

OVERVIEW AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Why and How the Reports are Prepared

The Department of State submits this report to the Congress in compliance with section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998. U.S. embassies prepare the initial drafts of the reports based on information from government officials, religious leaders, nongovernmental organizations, journalists, human rights monitors, religious groups, academics, and others. U.S. foreign service officers go to great lengths, often under difficult circumstances, to collect the information on which the reports are based.

The Office of International Religious Freedom collaborates in collecting and analyzing information for the country reports, drawing on its own consultations with foreign government officials, religious leaders, nongovernmental and faith-based organizations, representatives from the UN and other international and regional organizations and institutions, journalists, academic experts, community leaders, and Department of State offices. The Department's guiding principle is to ensure that all relevant information is assessed as objectively, thoroughly, and fairly as possible.

The reports can be directly accessed at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm> in a format that allows readers to search the texts and compare reports across regions and themes. Translations of the report are available via www.humanrights.gov. Both the International Religious Freedom Report and the Human Rights Report spotlight examples of abuses and restrictions that typify and illuminate the types of problems frequently reported in each country in 2015. Specific inclusions or omissions should not be interpreted as a signal that a particular case is of greater or lesser importance to the U.S. government, or that a case is the only available example. Rather, our goal is to shed light on the nature, scope, and severity of the violations we report with illustrative examples. Both reports cover the calendar year so that readers can reference the two reports jointly and benefit from year-end data.

How the Reports Are Used

A wide range of U.S. government agencies and offices use the reports to shape policy; conduct diplomacy; and inform assistance, training, and other resource allocations. The Secretary of State also uses the reports to help determine which

countries have engaged in or tolerated “particularly severe violations” of religious freedom in order to designate “Countries of Particular Concern.”

Acknowledgements

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The reports were produced under the direction of Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom David Saperstein and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Assistant Secretary Tom Malinowski, with guidance from Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Virginia Bennett, Deputy Assistant Secretary Steven Feldstein, Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Near East and South/Central Asia Knox Thames, and Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Ira Forman.

The editorial staff of the International Religious Freedom Report consists of the following: Editor-in-Chief: Robert W. Boehme; Senior Editors: Daniel T. Fantozzi, Andrew Goodman, Carol Rodley, Vicente Valle, and Juliet Wurr; Office of International Religious Freedom Director Daniel Nadel and Deputy Director David T. Morris; and the office’s editorial and support staff: Brian D. Bachman, Bradleigh Breland, Warren Cofsky, Sean Comber, Stacy Bernard Davis, Serena Doan, Ariel Ehmer, Ramy Ghaly, Mariam Haris, Sameer Hossain, Jacqueline Jin, Sarah Krech, Katherine Lawson, Benjamin W. Medina, Tom Niblock, Douglas Padgett, Doni Phillips, Michael Roth, Paul Saaranen, Robin Schulman, Lucia H. Seyfarth, Jennifer Dawn Smith, Tenzin Thargay, Victoria L. Thoman, Sharon Umber, Daniele Villela, and Daniel W. Wright.