

Religious Freedom Designations

PRESS STATEMENT

ANTHONY J. BLINKEN, SECRETARY OF STATE

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Advancing the freedom of religion or belief has been a core objective of U.S. foreign policy ever since Congress passed and enacted the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998. As part of that enduring commitment, I have designated Burma, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, the DPRK, Eritrea, Iran, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as Countries of Particular Concern for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. In addition, I have designated Algeria, Azerbaijan, the Central African Republic, Comoros, and Vietnam as Special Watch List countries for engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom. Finally, I have designated al-Shabab, Boko Haram, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Houthis, ISIS-Sahel, ISIS-West Africa, al-Qa'ida affiliate Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin, and the Taliban as Entities of Particular Concern.

Significant violations of religious freedom also occur in countries that are not designated. Governments must end abuses such as attacks on members of religious minority communities and their places of worship, communal violence and lengthy imprisonment for peaceful expression, transnational repression, and calls to violence against religious communities, among other violations that occur in too many places around the world. The challenges to religious freedom across the globe are structural, systemic, and deeply entrenched. But with thoughtful, sustained commitment from those who are unwilling to accept hatred, intolerance, and persecution as the status quo we will one day see a world where all people live with dignity and equality.

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