

## October 16, 2007: USCIRF News Conference on Saudi Arabia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Press Conference and Release of USCIRF report on Saudi Arabia

Thursday, Oct. 18, 10-11 a.m.

Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 538

WASHINGTON-A delegation from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom traveled to Saudi Arabia earlier this year. The visit came nearly a year after the United States and Saudi Arabia, through negotiations, confirmed a set of Saudi policies intended to improve the climate for freedom of religion and related human rights:

- Halting the dissemination of intolerant literature and extremist ideology;
- Reviewing and revising textbooks;
- Protecting the right of private worship and the right to possess personal religious materials;
- Curbing harassment of religious practice by the Commission to Promote Virtue and to Prevent Vice (the CPVPV, or religious police); and
- Empowering the newly established Human Rights Commission.

The Commission delegation examined Saudi implementation of these policies. The delegation also looked at religious freedom restrictions and discrimination affecting indigenous Muslim religious minorities such as the Shi'a, non-conforming Sunnis, Ismailis, and expatriate workers; religiously justified limitations on the rights of women; and the reform of school textbooks and curricula to remove language encouraging intolerance, hatred, or violence on the basis of religious differences. That issue affects schools from Indonesia to our own backyard, in Northern Virginia.

The Commission will release its report on the mission to Saudi Arabia at a press conference on Thursday, Oct. 18, at 10-11:00 a.m.

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