

EFFECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR  
COUNTRIES OF PARTICULAR  
CONCERN**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, June 13, 2014*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I recently chaired a hearing on effective accountability for countries that blatantly commit religious or freedom violations or that turn a blind eye to such violations within their borders.

The headlines are filled with examples. A 27-year-old mother, Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, is imprisoned and faces a death sentence in Sudan because she refused to renounce her Christian faith. This case in Sudan mirrors a similar incident in Nigeria in which Boko Haram shot Habiba Adamu, who refused to renounce Christianity, just like Mrs. Ibrahim. Also in Nigeria, Islamic terrorist organization Boko Haram is holding over 200 school girls hostage (most of whom are Christian), after kidnapping them from their school dorms in the middle of the night.

Anti-semitism has resurfaced in Ukraine with a series of violent attacks following the ouster of former Prime Minister Yanukovich.

We have also received word that American Pastor Saed Abedini, who is serving an 8 year sentence in Iran for his faith, was severely beaten and returned to prison. He had been hospitalized due to internal bleeding from beatings previously received in prison. His wife, Naghmeh Abedini, testified before my subcommittee in December and begged that the Administration make securing her husband's release a top priority.

Tragically, many countries of the world are a long way from recognizing the human right of religious freedom set forth by Article 18 of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In the United States, we claim religious freedom as the "first freedom" because of its placement at the top of the Bill of Rights enumerated in our Constitution, and because of its foundational role in the life of a free and democratic nation. Religious freedom is a constant reminder to governments that their power is limited, that governments do not create rights but merely recognize them, and that a man or woman's first duty is to his or her well-formed conscience.

The evidence bears out the importance of protecting and promoting religious freedom. As the Pew Research Center and Berkley Center at Georgetown have shown, governments that protect and promote religious freedom have higher levels of social harmony. Just as importantly for national security, high observance of religious freedom is correlated with lower levels of religious extremism.

In 1998, Congress had the foresight to make the protection and promotion of religious freedom a priority in U.S. foreign policy by creating an Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom, the Office of International Religious Freedom at the Department of State, which authors the International Religious Freedom Reports on every country in the world, and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, with their watchdog report to Congress.

Importantly, this landmark piece of legislation, the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), authored by Chairman FRANK WOLF of Virginia, created a system for naming and taking action against Countries of Particular Concern or CPCs.

Sixteen years later, the need for U.S. leadership on religious freedom could not be more critical—but the tools to achieve it are lightly used. The Administration recently announced its intention to appoint two new members to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom—but the post of Ambassador-at-Large is in its seventh month of vacancy. The post has been empty for more than a third of this Administration, and the Ambassador's level of authority within the State Department has been demoted.

Despite the fact that the IRFA called for an annual review of CPC designations, the Administration has not named CPCs since 2011. What few Presidential Actions—like sanctions—have been taken in correlation with the 2011 CPC designation, have now lapsed.

History has shown that when the United States makes religious freedom a priority and that priority is conveyed to countries of particular concern, we have seen conditions change with minimal harm to security or economic cooperation. For instance, the CPC designation worked as intended with Vietnam—until it was removed prematurely.

In 2004, the Bush Administration designated Vietnam as a CPC as part of the larger bilateral relationship. Vietnam took positive steps toward reforming its laws and practices related to religious freedom and releasing religious prisoners.

Other parts of the relationship—trade and security cooperation—expanded at the same time. Vietnam saw that it was in its interest to take positive steps on religious freedom because it was a priority of the Administration and a prerequisite of a harmonious bilateral relationship.

In 2006, the CPC designation was removed prematurely. In 2007, shortly after Vietnam gained World Trade Organization status, it launched a crackdown on religious leaders, free speech advocates, labor unions, and others that continues to this day.

USCIRF has made a compelling case for why Vietnam should be designated as a CPC, why that designation would again produce results, and why it is in the United States interests to prioritize religious freedom in the bilateral relationship. Seven years later, we are waiting for CPC designation.

The hearing took a close look at the ongoing need for the United States to actively pursue religious freedom as a priority goal of its foreign policy, as intended by Congress in the IRFA, and, specifically, the work of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom in reaching this goal.

NATIONAL MEN'S HEALTH WEEK

**HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, June 13, 2014*

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of National Men's Health Week from June 9–15, 2014.

Men's Health Week is a time to focus attention and heighten awareness of preventable health problems affecting men and boys and encourage early detection and treatment.

On May 24, 1994, Congress passed S.J. Res. 179, a joint resolution establishing National Men's Health Week (NMHW). The joint resolution was signed into law (Pub. L. 103–264) by President William Jefferson Clinton on May 31, 1994.

Men's Health Month is celebrated across the country with screenings, health fairs, media appearances, and other health education and outreach activities.

I encourage all men, young and older, and their families, to develop positive and proactive attitudes toward health and wellness, engage in preventive behaviors, lead healthy lifestyles, and seek timely medical advice and care.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men, afflicting 1 out of every 11 American men and killing 34,000 men every year.

For African-American men, the rate of affliction is even worse; African-American men have the highest incidence of prostate cancer in the world.

In the past 5 years, the death rate for prostate cancer has grown at almost twice the death rate of breast cancer.

National Men's Health Network has encouraged the development of thousands of health awareness activities as corporations, hospital systems, clinics, faith-based communities, the public sector, and others use the month of June to highlight their services and reach out to men and their families.

Mr. Speaker, much progress has been made in the past 20 years with improvements in the health and well-being of men and boys, with a dramatic improvement in life expectancy and surprising drops in key mortality indicators.

There has been a steep drop among males in overall mortality, and corresponding improvements in the mortality rates for cancer and cardiovascular diseases.

Our goal this month should be to raise awareness about men's health in our communities and to support National Men's Health Week and to rededicate ourselves to providing support for our men by further educating ourselves and our communities on Men's Health and effects.

Recognizing and preventing men's health problems is not just a man's issue because it impacts wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters.

Men's health is truly a family issue.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in the recognition of National Men's Health Week, and ask all Americans to take time this month to find out what you can do to help the growing population of the men around you.

HONORING MARY ALLEN  
LINDEMANN AND ALAN SPEAR**HON. CHELLIE PINGREE**

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, June 13, 2014*

Ms. PINGREE of Maine. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a wife-and-husband team in my District for being selected as the Small Business Administration's Maine Small Business Person of the Year for 2014.

Mary Allen Lindemann and Alan Spear founded Coffee by Design (CBD) in Portland, Maine, 20 years ago with one part-time employee. From its humble beginnings, CBD has become a Maine institution. Today it employs 55 people, sells its coffee wholesale to numerous clients across Maine and the country, and has five locations, including a beautiful new 45,000-square-foot roastery, office, café, and training facility.

All this growth has not detracted one bit from the company's commitment to locally roasting, blending, and brewing a superior cup of coffee.

As much as for the taste of its coffee, though, people in Maine love CBD for its community mindedness—locally and internationally. Giving herself the title of “Community Builder,” Mary Allen has made sure that CBD takes great care of its employees, supports and leads many community causes, and creates a welcoming and compassionate feel for all who come into the company's coffee houses. As “Chief Bean,” Alan travels the world seeking coffee sources that use sustainable practices and treat farmers fairly. Under their leadership, CBD has shown that businesses can have a heart without sacrificing success.

I appreciate the SBA for recognizing CBD and other small businesses for their leadership, as well as supporting their growth with the help of local banks and other partners. My sincere congratulations to Alan and Mary Allen as well as all the other Maine businesses being recognized this year.

#### THE ONGOING STRUGGLE AGAINST BOKO HARAM

### HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, June 13, 2014*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, since November 2013, the U.S. government has declared Boko Haram and its affiliate Ansaru to be Foreign Terrorist Organizations. This supposedly provides further tools with which to fight such organizations and their sponsors. However, an Administration that resisted the FTO designation for so long continues to downplay its significance. A hearing that I held earlier this week was intended to provide information on that reluctance and on obstacles to our effective security and/or military assistance to the Nigerian government in this anti-terror fight.

Boko Haram is a Nigerian terrorist group whose full name in Arabic means “people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad.” The name “Boko Haram” is a translation from Hausa meaning that conventional education (boko) is forbidden (haram).

According to various reports, Boko Haram began in 2003 when about 200 university students and unemployed youth created a camp in Yobe State near the Niger border to withdraw from what they considered the corrupt, sinful and unjust Nigerian government, and their community was supposedly founded on Islamic law. The group was then known by the nickname the Nigerian Taliban. Violent clashes with Nigerian security forces nearly destroyed the group several times, but its char-

ismatic leader, Mohammed Yusuf kept the group alive until his death while in police custody in July 2009. Since Yusuf's death, there have been various spokesmen but one person who is believed to be the nominal leader: Abubakar Shekau. Furthermore, a breakaway group known as Ansaru has appeared on the scene, but still coordinates with the original Boko Haram.

Because of its repeated attacks against Christian targets during holy days such as Christmas and Easter, Boko Haram is seen by some as principally an anti-Christian organization. This past year alone, Boko Haram terrorists are believed to have killed more than 1,000 Christians in Nigeria. In fact, it is estimated that more than 60 percent of Christians killed worldwide because of religious intolerance die in Nigeria. However, it would not be a completely accurate interpretation of the facts to assume that what is happening in Nigeria is just a Muslim-Christian conflict.

The kidnapping of nearly 300 Nigerian schoolgirls in the Borno State town of Chibok on April 14 has caught the attention of the international community, albeit two weeks after the incident. However, the kidnapping of eight additional girls after that has been an afterthought, and the kidnapping of another 20 women last week has yet to receive much notice. Prior to the April kidnappings, Boko Haram had generally killed boys but let girls go, warning them to go home and give up their dreams of education. There have been previous incidents, however, in which girls have been kidnapped, though not in large numbers as in Chibok.

Now Boko Haram leaders realize that kidnapping girls gets worldwide publicity, and whether these girls are recovered or not, they know that they can do this again to get publicity for their group. The very news media used to galvanize pressure on Nigeria to obtain the freedom of the kidnapped girls is being used by Boko Haram to brag of its ability to disrupt society and taunt Nigerians and their government about their ability to take their women and girls away. Several videos, purportedly of the kidnapped Chibok girls, have been released, echoing previously-used al-Qaeda tactics in this regard.

In the past two years, our subcommittee has sent a staff delegation to investigate the Boko Haram threat; this past September, Gregory Simpkins, our subcommittee's staff director, and I visited Abuja and Jos to further look into this matter, and I just returned the other day from Abuja, where I took time out from another human rights mission in Nigeria to further investigate the ongoing struggle against this terrorist threat.

Last week, I met in Abuja with one of the Chibok girls who escaped early on in the ordeal. This brave young woman has suffered much and was clearly traumatized and in emotional pain. You could hear it in her voice and see it in her eyes as she sat motionless, recounting her story. Yet she spoke of her concern not for herself, but her friends and classmates who remain in captivity.

I met with a Muslim father of two girls abducted from the Chibok School. Fighting back tears, he said the agony was unbearable. The story of his daughters underscored the fact that Boko Haram brutalizes Muslims as well.

I also met with other Boko Haram victims, including a Christian mother whose two daughters were abducted in February 2012.

She told us her husband was shot on the spot. Three months later, Boko Haram returned and asked if her son had converted to Islam. When she said no—he was shot and killed. We wasted more than a year of not using all our tools because of the specious argument that doing so would provide publicity to terrorists, and now the Administration is downplaying what the FTO designation can accomplish. There must be robust use of the benefits of this designation if we are to be successful in the battle against terrorism in Nigeria.

The three criteria for an organization to be declared a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. government are: 1) it must be a foreign organization, 2) it must engage in terrorist activity, and 3) it must threaten the security of United States nationals, U.S. national security or the economic interests of the United States. Clearly, Boko Haram/Ansaru meets that test. This was why I introduced H.R. 3209 last year to urge the Administration to declare Boko Haram a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

The proliferation of voices speaking for Boko Haram and the new faction lead some to believe this is not a coherent organization, but we have learned that it is actually a very sophisticated organization operating in cells disconnected from each other but coordinating at a high level. Some also believe this group is purely a domestic terrorist group operating in Nigeria. We found that to be a false assumption as well.

Boko Haram/Ansaru does wage attacks on the Nigerian government and other domestic targets. Nevertheless, their actions prove their participation in the global jihad movement that wages violent war worldwide to establish their skewed version of Islam as the prevailing religion globally. Various actions, such as the bombing of the United Nations Abuja office in August 2011, and numerous statements from Boko Haram spokesmen indicate their international intent.

This international focus has been confirmed by American and Nigerian intelligence information. In fact, there was at least one American present during the U.N. bombing, which if the Administration had acknowledged that at the time, would have created pressure to use the FTO designation then. As recently as the Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on May 21st, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Sarah Sewell would neither confirm nor deny that fact. In fact, the State Department has refused to confirm what we now know to be true since the 2011 U.N. building bombing. When then-Assistant Secretary of State Johnny Carson told us in our July 2012 hearing on Nigeria that Boko Haram's attacks were caused mostly by animus against the Nigerian government, he was wrong in his apportionment of cause and effect. There is tremendous animus toward the Nigerian government and an effort to embarrass President Jonathan. However, Boko Haram is determined to convert or kill Christians and Muslims they believe oppose them.

Poverty did not create Boko Haram—religious fanaticism did. Still, underdevelopment in northern Nigeria provides fodder for a level of discontent with the federal government that provides at least tacit northern support for anyone opposing the government. If northern Nigeria were its own country, it would be among the poorest, least educated, least healthy countries in the world.