

Message from the Chair

Laonard A. Leo

Chair

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom continues to be an important advocate for ensuring that freedom of religion and belief are an integral part of the United States's foreign policy and national security agendas. It achieves this in a number of ways, including by providing unique data and candid insights into the dimensions and impact of religious repression and intolerance in countries worldwide.

The Commissioners on this bipartisan federal body assess, propose, and press for U.S. foreign policy action to advance freedom of thought, conscience, and religion and other freedoms needed to protect people at risk of abuses, such as killing, detention, or torture. In carrying out this work, Commissioners begin by examining conditions in countries, then review how the U.S. government is responding, and as warranted, formulate options for further action. Commission recommendations and reports have prodded a wide array of new bills in Congress, policy measures by the Executive Branch, and coordinated and targeted action by the civil society world.

Through its work, the Commission seeks to advance the visibility of and serious thinking about how the United States can best address the challenges of religious extremism, intolerance, and repression throughout the world. In short, we are committed to ensuring that the "First Freedom," as guaranteed by international human rights law, extends to all corners of the globe.