

Pakistan hearing - press release

EVENT ADVISORY - Public Hearing

PAKISTAN: The Threat of Religious Extremism to Religious Freedom and Security

Tuesday March 17, 2009, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2358-C

WASHINGTON, DC - On Tuesday, March 17, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), a U.S. government advisory body, will hold a public hearing on Pakistan. The hearing will focus on the threat that religious extremism poses to religious freedom and related human rights for all Pakistanis, particularly women and members of religious minorities.

USCIRF believes that the promotion of religious freedom must be a central concern for the Obama Administration as it redefines its diplomatic, development, and military strategy towards Pakistan.

Witnesses will discuss the following issues:

- Limitations on religious freedom and violence against women and religious minorities, including Shi'a Muslims, Ahmadis, Christians, and Hindus;
- Religious intolerance and extremism in madrassas, and strategies for promoting tolerance and respect for human rights in Pakistani classrooms;
- The extremist threat to democratic institutions and the rule of law, and the relationship of Pakistan's government and intelligence agencies with Taliban-associated religious extremists.

Witnesses will provide specific recommendations to the Obama Administration regarding ways in which U.S. policy towards Pakistan can promote human rights, religious freedom, democratic institutions, the rule of law, and security for all Pakistanis. Confirmed witnesses include:

- Steve Coll, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist; President of The New America Foundation
- Ali Dayan Hasan, Senior South Asia Researcher, Human Rights Watch
- Azhar Hussain, Vice President for Preventive Diplomacy, International Center for Religion & Diplomacy
- Ayesha Jalal, Professor of History at Tufts University; MacArthur Fellow
- William Milam, Former U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Woodrow Wilson Center Senior Policy Scholar

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