

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 1st Session of the 57th Legislature (2019)

3 SENATE
4 RESOLUTION 8

By: Shaw

5
6 AS INTRODUCED

7 A resolution condemning persecution of Christians
8 around the world; and calling on the President and
Congress to take action.

9
10
11 WHEREAS, the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22
12 U.S.C. 6401 et seq.) found that religious persecution is not
13 confined to a particular region or regime and reaffirmed the
14 commitment of the United States that religious freedom, which is the
15 freedom of thought and conscience and the right to practice theistic
16 and non-theistic beliefs, is the right of every individual and
17 should never be arbitrarily abridged by any government; and

18 WHEREAS, the persecution of Christians is a global problem,
19 occurring in countries across Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the
20 Americas; and

21 WHEREAS, Christians face persecution not only from Islamic
22 extremist groups, like the Islamic State and Boko Haram, but also
23 from other religious extremist groups and from officials at all
24 levels of government; and

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

5 WHEREAS, such persecution ranges from social harassment and
6 discrimination to physical violence, imprisonment, torture,
7 enslavement, rape and death; and

8 WHEREAS, Christians in Syria and Iraq have faced assault,
9 torture, imprisonment, enslavement and execution in a genocidal
10 campaign by the Islamic State; and

11 WHEREAS, according to 2017 reports from international non-
12 governmental organizations, the Christian population in Iraq
13 decreased from 1.4 million people in 2003 to just 275,000 people in
14 2016, as a result of displacement and genocide caused by religious
15 extremism; and

16 WHEREAS, Christian holy sites in Syria have been destroyed by
17 the Islamic State; and

18 WHEREAS, in 2016, approximately 200 Christians in Iran were
19 arrested, while others have been beaten, tortured, subjected to
20 feigned public executions, and even sentenced to death for their
21 faith, and at least 90 remain in illegal detention; and

22 WHEREAS, in Saudi Arabia, Christians as well as other religious
23 minorities face imprisonment, torture and deportation and must
24

1 practice their faith in secrecy because their houses of worship are
2 not allowed; and

3 WHEREAS, on April 9, 2017, Palm Sunday, 44 people were killed in
4 bomb attacks by the Islamic State on Coptic churches in Egypt; and

5 WHEREAS, the Islamic State has also claimed responsibility for
6 the attack on a bus on May 26, 2017, in which 29 Coptic Christians
7 were killed while traveling to a monastery in Minya, Egypt; and

8 WHEREAS, since the fall of the Gaddafi regime, Libya has served
9 as a haven for militant Islamist extremist groups, like the Islamic
10 State, which has resulted in more violent forms of Christian
11 persecution; and

12 WHEREAS, the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the
13 killing of 51 Coptic Christians in Libya in February and March of
14 2015; and

15 WHEREAS, Christian migrants from northern Africa traveling
16 through Libya on their way to Europe have been abducted, trafficked
17 and forced to convert to Islam at the hands of the Islamic State;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, in Afghanistan there are reports that converts to
20 Christianity have been murdered or sent to mental hospitals; and

21 WHEREAS, Christians in Pakistan face accusations of blasphemy,
22 punishable by death, and convictions and sentences for blasphemy are
23 given despite little or no evidence; and

1 WHEREAS, according to Open Doors USA, approximately 600
2 Christian churches were attacked in Pakistan in 2016; and

3 WHEREAS, both Christians and Muslims in Nigeria have been
4 massacred by Islamic extremist groups like Boko Haram; and

5 WHEREAS, Christian converts in Somalia often face public
6 execution; and

7 WHEREAS, in 2017, a mob of 100 men attacked a Christian church
8 in Uganda, beating and raping members of the congregation; and

9 WHEREAS, in May 2017, a Christian governor in Indonesia was
10 found guilty of blasphemy and sentenced to two years in prison, in
11 what was widely seen as a challenge to religious pluralism in
12 Indonesia; and

13 WHEREAS, communist regimes have a strong history of oppressing
14 and persecuting Christians as well as other religious minorities;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, since 2013, in the Zhejiang Province of China, crosses
17 have been removed from over 1,500 churches as part of that
18 province's anti-cross campaign; and

19 WHEREAS, in China, members of Christian churches, as well as
20 other religious minorities, that are not registered with the
21 government face increased persecution from the Chinese state,
22 including the risk of imprisonment and torture; and

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

4 WHEREAS, in November 2016, Vietnam adopted a new "Law on Belief
5 and Religion" that falls dramatically short of internationally
6 accepted standards for human rights and curtails the right to
7 religious freedom for over 8 million Christians in that country; and

8 WHEREAS, in Mexico and Colombia, Christian church leaders have
9 been assaulted, threatened and, in some cases, killed by
10 transnational criminal organizations and paramilitary armed groups
11 attempting to intimidate and silence them; and

12 WHEREAS, religious discrimination, including the persecution of
13 Christians, is a global human rights problem; and

14 WHEREAS, the right to religious freedom is a universal right
15 recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

16 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 1ST SESSION
17 OF THE 57TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE:

18 THAT the Oklahoma State Senate condemns all violations of
19 religious freedom and affirms that religious freedom is a
20 fundamental right of every individual that should never be
21 arbitrarily abridged by any government.

22 THAT the Oklahoma State Senate condemns the persecution of
23 Christians around the world.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

THAT the Oklahoma State Senate calls on the President of the United States and Congress to urge discriminatory countries to cease their persecution of Christians and religious minorities and combat religious persecution carried out by extremist non-state actors.

THAT the Oklahoma State Senate calls on the President of the United States and Congress 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 Christians and other religious minorities.

57-1-2338 JS 5/23/2019 8:46:40 AM