

## November 18, 2004: China: USCIRF Chair Bansal testifies on Capitol Hill

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WASHINGTON - Preeta D. Bansal, Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), testified today on Capitol Hill at a hearing held by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC). The hearing, "Religious Freedom in China," examined the current situation with respect to Chinese government repression of religion and belief. This hearing was particularly timely, as U.S. officials are in Beijing discussing a resumption of our human rights dialogue and President Bush will meet with Chinese President Hu Jintao at the APEC Leaders' Summit this weekend. The full text of Commissioner Bansal's testimony may be found on USCIRF's Web site [www.uscifr.gov](http://www.uscifr.gov) in either PDF or HTML format. "Advancing the freedom of religion and belief cannot be considered a marginal or 'soft' issue, but is foundational to a whole range of U.S. interests. Respect for the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief is a critical indicator of stable trading partners, stable allies, and stable regions," said USCIRF Chair Preeta D. Bansal. "The government of China does not treat religion as a side issue, but views religious adherents, religious communities, and religious leaders through the lens of security. The United States should not ignore this fact and should fashion policies and actions that integrate the right of thought, conscience, religion, and belief with security and economic interests." As part of its testimony, the Commission issued specific recommendations for U.S. policy. Commission recommendations include: Strengthen bilateral human rights dialogues with China through Congressional oversight. Advance a multilateral resolution at the UN Commission on Human Rights and work for its passage at appropriate and high official levels. Organize regular meetings of involved nations to coordinate technical cooperation and capacity building programs in China. Fund new legal reform and rule-of-law programs to advance religious freedom and related human rights. As required by International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), review all U.S. foreign aid funding and public diplomacy programs for China to include the promotion and protection of religious freedom. Establish an official presence in Xinjiang and Tibet. Provide incentives for U.S. businesses to promote human rights in China. The Commission twice had to cancel planned visits to China in 2003 due to unacceptable limits imposed on the Commission's itinerary by the Chinese government. The Commission visited Hong Kong in 2004, but continues to seek a visit to Mainland China. Commissioner Bansal's testimony is available on our home page under Congressional Testimony.

Preeta D. Bansal, Chair

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