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Americans cherish religious freedom and deplore the persecution of people of faith wherever it happens. That's the important message of the recently released third annual report of the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom**

. The report, available at www.uscirf.gov, describes many instances of religious oppression around the world. The commission makes policy recommendations to the federal government, as it has in its first three years of operation.

The commission continues to urge the administration to denounce violations of the right to worship. The report also suggests the government work with other countries to guarantee religious freedoms.

Commission Chairman Michael K. Young accurately describes the sad reality of religious persecution around the world: "Millions of people suffer unspeakable horror every day simply because they choose to worship their God."

The new report highlights such persecution in China, Sudan, Pakistan, North Korea, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Vietnam and elsewhere. Indeed, the level of religious persecution and violence around the world is simply breathtaking. It ranges from the killing of Muslims and Hindus in India to violence against Jehovah's Witnesses in the former Soviet republic of Georgia.

Nor are Americans always free from religious prejudice in their own country, as the many acts of hostility toward Muslims after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks have demonstrated. But this commission's task is to review religious persecution abroad.

The commission is rare among government agencies of any country in that it tries to promote religious freedom around the world. In keeping that focus, it speaks for a value Americans hold dear.