

113TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 301

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## AN ACT

To provide for the establishment of the Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia.

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

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) More than 500 Baha'is in Iran have been  
4 arbitrarily arrested since 2005. Roughly 100 Baha'is  
5 are presently imprisoned because of their religious  
6 beliefs.

7 (2) In May 2010, suspected terrorists attacked  
8 two mosques in Pakistan belonging to the Ahmad-  
9 diya minority Muslim sect, killing at least 80 people.  
10 Ahmadis consider themselves Muslim, but Pakistani  
11 law does not recognize them as such.

12 (3) Said Musa, an Afghan Christian convert,  
13 was arrested in May 2010 on charges of apostasy,  
14 a crime which can carry the death sentence, and was  
15 released in February 2011 only after sustained  
16 international pressure.

17 (4) On October 31, 2010, gunmen laid siege on  
18 Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad, Iraq,  
19 killing at least 52 police and worshipers, including  
20 two priests, making it the worst massacre of Iraqi  
21 Christians since 2003.

22 (5) Iraq's ancient and once vibrant Christian  
23 population that numbered an estimated 1,500,000  
24 out of a total population in Iraq of 30,000,000 in  
25 2003 has been reduced by at least one half, due in  
26 significant part to Christians fleeing the violence.

1           (6) In November 2010, a Pakistani court sen-  
2           tenced Aasia Bibi, a Christian mother of five, to  
3           death under the country’s blasphemy law for insult-  
4           ing the Prophet Muhammad.

5           (7) Since early 2011, violent sectarian attacks  
6           targeting Coptic Orthodox Christians and their prop-  
7           erty increased significantly, resulting in nearly 100  
8           deaths, mostly Coptic Christians, surpassing the  
9           death toll of the 10 previous years combined.

10          (8) In Egypt, with the ascent of the Muslim  
11          Brotherhood, Coptic Christians, numbering 8 to 10  
12          million, have been under increased threat and many  
13          are reported to have fled the country during former  
14          President Mohamed Morsi’s rule.

15          (9) On March 2, 2011, Pakistani Federal Mi-  
16          norities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti, the only Christian  
17          member of the Cabinet, who was outspoken in his  
18          opposition to Pakistan’s blasphemy laws was assas-  
19          sinated by extremists.

20          (10) The former Special Envoy to Monitor and  
21          Combat Anti-Semitism, Hannah Rosenthal, has  
22          noted that Holocaust glorification “is especially viru-  
23          lent in Middle Eastern media, some of which is  
24          state-owned and operated, which calls for a new Hol-  
25          ocaust to finish the job”.

1           (11) In the midst of a devastating civil war,  
2           Syrian Christians and other religious minorities,  
3           which comprise roughly 10 percent of the popu-  
4           lation, are particularly vulnerable lacking their own  
5           militias and regional protectors.

6           (12) Many of these ancient faith communities  
7           are being forced to flee the lands which they have  
8           inhabited for centuries.

9           (13) The United States Commission on Inter-  
10          national Religious Freedom has recommended that  
11          Egypt, Tajikistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Saudi Ara-  
12          bia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan be designated by  
13          the Department of State as Countries of Particular  
14          Concern in accordance with the International Reli-  
15          gious Freedom Act of 1998.

16          (14) The situation on the ground in the region  
17          continues to develop rapidly and the United States  
18          Government needs an individual who can respond in  
19          kind and focus on the critical situation of religious  
20          minorities in these countries.

21          (15) There are historical precedents, including  
22          the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-  
23          Semitism, the Special Envoy for North Korea  
24          Human Rights Issues, and the South Sudan and  
25          Sudan Special Envoy, for the Department of State,

1       either as a result of legislative mandate or initiative  
2       of the Secretary of State, to create positions with a  
3       targeted focus on an area or issue of recognized im-  
4       port.

5       **SEC. 2. SPECIAL ENVOY TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS FREE-**  
6                               **DOM OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE**  
7                               **NEAR EAST AND SOUTH CENTRAL ASIA.**

8       (a) APPOINTMENT.—The President shall appoint a  
9       Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious  
10      Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia (in  
11      this Act referred to as the “Special Envoy”) within the  
12      Department of State.

13      (b) QUALIFICATIONS.—The Special Envoy should be  
14      a person of recognized distinction in the field of human  
15      rights and religious freedom and with expertise in the  
16      Near East and South Central Asia regions. The Special  
17      Envoy shall have the rank of ambassador and shall hold  
18      the office at the pleasure of the President.

19      (c) PROHIBITION.—The person appointed as Special  
20      Envoy may not hold any other position of Federal employ-  
21      ment for the period of time during which the person holds  
22      the position of Special Envoy.

23      **SEC. 3. DUTIES.**

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

1           (1) Promote the right of religious freedom of  
2 religious minorities in the countries of the Near  
3 East and the countries of South Central Asia, de-  
4 nounce the violation of such right, and recommend  
5 appropriate responses by the United States Govern-  
6 ment when such right is violated.

7           (2) Monitor and combat acts of religious intol-  
8 erance and incitement targeted against religious mi-  
9 norities in the countries of the Near East and the  
10 countries of South Central Asia.

11           (3) Work to ensure that the unique needs of re-  
12 ligious minority communities in the countries of the  
13 Near East and the countries of South Central Asia  
14 are addressed, including the economic and security  
15 needs of such communities to the extent that such  
16 needs are directly tied to religious-based discrimina-  
17 tion and persecution.

18           (4) Work with foreign governments of the coun-  
19 tries of the Near East and the countries of South  
20 Central Asia to address laws that are inherently dis-  
21 criminatory toward religious minority communities  
22 in such countries.

23           (5) Coordinate and assist in the preparation of  
24 that portion of the report required by sections  
25 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act

1 of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151n(d) and 2304(b)) relating  
2 to the nature and extent of religious freedom of reli-  
3 gious minorities in the countries of the Near East  
4 and the countries of South Central Asia.

5 (6) Coordinate and assist in the preparation of  
6 that portion of the report required by section 102(b)  
7 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998  
8 (22 U.S.C. 6412(b)) relating to the nature and ex-  
9 tent of religious freedom of religious minorities in  
10 the countries of the Near East and the countries of  
11 South Central Asia.

12 (b) COORDINATION.—In carrying out the duties  
13 under subsection (a), the Special Envoy shall, to the max-  
14 imum extent practicable, coordinate with the Bureau of  
15 Population, Refugees and Migration of the Department of  
16 State, the Ambassador at Large for International Reli-  
17 gious Freedom, the United States Commission on Inter-  
18 national Religious Freedom, and other relevant Federal  
19 agencies and officials.

20 **SEC. 4. DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION.**

21 Subject to the direction of the President and the Sec-  
22 retary of State, the Special Envoy is authorized to rep-  
23 resent the United States in matters and cases relevant to  
24 religious freedom in the countries of the Near East and  
25 the countries of South Central Asia in—

1           (1) contacts with foreign governments, intergov-  
2           ernmental organizations, and specialized agencies of  
3           the United Nations, the Organization of Security  
4           and Cooperation in Europe, and other international  
5           organizations of which the United States is a mem-  
6           ber; and

7           (2) multilateral conferences and meetings rel-  
8           evant to religious freedom in the countries of the  
9           Near East and the countries of South Central Asia.

10 **SEC. 5. PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND CONSULTATION.**

11           (a) PRIORITY COUNTRIES.—In carrying out this Act,  
12 the Special Envoy shall give priority to programs, projects,  
13 and activities for Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and  
14 Pakistan.

15           (b) CONSULTATION.—The Special Envoy shall con-  
16 sult with domestic and international nongovernmental or-  
17 ganizations and multilateral organizations and institu-  
18 tions, as the Special Envoy considers appropriate to fulfill  
19 the purposes of this Act.

20 **SEC. 6. FUNDING.**

21           (a) IN GENERAL.—Of the amounts made available  
22 for “Diplomatic and Consular Programs” for fiscal years  
23 2014 through 2018, \$1,000,000 is authorized to be appro-  
24 priated for each such fiscal year to carry out the provisions  
25 of this Act.



1           (b) **FUNDING OFFSET.**—To offset the costs to be in-  
2 curred by the Department of State to carry out the provi-  
3 sions of this Act for fiscal years 2014 through 2018, the  
4 Secretary of State shall eliminate such positions within the  
5 Department of State, unless otherwise authorized or re-  
6 quired by law, as the Secretary determines to be necessary  
7 to fully offset such costs.

8           (c) **LIMITATION.**—No additional funds are authorized  
9 to be appropriated for “Diplomatic and Consular Pro-  
10 grams” to carry out the provisions of this Act.

11 **SEC. 7. SUNSET.**

12           This Act shall cease to be effective beginning on Octo-  
13 ber 1, 2018.

          Passed the House of Representatives September 18,  
2013.

Attest:

*Clerk.*

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