

109TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

S. RES. 421

Calling on the Government of Afghanistan to uphold freedom of religion and urging the Government of the United States to promote religious freedom in Afghanistan.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 4, 2006

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. KERRY, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. INHOFE, and Mr. COLEMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Calling on the Government of Afghanistan to uphold freedom of religion and urging the Government of the United States to promote religious freedom in Afghanistan.

Whereas under the Taliban Government of Afghanistan, individuals convicted of promoting faiths other than Islam, or expressing interpretations of Islam differing from the prevailing orthodoxy, could be imprisoned and those converting from Islam could be tortured and publicly executed;

Whereas the United States has more than 22,000 members of the Armed Forces stationed in Afghanistan and whereas 282 members of the Armed Forces have given their

lives in Afghanistan since Operation Enduring Freedom began in that country;

Whereas Abdul Rahman, a citizen of Afghanistan, was arrested and accused of apostasy for converting to Christianity 16 years ago and threatened with execution;

Whereas the prosecutor in this case, Abdul Wasi, stated in court that Abdul Rahman “is known as a microbe in society, and he should be cut off and removed from the rest of Muslim society and should be killed.”;

Whereas, while it was a welcome development that charges against Abdul Rahman were dropped, he was forced to seek asylum in Italy;

Whereas, despite his release, religious freedom and those who would practice it in Afghanistan remain in jeopardy;

Whereas religious freedom is a fundamental principle of democracy;

Whereas the Constitution of Afghanistan does not fully guarantee freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief;

Whereas, on several occasions throughout Afghanistan’s constitution drafting process, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom raised concerns that the constitution’s ambiguity on issues of conversion and religious expression could lead to unjust criminal accusations against Muslims and non-Muslims alike;

Whereas charges of blasphemy since 2002 have justified those concerns;

Whereas the International Religious Freedom Report 2005 published by the Department of State does not list Afghanistan among those countries cited for “State Hostility Toward Minority or Nonapproved Religions”,

“State Neglect of Societal Discrimination or Abuses Against Religious Groups”, or “Discriminatory Legislation or Policies Prejudicial to Certain Religions” and notes that “[t]he new Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice”;

Whereas the International Religious Freedom Report 2005 states that conversion from Islam is “in theory – punishable by death” in Afghanistan;

Whereas the case of Abdul Rahman, other instances of religious persecution or discrimination against minorities, and ambiguities within the Constitution of Afghanistan appear to warrant closer scrutiny in the International Religious Freedom Report 2006; and

Whereas Afghanistan is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which reads in part, “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That—

2 (1) the Senate—

3 (A) recognizes freedom of religion as a
4 central tenet of democracy;

5 (B) respects the right of the people of Af-
6 ghanistan to self-government, while strongly

1 urging the Government of Afghanistan to re-
2 spect all universally recognized human rights;

3 (C) condemns the arrest of Abdul Rahman
4 and other instances of religious persecution in
5 Afghanistan;

6 (D) commends the dropping of charges
7 against Abdul Rahman; and

8 (E) strongly urges the Government of Af-
9 ghanistan to consider the importance of reli-
10 gious freedom for the broader relationship be-
11 tween the United States and Afghanistan; and

12 (2) it is the sense of the Senate that the Presi-
13 dent and the President's representatives should—

14 (A) in both public and private fora, raise
15 concerns at the highest levels with the Govern-
16 ment of Afghanistan regarding the violations of
17 internationally recognized human rights, includ-
18 ing the right to freedom of religion or belief, in
19 Afghanistan; and

20 (B) ensure that the International Religious
21 Freedom Report 2006 for Afghanistan fully ad-
22 dresses the issue of religious persecution in that
23 country, including the arrest of Abdul Rahman.

○