjab was attacked and destroyed by a mob of 10,000 incited by Islamists. The villagers were alerted to the impending attack and requested police protection. However, the police withdrew as the mob drew near. Nearly 1,500 homes were destroyed. Almost 70 Christian women and girls were kidnaped during the attack. Because of the mistreatment their captors the women's emotional scars will be more difficult to rebuild than their homes. The Pakistani government had promised to compensate the villagers 500,000 Rupees (\$12,500) for each home lost. Later this amount was amended to 50,000 Rupees (\$1,250). Only a few houses have been partially rebuilt. Victims have so far received only 800 Rupees (\$20).

The Assyrians, an indigenous Christian minority who live among the Kurds in Northern Iraq, have reported the systematic confiscation of traditional Assyrian lands by well armed Kurdish groups. Local Assyrians report that they are terrorized by the perpetual land grabs. Since 1991, 52 Assyrian villages have had their lands confiscated. These include the villages of Dohuk, Pakhloua, Zakho, Sariya, Towsana, Mshara, Bajidbraf, Bravook, Mansoura, Fesh Khabour, Howrisk, Khalakh, Azakh, Dowra and others. Often times these land confiscations by Muslim Kurds end in violence. On April 16, 1996 an Assyrian deacon from Sanat village, Adel Odish Marcus, was murdered in Zakho by a member of the KDP. A number of killings of Assyrians by the PUK during May 1996 was reported. On February 10, 1997, in the city of Shaqlowa, Northern Iraq, two Assyrians, father and son, Lazar and Hawel Matti, were murdered by a group of Islamist Kurds. In the past six years, since the Kurds took control of Northern Iraq, with considerable U.S. assistance, not one Kurd has been arrested for the murders or land confiscations of Assyrians.

In most all countries of the Near East the media is controlled by the government. Not only is the media used as a filter to block or twist unwanted criticism, it can also be used as a vehicle to undermine the security of minorities. In Egypt there are over 1500 radio and television programs which are accessed by religious groups. Copts report that they are denied access to any of those programs. The government does allow Islamist clerics, some who routinely deride Copts as infidels and openly encourage violence against them. The government in Egypt does nothing to curb the production of inflammatory tapes directed against the Christian minority. Recently the government has proposed that all Christian books be prohibited from being published until being reviewed and approved by an Islamic review authority.

The Lebanese government has threatened to close down a Catholic TV network and two church operated radio stations. The move was proposed as part of a resolution adopted last year that suppressed 50 TV and 150 radio stations, contradicting constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of religion and expression. In south Lebanon, the only area not occupied by Syria, Christians have been subjected to escalating

threats by Islamists associated with *Hizbollah*. The Christians of south Lebanon operate the only independent television tower in Lebanon.

In Egypt, vitriolic clerics are allowed to inflame uneducated Muslims with bigoted portrayals of Christians on a daily basis. In a village in Assuit, during Friday prayers at the mosque on March 14, 1997, a fundamentalist cleric called for the burning of the adjacent church and killing of infidels, claiming that the church had placed the cross too high on its roof. The newspaper *Watny* reported that the Governor of Assuit sent letters to the local Christians asking them, in a gesture of good will and in order to restore peace, to contribute all of the costs of renovating the two mosques on each side of the church so that they would be higher than the church cross. The Christians were left with no recourse but to agree. Article 20 of the Egyptian Constitution states that, "Any advocacy of national or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law." Justice has not been implemented blindly in Egypt.

The Egyptian government continues to subject Christian churches to the Hamayonian law, first issued under the Ottoman rule in 1856. The law does not allow any repair of churches or construction of new churches without first obtaining a decree signed by the President of the Republic. During 1981–1990 only 10 permits were granted to the Coptic Orthodox Church (90% of the Christian population) for new churches to be built and 25 for repair permits. Permission is needed for even the most minute changes, such as painting or repairing a bathroom.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran the Ministry of Islamic Guidance prohibits the printing of all Christian literature including church bulletins and newsletters. In February 1990, the Ministry of Islamic Guidance closed the Iran Bible Society and refused permission for the importation of bibles. According to Iranian Christians International all Christian books and bookstores were confiscated, this after 200 years of operation with government registration. The Christian population of Iran consists of 150,000–300,000 Armenians, 70,000 Assyrians, and 20–25,000 Evangelical Christians, the majority of whom are converts from Islam. It is estimated that an underground church of approximately 100,000 apostates operates completely in secret for fear of discovery, conviction, and the death sentence.

The Iranian government has waged a campaign of eradication against the Evangelical Christians of Iran. Rev. Ravanbahsh, who was murdered in September of 1996, had been ordained in 1990 by the late Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr, Director of the Assemblies of God Church. Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr was murdered in January 1994 after waging a successful campaign to gain the release from prison of another minister, Rev. Mehdi Dibaj. Rev. Dibaj and Rev. Tateos Mikaelian were murdered in June 1994. The Iranian government blamed those murders on the Iranian opposition. In July 1994, an American legal resident and Iranian Christian, Hassan Shahjamali, was arrested by Iranian security personnel, who he believed were from the intelligence group attached to the President's office. They interrogated him about bringing films and religious books to family members who were Christian. They also wanted information on the activities of all the Christian churches in Tehran. After international intervention, Shahjamali was released two weeks later and allowed to return to the U.S.

Perhaps the most insidious forms of persecution to arise over the past five years are kidnappings and "shame rapes" for the conversion of women; these have increased in many parts of the Near East. The Pakistan daily newspaper, *Jang*, reported on May 21, 1996 that a Christian girl of Village 46, Sangla Hill was taken out of her house at gun point in the middle of the night, gang raped and kept by her kidnapers. Surryia Bibi, 17, of Rawalpindi was also kidnaped and forced to convert by her rapist. The police refuse to file a complaint reasoning that the girl is no longer a Christian and she can not be allowed to return home because it is a Christian home. Last year, two minor Christian girls were abducted, raped and forced to convert to Islam. When their father approached the police to obtain the release of his daughters, the police offered him a deal. If he were to convert to Islam, the girls would be permitted to visit him as Muslim father.

These are only a small number of the cases of reportedly thousands of such cases of rape being used by Islamists as a way of devastating Christian families. Unfortunately, the crime goes unpunished by local authorities. In Egypt, the Coptic Church is investigating 200 such cases.

#### *Conclusion*

Mr. Chairman, the persecution of Christians and other minorities does exist in such countries as Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. Religious persecution in the context of the examples which have been presented stands out as something tragically unique. The discriminatory policies, arrests, destruction of property, violence, torture and murder are targeted

against certain groups solely on the basis of their beliefs and religious culture. Even though governments such as Egypt and Pakistan do not officially condone violence against the minorities they bear responsibility for it by their de facto support of the Islamists by refusing to prosecute their acts of violence. Their own callous support of the very attitudes and institutions which perpetrate an environment in which religious bigotry flourishes and where unruly mobs motivated by radical ideologues hurt and kill those whose beliefs are different than their own must be challenged.

It is important for this legislative body to incorporate as part of its foreign policy perspective the fact that the countries of the Middle East are not homogeneously Arab and Islamic. There are sizable and vibrant indigenous Christian cultures throughout the region. The Christians of the Middle East do not want to abandon their homelands. They want to feel secure in them. They want to be an integral part of the political, economic and cultural life in their own country. They do not want to be second class citizens, subjected to religious apartheid by their government and society at large.

The United States enjoys interdependent relationships with many of the countries guilty of persecuting its religious minorities, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. It is sometimes difficult to criticize our friends, but it is time that we begin a serious engagement of these countries. Friendship depends upon similar values and like-mindedness. By our silence and unwillingness to demand the highest form of civility from these countries, we give tacit permission for them to impose ever greater hardships on those minorities who are already suffering.

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## G. Prepared Statement of Colonel Sharbel Barakat

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me this opportunity to talk about the persecution of the Lebanese Christians in general and the Christian population in south Lebanon in particular. This historic achievement will allow me to share with you, the representatives of the American people, a truth which was hidden for years by both the oppressors in the Middle East and by their protectors in the Western world.

My name is Sharbel Barakat. I was born and raised in the Christian village of Ain Ebel in south Lebanon. I studied in my village and later in Beirut. I became an officer of the Lebanese army, got married and had four children. I currently live in my village which is under siege by terrorist groups such as Hizbollah, and radical factions. I cannot travel in my country, nor I can go to the capital Beirut, I cannot leave my country through the airport, nor through seaports, Hizbollah has issued death sentences—sentences which were made public by the leadership of the organization—against large numbers of Christians in south Lebanon. I live with my family and my Christian community under the constant threat of shelling, road side explosions, kidnapping, and torture, in an area, home to 150,000 Christians and other minorities. Our fault? We are Christians surrounded by Islamist fundamentalists. In order to respond to your invitation Mr. Chairman, I had to cross the border into Israel, and leave the Middle East through the only airport that connects us to the free world.

We, the Christians of south Lebanon do not live in a free world.

Throughout my life, my relatives, friends and community have been submitted to various forms of oppression and persecution for the mere reason that we are Christians. Today, I would like to testify about my own experience, the experience of my community, the present state of harassment, and what we expect in the future. I would like also to make a few suggestions to the United States and world governments.

### *I. My experience*

Throughout my young years, I was raised in the fear of massacres, as our village's population was butchered in 1920 by Muslims. At the end of 1958, and before the U.S. Marines' intervention to put an end to the Islamic uprising, backed by Abdel Nasser of Egypt, I lost my eldest brother, a young Lebanese officer. When Benoit was killed, I was six years old. In the seventies, the PLO systematically brutalized the youth and elders of Ain Ebel, and other villages, installing terror check points, arresting, kidnapping, and killing some of the villagers. On many occasions graffiti were written on the walls such as "there is no place for Christians in this land." Since 1977, our village was encircled by PLO and other radical groups. Our world shrunk to less than three square miles. We were in a collective prison, more like a Christian ghetto surrounded by Jihad forces. On new year's eve of 1979, the day my wife gave birth to my older son, her two parents were kidnapped by the elements of Abu Nidal for three months. On Christmas day of 1991, my brother-in-law, a middle school teacher, was kidnapped to the Ain El Helweh Camp and tortured for a whole month by the armed elements of Abul Abbas.

In 1984, a new organization, Hizbollah, took over from the PLO. Manipulated by the Iranians, protected by the Syrians, legitimized after 1990 by the current Lebanese regime, the terrorists of Hizbollah were bolder in their designs. They openly called for the establishment of an Islamic republic. For six years, we had to use fishing boats to exit Ain Ebel's region in order to reach Beirut, before it fell to the Syrians in 1990. Children, women, and elderly were packed like cattle, under Hizbollah's fire. In 1985 a ship carrying 200 Christians sank off Beirut's shores. I personally was on many of these horror trips. Life was forbidden to us, so was freedom. During the time we were oppressed by the fundamentalists, other Christians suffered as well: the Western and American hostages, held by the same Hizbollah in Lebanon,

In the wake of the Syrian invasion of the Christian areas of Beirut and Mount Lebanon in October 1990, three civilians from my village were kidnapped by Hizbollah. Marun Nassif Atmeh was killed and his body was left in the valley of Wadi el-Sluki for fifteen days. The United Nations soldiers found him defaced and maimed. We were able to recognize him with the help of X rays taken of his leg few weeks prior. Butros Nassif Atmeh died months after his release as a result of severe beating to his head during his kidnapping. The third Christian, who is the nephew of a bishop and still alive, was reduced to a living martyr. I cannot bring his name for safety reasons. This environment of extreme violence against my vil-

lage and the Christians of this area caused us to live in constant fear. We even considered emigrating, emptying the villages; however, we remained on our land.

Since 1979, under Syrian pressures, our wages from the Lebanese Army were suspended by Beirut's government. Furthermore, a great number of us are denied passports.

More recently I worked hard to establish a Christian radio station to broadcast to the local community. As I made the first broadcast, Hizbollah threatened to shell the station. Later, Hizbollah's rockets were fired into the area, and we were forced to close it down to spare lives.

## *II. The experience of my community*

The pattern of suppression is an old one. The Christian community in that area was subjected to a number of massacres throughout this century. Since the massacre of 1920, incidents occurred frequently.

Mr. Chairman, the present Speaker of the House in Lebanon, Mr. Nabih Berri, who is considered as a moderate Shiite, publicly threatened by reminding us of this 1920 massacre three times. Targeting Christians is not specific to south Lebanon. The Lebanese Christians have been resisting the tide of Islamism since the seventh century. Our ancestors have paid the price for their faith. Lebanon is the only country in the Middle East where Christians from all denominations have been able to form a safe haven for over thirteen centuries.

In modern times, attempts were made to create a co-existence between Lebanon's religious communities. The Christians extended their hands to the Muslim leadership. Successful for a short period of time, this peaceful coexistence fell under the terrorism of the PLO, the Syrian occupation, and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

For an insight on this history I recommend the comprehensive book of Professor Walid Phares, "Lebanese Christian Nationalism: The Rise and Fall of an Ethnic Resistance." (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995).

In Phares' terms, the "Christians of Lebanon were and are still targeted because of their Christian identity and their determination to remain Christian."

Since 1975, about 150,000 Christians were killed during the war, Thousands of Lebanese Muslims died as well. Entire Christian villages were erased and their populations were ethnically cleansed. In Damur (south of Beirut), for example, a thousand Christian civilians were killed while the armed bands shouted "Allahu Akbar" and "Jihad" (Holy war slogans). Churches were burned down by dozens. An account of the horrors is too long to include in this testimony. Here are few examples of massacres:

1975: Beit Mellat, Deir Eshash, Tall Abbas (north Lebanon), Damur (Mount Lebanon)

1976: Chekka (north Lebanon), Qaa, Terbol (Bekaa valley)

1977: Aishye (south Lebanon), Maaser el-Shuf (Shuf Mountain)

1978: Ras Baalbeck, Shleefa (Bekaa valley)

1983: Major massacres in Aley and the Shuf mountains. In addition to the 241 US Marines and 78 French paratroopers savagely assassinated by Hizbollah

1984: Iqlim el-Kharrub (Mount Lebanon)

1985: East Sidon (South Lebanon)

1990: Matn district

## *III. The present state of harassment*

Since the so-called national reconciliation agreement of Taif was implemented by the Syrian army in 1990, Lebanon is under occupation and its Christian community under systematic oppression. Under this Syrian controlled regime, freedoms were eliminated.

Here are some of the flagrant abuses of human rights against Christians around the country:

- Constant and arbitrary arrests of young men and women. Armed elements break into their homes by night and kidnap them to "security" centers. The last campaign was during December 1996, when 450 young Christians were thrown in jail and beaten for days. They spent Christmas alone in helplessness.
- Christians are tried by military courts for "forming Christian associations," "opposing Syria," or for allegedly "contacting Israelis or Jews."
- Christians are severely tortured in Lebanese or Syrian jails or in detention centers by Hizbollah. Even the President of Lebanon has recognized the existence of 210 detained in Syrian jails. Our estimate indicates around 600.

In the so-called "security zone" of south Lebanon Christians live under the fear of Hizbollah's terror, In 1996, Hizbollah issued a public religious fatwah (religious edict) calling for the murder of "all those who have been in contact with Jews." As

we all know, there are thousands of Christians who work in the Galilee, inside Israel. All of these civilians will be put to death by the Iranian-backed organization if Israel withdraws. As of today, neither the Lebanese or the Syrian governments have issued a rebuttal to this Fatwah. We therefore, assume that Beirut and Damascus are endorsing the massacre of the Christians in south Lebanon by Hizbollah. Meanwhile, south Lebanon's villages are the target of snipers, bombs, kidnapping, and economic blockades.

*IV. What to expect in the future*

Mr. Chairman, it is certain that my community in the security zone and Jezzine is under present and real danger. Christians are presently safe because of the presence of Israeli troops and the local defense force known as South Lebanon Army (SLA). However, in the case of an Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the area, and disbanding of the SLA, we expect a generalized massacre of Christians, an ethnic cleansing, and de-Christianization of south Lebanon. This potential holocaust of Christians will have a tremendous impact on the region's Christians. For Lebanon has always been the hope for Middle East Christianity.

*V. Suggestions*

For the short term, I present the following suggestions aimed at saving the Christians of South Lebanon, as long as Hizbollah and the Syrian occupation forces are present and influential in that area.

(1) That the US government formally asks the Israeli government not to withdraw from the security zone before a solution is found for the protection of the Christian community in south Lebanon.

(2) That the US government help the Christians of south Lebanon to form a local authority which will enable them to face the administrative, economic, social, and security challenges.

(3) That the US government extend a direct humanitarian support to the encircled Christian community in south Lebanon, and help them establish a safe haven until the regional problem is solved.

(4) That the US Senate, and the US Congress extend invitations to the Maronite Patriarch of Lebanon, and other Christian leaders in south Lebanon and in exile, to testify about the fate of their community. Such a message can bring about the truth of persecution to the American people and allow Christians worldwide to extend their support to their brethren in faith in our tormented country.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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## H. Prepared Statement of Esmail Ebrahimi

### *Conversion from Islam to Christianity:*

I was born into a strict Muslim family in Tehran.<sup>1</sup> As a child, I fell into a well and almost died, but it seemed like a force was protecting me. At age fourteen, I felt there was a presence with me, like a guardian angel. Later I felt that God had a special plan for my life, and that I would bring God's truth to people. In my late teen years, God saved me from death when I almost froze during a mountain climbing excursion near Tehran. I served my two years of military service from 1983 to 1985, at the peak of the Iran-Iraq war and again God protected me.

In 1986, through the invitation of my brother, Ebrahim, who had previously converted from Islam to Christianity, I saw the movie *Jesus of Nazareth*. I immediately realized that in Jesus Christ I had found what I had been searching for. After a second viewing of the film, I clearly saw my sinfulness and how God had accepted and loved me with all my sins. In an evangelistic meeting at a park, a short time later, a man shared Christ with me and I prayed and received Christ into my life as Lord and Savior. Thus, in 1988, I made a decision to convert from Islam to Christianity and began attending the Emmanuel Evangelical Persian Church in north Tehran. I began sharing my new-found faith with other people. I was baptized by Rev. Sepehri in the Emmanuel Church, along with about 12 other people, in 1989. Soon my younger brother, Bahman, and my mother, Anis, also embraced Christianity.

### *Persecution in Iran Because of My Conversion from Islam to Christianity and My Evangelistic Activities:*

Because I shared Christ with my clients at my tailor shop, Islamic Revolutionary Guards began to come to my store posing as clients. They were actually trying to obtain evidence about my conversion from Islam to Christianity to use against me. They warned me to stop sharing my Christian faith with others. I knew that I must obey Christ's command to share my faith, but I was now more careful. Nevertheless, on July 13, 1990 two Revolutionary Guards came into my store and took me to the General Prosecutor's office. They blind-folded me and put me in solitary confinement without any information about their plans for me. The next day, Revolutionary Guards interrogated me about my Christian faith. They announced that I was to be executed for abandoning Islam. During this time, my family did not know of my whereabouts.

Three days later, I was interrogated again, but this time in the Revolutionary Court Building. After more interrogations and about three months of imprisonment and much psychological and physical abuse, I was forced to sign a statement not to preach Christianity and was released in October, 1990. Later, I learned that my release was due the intervention of the late Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr, then superintendent of the Assemblies of God Church and president of the Council of Protestant Churches in Iran, and to the upcoming visit to Iran of Mr. Galindo Pohl, the U.N. Special Representative of the Commission on Human Rights.

Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr was killed by government agents in January 1994 after he led an international campaign to free Rev. Mehdi Dibaj, an Iranian Muslim convert and evangelist, who had been imprisoned for nearly ten years and sentenced to be executed for "apostasy". Rev. Dibaj and Rev. Tatavous (Tateos) Mikaelian were killed by government agents in June 1994. Rev. Mikaelian took over the position of president of the Council of Protestant Churches in Iran after Bishop Hovsepian-Mehr's death.

I married my wife, also a convert from Islam to Christianity, in 1991. When my wife converted to Christianity, her neighbors learned about it and began to persecute her by saying unkind things. One day a Revolutionary Guard came to her door and warned her that if she did not cut off her association with Christians, "we will put a lead bullet into your empty head." She was frightened and didn't attend church for two or three weeks, then resumed going to church.

When our son was born in 1992, we had difficulty in obtaining an Iranian identification booklet because we had given him a name which was not an approved Islamic name. However, after we produced our Christian marriage certificate, by God's help, we succeeded in registering him under his Christian name.

After we were married, we lived and worked in Turkey with the Iranian Christian church. For two-and-a-half years after our return from Turkey we lived in Tehran in a basement in a state of fear. We were under surveillance and our phone was tapped. My business and inventory were confiscated by government authorities.

<sup>1</sup>This English language statement is a translation of the original Persian language statement.

After the killing of the three pastors in 1994, persecution of ordinary Muslim converts and Christians who evangelized Muslims increased. We feared that it would only be a matter of time before I would be arrested, imprisoned and charged again with abandoning Islam. My name and description had been given to all land border stations to prevent my exit from Iran. Therefore I was counseled not to leave Iran overland. We began to carefully plan our escape from Iran. When we learned that the Embassy of India in Tehran was giving visas to Iranians, we secretly obtained visas to India and purchased our plane tickets.

Without saying goodbye to any of our friends and family or telling anyone of our plans, my wife and son and I flew to India in December 1994. The government officials at Iran's Mehrabad airport did not search us or discover our official documents, including documents pertaining to my imprisonment.

*Persecution of Other Family Members Because of Their Conversion From Islam to Christianity and their Evangelistic Activities:*

Prior to 1986, my older brother, Ebrahim, had converted from Islam to Christianity. He received instruction from Transworld Radio in Monte Carlo, that broadcasts Persian Christian programs into Iran. He worked as an employee of the Iran Bible Society. After the government authorities closed the Iran Bible Society in 1990, Ebrahim served with Campus Crusade for Christ International, a U.S. based organization. He was imprisoned in Kermanshah in 1992 because of his conversion from Islam to Christianity and because of his evangelistic activities. Ebrahim and his wife fled Iran in 1994 and were accepted as refugees in Canada.

My younger brother, Bahman, also a Muslim convert to Christianity, had to discontinue his graduate studies in Iran. Because of the persecution he received for his Christian faith, he fled Iran in 1994, and was accepted as a refugee in Canada.

My mother had fled Iran to Canada several years earlier because of her conversion to Christianity.

*Persecution in India by Iranian Government Agents:*

Seven months after our arrival in India, with the help of Iranian Christians International, Inc., a Colorado based organization who assists Iranian Christian refugees, my wife, son and I were recognized by the UNHCR in New Delhi as refugees. Because the UNHCR monthly stipend is so little, we were forced to live in a one room apartment without air conditioning in a poor and fanatically Muslim part of New Delhi. A number of Iranian government agents and embassy personnel lived near us, including embassy officials who lived in the apartment below us. Because I did not receive any mail that had been sent to me since these officials moved into our building, I believe that they had asked the postman to deliver all of my mail, and perhaps the mail of other Iranian tenants, to them.

Other Iranian and Afghan refugee Muslim converts to Christianity in New Delhi were severely persecuted by Iranian and Afghan government agents while I lived in India. There were several kidnaping attempts, severe beatings requiring hospitalization, attempts to run over the converts with motorcycles and automobiles, and death threats. The motorcycles and cars had Iran/Afghanistan embassy license plates. Although reports of these incidents were submitted to the U.S. Immigration and the UNHCR, the truth of these reports has not been accepted by the U.S. INS and the UNHCR.

*Persecution in India by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service:*

After being recognized as a refugee by the UNHCR in July 1995, I immediately applied to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) at the American Embassy in New Delhi. Although most U.S. INS interviews at refugee processing posts are scheduled within two months of filing, I was not interviewed until eight months later. I was told that since my mother lived in Canada, although I had a U.S. sponsor, I must apply to Canada, and not to the U.S. In May 1996, Iranian Christians International, Inc. contacted U.S. Congressman Frank Wolf's office requesting his intervention for another Iranian Christian refugee and me. Congressman Wolf faxed a letter to the Honorable Frank G. Wisner, U.S. Ambassador to India, requesting detailed information why the other family and mine were rejected.

A month later Mr. Johnson, U.S. INS officer, gave me a second interview. However, he was very hostile and abusive. Now I submit the description and content of my interview with the U.S. INS in New Delhi for your information.

*June 6, 1996 Interview of Mr. Esmaeil Ebrahimi with Mr. Johnson, First Officer U.S. INS, New Delhi, India:*

I went to the U.S. Embassy with my wife and son at 10:00 A.M., June 6, 1996. At 10:30 A.M. Mr. Manouch (an employee of U.S. INS) took us to the U.S. INS sec-

tion of the Embassy and the office of Mr. Johnson. My wife and son were directed to the next room and only I was allowed into Mr. Johnson's office.

Mr. Johnson was standing in his office with a very angry expression on his face. After I sat down Mr. Johnson asked, "Why didn't you apply to the Canadian Embassy?" I thought he was referring to July 1995, when I first applied for immigration to the U.S., so I said, "As soon as I was recognized as a refugee in July 1995 I applied to the U.S. INS," Mr. Johnson became angry and screamed, "Didn't I tell you to apply at the Canadian Embassy?" I responded, "It is illegal to concurrently apply to two countries for resettlement as a refugee. I couldn't do that." Mr. Johnson shouted, "How do you know it is illegal? Have you been in contact with an immigration officer?" I replied, "No, I asked the receptionist at the information desk." Mr. Johnson said, "Who is a receptionist? You must have obtained that information from an officer." I responded, "That is not the case as refugee applicants are not allowed inside [to obtain such information from an officer]." Mr. Johnson angrily said, "Who do you think you are that you are trying to teach me immigration law? When I ordered you to apply to Canada you should have done it. Who do you think you are? You are a nobody. You have no status. Who gave you the right to complain [about U.S. INS, New Delhi]?" I said, "I did not complain to any place." Before my response was translated Mr. Johnson said with anger, "I am an independent person here. No one in America can write to me and tell me what to do. I can decide whom to accept and who to reject [as refugee]. No one is allowed to tell me what to do." (This statement was evidently in response to Congressman Wolf's letter to Ambassador Wisner.)

He then looked at my file and asked the date of my baptism. I responded, "1989." Mr. Johnson asked, "Where were you baptized?" I said, "In Tehran, Iran." He asked, "Why then the letter affirming your baptism is from a church in Germany?" I responded, "Rev. Sepehri [who wrote the affirmation letter] was formerly my pastor in Iran and the director of the Iran Bible Society. Due to danger to his life he fled from Iran to Germany. Rev. Sepehri baptized my wife and me in Tehran, Iran. We contacted him in Germany to receive affirmation of this fact." Mr. Johnson then asked for the original of the fax from Rev. Sepehri. I showed him a photocopy which I had laminated. In order to intimidate me, Mr. Johnson said the top part of my copy and what was in my file did not agree. I responded, "It is as clear as the day for me that the two are the same." Mr. Johnson said, "What if I contact Rev. Sepehri?" I responded, "It is a great idea. That is the best way to verify [the fact of my baptism]."

Mr. Johnson seemed to relax a bit and thumbed through more of my documents in the file. Then he asked, "Who is Ebrahim Ghaffari?" I said, "He and his wife are directors of ICI [Iranian Christians International]." Mr. Johnson asked, "Who is ICI?" I explained about ICI's work.

(Gap)

Then Mr. Johnson asked, "Why do you want to go to the U.S.? Why do you think you will be safe only in the U.S. while you are safe here in India where there is an Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran?" I responded, "India is not safe for Muslim converts to Christianity and evangelical Christians from Iran. Muslim fanatics have put us under pressure. I want to go to the U.S. to live and work in a safe country." Mr. Johnson said, "There are Muslim fanatics in the U.S. also. You will not be safe there either." I responded, "In the U.S. I will no longer be a refugee, but an immigrant and the police will protect me." Mr. Johnson said, "The police in India will protect you." I responded, "No, that is not so. Only UNHCR supports us, but even then it takes months to see an officer for an appointment. The Indian police protect those who pay a bribe." Mr. Johnson said, "Do you think we in the U.S. hire the police to protect you on a daily basis?" Then he added, "How do you want to live [support yourself in the U.S.]" I responded, "First, I have a sponsor. Second, I will work and I have faith that I can support my family and myself." Mr. Johnson said, "I was born in a Christian family myself. I am more of a Christian than you. You don't need to teach me about faith." Then he asked, "There are many poor people in America and they have a strong faith, but are not able to support themselves. If you think you can get a job based on your faith then you are stupid. Do you know any skills/jobs?" I said, "Yes, I am a tailor." Mr. Johnson stated with ridicule, "I don't think you will be able to have an income as a tailor. It is not an important occupation."

Then he asked, "If you had a chance, would you return to Iran?" I said, "Never." Mr. Johnson asked, "Why do you think if you return to Iran you will be killed? You exited [left] Iran legally." I responded, "The Iranian Christian pastors who were killed in Iran in 1994 also had Iranian passports and had gone in and out of Iran repeatedly." Mr. Johnson asked, "What is your source of support now?" I said, "I received a small allowance from the UN and a little that my mother sent until two

months ago. She is no longer able to do so." At his point Mr. Johnson looked at his calendar and told me, "Be here at 10:00 A.M. sharp on June 21, 1996 to receive our decision."

Mr. Johnson took no notes during the interview. Sometimes he was so angry that he would ask a question and not pause for my response. By the end of the interview he seemed calmer.

My wife who was in the next room during the interview, had heard all the screaming and shouting in Mr. Johnson's office. When I saw her after the interview she was frightened, upset and crying.

After the interview, we were accepted for resettlement in the U.S. as refugees. Following another tortuous process with the U.S. INS, and further intervention of Iranian Christians International, Inc., we arrived in the U.S. in December 1996, six months after we were accepted for resettlement and twenty-four months after our arrival in India. (The normal time period for processing to the U.S. after being accepted is two to four months.) Our second child was born less than a month after our arrival in the U.S. The doctor in New Delhi had told my wife not to travel during her third trimester of pregnancy. This information was given to the U.S. INS several times.

*Conclusion:*

The adversarial attitude of the U.S. INS officials and inconsistent refugee processing has led to Iranian Christian refugees finding themselves between a rock and a hard place. They cannot go back to Iran, yet spend months or years in limbo living in hostile and impoverished conditions before being processed to the U.S. First a refugee must go through a long and difficult ordeal to obtain UNHCR refugee status and financial assistance and then go through another lengthy and arduous process with the U.S. INS to be accepted for resettlement as a refugee in the U.S. During the time I was going through this process, an Afghan refugee set herself afire because the UNHCR refused to provide adequate medical care for her family.

Many of the refugees are financially destitute and cannot survive unnecessarily drawn-out appeals. The complete refugee processing procedures at the U.S. INS in New Delhi must be thoroughly investigated and changes made so that other Iranian Christian refugees currently stranded in India can be speedily processed to the U.S.; and so that other fleeing refugees in the future will not need to go through the severe hardship that my family and I faced.

This Subcommittee must continue to pressure the Iranian government to discontinue its persecution, arrest, imprisonment, torture and killing of Iranian Christians; to re-open churches and the Iranian Bible Society, and allow Muslim converts to attend church, and pastors to preach in Persian, the language of 90% of Iranians; and to allow Iranian Christians to leave Iran. This Subcommittee must take the lead in applying international pressure.