

Resolution

ENROLLED SENATE
RESOLUTION NO. 8

By: Shaw, Scott, Quinn,
Newhouse, Weaver,
Pemberton, Allen, Dugger,
Rader, Leewright, Kidd,
Montgomery, Standridge,
Silk, Jech, Murdock,
Howard, Thompson, Treat,
Dahm, Bice, Pugh, Rosino,
Stanislawski, Pederson,
Bullard, Sharp, Simpson,
David, Boggs, Haste,
Daniels, McCortney,
Bergstrom, Stanley,
Smalley, Hall, Paxton and
Coleman

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Christians face persecution not only from Islamic extremist groups, like the Islamic State and Boko Haram, but also from other religious extremist groups and from officials at all levels of government; 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, such persecution ranges from social harassment and discrimination to physical violence, imprisonment, torture, enslavement, rape and death; and

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

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

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

WHEREAS, in 2016, approximately 200 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 90 remain in illegal detention; and

WHEREAS, in Saudi Arabia, Christians as well as other religious minorities face imprisonment, torture and deportation and must practice their faith in secrecy because their houses of worship are not allowed; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, in Mexico 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; and

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Adopted by the Senate the 23rd day of May, 2019.

Presiding Officer of the Senate

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Received by the Office of the Secretary of State this _____
day of _____, 20 _____, at _____ o'clock _____ M.
By: _____