

By Patrick Goodenough

<http://cnsnews.com/news/article/islamist-leader-blames-cia-murder-pakist>

The meeting was set up by the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)**, an independent statutory body, which in 2009 awarded Bhatti its first religious freedom medallion.

USCIRF chairman Leonard Leo described Bhatti Wednesday as “a true hero for human rights and religious freedom for all.”

He urged the U.S. and other governments to bring pressure on the Pakistan government to amend the blasphemy laws, which he said “embolden extremists.”

“We believed he was Pakistan’s brightest light of hope for the advancement of freedom of religion and human rights more broadly,” Leo said of Bhatti. “Who will now take up his work? Do the highest levels of Pakistan’s government have the resolve, courage, and leadership to do so? To date, they haven’t demonstrated those qualities.”

The **USCIRF** has been calling since 2002 for the government to name Pakistan as a “country of particular concern,” a designation that allows the U.S. to apply measures including sanctions against governments that are responsible for, or tolerate, violations of religious freedom.