

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 12, 2004

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WASHINGTON - Members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) met recently in New York with Ms. Asma Jahangir, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Commissioners discussed with the UN Special Rapporteur countries and thematic issues of mutual concern. Ms. Jahangir was appointed Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in July 2004 and replaced Abdelfattah Amor.

Commissioners and policy staff had a productive exchange with Ms. Jahangir about countries USCIRF has designated as CPC and Watch List countries based on their religious freedom records. Commissioners also discussed with the Special Rapporteur mutual opportunities to further freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief throughout the world. They discussed the need to protect such freedoms within individual rights frameworks and national constitutions, and to protect the rights of belief and conscience for all individuals to dissent within their respective traditions.

USCIRF Chair Preeta D. Bansal said, "We look forward to sharing information and insights with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief in order to help protect individuals from violations of their internationally recognized human rights, and to

promote compliance with the international norms in our respective mandates."

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.

- Preeta D. Bansal
- Felice D. Gaer