

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON -- U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Vice Chair Felice D. Gaer testified today at the Congressional-Executive Commission on China's hearing on "Will Religion Flourish under China's New Leadership." "As China continues its political and economic transformation, the United States must consistently remind the Chinese government that the protection of human rights, including religious freedom, is critical to a strong and vibrant society and economy. The rights of the Chinese people must be protected, and the United States should be prepared to assist in this regard," said USCIRF Vice Chair Gaer.

To that end, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

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First, the Secretary of State has designated China as a "country of particular concern" (CPC) under IRFA for its egregious violations of religious freedom. The State Department should use the full range of policy tools available under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) to take additional actions with respect to China.

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Second, the State Department should provide to the Congress its evaluation of the impact that current U.S. rule of law and democracy programs have on the promotion of religious freedom and other human rights in China. A recent State Department report mentions multi-million dollar programs but does not assess their impact.

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Third, the U.S. government should enhance its public diplomacy efforts, focusing serious

attention on the plight of the Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists. This includes the expansion of broadcasts by Radio Free Asia and the Voice of America.

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Fourth, the United States must be consistent in our message that religious freedom will remain a priority in U.S. foreign policy and in our assessment of progress in China's human rights practices. The United States should propose and promote a resolution to censure China at the UN and its Commission on Human Rights. The U.S. stands virtually alone in striving to focus world attention on China's specific violations of human rights.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

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