

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1002

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, Endorsing and supporting international freedom from persecution for religious beliefs.

WHEREAS, the right of freedom of religion undergirds the very origin and existence of the United States, since many of our Nation's founders, from John Winthrop to Roger Williams to William Penn, fled religious persecution abroad in order to establish in law, as a fundamental right and as a pillar of our Nation, the right to freedom of religion; and

WHEREAS, from its birth to this day, the United States has prized this legacy of religious freedom and honored this heritage by standing for religious freedom and offering refuge to those suffering religious persecution; and

WHEREAS, freedom of religious belief and practice is a universal human right and fundamental freedom articulated in numerous international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Helsinki Accords, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, the United Nations Charter, and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; and

WHEREAS, the right to freedom of religion is under renewed and, in some cases, increasing assault in many countries around the world; and

WHEREAS, it is even more abhorrent that religious believers in many countries face such severe and violent forms of religious persecution as detention, torture, beatings, forced marriage, rape, imprisonment, enslavement, mass resettlement, and death merely for the peaceful belief in, change of, or practice of their faith; and

WHEREAS, in many countries, religious believers are forced to meet secretly, and religious leaders are targeted by national security forces and hostile mobs; and

WHEREAS, though not confined to a particular region or regime, religious persecution is often particularly widespread, systematic, and heinous under totalitarian governments and in countries with militant, politicized religious majorities; and

WHEREAS, 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, which is an affront to the international moral community and to all people of conscience; and

WHEREAS, Chinese Christians and Tibetan Buddhists are now experiencing the worst persecution at the hands of the Chinese government since the 1970s; and

WHEREAS, severe persecution of people for their religious beliefs is also occurring in North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Indonesia, including East Timor, and in certain countries in the Middle East and the former Soviet Union, to name only a few; and

WHEREAS, the militant Muslim government of Sudan is waging what its leader had described as a jihad, or religious war, against Christian and other non-Muslim citizens in the southern part of the country, enforcing Islamic Shari'a law against non-Muslim African Sudanese, torturing, starving, killing, and displacing over one million people, and enslaving tens of thousands of women and children; and

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 religious believers throughout the world:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives of the Seventy-fourth Legislature of the State of South Dakota, the Senate concurring therein, that the Legislature urges the United States to:

- (1) Condemn violations of religious freedom, and to promote, and to assist other governments in the promotion of, the fundamental right to freedom of religion; and
- (2) Seek to channel United States security and development assistance to governments other than those found to be engaged in gross violations of the right to freedom of religion, as set forth in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, in the International Financial Institutions Act of 1977, and in other formulations of United States human rights policy; and
- (3) Work with foreign governments that affirm and protect religious freedom, in order to develop multilateral documents and initiatives to combat violations of religious freedom and promote the right to religious freedom abroad; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Senator Thomas Daschle, Senate Minority Leader, be commended for the appointment of Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, who has a strong record of uncompromising opposition towards religious persecution, to the Commission on International Religious Freedom, and that Senator Daschle, with other members of the South Dakota delegation, recommend to the President of the United States the appointment of additional commission members of uncompromising opposition towards religious persecution to the newly created commission on religious persecution, created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

Adopted by the House of Representatives,
Concurred in by the Senate,

January 26, 1999
February 17, 1999

Roger Hunt
Speaker of the House

Karen Gerdes
Chief Clerk of the House

Carole Hillard
President of the Senate

Patricia Adam
Secretary of the Senate