

112TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. RES. 459

Encouraging any new government convened in Egypt to fully allow for the freedom of religion.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 4, 2011

Mr. ADERHOLT (for himself, Mr. GRIMM, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. PITTS, Mr. WOLF, and Mr. FORBES) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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## RESOLUTION

Encouraging any new government convened in Egypt to fully allow for the freedom of religion.

Whereas in its 2011 Annual Report, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommended for the first time that Egypt be named by the United States Department of State as a Country of Particular Concern, along with other long-time religious freedom offenders Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam;

Whereas according to the USCIRF Chair, Leonard Leo, “CPCs are nations whose conduct marks them as the world’s worst religious freedom violators and human rights abusers. In the case of Egypt, instances of severe

religious freedom violations engaged in or tolerated by the government have increased dramatically since the release of last year's report, with violence, including murder, escalating against Coptic Christians and other religious minorities. Since President Mubarak's resignation from office in February, such violence continues unabated without the government's bringing the perpetrators to justice. Consequently, USCIRF recommends CPC designation for Egypt.”;

Whereas many instances of discrimination against religious minorities, especially the Christian minority, persist, including—

(1) a lack of employment in higher positions of the public sector, universities, army, and the security service;

(2) a lack of protection and lack of prosecution of perpetrators in cases of sectarian violence;

(3) government harassment of converts to Christianity while, conversely, the government allows and encourages conversion to Islam;

(4) the inability to obtain government issued identification cards which reflect conversion to Christianity; and

(5) prejudice against Christian guardians in child custody cases which involve parents of both Muslim and Christian faith;

Whereas under the current law, government permission is required for the construction and renovation of Christian churches and the process for obtaining such permission is often onerous and inflexible while no such restrictions apply for the construction and renovation of mosques;

Whereas a unified law regulating construction of places of worship was first proposed in 2005 in the Parliament, but has never been passed;

Whereas the government's response to sectarian violence has been to conduct forced reconciliation sessions between Muslims and Christians in lieu of prosecution;

Whereas, on October 9, 2011, at least 25 people were killed and more than 300 were injured when military forces opened fire on a gathering of unarmed Coptic Christians, and then drove armored vehicles into the crowds;

Whereas this incident follows multiple incidents in the spring of 2011 when Coptic churches and monasteries were burned and more than 39 individuals were killed and at least 263 wounded;

Whereas the New Year's Eve 2010 suicide attack on St. Mark's Coptic Christian church in Alexandria was one of the worst incidents of violence against Egypt's Coptic minority in a decade;

Whereas the trial for those accused of shooting and killing innocent victims outside a Coptic church in Naga Hammady on Coptic Christmas Eve in January 2010 has been repeatedly delayed and promotes a climate of impunity; and

Whereas these incidents are but a few examples of the recent increase in sectarian violence against religious minorities as well as other forms of discrimination which Egyptian authorities have failed to properly address: Now, therefore, be it

1        *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

1           (1) strongly encourages any new government  
2 convened in Egypt to fully allow for the freedom of  
3 religion;

4           (2) believes that Egyptian law should provide  
5 for this freedom, specifically including freedom of  
6 conversion and freedom to build houses of worship;

7           (3) recommends the release of Coptic Christian  
8 prisoners from the spring 2011 protests, unless all  
9 due legal processes are timely followed; and

10          (4) urges the issuance of permanent licenses to  
11 monasteries, churches, synagogues, and other places  
12 of worship to build boundary fences for their safety  
13 and protection.

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