

July 16, 2007: Felice D. Gaer, Nina Shea Reappointed to USCIRF

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON-Felice D. Gaer, director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights of the American Jewish Committee, and Nina Shea, a senior scholar at the Hudson Institute, where she directs the Center for Religious Freedom, have been reappointed to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. "Felice Gaer's expertise on human rights abuses and her watchful eye on women's rights and religious intolerance have strengthened the Commission's work globally," said Commission Chair Michael Cromartie. "Nina Shea has steadfastly held the Commission to its commitment to the fundamental concerns of our founding legislation, the International Religious Freedom Act, and served as a voice for repressed believers the world over." Gaer, who has served on the Commission since 2001, including two terms as chair, was reappointed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). She heads the Jacob Blaustein Institute, which conducts research and advocacy to strengthen international human rights protections and institutions. Gaer is an independent expert member of the Committee Against Torture, a United Nations treaty-monitoring body that reviews government compliance with the Convention Against Torture. The Encyclopedia Judaica credits Gaer with "the key role in ensuring passage by consensus of the UN General Assembly's first condemnation of anti-Semitism" in 1998, and being "the architect of many initiatives linking women's rights to human rights." In 2002 and 2003 she was cited in The Forward's annual "Forward Fifty" list of Jewish leaders. Gaer is author of more than 40 articles about human rights, the UN, and US. Shea, a former USCIRF Vice Chair, has served on the Commission since its formation in 1999. She was reappointed by House Minority Leader John Boehner. For the decade prior to joining Hudson last January, Shea was associated with Freedom House, where she directed the Center for Religious Freedom, an office she helped found in 1986 as the Puebla Institute. She authored and edited two widely acclaimed reports, Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance and Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques. Her 1997 book on anti-Christian persecution, In the Lion's Den, remains a standard in the field. Shea is a graduate of Smith College and American University's Washington College of Law. The Commission was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) to monitor violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in IRFA and set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress. It is the first government commission in the world with the sole mission of reviewing and making policy recommendations on the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom globally. Michael Cromartie, Chair • Preeta D. Bansal, Vice Chair • Richard D. Land, Vice Chair • Don Argue • Imam Talal Y. Eid • Felice D. Gaer • Leonard A. Leo • Elizabeth H. Prodromou • Nina Shea • Ambassador John V. Hanford III, Ex-Officio