

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4821

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 11, 2022

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

AN ACT

To hold accountable senior officials of the Government of the People's Republic of China who are responsible for or have directly carried out, at any time, persecution of Christians or other religious minorities in China, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Combating the Perse-
3 cution of Religious Groups in China Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress makes the following findings:

6 (1) According to the Department of State’s
7 International Religious Freedom (IRF) report esti-
8 mates, Buddhists comprise 18.2 percent of the coun-
9 try’s total population, Christians, 5.1 percent, Mus-
10 lims, 1.8 percent, followers of folk religions, 21.9
11 percent, and atheists or unaffiliated persons, 52.2
12 percent, with Hindus, Jews, and Taoists comprising
13 less than one percent.

14 (2) The Government of the People’s Republic of
15 China (PRC) recognizes five official religions, Bud-
16 dhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholi-
17 cism (according to the State Department’s IRF re-
18 port) and only religious groups belonging to one of
19 the five sanctioned “patriotic religious associations”
20 representing these religions are permitted to register
21 with the government and hold worship service, ex-
22 cluding all other faiths and denying the ability to
23 worship without being registered with the govern-
24 ment.

25 (3) The activities of state-sanctioned religious
26 organizations are regulated by the Chinese Com-

1 munist Party, which manages all aspects of religious
2 life.

3 (4) The Chinese Communist Party is actively
4 seeking to control, govern, and manipulate all as-
5 pects of faith through the “Sinicization of Religion”,
6 a process intended to shape religious traditions and
7 doctrines so they conform with the objectives of the
8 Chinese Communist Party.

9 (5) On February 1, 2018, the PRC Government
10 implemented new religious regulations that imposed
11 restrictions on Chinese contacts with overseas reli-
12 gious organizations, required government approval
13 for religious schools, websites, and any online reli-
14 gious service, and effectively banned unauthorized
15 religious gatherings and teachings.

16 (6) There are numerous reports that authorities
17 forced closures of Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, and
18 Taoist houses of worship and destroyed public dis-
19 plays of religious symbols throughout the country.

20 (7) Authorities arrested and detained religious
21 leaders trying to hold services online.

22 (8) There are credible reports of Chinese au-
23 thorities raiding house churches and other places of
24 religious worship, removing and confiscating reli-
25 gious paraphernalia, installing surveillance cameras

1 on religious property, pressuring congregations to
2 sing songs of the Chinese Communist Party and dis-
3 play the national flag during worship, forcing
4 churches to replace images of Jesus Christ or the
5 Virgin Mary with pictures of General Secretary Xi
6 Jinping, and banning children and students from at-
7 tending religious services.

8 (9) It has been reported that the PRC is rewrit-
9 ing and will issue a version of the Bible with the
10 “correct understanding” of the text according to the
11 Chinese Communist Party. Authorities continued to
12 restrict the printing and distribution of the Bible,
13 Quran, and other religious literature, and penalized
14 publishing and copying businesses that handled reli-
15 gious materials.

16 (10) According to the Department of State’s
17 IRF reports, the PRC Government has imprisoned
18 thousands of individuals of all faiths for practicing
19 their religious beliefs and often labels them as
20 “cults”.

21 (11) The Political Prisoner Database main-
22 tained by the human rights NGO Dui Hua Founda-
23 tion counted 3,492 individuals imprisoned for “orga-
24 nizing or using a ‘cult’ to undermine implementation
25 of the law.” Prisoners include—

1 (A) the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun
2 Choekyi Nyima, who has been held captive
3 along with his parents since May 17, 1995;

4 (B) Pastor Zhang Shaojie, a Three-Self
5 church pastor from Nanle County in central
6 Henan was sentenced in July 2014 to 12 years
7 in prison for “gathering a crowd to disrupt the
8 public order”;

9 (C) Pastor John Cao, a United States per-
10 manent resident from Greensboro, North Caro-
11 lina, who was sentenced for 7 years in prison in
12 March 2018 under contrived charges of orga-
13 nizing illegal border crossings; and

14 (D) Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain
15 Covenant Church who was arrested and sen-
16 tenced to 9 years in prison for “inciting to sub-
17 vert state power” and “illegal business oper-
18 ations”.

19 (12) Authorities continue to detain Falun Gong
20 practitioners and subject them to harsh and inhu-
21 mane treatment.

22 (13) Since 1999, the Department of State has
23 designated the PRC as a country of particular con-
24 cern under the International Religious Freedom Act
25 of 1998.

1 (14) The National Security Strategy of the
2 United States, issued in 2017, 2015, 2006, 2002,
3 1999, 1998, and 1997, committed the United States
4 to promoting international religious freedom to ad-
5 vance the security, economic, and other national in-
6 terests of the United States.

7 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

8 (a) HOLDING PRC OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR
9 RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ABUSES TARGETING CHINESE
10 CHRISTIANS OR OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES.—It is
11 the policy of the United States to consider senior officials
12 of the Government of the People’s Republic of China
13 (PRC) who are responsible for or have directly carried out,
14 at any time, persecution of Christians or other religious
15 minorities in the PRC to have committed—

16 (1) a gross violation of internationally recog-
17 nized human rights for purposes of imposing sanc-
18 tions with respect to such officials under the Global
19 Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (22
20 U.S.C. 2656 note); and

21 (2) a particularly severe violation of religious
22 freedom for purposes of applying section
23 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality
24 Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to such
25 officials.

1 (b) DEPARTMENT OF STATE PROGRAMMING TO PRO-
2 MOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC
3 OF CHINA.—The Ambassador-at-Large for International
4 Religious Freedom should support efforts to protect and
5 promote international religious freedom in the PRC and
6 for programs to protect Christians and other religious mi-
7 norities in the PRC.

8 (c) DESIGNATION OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF
9 CHINA AS A COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN.—It is
10 the policy of the United States to continue to designate
11 the PRC as a “country of particular concern”, as long
12 as the PRC continues to engage in systematic and egre-
13 gious religious freedom violations, as defined by the Inter-
14 national Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–
15 292).

16 **SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

17 It is the sense of Congress that the United States
18 should promote religious freedom in the PRC by—

19 (1) strengthening religious freedom diplomacy
20 on behalf of Christians and other religious minorities
21 facing restrictions in the PRC;

22 (2) raising cases relating to religious or political
23 prisoners at the highest levels with PRC officials be-
24 cause experience demonstrates that consistently rais-
25 ing prisoner cases can result in improved treatment,

1 reduced sentences, or in some cases, release from
2 custody, detention, or imprisonment;

3 (3) encouraging Members of Congress to
4 “adopt” a prisoner of conscience in the PRC
5 through the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commis-
6 sion’s “Defending Freedom Project”, raise the case
7 with PRC officials, and work publicly for their re-
8 lease;

9 (4) calling on the PRC Government to uncondi-
10 tionally release religious and political prisoners or, at
11 the very least, ensure that detainees are treated hu-
12 manely with access to family, the lawyer of their
13 choice, independent medical care, and the ability to
14 practice their faith while in detention;

15 (5) encouraging the global faith community to
16 speak in solidarity with the persecuted religious
17 groups in the PRC; and

18 (6) hosting, once every two years, the Ministe-
19 rial to Advance Religious Freedom organized by the
20 Department of State in order to bring together lead-
21 ers from around the world to discuss the challenges
22 facing religious freedom, identify means to address
23 religious persecution and discrimination worldwide,
24 and promote great respect for and preservation of
25 religious liberty.

1 **SEC. 5. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING ACTIONS AT**
2 **UNITED NATIONS.**

3 It is the sense of Congress that the United Nations
4 Human Rights Council should issue a formal condemna-
5 tion of the People's Republic of China for the ongoing
6 genocide against Uyghurs and other religious and ethnic
7 minority groups, as well as for its persecution of Chris-
8 tians, Falun Gong, and other religious groups.

Passed the House of Representatives September 29,
2022.

Attest: CHERYL L. JOHNSON,
Clerk.