

May 31, 2005: USCIRF: Congressional leaders reappoint Gaer, Ramirez, and Shea

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Anne Johnson, Director of Communications, (202) 523-3240, ext. 27 WASHINGTON - Congressional leaders have reappointed three Commissioners to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). The Commissioners are Felice D. Gaer, Bishop Ricardo Ramirez, and Nina Shea. The Commission consists of nine voting Commissioners and the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, who is a non-voting, ex officio member. Three Commissioners are selected by the President, two by the leaders of the President's party in Congress, and four by the congressional leaders of the political party that is not in the White House. Commissioners serve for two-year terms and are eligible for reappointment. USCIRF Chair Preeta D. Bansal said, "Commissioners Gaer, Ramirez, and Shea have been extremely dedicated to the substantive work of the Commission, and each have contributed in important ways. The Commission will continue to benefit enormously from their expertise, judgment, and perspectives." House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi reappointed Felice D. Gaer, who is one of the Commission's current Vice Chairs. She is the Director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights of the American Jewish Committee. Ms. Gaer is also a member of the Committee Against Torture, a 10-person United Nations expert body that reviews reports by governments on their compliance with the Convention Against Torture, a treaty ratified by over 130 countries. Nominated by the United States and elected in 1999, she is the first American to serve on the Committee. Ms. Gaer was appointed as a public member of nine U.S. delegations to UN human rights negotiations between 1993 and 1999, including the UN Commission on Human Rights, the World Conference on Women, and the World Conference on Human Rights. She is the Vice President of the International League for Human Rights, a member of the steering committee of Human Rights Watch/Eurasia, and a member of the Board of the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Valkill. Ms. Gaer is the author of more than 25 articles on international human right topics. She served as USCIRF Chair from June 2002 to June 2003, and on the Commission's Executive Committee from September 2001 to June 2002. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid reappointed The Most Reverend Ricardo Ramirez, who is currently Bishop of Las Cruces, New Mexico. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1966. Bishop Ramirez was named Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio in 1981, and in 1982 he became the first Bishop of the Diocese of Las Cruces. Bishop Ramirez currently serves as a Member of the New Mexico Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; Member of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) International Policy Committee; the Catholic Church Extension Society Board; USCCB Committee on the Liturgy; Member of the Committee on the Catholic Common Ground Initiative; and Consultant of the USCCB Committee on Hispanic Affairs. He has also served as a member of the U.S. State Department Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad. He was elected by the U.S. bishops to the Vatican Synod for America in 1997. Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert reappointed Nina Shea, also a current Vice Chair. Ms. Shea served as Vice Chair in 2003 as well. She is the Director of the Center for Religious Freedom of Freedom House in Washington, D.C. She has been an international human rights lawyer for 25 years and has for 19 years focused specifically on the issue of religious persecution. Ms. Shea helped form and lead a nationwide coalition of religious groups and churches that played an instrumental role in ending a genocidal conflict over religious freedom in southern Sudan, where some 2 million Christian and traditional African believers were killed, with the signing of a peace accord in early 2005. At the Center, she directed a project to collect and analyze Saudi government propaganda fostering religious hatred in the United States. Ms. Shea has organized and sponsored numerous fact-finding missions to Sudan, China, Egypt, and elsewhere and has testified regularly before Congress about the governments of these countries. She is a co-author of a newly-released book on governance by extreme sharia, *Radical Islam's Rules*, and the author of *In the Lion's Den*, a book on anti-Christian persecution around the world.

Preeta D. Bansal, Chair

- Felice D. Gaer, Vice Chair Nina Shea, Vice Chair Archbishop Charles J. Chaput Michael Cromartie Khaled Abou El Fadl Elizabeth H. Prodromou Bishop Ricardo Ramirez Michael K. Young Ambassador John V. Hanford III, Ex-Officio Joseph R. Crapa, Executive Director