

H. Res. 515

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

September 24, 1996.

Whereas oppression and persecution of religious believers around the world has emerged as one of the most compelling human rights issues of the day, in particular the worldwide persecution and martyrdom of Christians persists at alarming levels, and this is an affront to the international moral community and to all people of conscience;

Whereas in many places throughout the world, Christians are restricted in or forbidden from practicing their faith, victimized by a “religious apartheid” that subjects them to inhumane humiliating treatment, and are imprisoned, tortured, enslaved, and killed;

Whereas in some countries proselytizing is forbidden and extremist elements persist unchecked by governments in their campaigns to eradicate Christians and force conversions through intimidation, rape, and forced marriage;

Whereas in several Islamic countries conversion to Christianity from Islam is a crime punishable by death and an Islamic court in Kuwait has denied religious liberty to a convert from Islam to Christianity;

Whereas the militant Muslim Government of Sudan is waging what its leader has described as a jihad (religious war)

against Christian and other non-Muslim citizens in the southern part of the country, enforcing Shari'a (Islamic law) against non-Muslim African Sudanese, torturing, starving, killing, and displacing over 1,000,000 people, and enslaving tens of thousands of women and children;

Whereas today in Sudan a human being can be bought for as little as \$15;

Whereas Christians in China are now experiencing the worst persecution since the 1970's;

Whereas there are more documented cases of Christians in prison or in some form of detention in China than in any other country;

Whereas both Evangelical Protestant house church groups and Roman Catholics have been targeted and named "a principal threat to political stability" by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China;

Whereas in recent months, in separate incidents, 3 Chinese Christian leaders were beaten to death by Chinese authorities simply because of their religious activities;

Whereas 3 Christian leaders in Iran were kidnapped and murdered during 1994 as part of a crackdown on the Iranian Christian community;

Whereas severe persecution of Christians is also occurring in North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Indonesia (including East Timor), and in certain countries in the Middle East, to name only a few;

Whereas religious liberty is a universal right explicitly recognized in numerous international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

Whereas Pope John Paul II recently sounded a call against regimes that “practice discrimination against Jews, Christians, and other religious groups, going even so far as to refuse them the right to meet in private for prayer”, declaring that “this is an intolerable and unjustifiable violation, not only of all the norms of current international law, but of the most fundamental human freedom, that of practicing one’s faith openly”, stating that this is for human beings “their reason for living”;

Whereas the National Association of Evangelicals in January 1996 issued a Statement of Conscience and Call to Action, subsequently commended or endorsed by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, United States of America, in which they pledged to end their “silence in the face of the suffering of all those persecuted for their religious faith” and “to do what is in 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”;

Whereas the World Evangelical Fellowship has declared September 29, 1996, and the last Sunday in September each year thereafter, as an international day of prayer on behalf of persecuted Christians, and that day will be observed by numerous churches and human rights groups around the world;

Whereas the United States of America since its founding has been a harbor of refuge and freedom to worship for believers from John Winthrop to Roger Williams to William Penn and a haven for the oppressed, and has guaranteed

freedom of worship in this country for people of all faiths;

Whereas historically the United States has in many instances failed to intervene successfully to stop anti-Christian and other religious persecution; and

Whereas in the past the United States has forcefully taken up the cause of other persecuted religious believers and the United States should continue to intervene on behalf of persecuted Christians throughout the world: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) reaffirms its commitment to the Nation's
3 historic devotion to the principles of religious liberty;

4 (2) unequivocally condemns the egregious
5 human rights abuses and denials of religious liberty
6 to Christians and other persecuted religions around
7 the world and calls upon the responsible regimes to
8 cease such abuses;

9 (3) strongly recommends that the President ex-
10 pand and invigorate United States international ad-
11 vocacy on behalf of persecuted Christians and other
12 persecuted religions and initiate a thorough exam-
13 ination of all United States policies that affect per-
14 secuted Christians;

15 (4) encourages the President to take organiza-
16 tional steps to strengthen United States policies to
17 combat religious persecution, including the creation

1 of a special advisory committee for religious liberty
2 abroad which has an appropriate mandate and ade-
3 quate staff or to consider the appointment of a
4 White House special advisor on religious persecu-
5 tion; and

6 (5) applauds the actions of the World Evan-
7 gelical Fellowship in declaring an annual inter-
8 national day of prayer on behalf of persecuted Chris-
9 tians.

Attest:

Clerk.