

## December 21, 2006: USCIRF Chair Felice D. Gaer to Testify on State Department Annual Report on International Religious Freedom

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Contact:

Angela Stephens, Assistant Communications Director,

(202) 523-3240, ext. 114

WASHINGTON-Felice D. Gaer, chair of the independent, federal, bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), will testify Thursday, December 21, at 11:00 a.m. in the Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2172, at a hearing of the House Committee on International Relations entitled "Examination of a Fundamental Human Right: The 2006 International Religious Freedom Report." The purpose of the hearing is to review the Department of State's 2006 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom. Commissioner Gaer will present the Commission's response to the Department of State's annual report, including the designation of Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) for severe violations of religious freedom. This year the Secretary of State added Uzbekistan to the list, which the Commission welcomed and has recommended since 2005. The Secretary also removed Vietnam from the list, which was contrary to the Commission's recommendation. The Commission had also recommended that Pakistan and Turkmenistan be added to the CPC list, and regrets that the Secretary did not designate them CPCs. The Commission welcomed the continued designation of Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Sudan as CPCs. Commissioner Gaer will also speak about the Commission's concerns regarding Russia, where a Commission delegation traveled in July, and Bangladesh, where religious extremism appears to be gaining ground. In addition, she will comment on the absence of protections for religious minorities in Iraq and the subsequent refugee crisis. The full text of Commissioner Gaer's testimony will be available immediately following the hearing on the Commission's web site at [www.uscirf.gov](http://www.uscirf.gov).

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