

FAITH UNDER FIRE: AN EXAMINATION OF GLOBAL RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,
THE BORDER, AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE
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AND ACCOUNTABILITY
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FAITH UNDER FIRE: AN EXAMINATION OF GLOBAL RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, THE BORDER, AND FOREIGN
AFFAIRS

Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Glenn Grothman [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Grothman, Gosar, Foxx, Sessions, Biggs, Fallon, Garcia, Goldman, Moskowitz, Porter, and Frost.

Also present: Representative Raskin.

Mr. GROTHMAN. This hearing of the Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs will come to order.

Welcome, everyone.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time.

And, without objection, we are going to have Representative Luna of Florida waived on to the Subcommittee for the purpose of questioning the witnesses at today's Subcommittee hearing.

I recognize myself for the purposes of an opening statement.

Good morning, and welcome to the Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs' hearing on examining global religious persecution.

Today's hearing will address one of the most fundamental and pressing issues that transcends borders and boundaries: international religious freedom. It is an issue that speaks to the very core of our values as Americans and a basic principle of human rights.

During my time in Congress, I have been deeply committed to this cause and believe the United States can take a leading role in championing religious freedom on the global stage.

It is the right of every individual to worship, express, and practice their religion freely without fear. However, we must recognize that religious freedom is not universally recognized and respected in all parts of the world. In too many corners of the world, individuals and entire communities face a stark reality of violence, displacement, and discrimination.

Look at what is happening in Nigeria today. Last year, 90 percent of Christians killed globally because of their faith were Nige-

rian. Boko Haram, or sub-Saharan ISIS, continue to slaughter Christians that refuse to convert to Islam, creating chaos and fear.

Yet the Biden Administration removed Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern, a designation subjecting Nigeria to greater congressional scrutiny. Why did the Administration remove this designation?

In Azerbaijan, ethnically Armenian Christians are being forced to flee their homes because they are facing genocide. And, tragically, as we have witnessed over the last several weeks, terrorist groups like Hamas will use their extreme versions of religion to justify committing horrible atrocities against civilians of different ethnicities and faiths.

Religious freedom is also fundamental to our national security interests. For example, our enemies not only suppress religious freedom but often support terrorist proxy groups that target people based on their faith.

This Subcommittee recently held a hearing where witnesses described the Iranian regime's assistance to terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah that have now invited more terror, conflict, and instability.

For years, Iran has been supplying Hamas with funding, weapons, and support, all of which were leveraged for the recent slaughter of innocent Israeli citizens. Make no mistake: Iran holds an equal share of responsibility for all the deaths and kidnappings Hamas has inflicted on Israelis.

Yet the Biden Administration continues to give humanitarian assistance to Gaza without any plans or guarantees that taxpayer dollars will not go to terrorists such as Hamas.

Similarly, the Biden Administration continues to supply humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, which, under Taliban control, oppresses women and girls.

Additionally, the Biden Administration continues to send foreign assistance to countries suffering from religious persecution on the condition that the receiving country adheres to progressive policies. It is completely inappropriate for the Administration to be pushing their policy preference on other nations.

The United States has a long history of addressing and advocating for human rights and religious freedom around the world. We have the tools and the influence to help those abroad who are subject to religious persecution.

America itself is a very religious country. And it is important—while we do send missionaries from various faiths around the world, it is important that the United States not weigh in with kind of an anti-religious agenda.

I hope to hear from our witnesses today that we use the power to help better the lives of religious minorities and promote religious freedom around the world, as well as not, kind of, impose or encourage the kind of anti-religious feeling a lot of American elites have. A world which encourages and promotes religious freedom is a more peaceful world.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here, and I look forward to your testimony.

I now recognize Ranking Member Garcia for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you again, and I want to thank all of our witnesses also for being here. Appreciate you all joining us.

And I want to just start by just adding that, you know, we know that, across the world, minority communities, including Jewish people, Muslims, Christians, so many others, face intimidation of violence and unequal protection under the law.

Just this month, of course, we have seen disturbing anti-Semitic and Islamophobia attacks just here in the United States due to the rising conflicts happening in the Middle East.

Wadea Al-Fayoum, who was only 6 years old, was stabbed 26 times Saturday by his family's landlord in Plainfield Township, Illinois, for being Muslim. His mother, Hanaan Shahin, also suffered more than a dozen stab wounds. And I know that all of us, our heart breaks for that tragedy and that horrific attack of hate.

Now, as both a Catholic and a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community, I know how vulnerable minority communities can be here at home but also abroad. And that means that the United States has a critical voice in that work.

I think President Biden said it well in his inaugural address, that we will lead not merely by the example of our power but also by the power of our example. And freedom of religion, of course, is core to who we are as a country.

Now, the First Amendment says that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. Now, every Member of this Committee took an oath to uphold that constitutional principle, and I am proud that in the last few years we have expanded the cause of religious freedom across the world.

We are building our State Department in this important work. Our work abroad, which had been decimated under the previous Administration, has expanded in the rebuilding of the State Department.

We have restored our global strategies so we can lead global coalitions of righteousness across the world. We have halted discrimination on the basis of religion in the U.S. immigration system by ending the bigoted Muslim ban.

And the President, of course, established the Protecting Places of Worship Interagency Policy Committee. And congressional Democrats voted to provide the largest ever increase in funding for the physical security of nonprofits, including churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and other houses of worship.

Deborah Lipstadt, a Holocaust expert, is also serving as the first Ambassador-level envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism across the world. Her work, of course, is needed now more than ever.

The Administration has done outstanding global faith-based outreach, like launching USAID's first-ever Strategic Religious Engagement Policy. And religious engagement abroad is also a key priority, including for really critical programs like PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, which, of course, is a coalition of faith and community initiatives that has saved millions of lives.

Extremist groups and authoritarian governments work hard to spread their message of hate and attack the vulnerable, and, of course, we confront that wherever that happens. And we also work to protect innocent people from danger wherever they are, and, of course, as anti-Semitism rises, especially as we are seeing today.

We also intend to stand up to China as they continue to repress the Uyghurs. The Democratic Congress passed the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which was signed and implemented by President Biden. And we will continue to confront domestic extremist groups which threaten our religion and constitutional freedoms.

Now, violent religious nationalism has been used to fuel human rights violations all over the world, including in Russia. We all know the role of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow in legitimizing the Russian war in the Ukraine.

I also just want to note, just because I am also Catholic, I just want to touch on sometimes the narrative that seems to be growing in some parts of the extreme right that the Justice Department somehow is an anti-Catholic organization. Members have attempted to confront our Attorney General, whose family escaped religious persecution in Europe, with this allegation in hearings just last month.

To be clear, the DOJ has never targeted traditional Catholics and I do not believe ever will. This is yet another attack to discredit the Department of Justice, as we know, and to shield the former President.

Our religious freedom is too important to be used as a political football. It is critical for our country; it is critical for the world. And I want to thank you all for being here today.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

I am pleased to introduce our witnesses today.

David Curry is the President and CEO of Global Christian Relief, an international ministry that advocates on behalf of those who are persecuted for their Catholic faith. He also serves as a commissioner on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent, bipartisan Federal Government entity established by Congress to monitor, analyze, and report on religious freedom abroad.

Eric Patterson. Dr. Patterson serves as president of the Religious Freedom Institute. His academic interest is in the intersection of religious liberty and national security. He has a long history of government service, to include two stints at the U.S. State Department in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs and over 20 years as an officer and commander in the Air National Guard.

Meaghan Mobbs is a senior fellow at the Independent Women's Forum with a focus on defense, national security, military, family, and health-related issues. She holds a master's from George Washington University and a doctorate from Columbia University. She is a former paratrooper and combat veteran and a graduate of West Point.

And, finally, Amanda Tyler is the Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, an organization that

promotes the historic Baptist principle of religious liberty. She is a member of the Texas and U.S. Supreme Court bar.

Again, I want to thank all four of you for being here today.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses will please stand and raise their right hand.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Let the record show the witnesses all answered in the affirmative.

Thank you. You can take a seat.

I appreciate you being here today and look forward to your testimony.

Let me remind the witnesses, we have read your statement already. Please see if you can limit your oral statement to 5 minutes.

As a reminder, please press the button on the microphone in front of you so that you can hear, we know that the microphone is on. When you begin to speak, the light in front of you will turn green. After 4 minutes, the light will turn yellow. And when 5 minutes have expired, we will ask you to please try to wrap up your testimony.

I now recognize Mr. Curry for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF DAVID CURRY
PRESIDENT AND CEO
GLOBAL CHRISTIAN RELIEF**

Mr. CURRY. Thank you, Chairman Grothman, Ranking Member Garcia, and all the Members of the Committee, for inviting me to testify today on behalf of Global Christian Relief.

I would like to begin my testimony today by showing you a picture of a woman named Abigail. She is a young mother of three who, until last year, lived in a small Christian village in northern Nigeria, which I will be visiting just next week.

On the night of March 22, 2022, Islamic gunmen stormed Abigail's village, shooting dozens of her friends and family members. After the attack, Abigail was nowhere to be found.

It would be days afterwards that the terrorists would call, using the villagers' own stolen cell phone, to let her know—let folks in her family know that Abigail and others had been kidnapped.

She is one of just 8,000—almost 8,000 Christians who have been abducted in the last 3 years in Nigeria. And she remains missing today as I testify before you.

Her story is emblematic of the truly horrific levels of violence many people face today because of their faith—the faith that they have chosen to follow.

Contrary to popular belief, religious persecution is not a thing of the past. It is a major and growing challenge around the world, with billions of people living in nearly 80 countries that maintain high levels of government restrictions or social hostility toward people of faith. Faith really is under fire today.

For Christians specifically, the numbers are staggering. Approximately 360 million Christians globally are experiencing high levels of persecution or discrimination just for their beliefs.

In Abigail's home country of Nigeria, terror groups driven by extremist ideology have killed 12,793 Christians since 2019. We know that all these victims are explicitly targeted for being Christians, both because the killers and kidnappers often expressly say so and because Christians are suffering killings and abductions at a rate vastly disproportionate to other faiths in the region.

In China, over 100 million Christians must practice their faith under an almost totalitarian system of laws and surveillance. Refusing to join the government-controlled church is illegal, but as many as 60 million Chinese Christians choose to do so regardless of the cost, risking their freedom and social standing to worship and hear sermons not dictated for them by the Communist Party members.

Some governments and especially U.S. adversaries choose to co-opt religion to support violent aggression against their rivals and engage in religious persecution.

As Ranking Member Garcia mentioned, the Russian Government has formed what I call an "unholy alliance" with the Russian Orthodox Church, whipping up religious support to justify its invasion of Ukraine and the persecution of other Christian denominations. According to one report, nearly 500 religious buildings and sacred sites in the Ukraine have been destroyed by the Russian military since the start of the war last year.

In Iran, the government uses Islam as a pretext to imprison Christians and others attempting to run non-Islamic places of worship. And those who attempt to convert from Islam to other faiths, make up their own mind about what they believe, face severe repression from friends and family—repression that Iranian officials willingly overlook and even encourage.

Of course, Iran's intolerance of people of faith does not stop at its borders. Hamas and Hezbollah, both supported by Iran, not only terrorize those of non-Muslim faith but prevent Muslims who live under their control from choosing the religion for themselves.

Now, what is the answer to these overwhelming challenges? The answer, in short, is religious freedom.

At Global Christian Relief, we are working to bandage and heal those who are broken by persecution, but we also advocate for religious freedom for everyone, because its implementation means the end of the most severe forms of persecution. When religious freedom is protected, no one is killed or abducted for their faith and people are free to pursue truth without fear.

The advancement of religious freedom is also important to U.S. national security interests, as we are seeing every day in the news. When religious freedom is not protected, extremism and authoritarianism flourish. The more the U.S. can do to advocate and advance this critical freedom, the more we will deter the very groups who wish to do us harm.

And with this in mind, I would like to offer three recommendations.

First, I would encourage this Committee to encourage the Biden Administration to appoint a Special Advisor for International Religious Freedom to the National Security Council. This position was first recommended by Congress with the passage of the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act in 1998, but it has only

been filled once by a dedicated official. And that would be a major step forward.

Second, the Members of this Committee should consider sponsorship of House Resolution 82 that calls on the Department of State to redesignate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern.

The CPC designation, as it is called, is reserved for the worst violators of religious freedom. And despite the failure of Nigeria's Government to prevent the targeted killing and abduction of thousands of Nigerians on the basis of faith, the State Department removed this designation from Nigeria in 2021, and I believe this is unacceptable.

I want to thank Representative Congressman LaTurner and other Members of this Subcommittee who have already sponsored this resolution, which also calls for a special envoy for that region that will be able to help bring resolution between the many countries in the Sahel region that need this help from extremism.

And, third, I recommend that the Committee directly encourage officials at the State Department to give the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom greater leeway in calling out violations of religious freedom.

So, thank you so much for this time to testify. I appreciate it.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Dr. Patterson?

**STATEMENT OF ERIC PATTERSON
PRESIDENT
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM INSTITUTE**

Mr. PATTERSON. Thank you.

Chairman Grothman, Ranking Member Garcia, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak a bit about the global crisis of religious freedom and its implications for American national security.

At the Religious Freedom Institute, our mission is to advance a broad understanding of religious freedom as a fundamental human right, as a source of individual and social flourishing, and as a driver of national and international security.

When considering America's national security imperatives, the analytical lens of religion and religious freedom is often essential, especially when considering regions of instability and our strategic competitors. Just look at what they say and what they do.

More specifically, how do governments and other organizations behave in four key areas: How do they treat their own people on religious freedom? How do they treat their neighbors? What is the ruling ideology or philosophy when it comes to religious freedom? And what do they say and do on the international stage?

Take Iran, for instance. The Government of Iran has a political theology that sees religious minorities as a threat. At the same token, they oppress their own majority. It is noteworthy that observant Muslim women have been in the vanguard of challenging the regime's tyrannical behavior and that they have done so by using religious symbols and religious texts.

The ayatollahs have imposed a system that is the opposite of one that values human dignity and religious freedom. Instead, they provide religious justifications for destruction and violence, from sending in their own young men as human minesweepers in the

1980's to destruction across the region and terrorism in countries like Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Yemen, and elsewhere.

When it comes to what they say and do, countries like Russia and China have state ideologies that see religious and ethnoreligious minorities as challenges to the regime. My colleague earlier mentioned some of these problems in both China and Russia.

A second worrying type of case, though, are democracies with civil liberties that seem to be on a downward spiral, notably Nigeria and India. They have democratic institutions; they have some civil liberties. But what we are seeing is increased violence against religious minorities.

In India, it is Hindu nationalists attacking Christians and Muslims and provinces across the country imposing so-called religious freedom laws that are actually designed to target religious minorities.

In Nigeria, we see a toxic situation with violent Islamists in the north, violence against Christians in the Middle Belt, and sharia courts in over a dozen provinces that do not give equal due process to Nigerian citizens if they are from a religious minority.

I have mentioned these countries—Russia, Iran, China, Nigeria—because they are major players on the global stage and in the regions, and understanding the religious freedom dynamics are key to helping us think through the national security decisions that the United States needs to make.

Now, let me pause for a moment and take a look at what the Biden Administration is doing specifically on these areas of international religious freedom. They have appointed a well-regarded public servant who has served Republican and Democratic administrations as the Ambassador at Large for International and Religious Freedom. They continue to publish a useful annual report from the State Department on international religious freedom.

But I would say that the Administration's lack of a consistent commitment to advancing religious freedom stalls real progress.

My written testimony provides a number of concrete recommendations, including some ones that are very similar to Mr. Curry's. But I would like to point out two things for sharper action as we go forward.

First, the Biden Administration, like its predecessors, routinely waives taking any formal legal action, such as economic sanctions, against Countries of Particular Concern. These are provided under the bipartisan International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

It goes a step further in places like Nigeria by ignoring the facts on the ground. And we have to think about this from a national security perspective. If Nigeria descends into chaos, civil war, as we have seen in DRC, Libya, in Rwanda and elsewhere, the results would be catastrophic for its own people, for its region, for global energy markets, and for the U.S. and our allies.

Second, the Biden Administration is harming American interests and our international relations by its aggressive export of its controversial domestic sexual-orientation and gender-identity policies, targeting highly religious societies.

Now, this began only 2 weeks into the Administration with National Security Memorandum No. 4 prioritizing these policies being

directed in U.S. foreign policy. Now, this came before any executive order on national security addressing vital U.S. interests such as China, energy security, Russia, et cetera.

Now, let me be clear: Every individual around the world has fundamental human rights and human dignity. What I am talking about, though, is the relentless pressure that our international partners feel coming from Washington on these matters.

A case in point is Vice President Harris's recent tour of Africa, where she criticized African societies for their deeply held, widely agreed-upon religious convictions.

My organization and others routinely hear from citizens in these countries, "Why is the U.S. pushing its domestic policies on us? Are we going to lose PEPFAR and other vital support if we hold to our convictions?"

So, on the one hand, the Administration has done little in terms of concrete effective action, such as sanctions, to push back on ethnoreligious violence and the persecution of faith communities, from Nigeria to Afghanistan; and, at the same time, they bully our friends in highly religious societies like Kenya, Zambia, and Ghana.

So let me conclude by saying: Religious freedom is a hallmark of America's ordered liberty, and it is a right and a blessing that people yearn for around the world.

We in the U.S. have a responsibility to do our part to enhance international security by understanding the religious dimensions of global affairs and championing religious freedom.

Thank you.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Mobbs?

**STATEMENT OF MEAGHAN MOBBS
SENIOR FELLOW
INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM**

Ms. MOBBS. Chairman Grothman, Ranking Member Garcia, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for convening a hearing on such an important and critical issue.

My name is Dr. Meaghan Mobbs. I sit before you as a woman and the mother of two young girls and a representative of Independent Women's Forum, a nonprofit that works every day to engage and inform women about how policy issues impact them and their loved ones. We celebrate women's accomplishments and fight to expand women's options and opportunities.

I lead with this as it is imperative we explicitly define what a woman is. A woman is an adult female human. While we appear to struggle with that definition in the West, oppressive regimes, authoritarians, and fanatics all over the world do not, as they use that very biological fact as a means to identify, subjugate, and tyrannize women and girls.

Religious women, globally, endure distinct forms of violence and persecution due to their sex and their capacity to bear future generations. The very ability to procreate—something only women are capable of—is used as a tool to oppress. Women, simply because they are women, face rape, forced marriage, and sterilization.

Women belonging to religious minorities are particularly vulnerable. Their persecution tends to be more violent, complex, and hidden. Riddled with shame, these women and girls often bear in silence the horrors visited upon them. These evils are perpetuated against them for the alleged crime of simply believing in something different than their tormentor and their gift of reproduction.

Hamas's attack on Israel and the targeted violence against young women is an all-too-recent example. The entire world bore witness to young women paraded around half-naked, their pants soaked in blood from repeated rape. A morgue worker for the military reported, quote, "There is evidence of mass rape so brutal that they broke the victims' pelvises—women, grandmothers, children."

If we do not have the moral courage to define what a woman is, how will we have the fortitude to do what is necessary to protect them around the world?

The last 2 years have revealed the perilous state of our safety and security. In less than 24 months, we have witnessed the biggest attack on a European country since World War II and the deadliest days for Jews since the Holocaust.

There is war in Europe, and there is war in the Middle East. Six central African nations have experienced military coups since 2021. And Latin America is facing surging gang violence and crime.

The entire world witnessed the ethnic cleansing of the Christian Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the last 30 days, almost all of the estimated 120,000 ethnic Armenians were violently moved from their homes. This forced migration followed a months-long siege and intentional starvation of this population.

This week, non-emergency personnel were ordered to evacuate the U.S. Embassy in Iraq, and this is the seventh evacuation of a U.S. embassy abroad in this Presidency.

All the while, our greatest adversary, China, grows stronger and bolder.

In short, we are in a new era of conflict and violence. The tense global climate has concurrently borne a precipitous uptick in violations of religious freedom. In 2023, countries where religious freedom was violated were home to over 4.9 billion people.

The persecution women face often manifests in forced marriages, which saw a 16-percent increase, and physical violence, which rose by over 31 percent.

More than 350 million Christians suffer high levels of maltreatment and discrimination for their faith. Christian women and girls, in particular, face violence and degrading forms of victimization, with sexual violence reported in 90 percent of the top 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution.

Christians and Jews are not the only religious groups to bear the weight of oppression. At this very moment, as we sit here, the Uyghurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority group residing in China, have been subjected to severe human rights abuses by the Chinese Government.

Described as a "quiet genocide," the treatment of Uyghurs includes arbitrary detentions, torture, slave labor, reeducation, and forced sterilizations. Regarding the latter, the Chinese Government poured \$37 million into forced sterilizations and IUD implantations

meant to rapidly decrease Uyghur birth rates. Again, their crime was their faith and their sex.

Tragically, recent foreign policies and aid decisions have placed the most vulnerable in worse conditions. Beginning with the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, women and girls around the world increasingly suffer from persistent and devastating human rights violations. There have been regressions in access to education, the ability to move freely, and restrictions on their ability to practice their chosen faith.

International religious freedom, once a fundamental and bipartisan aspect of U.S. foreign policy, appears to have been relegated to a second-tier right. The downgrading of religious freedom as a foundational principle is extremely concerning. This reorientation in U.S. foreign policy underscores a nuanced, yet very consequential, shift in which certain rights are prioritized or deprioritized alongside the rise of religious discrimination, armed conflict, genocide, and atrocities.

America must return to the exportation of freedom, not ideological indoctrination. This can be accomplished by congressional focus and commitment to fund bipartisan traditional elements of democracy and human rights promotion.

Thank you very much.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Tyler, you can go over if you want, obviously.

**STATEMENT OF AMANDA TYLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BAPTIST JOINT COMMITTEE FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

Ms. TYLER. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Garcia, and Members of the Subcommittee.

I am Amanda Tyler, Executive Director of Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty and the lead organizer of Christians Against Christian Nationalism.

For 87 years, BJC has worked to defend and extend God-given religious liberty for all, bringing a uniquely Baptist witness to the principle that religion must be freely exercised, neither advanced nor inhibited by government. As Baptists, we are concerned about the infringement of religious freedom against people belonging to any religious group and nonreligious people too.

International religious freedom has long been a bipartisan priority in Congress, and this hearing is another great example of congressional commitment to this crucial element of our Nation's work. For 25 years, Democratic and Republican administrations have faithfully implemented the International Religious Freedom Act.

We are concerned about blasphemy and apostasy laws, which stifle religious expression, undermine human rights, and foster religious intolerance, discrimination, and violence. Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and others have been fined, imprisoned, tortured, and executed for blasphemy offenses. BJC applauds both the House and Senate for passing the resolution calling for the global repeal of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws in 2020.

Faith is, indeed, under fire around the world, and the best way that we can make a difference is by not adding more fuel to the

fire of religious extremism and nationalism. Instead, we should focus on being a role model to the world by ensuring the institutional separation of church and state which protects all of us.

As we examine religious persecution globally, I hope we will also examine how well we are living up to this value at home. The single greatest threat to religious liberty in the United States today, and, thus, our reputation as leaders in the fight for religious liberty to the rest of the world, is Christian nationalism.

Christian nationalism is a political ideology and cultural framework that seeks to fuse American and Christian identities. Christian nationalism seeks to privilege Christians and Christianity in law and policy.

We see what happens when religious nationalism in a country is allowed to flourish and use the power of the state to attempt to force a set of religious beliefs or create only one accepted form of religious belief.

To oppose Christian nationalism is not to oppose Christianity. In fact, a growing number of Christians—and I am one of them—feel a religious imperative to stand against Christian nationalism.

More than 35,000 Christians have signed their names to a unifying statement of principles at the heart of the Christians Against Christian Nationalism campaign, which includes this language, quote: “Conflating religious authority with political authority is idolatrous and often leads to the oppression of minority and other marginalized groups as well as the spiritual impoverishment of religion. We must stand up to and speak out against Christian nationalism, especially when it inspires acts of violence and intimidation, including vandalism, bomb threats, arson, hate crimes, and attacks on houses of worship against religious communities at home and abroad,” end quote.

It is deeply alarming that a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives openly identifies as a Christian nationalist. Yet all of us who care about religious freedom should be able to quickly and definitively reject Christian nationalism.

What happens abroad has an impact on the daily lives of Americans. We have sadly seen increased religious bigotry in the United States because of the war between Israel and Hamas. It is up to all of us to reject anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in all of its forms.

An example of Christian nationalism and Islamophobia in law and policy is the prior Administration’s enactment of a series of travel bans aimed at Muslim-majority countries. On the first day of the new Administration in 2021, President Biden issued a proclamation overturning the Muslim ban, stating, in part, quote, “Those actions are a stain on our national conscience and are inconsistent with our long history of welcoming people of all faiths and no faith at all,” end quote.

BJC praised the Biden Administration’s decision to overturn the Muslim ban, but we also recognize that there cannot be any future attempt to ban immigrants based on their religion. This year, former President Donald Trump has stated on multiple occasions that he will reenact his Muslim ban policy if reelected.

Religious freedom is at a crossroads today. Religious persecution around the world coupled with the resurgence of Christian nation-

alism at home means we must redouble our efforts to protect religious minorities and the nonreligious, both domestically and globally.

Thank you.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

I will start out with a question for—well, let us start with Dr. Patterson.

We have a lot of Marxist, communist countries around the world. Could you explain a little bit, by definition, what their attitude is toward religion in general and religious minorities in particular?

Mr. PATTERSON. Thank you.

Amazingly, despite the fall of the Soviet Union and the West's victory at the end of the cold war, there are a number of communist countries left around the world, the largest of course being China, but we have practitioners of that in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba, and elsewhere.

And these governments practice a form of secular materialism that what it really privileges is, is allegiance of the citizens—or, better, subjects—to the state, to the state's ideology, to its demagoguery leadership, and the like. And so religious people are often seen as lacking allegiance, because Christians, Muslims, Jews, and other religious people have a higher authority that they worship and that they hold to.

So, this is why China cracks down on Uyghurs, Falun Gong, Christians—

Mr. GROTHMAN. Are you—I am sorry. I only have 5 minutes.

Mr. PATTERSON. Sure.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Are you aware, are you allowed to be a member of the Communist Party if you are not an atheist?

Mr. PATTERSON. What we have seen—in the past, there have been religious people who have been in the lower levels of the Communist Party. But under President Xi, what we have seen is a great hardening within the party. No senior official is going to be a publicly observant person of faith.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK.

Dr. Mobbs, the Biden Administration has been treating U.S. foreign aid as a global platform from which to implement overseas a rigidly progressive ideological agenda to counter some nations' religious beliefs.

In March, Secretary of State Blinken repudiated the prior Administration's elevation of religious freedom as a U.S. priority, declaring there is no hierarchy that makes some rights more important than others, and placed religious freedom as a co-equal to progressive policies.

Could you elaborate on the historical context and the policies that were in place under the prior Administration?

Ms. MOBBS. I think the critical point here, Mr. Chairman, is that we have to get back to having that as a standalone right.

Religious freedom as a standalone right has a bipartisan and historical consensus in the community. And, unfortunately, what has happened is, that has been taken away and brought to what my colleague said here, on par with domestic policies and the exportation of ideological beliefs.

And what we need to do is recentralize individual religious freedom as that central and historical right to ensure that we can export a values-based approach unrelated to domestic ideology.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK.

Could you—there is sometimes some concern, both in Central America and Eastern Europe, that America is not necessarily favorable to certain religious beliefs.

Could you comment on that a little bit? Is that a concern? Are we kind of sticking our nose in, in other countries, as far as how they should handle their religious beliefs?

Ms. MOBBS. I think what you may be referencing is what looks like the exportation, again, of our domestic belief systems—flying the pride flag over our embassies in certain countries—like, Hungary is an example that occurred last year—in which these nation-states felt as though we were imposing upon them our domestic belief system rather than just flying our Nation's flag.

And so, yes, I do think there has been evidence, as evidenced by the Prime Minister of Hungary explicitly stating that they felt that was the case.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. So, kind of a hostility to the United States because of our anti-Christian kind of world view?

Ms. MOBBS. Correct. Yes, sir.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK.

Mr. Curry, your organization, Global Christian Relief, is working diligently to assist persecuted Christians in Nigeria.

Can you give us just a quick overview of what is going on to Christians there, really quick?

Mr. CURRY. The persecution of Christians and moderate Muslims is driven by extremist groups there—Boko Haram, ISIS in that region, and the Fulani, which have typically been seen as a tribal group but also have a shared ideology, they have a dogma.

And the Fulani, who are often, you know, sort of positioned as arguing over land, really are telling the government, when there are public statements, that they are attacking these Christian villages because of their faith.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK.

Mr. CURRY. So, there is a unified extremism there.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Mobbs, one more time. I would like you to focus a little bit on South America, maybe the Caribbean. Has the U.S. at all weighed in there on domestic policies that may affect what they feel are Christian laws?

Ms. MOBBS. Mr. Chairman, I do not feel qualified to answer that question.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK.

Dr. Patterson?

Mr. PATTERSON. The answer to that, sir, is yes in a number of instances. Perhaps the most famous one was a leaked memo from the U.S. embassy in a Central American country saying that the U.S. Government wanted to push as much as possible in the direction of a candidate that was pro-abortion and other things rather than the candidate who ultimately won in that election.

So, there is a sense in many of these highly religious societies that, when it comes to matters of life and family, that the United States is eroding their national positions.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. Yes, I think I had one Congressman tell me that a representative from one of those countries felt that every time the foreign aid was conditioned on behaviors in those countries, it made their country less Christian.

OK. Mr. Garcia.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you.

I want to broadly just start by saying, I also believe that there is a lot of work to be done as far as it relates to the rights of women, of young girls across the world. I probably love few people more than my sister, as well. But I also want to be clear: I do not like—there were some veiled, I think, transphobic comments that were made, and I just want to be clear also that trans people do exist in our country. Trans women do exist in our country. And trans people also face stigma, harassment, discrimination, and physical violence oftentimes much more than other communities or persecuted people. So, I just wanted to say that as well.

Ms. Tyler, I do have a couple of quick questions for you.

Since we are talking so much about religious freedom and to ensure that folks have the ability to say and feel free to worship as they would like to, do you think it advances the cause of religious freedom for a Member of Congress to claim that the Catholic Church, of which I am a member of, is controlled by Satan?

Ms. TYLER. I think that kind of rhetoric really is a threat to religious freedom. I think we have to understand that words matter. And it is particularly concerning when it comes from a member of government. I think one of the protections that we have in the United States—and, again, we are the envy of the world in many ways in the legal protections we have for religious freedom—

Mr. GARCIA. Absolutely.

Ms. TYLER [continuing]. Is that our government stays neutral when it comes to religion.

Mr. GARCIA. And what about saying—this same Member said that Catholic bishops are destroying the United States by advocating for policies that support migrants and refugees—that the Catholic bishops are doing that, by the way, destroying the United States by advocating for policies that support migrants. How do you think that advances the cause of religious freedom?

Ms. TYLER. Well, again, I think we have to be cognizant that words matter, and that rhetoric can threaten religious freedom in ways that can lead, again, as we saw, can lead to violence in other—

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you.

Ms. TYLER [continuing]. In other places.

Mr. GARCIA. And those comments were actually made by a Member of this broader Committee, of the Oversight Committee, which I think are, obviously, repulsive comments.

Ms. Tyler, did it advance the cause of religious freedom to try to ban Muslims from entering the United States?

Ms. TYLER. Absolutely not. And I spoke to that—

Mr. GARCIA. And let me—no, that is—

Ms. TYLER. Sure.

Mr. GARCIA. I am sorry. And if we are trying to protect persecuted religious communities around the world, what is the impact of domestic actions like President Trump's Muslim ban, just briefly, please?

Ms. TYLER. Well, I think from—you know, as we have talked about, I think that oppressive policies can have impact on national security, but it also impacts the stature of the United States and our ability to advocate for religious freedom in other countries.

The problem, of course, with the Muslim ban and why it is an attack on religious freedom for all is, it singles out one faith for disfavored—

Mr. GARCIA. Absolutely.

Ms. TYLER [continuing]. Treatment—

Mr. GARCIA. And I want to—no, that is exactly what I wanted to hear. Thank you.

Now, this week, Donald Trump promised to restore and expand his bigoted ban, he said, and I quote, “on day one.” He said that, as President, he stood up for, and I quote again, “Judeo-Christian civilization,” which is, I believe, a slap in the face to many other religious traditions which are part of our country and make up the beautiful fabric of who we are as a country.

Does this support religious freedom, for a leader to say that a mob that chanted, quote, “Jews will not replace us” and included “very fine people”—what do we think of that, for a leader to say that? Do you think that is something that is not—not great?

Ms. TYLER. Again, I think that words matter and that that kind of violent rhetoric has a direct cause to threatening the lives of people in our country and—

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. And I think we all know that Donald Trump, of course, said that after the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, which were some really horrific remarks.

Do we think that Donald Trump was upholding religious freedom when he posted that, quote, “liberal Jews . . . voted to destroy America and Israel,” unquote, when they voted against him, which he just did last month?

Ms. TYLER. I think those are violent, anti-Semitic remarks.

Mr. GARCIA. I would agree with you. Thank you, Ms. Tyler. And I am just raising these points. I think they are very important.

I also just want to say that, as a Catholic, I also find it very troubling to see religious freedom invoked to not just justify bigoted policies but also to justify discrimination against other LGBTQ+ people like myself.

Ron DeSantis and many other Governors across the country have signed laws which allow healthcare workers to discriminate against members of the community, particularly also around gender-affirming care, if workers cite religious objections. I believe that is dangerous. I believe that is misguided.

And I, Ms. Tyler, would hope you agree that LGBTQ+ protections and religious freedoms can be complementary. I think that you agree with that.

Finally, just to the panel, just briefly, a “yes” or “no” question. I will start with Mr. Curry.

Do you believe, as far as LGBTQ rights abroad, should the U.S. remain silent when someone can be executed for who they love abroad? Yes or no?

Mr. CURRY. Should—no. The U.S., I think, needs to speak out. And I also believe—

Mr. GARCIA. Well, that is it, sir. So, you agree that if someone is LGBTQ+ as far as—the U.S. should not remain silent if they face execution or persecution abroad?

Mr. CURRY. No, we should not remain silent.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Dr. Patterson?

Mr. PATTERSON. The U.S. should not remain silent.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Dr. Mobbs?

Ms. MOBBS. The U.S. should not remain silent.

Mr. GARCIA. And Ms. Tyler?

Ms. TYLER. The United States should not remain silent.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you.

And I want to thank all of you for that answer. I think that is absolutely correct.

And, for the record, all of our witnesses agreed that the U.S. should not remain silent when someone can be executed for who they love somewhere else across the world.

So, thank you for reaffirming that belief.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Dr. Foxx.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I thank our witnesses for being here today.

Dr. Mobbs, it has been 2 years since the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan amid the Biden Administration's chaotic and deadly withdrawal from the country. It has been reported that the status of women and girls' rights in Afghanistan has reverted to that of the pre-2002 era when the Taliban last controlled the country, effectively erasing progress on women's rights in the intervening 20 years.

Has the Biden Administration taken any actions to preserve the gains made for women in Afghanistan?

Ms. MOBBS. Unfortunately, no, they have not, ma'am.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you very much.

The United States spent nearly \$1.8 billion on programs supporting Afghan women and the rule of law. Was that money totally wasted?

And are there any efforts the U.S. can take to protect the Afghan women and girls that do not involve providing money to the Taliban?

Ms. MOBBS. As a U.S. veteran who served in Afghanistan, it is difficult for me to ever comment on the use of funds during our time in Afghanistan, because I do not want to say my time or any of our servicemembers' time was wasted in Afghanistan. However, unfortunately, the way that we allocated and utilized money in Afghanistan ended up being wasteful and was in pursuit of goals that we could not accomplish.

Unfortunately, currently, the aid that is also being provided does not have enough protections on it to ensure that it is actually going

to humanitarian goals and reaching the people that need it, like starving children, and also the education of women and children.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you very much for your service, by the way.

Again, Dr. Mobbs, last week, President Biden announced the U.S. would send \$100 million in humanitarian assistance to provide humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. The President also warned Hamas not to steal or divert the humanitarian aid that countries around the world are funneling into the region.

In your opinion, is there any way to ensure effectively that U.S. taxpayer funds will not be siphoned off by Hamas for its military operations?

Ms. MOBBS. The reality of what we have seen is, unfortunately, there is not a highly effective way, as the bulk of humanitarian aid that has gone to Palestine has unfortunately been siphoned off to Hamas through a variety of different means. There is false charities; there are bank accounts set up to do so. It is extremely difficult to do so.

And, certainly, sending out such a large amount of money in a short period of time prevents what would be substantial oversight to ensure it is actually going to where it needs to go, which is to the human rights for the children and the women.

Ms. FOXX. In the current conflict between Israel and Hamas, has Hamas targeted women and girls in its attacks? And how is it targeting them?

Ms. MOBBS. Yes, ma'am, of course. They targeted women and children in Israel. They also use schools and hospitals and children as human shields.

Ms. FOXX. Yes. It is really disgusting, what is going on there, and I think we should speak out more and more and more. No one should be assassinated or kidnapped for his or her religious beliefs—no one. I do not care—or their chosen gender or their race or for any reason. And what is happening in Israel, the atrocities committed by Hamas, every Member of Congress should speak out against those.

Mr. Curry, a Country of Particular Concern is a designation by the Secretary of State of a nation engaged in severe violations of religious freedom under the International Religious Freedom Act. The Trump Administration had designated Nigeria as one Country of Particular Concern. However, the Biden Administration removed Nigeria from that list.

Why did the Biden Administration remove Nigeria from the list? And do you believe that the move was warranted?

Mr. CURRY. I do not believe it was warranted. The waivers that are often used on Countries of Particular Concern do not require a reasoning behind it, and I have not heard any justification as to why Nigeria was removed.

But I think that we have to look at these waivers as a whole, because it really weakens the law that was passed that really would allow us to put pressure on these countries that allow religious extremism and persecution.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you very much.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Raskin?

Mr. RASKIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

All over the world, there are people in prison right now for having been accused of and found guilty of violating blasphemy, heresy, or apostasy laws, which are of course unconstitutional in America.

In 2020, the House passed a resolution, which I had introduced, denouncing the blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws and calling for this to be a central plank in U.S. foreign policy, to free religious prisoners and to strike these laws down.

Do all of you agree—maybe we can just go down the line—that these laws are a threat to religious freedom and human rights all over the world?

Ms. Tyler?

Ms. TYLER. Yes.

Mr. RASKIN. Dr. Mobbs?

Ms. MOBBS. Yes.

Mr. RASKIN. Dr. Patterson?

Mr. PATTERSON. Yes.

Mr. RASKIN. And Mr. Curry?

Mr. CURRY. Yes, I absolutely agree.

Mr. RASKIN. OK.

And does anybody want to say a quick word about what their group is doing to try to overturn these laws?

Would you perhaps, Ms. Tyler, take a second?

Ms. TYLER. Yes. So, BJC did endorse your legislation, Mr. Raskin, for H.R. 512 to send a signal to the State Department to prioritize countries getting—or not enforcing their blasphemy laws. Because one-third of countries around the world do have blasphemy laws, although not all of them enforce them.

I think a point that is important to make is that blasphemy laws do not only hurt the religious freedom of religious minorities in those countries but also co-religionists, because it tries to enforce a single view of a religion that—

Mr. RASKIN. They do, indeed, and I am going to have something to say about that.

Religious freedom in our country means two things. Our Framers rebelled against centuries of religious warfare, wars between the Catholics and the Protestants every bit as vicious as wars between the Shia and Sunni today. They rebelled against holy crusades, inquisitions, witchcraft trials, you name it. And they came up, in our Constitution, with two parts of religious freedom: free exercise that every citizen has and, also, no establishment of religion. The government cannot establish religion. And these two values stand best when they stand together. They reinforce each other.

Just very quickly, does everybody agree that we need to be promoting both of these values in our foreign policy?

Ms. Tyler?

Ms. TYLER. Yes, and beginning at home.

Mr. RASKIN. Thank you.

Dr. Mobbs?

Ms. MOBBS. Yes.

Mr. RASKIN. And Dr. Patterson?

Mr. PATTERSON. Yes, with a caveat: that we could imagine societies where a vast part of the majority are part of one religious orientation and where they have free exercise for the common people, for other citizens from religious minorities, and yet they may—due to their history, religion, and it being a large majority, where there may be a favorable treatment toward one religion, but where religious minorities could freely practice.

Mr. RASKIN. Yes. OK. I am not sure about what you just said. That sounds to me like setting a predicate for religious persecution.

Just because a large majority of people believe in a particular religion does not give them the right to legislate that and compel against other people, right?

Mr. PATTERSON. What I am talking about is countries that may be on a historical trajectory toward increasing religious liberty over time, particularly smaller countries that have a large religious population that is pretty homogenous.

Mr. RASKIN. OK.

Mr. Curry?

Mr. CURRY. I would agree with your statement.

Mr. RASKIN. Thank you kindly.

Well, look, I belong to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. I have adopted numerous prisoners of conscience. I would challenge and encourage all of my colleagues to do what I have done. Sometimes, if you feel like you are not able to move a huge institution like the U.S. Congress, you can save somebody from spending the rest of their life in prison.

I adopted a religious prisoner in Pakistan, Abdul Shakoor. He was an 82-year-old bookstore owner who the Pakistani Government had imprisoned for heresy, simply for religiously subversive thoughts, allegedly. And we got him out. And he is a Muslim himself, but he practiced the Ahmadiyya faith.

I advocated for the release of Kunchok Tsephel, who is a Tibetan writer who created a website promoting and celebrating Tibetan culture. Chinese authorities sentenced him to 15 years in prison. He was released just last year, 13 years into his sentence.

So, for those of you who really believe in religious freedom and understand how persecution is a danger to people all over the world, colleagues, you can do something by joining the Lantos Human Rights Commission and adopting religious prisoners of any faith, because every faith is being discriminated against and persecuted somewhere. And our job is to try and champion the American value of religious toleration for everyone of any religious belief—or no religious belief at all, because that is part of religious freedom too.

Thank you very much for your indulgence, Mr. Chair. I will yield back to you.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Sessions?

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

I want to thank each of you for being here today.

I think that the indications that you have really provided deep details about—every American is aware that there is conflict around the world. We even see conflict here in the United States.

And I believe that your insight—for instance, Dr. Mobbs, you probably have a lot of insight in some areas where perhaps the Taliban or others would be directly in confrontation with not just human rights but, really, religious intolerance and the use of the various elements of violence against people on that measure. And I would like to vet this issue, if I could, for just a minute.

Mr. Curry, I did not have my trusty pen out when you spoke about a resolution that you would like Members of this body to be in tune to, but you mentioned an H.R. number that you felt like outlined good consideration of good policy. Would you mind giving that to me again?

Mr. CURRY. Yes. That is House Resolution 82 that calls on the Department of State to redesignate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern.

It has a request that we appoint a special envoy which would be able to mediate between Nigeria, Niger, Mali, all of these countries in the Sahel region which are now affected by these extremist groups who all have a shared ideology even though they battle amongst themselves for power.

This would be a critical, critical thing for us to see pass and would really, I think, help aid religious minorities in the north of Nigeria.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you.

Dr. Mobbs, we are engaged in watching, literally, on our TVs every day the Palestinian conflict with America's ally Israel. And it is based on not only hatred and bitterness but, really, on annihilation of the right of the Israelis and Jewish people to exist.

You evidently came into conflict—or saw this conflict firsthand in Afghanistan and in the Middle East. Could you talk with us about a wise way to look at how we should look at this conflict and, in particular, where religion is the key element of discrimination against people who do not read the Bible or the Koran exactly the same way you do?

Ms. MOBBS. Sir, I would say that, when people tell you what they believe, we should believe them. As you mentioned, Hamas believes in the eradication of the Jewish people and the Jewish State, and we should take them at their word that they will go to every end to reach those end states.

And so, a wise policy would be to take them at their word and support our ally Israel in their eradication of this population that only serves to end them.

Mr. SESSIONS. So, in other words, we would try and encourage anyone that did not follow that ideology to leave what I will say is Gaza and let the battle ensue.

Ms. MOBBS. Of course, I think that the protection of the innocents is always paramount, and I think that a humanitarian corridor must be established for those to leave so that they are not going to be subjected to conflict.

I think that absolutely should occur and that is the best path forward. And we should support Israel, as is their right, to go after the terrorists who perpetuated the evil upon them.

Mr. SESSIONS. And that self-protection that they would be allowed to—so that in 2 weeks or 6 months or 4 years they were not faced with this same problem again.

Ms. MOBBS. Yes, sir.

Mr. SESSIONS. Good.

Dr. Patterson, you have provided us a lot of what I think is really good information about violators, people who came and have used religion in those circumstances against people.

Talk to me again about the Chinese experiment. Are they pushing forth and sending out across the world their ideas about the same things that they do to their own people?

Mr. PATTERSON. Thank you, sir. Let me mention two things about that.

The first one is that China's reach, for instance, against Uyghurs and other minorities, specifically Uyghurs though, is not just internal; they have pushed on countries like Turkey and others across Central Asia to repatriate Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and others to China for detention, imprisonment, and who knows who else—

Mr. SESSIONS. Would that include the New York City issue where the Chinese have police stations?

Mr. PATTERSON. Yes, this New York situation, of course, is insidious. And what we have seen is this type of Chinese infiltration in many places around the world.

The other side of China's influence is that many poorer countries look at the United States and say, "If we take aid from you, you are going to make us do all of these new, novel social ideologies you want to impose on us. The Chinese, they will give us a low-interest loan, no questions asked." And our organization has heard that very dichotomy from people in Africa and Latin America.

Mr. SESSIONS. My thanks to the panel.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Frost?

Mr. FROST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Religious prosecution and violent extremism globally are very serious threats to U.S. security and human rights abroad. Today, on my line, I want to focus in and hone in on religious extremism happening here in the United States, domestically, because I believe it is also a very important part of this conversation.

Christian nationalism is a form of religious extremism making its way into our policies and undermining our democracy. These extremist actors are co-opting the language of Christianity and religious freedom to push an undemocratic agenda that seeks the very opposite of what they claim to do.

And I want to start off by saying, I am a man of faith. I was raised Southern Baptist. I love potlucks. I was in Awana. I got the Sparky Award. I was in youth band for about 10 years. This is a huge part of my life and part of the reason why I am so passionate about it.

As a man of faith, I know that Christianity is not Christian nationalism. I oppose my faith being used to whitewash a racist, violent, and dangerous ideology.

Ms. Tyler, I have a few questions for you, but let us start with this: How does religion differ from religious extremism? And why does religious extremism, specifically Christian nationalism, threaten the safety and lives of people in our communities?

Ms. TYLER. Well, I think that religious nationalism is this tendency to merge our religious and national identities. And it can occur along a spectrum but can also be co-opted by those in power to enforce a certain religious viewpoint on everyone else. And that is why it is such an urgent threat to religious freedom.

But it is also, as you point out, an urgent threat to democracy. And it is because it is taking this increasingly violent aspect.

And we saw that on January 6 in the way that Christian nationalism was used as a permission structure and as a uniting ideology for people who were here at the Capitol that day in search of a political cause that was then infused with religious fervor.

Mr. FROST. And what would you say the relationship is between White supremacy and Christian nationalism?

Ms. TYLER. Christian nationalism often overlaps with and provides cover for White supremacy and racial subjugation. That is because the “Christian” in “Christian nationalism” is not so much about theology as it is about an ethno-national identity.

Mr. FROST. Yes.

And Christian nationalists have played vital roles in very violent attacks, even recently—the killing of 11 people attending services at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh; the killing and murder of 9 people attending a bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, the “Emanuel Nine”; the killing of 33 people shopping at Walmart and Tops in El Paso and Buffalo.

Ms. Tyler, how does Christian nationalism pose a threat to our democratic institutions?

Ms. TYLER. Well, I think all of those examples are what happens when this ideology of Christian nationalism is used by White supremacists to try to justify their violence. It uses the symbols and the language of Christianity to try to justify what is indefensible. And it turns, again, their hatred into a religious cause, into something that they believe is ordained by God.

Mr. FROST. Most Christian nationalists claim to support religious freedom while at the same time working to have the exact opposite of that happen.

Have you noticed a coordinated attempt in America to co-opt the right of religious freedom to try and justify stripping rights away from people?

Ms. TYLER. Well, I do think that language really matters here, and definitions. And, too often, we hear the language of religious freedom being used for what is really religious privilege or Christian nationalism.

True religious freedom requires equality for all people regardless of religious belief. And that is why it is so important, as our Constitution promises, that the government will stay neutral when it comes to religion to allow all religions to flourish.

Mr. FROST. And this threat to democracy has made its way to Congress. I mean, my colleague Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene has said, quote, “Christian nationalism is ‘actually a good thing’”. It is an “identity that Republicans need to embrace” and “I am being attacked by the godless left because I said I am a proud Christian Nationalist,” end quote.

My colleague Representative Lauren Boebert said, quote, “The church is supposed to direct the government. The government is not supposed to direct the church. I am tired of this separation-of-church-and-state junk,” end quote, “junk” being the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

The Bible itself, in Second Corinthians, actually warns us against this. Paul warned against this. He warned us against people who would preach of a Christ that differs from the true Christ that we learn about in the Bible. That is exactly what Christian nationalism is doing.

I condemn religious extremism everywhere, globally and domestically. And we have to recognize the threat it poses to our most sacred freedoms and root it out everywhere.

And I think it is incumbent especially upon us as Christians, and me as a Christian, to be at the forefront of the fight to ensure that White nationalism and Christian nationalism does not see the light of day.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK.

Mr. Biggs?

Mr. BIGGS. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

I thank the panelists for being here today.

Dr. Patterson, I want to ask you first—and maybe we will expand it. We will see how it goes.

A number of nations have been listed as particularly pernicious in their persecution of people of faith—China, Iran, Nigeria, et cetera. My question to start off is, do you know how many of the nations that we are concerned with today, as we sit here, have actually signed on as signatories to the International Criminal Court?

Mr. PATTERSON. I do not know how many have signed on to the International Criminal Court.

But on this specific issue of religious freedom, most countries around the world, including terrible violators like Afghanistan, have signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which has strong religious freedom language protecting religious freedom for institutions and organizations.

Mr. BIGGS. Well, the reason I ask about the International Criminal Court is because the International Criminal Court, last I heard, has about 48 signatory nations, and I am curious what the number is here.

I happened to be at the Rome conference where the document was drafted, and I will tell you that there was indicia of—I should not say “indicia”—there was a crime of genocide recognized in the International Criminal Court, which would allow prosecution of violators both as state actors and non-state actors.

And what we see in Nigeria could be characterized, I believe, as genocide under the ICC. I also believe that what is happening to the Uyghurs could be categorized as genocide under the ICC.

But I am not sure—I do not believe China has signed on. I am not sure about Nigeria. And in our own state, we have never ratified membership in that. In spite of what the ICC said, just because—just because 48 nations ratified it does not mean anybody else is underneath that.

So, I want to expand a little bit and get into some of your recommendations, Dr. Patterson. And I would like Mr. Curry and then Dr. Mobbs to actually comment on this.

These recommendations, like the GAO to assess and publicly report on the implementation of IRFA of 1998, are you aware of any report having been done? And tell us what you think should be done and what should be assessed, what should be included in that assessment.

Mr. PATTERSON. Certainly.

I do not know of a report like this that has been done, at least not in recent years.

A couple of things that could be assessed is, first, justifications for waivers—year after year after year of waivers.

A second thing that could be looked at here is: What programs that the U.S. has put money into have actually reaped actual, tangible results promoting religious freedom? Where do we see actual difference anywhere on the ground?

Mr. BIGGS. And so, to that point, do you see any place where our funding and our non-imposition of our own domestic policies on these nations have actually produced more religious freedom in any of these nations that we are looking at?

Mr. PATTERSON. Well, in some cases what you are doing is just trying to keep the door open or open new doors.

But one case—and Congressman Chris Smith has a lot to say on this specific case. The one time where we did a binding—a semi-binding compact, almost like a Millennium Challenge Corporation type of thing but on religious freedom, the one time was with Vietnam. And Vietnam came off the CPC list because they promised to do some things. They had about a year or two of progress. They actually went back on the CPC list eventually because they reneged on that.

But there is a case of success.

Mr. BIGGS. OK.

And I hate to bring this up, but, as one of the witnesses has said, words do have consequences, they have meaning. And the implication—to call the travel ban a religious travel ban continues to be a narrative that actually is a vile lie. That narrative is a vile lie.

The travel ban of 2019 was imposed originally under the Obama Administration in 2015. They undertook a great deal of study. Fifty nations were included in that original ban, including Chad. But after Chad increased its ability for us to share and vet people coming in from Chad, Chad was removed from that list.

The Supreme Court addressed this, and they concluded that the proclamation was neutral on its face regarding religion and applied to people of all faiths.

So, it undermines one's credibility to continue with this pernicious lie.

I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Moskowitz?

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Mr. Chairman, thank you. Appreciate it. Appreciate the conversation.

In 2022, the Anti-Defamation League said there were 3,697 anti-Semitic incidents in the United States. That was a 36-percent increase from 2021, just a year before.

I think it was an excellent decision by President Biden to elevate the position of the head of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism to an ambassador at large.

You know, when my Republican colleagues cozy up to neo-Nazis and the Proud Boys and White supremacist groups——

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman? Mr. Chairman, I find that offensive, that the gentleman would make a broad statement like that. And I think that he should back that up with any individual but not a broad group. That would be inappropriate for me——

Voice. It is not true.

Mr. SESSIONS [continuing]. And untrue——

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Do not worry, I am getting to the part you will like.

Mr. SESSIONS. Well, I do not—perhaps you are. I find it offensive that you have used this forum——

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Sure, no problem. Donald Trump—Donald Trump had dinner with a Holocaust denier at his house. Do you want more facts?

Mr. SESSIONS. Then use that, sir.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Sure. No problem.

When my Republican colleagues support a President of the United States who is having dinner with a Holocaust denier at his house and they remain silent, silence is complicity.

When there are Nazis——

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. When there are Nazis——

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Sessions?

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. I would like my time back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman——

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Reclaiming my time——

Mr. SESSIONS. Well, I am sure you will get that back.

Broad statements are inappropriate and are not worthy of this hearing.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. I know you are in denial that he had dinner with a Holocaust——

Mr. SESSIONS. I was unaware of it. So, for you to assume——

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. It was national news for, like, a week.

Mr. SESSIONS. That matters not.

What I am trying to say, Mr. Chairman, is, this hearing needs to stay very cordial and very much on the level. And attacks like this are exactly why our country is going through what we are going through. And——

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Chairman, there needs to be—there needs to be a point of order, actually, on this.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. There is no point of order. I——

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. I called nobody out, other than the former President of the United States, Donald Trump.

Mr. SESSIONS. That is not correct, sir. You referred to “Republicans.” That is——

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Chairman, there needs to be a point of order, please.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman, I would ask that you please admonish the people of this Subcommittee that we are trying to make progress together—

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Chairman, there needs to be a point of order.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Yes. And I would like my time back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GROTHMAN. We need a point of order.

You will get your time back. We are not running the clock.

OK. If there is no point of order, just continue.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So, I will go back to what I was previously saying, is that, when Republican colleagues, not all of them, but some Republican colleagues cozy up to neo-Nazis and the Proud Boys and White supremacist groups—

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman, I would like for you to please—

Mr. RASKIN. Sir, there is no point of order here.

Mr. GROTHMAN. We need a point of order.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. I know this is—

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ [continuing]. Uncomfortable, but I want to get through this. So, it is just a paragraph, and we will be fine. So—so much for free speech.

When some of my Republican colleagues cozy up to neo-Nazis, Proud Boys, and White supremacist groups because they are their voters, and when President Trump hosts Holocaust deniers at Mar-a-Lago, sometimes we hear silence from our friends on the right.

When Nazis are holding rallies in the streets, when mass murderers go into synagogues or grocery stores and have Nazi symbols or anti-Semitic dossiers under White nationalism or Christian nationalism, we actually do not hear silence; we hear denial.

But do not worry, I want to make this Committee bipartisan. Because this is a bipartisan issue. Anti-Semitism is bipartisan. And there is plenty of bipartisan silence on what is happening to Jews in this country on the left.

“Gas the Jews.” “Kill the Jews.” “Glory to the martyrs,” celebrating Hamas killing innocent people, at GW last night, my alma mater. “Glory to the martyrs”—glory to the people that raped women, that killed babies in their cribs, glory to those people.

“Bring back Hitler.” “Jews are not wanted.” “No wonder the Germans killed them.” “Zionism is a mental illness.” “No wonder why Hitler wanted to get rid of them.” “Fuck the Jews.”

Posters of children hostages being pulled down all over the country. Swastikas coming back, not just at rallies, but people are just wearing them. Cheering in the street after rape, killing babies. Using rape as a cause of resistance. Burning people alive, like they did in concentration camps, to bring back the smell of burning Jews.

We are constantly told that you can be critical of Israel’s policies without being anti-Semitic—except that is not what we are seeing in the street. We are not seeing from the progressive left them saying, you know, “Israel.” No, they are saying “the Jews,” right?

We are constantly told, “No, no you can criticize a country’s policies and positions. It is not about a religion. It is not about an elimination of people.” Except that is not what they are saying; that is not what they are doing. All being done in the cause of “resistance” or “progressive values.”

And, again, while it is not all of my Members, silence from the progressive left.

You know, I get it; Jews do not look like the usual victim. We do not look like victims. No, we look more like oppressors. And in social media, where everything is, you know, binary—right?—we do not like complicated arguments—right?—and where facts do not matter anymore because folks like Elon Musk took away all of the guardrails, and where anti-Semitism and racism and hatred is just breeding on social media, it is no wonder why what we are seeing now scares the Jewish community, because we have not seen this since the Holocaust.

You know, it is because Jews are subhuman. That is—that is what it is. It is a double-standard that is only applied to us.

And both parties are failing, because you know what? Each of them have no problem calling out anti-Semitism when the other side does it, right? The Republicans will call out “the squad.” Democrats will call out, you know, Republican Members when they say, you know, Jews and space lasers.

No, no, we have no problem doing it on the other side, because that is easy. Super-easy to criticize the other side. No, but it is much harder to do it when it is within your own ranks—much harder to do it within your own ranks. That is when we see the silence.

And so—I will conclude, Mr. Chairman.

You know, Jews have often wondered why it took so long for people to come to their aid during the Holocaust, why millions of people were slaughtered before people came to their aid. Now we know. Now we know why it took so long.

And we also now know—because we see it in this country, in the streets and in the halls of Congress—we now know who those people are who would not come to our aid now if that happened again.

I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Fallon?

Mr. FALLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really do appreciate the opportunity to talk about this. It is so vitally important.

There was a Prussian diplomat, Klemens Wenzel Furst—and we know him by his last name—von Metternich. And he said that when France sneezes the world catches a cold. And now that term has been applied to the United States, of course. When we sneeze, the world catches a cold.

So, what we do here really does matter. And it is not just for the 340 million people in this country, but it is for billions across the world.

I had a friend of mine in my twenties. He is an American. He was born in Iran. His father still lived in Iran. And he said he cannot go back because they might press him into military service and might punish his father and just take all his possessions, after working for 50 years of his life, because that is what theocracies, authoritarian theocracies, tend to do.

And it really opened my eyes, as somebody that has experienced the blessings and bounties of this country, when we have a big moat called the Atlantic and a bigger one called the Pacific, and we are protected. And we do not realize that you do not have to go back to 1500 or 1000 AD to see this kind of religious oppression and persecution. It is happening right here in this world in 2023.

So, we not only live in the right place, we do live in the right time. But some people live in the wrong place, and still, in 2023, for some folks it is the wrong time.

Nothing to me is more important than a human being able to worship the Almighty to the dictates of their own conscience. I think that is why we are all here. That is why it was a little upsetting to hear this kind of partisan gutter-politics that then morphed into something sane.

So, what I wanted to do is ask a couple of questions about—because I really would hope this would be bipartisan. And our office is going to draft a letter that hopefully will get Republicans and Democrats to sign on to it.

So, the International Religious Freedom Act, which allows the Secretary of State to designate countries that commit systematic and ongoing egregious violations of religious freedom, these Countries of Particular Concern, CPCs.

Mr. Curry, in Afghanistan, if you are born—or, you are raised Muslim and you leave that faith, can you face egregious consequences?

Mr. CURRY. Absolutely. In many countries, including Afghanistan, you are not allowed to change your faith. In some countries, you are forced to register and never—you cannot choose a faith of your own. But, both culturally and politically, it is not allowed in Afghanistan.

Mr. FALLON. What if somebody wanted to build a—I would ask Mr. Patterson, or Dr. Patterson—sorry. If you wanted to build a Jewish temple in Kabul today under the Taliban, what do you think would happen?

Mr. PATTERSON. Yes. Impossible.

Mr. FALLON. It would not happen.

Mr. PATTERSON. And you would probably face the death penalty.

Mr. FALLON. OK.

So that is pretty egregious, wouldn't you all agree?

Dr. Mobbs? Yes.

Ms. Tyler, you would agree? Yes.

Mr. Curry, is Afghanistan designated as a CPC?

Mr. CURRY. Yes.

Mr. FALLON. It is? OK. What other countries would you feel are—should be designated and are not?

Mr. CURRY. Well, I think, you know, one country that I would highlight for you that has been designated as a CPC but has been given waivers would be India.

This is a country that we want to have strong partnership with, we have lots of business relationships with, but, surprisingly, this democracy is one of the foremost persecutors of religious minorities. Christians and Muslims in India face great repression from the political movement there.

And so, if I could highlight anything as it relates to CPC, it is India, countries like it, which are designated but there is no teeth to it because the State Department continues to waiver—waive the consequences.

Mr. FALLON. Dr. Mobbs, Russia, of course, is in the news every day because of their illegal and grotesque invasion of Ukraine.

Why do you—so the Russian Orthodox Church—Putin, who was a secularist for his entire life and then suddenly embraces Christianity—why do you think they are persecuting particularly Jehovah's Witnesses so severely?

Ms. MOBBS. I think they are just willing to persecute anyone that does not do exactly what he says.

Mr. FALLON. Just, if you get out of line? So, you could be—if you are a Russian Orthodox, is it more just toward just, kind of, accentuating the Russian identity and ethnicity?

Ms. MOBBS. Yes.

Mr. FALLON. Yes.

Well, Mr. Chairman, my time is up. I will yield back.

Thank you all.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Porter?

Ms. PORTER. Dr. Patterson, could you summarize the purpose of this hearing as it was intended to be held?

Mr. PATTERSON. The purpose of the hearing, as I understand it, is to look at the national security implications of U.S. international religious freedom policy and the state of the globe.

Ms. PORTER. OK.

And Dr. Mobbs?

Ms. MOBBS. That is my understanding as well.

Ms. PORTER. OK.

So, the summary that I have says, "This hearing will examine the Administration's oversight of assistance to organizations promoting religious freedom for oppressed religious minorities and others persecuted. The hearing will also examine how global religious persecution presents national security concerns."

So, one of our top goals today is to have the U.S. Government stop organizations that persecute religious minorities, correct?

So, if we want the United States to be successful in that, we need to understand exactly what religious persecution looks like. And many of you have given helpful examples today. I want to consider a different example.

Let us say, like, that an organization creates a list of people that it fears is going to commit crimes. And we have that organization—that organization says in writing that it is not using religious affiliation; it is just about crimes. But we see the list, we do the analysis, and we can confirm that 98 percent of the people on the list are part of a single religious minority.

Dr. Patterson, could that be an example of the type of religious persecution that we are trying to prevent with this hearing?

Mr. PATTERSON. If I understand the parameters of what you just said, I think one of the things that we would be concerned about was that, as I understand it, you are talking about preventing a future wrong by going after this group rather than them having committed any crime in the first place. And, of course, that is a

much larger legal principle, that we do not want to go after preventing someone that we might think might do something down the road.

Ms. PORTER. And definitely not based on their—if the main guiding fact seems to be, to get on this list, being a particular religion, as opposed to anything that someone has done, we would be concerned about that.

Dr. Mobbs, what do you think about that? Would you want to know more at least?

Ms. MOBBS. I would want to know more.

Ms. PORTER. OK.

Ms. Tyler, how about you?

Ms. TYLER. Yes, I mean, I think that hypothetical talks about how one could use religion as a proxy for a security threat—which is a way of singling out a single religion for government disfavor.

Ms. PORTER. Dr.—Mr. Curry? Excuse me.

Mr. CURRY. As I understand it, yes, I agree.

Ms. PORTER. OK.

So, at the beginning of this hearing, we said it is the United States' duty to do oversight of religious persecution. I gave an example that we think could at least raise concerns.

Let us say we find out that the organization making this list is the FBI and that the religious minority is Muslims.

This is a real-life example. A copy of the FBI's terrorism watch list was leaked, and an analysis showed that 98 percent of the names on that list are those of Muslim people.

Now that we have the specifics, are you still—do you still think that we should do oversight and the Administration should do diligence to make sure that the FBI watch list is targeting people based on risk and not on religion?

Ms. Tyler?

Ms. TYLER. Absolutely. I think if we are to defend religious freedom around the world, we must be sure that our government is also defending religious freedom here at home.

Ms. PORTER. Dr. Mobbs?

Ms. MOBBS. Absolutely. Being placed on a list should be based on behaviors, predictions, risk analysis, and should not be predicated on religion at all.

Ms. PORTER. Dr. Patterson?

Mr. PATTERSON. I concur. And I think it is exactly right for Congress to be doing oversight in the first place over the executive branch.

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Curry?

Mr. CURRY. Yes.

Ms. PORTER. So, we have a strong consensus here, and I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will join with me in asking that the Administration would give us more information about how they have constructed this list and why the list seems to be based on religion, and if it is not true, that they are able to explain that and answer that to us.

We have a duty as a country to do that kind of oversight to stop persecution. And we do not have credibility, internationally, to take on the kinds of challenges that you have described today if we are not doing it here.

We have heard it today from witnesses, Republican and Democrat alike, that religious persecution harms our national security. And that is just as true when we may be missing or under-identifying national security threats to our own country internally because we are using religion as a basis to identify people for the terrorism watch list.

The Committee needs to keep pressing, on a bipartisan basis, to do oversight on the FBI's terrorism watch list until this issue is fixed or until our questions are answered.

I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr.—oh, first of all, I would like to submit for the record three articles here on these topics: one from Heritage Society [sic], one from *Newsweek*, and one from *The Providence Journal*.

Mr. GROTHMAN. And then Mr. Gosar.

Mr. GOSAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate the Committee's interest in protecting people of faith abroad. Sadly, this Administration's persecution of Christians here at home strips them of any credibility whatsoever in fighting religious discrimination abroad.

The Department of Justice under this Administration has indicted at least 34 people for protesting outside of abortion clinics under the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act. Many proliferate face years behind bars. One man, Mark Houck, was arrested in front of his wife and seven children in an unnecessary and brutal raid where FBI agents brandished their weapons at the family.

Multiple FBI field offices worked together to construct a memo that encouraged the infiltration and targeting of Catholic worshippers.

The DOJ threatened states that passed laws protecting children from mutilation and harmful chemical infusions.

Biden signed a law last year that perverted the Federal definition of marriage.

The U.S. military refused to grant thousands of brave servicemembers a religious exemption to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Health and Human Services is seeking to limit the ability of employers to oppose providing contraceptive coverage for religious reasons to refrain from violating their conscience.

January 6 prisoners have claimed that Federal prison officials have prevented them from attending religious services.

Meanwhile, rioters have destroyed property to the tune of \$2 billion in the "summer of love," and pro-abortion terrorists who firebombed pro-life pregnancy centers roam free.

This Administration should start with itself when it comes to eradicating religious freedom.

Now, a question.

Mr. Curry, does the persecution of Christians here at home by this Administration undermine the ability of advocates to help persecuted Christians abroad?

Mr. CURRY. Congressman, I am sorry. I beg your pardon. My expertise is on international persecution. I would—

Mr. GOSAR. Dr. Patterson?

Mr. PATTERSON. Would you mind saying the question one more time.

Mr. GOSAR. Yes. Does the persecution of Christians here at home by this Administration undermine the ability of advocates to help persecuted Christians abroad?

Mr. PATTERSON. I would say that the persecution of people of faith at home does undermine our efforts abroad.

Mr. GOSAR. Would with you agree, Dr. Mobbs.

Ms. MOBBS. I would agree, yes.

Mr. GOSAR. Ukraine has taken procedural steps to ban their Ukrainian Orthodox Church over alleged ties to Russia. Zelenskyy has sanctioned several leaders of the Church of Ukraine. Ukraine's Constitutional Court unilaterally changed the name of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. A government body meddling in the affairs of a church to the extent of renaming should be utterly anathema to any person of goodwill.

A *Christianity Today* article from just a couple days ago claims that the Ukrainian national police, known as the SBU, have accused 68 Church of Ukraine priests of collaboration, treason, and other offenses. The Ukrainian citizenship of 20 of these priests was revoked.

Are you concerned, Dr. Mobbs, that the Ukrainian Government is violating the religious liberty of its citizens.

Ms. MOBBS. I would say, anytime you have any violation of anyone's religious liberties, we should be concerned.

Mr. GOSAR. How about you, Dr. Patterson?

Mr. PATTERSON. I agree with that statement.

Mr. GOSAR. Since it is international, Mr. Curry.

Mr. CURRY. Yes. Both the Russian side and the Ukrainian side are using religion as a wedge, and it is unacceptable.

Mr. GOSAR. I see the same thing. You are exactly right.

The Ukrainian Security Service orchestrated a raid on the Russian Orthodox Christian monastery in Kyiv in November 2022. Is this what a democratic country that respects the freedom of religion looks like?

Dr. Mobbs?

Ms. MOBBS. Unfortunately, I do not know anything about that raid, sir.

Mr. GOSAR. OK.

How about you, Dr. Patterson?

Mr. PATTERSON. I do not know about that specific case.

Mr. GOSAR. No? OK.

Well, the Media Research Center recently broke a story detailing how the Department of Homeland Security approved of a grant to Dayton College under a program meant to fight all forms of terrorism and targeted violence. Money from the grant was used to produce a seminar where a DHS agent included the Christian Broadcasting Network, along with other conservative entities like The Heritage and FOX News, in a "pyramid of far-right radicalization." Another presenter of this group was an Antifa member, who admitted proudly that his group often breaks the law.

I am curious to get the panel's take on how protecting religious freedom at home will complement congressional and executive pressures to protect the people of faith abroad.

Could you comment on that, Dr. Mobbs?

Ms. MOBBS. I think that it is very clear that what we do here echoes elsewhere. So, in order for us to be a model around the world, we have to ensure that we are doing what we say we are doing here at home, which is allowing religious freedom and protecting all of the constitutional rights enshrined in our Constitution.

Mr. GOSAR. How about you, Dr. Patterson?

Mr. PATTERSON. I agree with that statement. And it is particularly worrying when people glorify lawlessness and violence as if that is somehow something that is positive. We cannot hand that on to our children.

Mr. GOSAR. Well, I applaud the lady from—the gentlelady from California, because she is right on target with where this needs to go. Because we have to look at home as well as abroad. And our law enforcement agencies are no dissimilar person; they have to be looked at very intensely.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Goldman?

Mr. GOLDMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I thank our witnesses for being here.

I want to give a little bit of a perspective from an American Jew right now, from New York City, which has the highest population of Jews, outside of Israel, in the world.

What happened on October 7 was an effort by an extremist jihadist terrorist organization to kill as many Jews as possible. And for someone like me, who has grown up in this country, hearing about stories of the Holocaust, stories of the pogroms in Europe from which my grandmother escaped to come to the United States, it has always been historical. But, today, we are living with the reality of the same thing.

And it is difficult being a Jew in America right now. There are mass protests against Jews who suffered from a terrorist attack. There are dramatically increased threats. And, in many ways, it feels very isolating.

And so, in large respect, I appreciate having this hearing today, because we do need to make sure that we are addressing the persecution and discrimination and hate against all religious groups.

And I appreciate that my colleague from Arizona raised some issues in terms of some of the Christian groups, but obviously it is not limited to Christians. There is horrific anti-Semitism and there is horrific Islamophobia that is going on, including the awful, awful murder of a 6-year-old Palestinian-American boy in Illinois.

And, Dr. Patterson, I think your statement is right; we cannot pass this on to our children.

And so, I am grateful that you are all here to discuss what has to be a unified anti-hate platform among all religions, among all ethnicities, among all races, so that we get back to the foundational principles of this country and of this great democracy—that we are all created equal, and we all have an opportunity to succeed and to thrive regardless of our religion.

I want to ask just a couple of questions, Ms. Tyler, because this is a global fight, but it is obviously also a domestic fight, and there is domestic extremism that we are now seeing on both sides.

And I am curious what you think we can do in Congress to assist the Administration's efforts to ensure that people of faith are free to worship without fear of attack here in the United States.

Ms. TYLER. I mean, I think it starts with the rhetoric that is used in Congress. I think that people follow what they hear here.

And so, it is important that we as a country live up to the values that we have established in our Constitution and also in who we are as a people—that we do not use rhetoric that dehumanizes other people, that we do not claim that God is on the side of any—of any side of any war, and that we take care of civilians and we do not equate civilians with the governments of their countries.

And I think any attempt to try to use religion or religious people to justify a particular government policy has the ability to, first, harm religion but, also, to spread violence and hatred in the country. And so, I think that Congress has a very important role to play, both in debate that happens here and also in the instructions and the oversight that Congress plays with the administration.

Mr. GOLDMAN. Thank you for that thoughtful response.

And, Mr. Curry, in my last few seconds: Because of your expertise in the international realm, I am curious how you think or how you perceive domestic religious extremism and discrimination has an impact abroad.

Mr. CURRY. I think anytime we look at international religious freedom, what I am trying to do is hold up the international standard that people have the freedom to associate, to choose their own faith, and to practice it freely. I would say that standard should hold for us, as well, here.

Mr. GOLDMAN. Thank you.

And I yield back.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

I think what I am going to do is—we will just go to closing statements.

Mr. Garcia, do you want to say anything?

Mr. GARCIA. No. I just want to thank the witnesses again.

But I do want to just reiterate the point earlier that I think the Biden Administration is and the State Department is rebuilding a lot of these programs. I do want to commend them for calling out, particularly at this really difficult moment, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and all the attacks on other minorities happening across the world in countries.

So, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. Thank you.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here.

I wish we would have spent a little bit more time focusing on Americans' involvement in what are normally religious matters in other countries.

I once met a woman here, who was appointed by President Trump, who felt that the pushing of, let us say, a Planned Parenthood agenda in Africa was largely racially driven but was certainly opposed by the primarily Christian churches in Africa at the time.

I think Dr. Patterson—I wish I would time to do a followup question, but—pointed out that apparently some loans that Western—or, the United States was giving out, as opposed to Chinese loans,

were conditioned upon things that were sometimes against religious beliefs held in these third-world countries.

We have talked about the concern in Hungary for kind of an anti-traditional Christian worldview held by the United States. I think there were some kind of outlandish statements made by people on the other side.

But right now, I think we are seeing around the world anti-Semitism, but, to a certain extent, an anti-Semitism born of kind of an anti-Western world view. And for whatever reason, young people, very disturbingly, are drawn into that, for whatever psychological reason. I think I saw kids with T-shirts that were just shocking in our own Cannon Building the other day. You know, kind of hard to believe why young people would be drawn into this, but I think there is kind of a self-hatred toward Western values here that young people are drawn to.

But, in any event, I encourage people to pay a little bit more attention to the United States. They are getting involved in what are normally religious issues or religious beliefs in other countries. And I think that there is an element of kind of an atheistic, humanistic world view that is kind of becoming the official religion of some people around the United States, and that is a horrible thing.

But, in any event, I know you guys took a lot of time out of your busy days to be here today, so thank you one more time.

[Whereupon, at 11:50 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

