

2019 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 285

BY REPRESENTATIVE AMEDEE

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the President and Congress of the United States of America to urge discriminatory countries to cease religious persecution and combat religious persecution carried out by extremist, non-state actors and to urge heads of the governments of all countries around the world to uphold the right to religious freedom and condemn the global persecution of any religious group.

WHEREAS, the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401 et seq.) finds that religious persecution is not confined to a particular region or regime and reaffirms the commitment of the United States that religious freedom is the right of every individual and should never be arbitrarily abridged by any government; and

WHEREAS, the persecution of Christians and members of other religions is a global problem, occurring in countries across Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas; such persecution ranges from social harassment and discrimination to physical violence, imprisonment, torture, enslavement, rape, death, and genocide; and

WHEREAS, thousands of Christians and members of other religions are held as prisoners around the world, merely for believing and worshiping according to their faith; and

WHEREAS, 2018 reports from international nongovernmental organizations state that 215 million Christians experience high levels of persecution, amounting to one in twelve Christians worldwide, and that in the most recent twelve-month reporting period, 3,066 Christians were killed, 1,252 were abducted, 1,020 were raped or sexually harassed, and 793 churches were attacked; and

WHEREAS, the Middle East has been a home to Christians since the first century A.D., but the Christian population in the Middle East has significantly decreased over the past few decades as a result of persecution, displacement, and genocide; and

WHEREAS, Christians and members of other religions in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere have faced assault, torture, imprisonment, enslavement, and execution in a genocidal campaign by the Islamic State and other religious extremists who have destroyed Christian and other religious holy sites in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere; in 2016, approximately two hundred Christians in Iran were arrested, while others have been beaten, tortured, subjected to feigned public executions, and even sentenced to death for their faith, and at least ninety remain in illegal detention; and

WHEREAS, there is widespread violence among Muslims in the Middle East, most commonly along the Shia-Sunni divide; and

WHEREAS, Communist regimes have a strong history of oppressing and persecuting Christians as well as members of other religions; and

WHEREAS, in China, members of Christian churches, as well as members of other religions, who are not registered with the government face increased persecution from the Chinese state, including the risk of imprisonment and torture, and Communist officials are confiscating church belongings and burning them along with murdering priests who continue to preach the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, in North Korea, the practice of Christianity is prohibited, and if caught, Christians are sent to forced labor camps; and

WHEREAS, in Mexico, Nicaragua, and Colombia, Christian church leaders have been assaulted, threatened, and in some cases killed by transnational criminal organizations and paramilitary armed groups attempting to intimidate and silence them; Mexico is reportedly the most dangerous place in the world to be a priest, with at least six priests killed in 2018 and twenty-two priests killed in the past three years due to increased secularism, organized crime, and lawlessness; and

WHEREAS, religious discrimination is a global human rights problem, and the right to religious freedom is a universal right recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the President of the United States of America and the Congress of the United States of America to urge discriminatory countries to cease religious persecution and combat religious persecution carried out by extremist

non-state actors and to urge the heads of the governments of all countries around the world to uphold the right to religious freedom and condemn the global persecution of any religious group.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby condemn all violations of religious freedom and the religious persecution of Christians around the world and does hereby affirm that religious freedom is a fundamental right of every individual that should never be arbitrarily abridged by any government.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States of America and each member of Louisiana's congressional delegation.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES