

APPENDIX 2

RELIGIOUS PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Through USCIRF's Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project, Commissioners advocate in support of selected prisoners of conscience. With increased education, outreach, and advocacy, USCIRF hopes to raise awareness of these and other individuals being imprisoned for their religion or beliefs, reduce their number, and highlight the country conditions that led to their imprisonment.

PASTOR ANDREW BRUNSON



COUNTRY

Turkey

KEY FACT

American pastor living in Turkey for 20+ years

DETAINED SINCE

October 7, 2016

CHARGES

“support of a terrorist organization” and “political or military espionage”

POSSIBLE SENTENCE

Life in prison

USCIRF ADVOCATES

Vice Chairwoman Kristina Arriaga
Vice Chairwoman Sandra Jolley

BIOGRAPHY

Andrew Brunson, 50, is an American citizen who has lived in Turkey for 23 years. He is a pastor for the Izmir Diriliş (Resurrection) Church, a small evangelical Presbyterian congregation in the city of Izmir.

Pastor Brunson filed an application to renew his residence visa in April 2016. On October 7, 2016, the local police department summoned him for what he assumed to be a routine meeting to discuss his visa renewal. However, he was taken into custody upon his arrival at the station and told he would be deported within 15 days.

A lawyer who asked to visit Pastor Brunson was denied access. When the lawyer returned with an affidavit, officials told him that he signed a statement declaring that he did not want a lawyer; the document he signed waived his right to legal representation. Initially, Turkey also refused to allow a U.S. consulate representative to meet with him, a violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. During this period, members of the pastor’s church attempted to bring food, water, and clothing to him, but were denied access until October 13. Pastor Brunson was not allowed contact with other prisoners and was held incommunicado in the Harmandali Detention Center.

A court document released at a December 9, 2016, hearing indicated that Pastor Brunson had been charged with “membership in an armed terrorist organization.” The judge reportedly mentioned allegations that Pastor Brunson is linked to the Gülen movement, which the Turkish government accuses of planning the failed July 2016 coup.

Pastor Brunson initially was held in a cell with 21 other inmates that was built to hold only eight prisoners. He was transferred in August 2017 to Kiriklar Prison where he was in a cell with two other men who have been

accused of being members of the Gülen movement. He spends 24 hours a day in his cell, leaving for one-hour weekly visits. Sometimes he is allowed family visits and the U.S. Embassy sees him regularly.

Anadolu, a state-run news agency, reported on August 24, 2017, that the prosecutor submitted new evidence corroborating two charges against Pastor Brunson: support of a terrorist organization and political or military espionage. On March 5, a Turkish court accepted the prosecutor’s indictment.

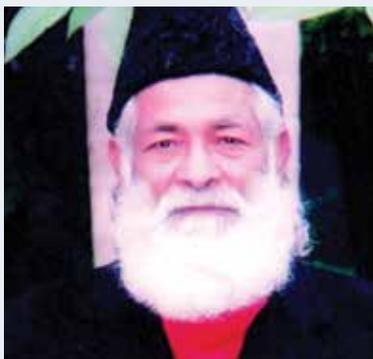
As of April 10, 2018, Pastor Brunson’s first court hearing is scheduled for April 16, after 18 months in government detention. Vice Chairwomen and USCIRF advocates, Kristina Arriaga and Sandra Jolley, visited Pastor Brunson on October 5, 2017, and confirmed the desperate conditions in which the Turkish authorities continue to hold Pastor Brunson.

The case against Pastor Brunson seems to be based on secret evidence and a secret witness. He has been incarcerated since October 2016 without due process and with inadequate physical and psychological support.



For more information on Turkey, see p. 196. For more information on Vice Chairwoman Kristina Arriaga, see p. 207.; for more information on Vice Chairwoman Sandra Jolley, see p. 206.

ABDUL SHAKOOR



COUNTRY

Pakistan

KEY FACT

80-year-old Ahmadi manager of a bookshop and optician store

DETAINED SINCE

December 2, 2015

CHARGES

Propagating the Ahmadiyya faith and stirring up “religious hatred” and “sectarianism”

SENTENCE

Three years in prison under the penal code for blasphemy and five years under the Anti-Terrorism Act on January 2, 2016

USCIRF ADVOCATES

Chairman Daniel Mark

BIOGRAPHY

Abdul Shakoor was born February 2, 1937, in Qadian, India. He is married and the father of five daughters and two sons.

Before his arrest, Mr. Shakoor was the manager of an optician’s store and bookshop in the main bazaar of Rabwah (also known as Chenab Nagar), Punjab Province, Pakistan. The population of the Ahmadiyya community in Rabwah is about 70,000—about 95 percent of the city’s total population. Many view the city as the de facto headquarters of Pakistan’s Ahmadiyya community.

On December 2, 2015, officials from the Counter Terrorism Department of the Punjab Police and Pakistan’s Elite Force raided the bookshop Mr. Shakoor managed. He was arrested along with the shop’s assistant, Mazhar Abbas—a Shia Muslim—and accused of selling an Ahmadiyya commentary on the Qur’an, among other publications. The officials confiscated Ahmadiyya publications during that raid and a later raid that took place on December 9. After their arrest, the two men were held in unknown locations and were not permitted to contact their families.

Mr. Shakoor’s trial was held in the Anti-Terrorism Court in Faisalabad, Punjab Province, with the officers who raided the bookstore as the only witnesses. The prosecution entered into evidence a letter that was ostensibly recovered during the December 9 raid from the Ahmadiyya Director of Public Affairs to Mr. Shakoor notifying him that the Punjab Province government had banned some Ahmadiyya literature and that he should neither display nor sell the banned literature. Ahmadiyya leaders assert that the prosecution fabricated the letter to support their story, noting that

none of the literature cited in the letter was banned until January 20, 2016, after the trial’s conclusion. Mr. Shakoor contended during the trial and maintains the position that he did not distribute any of the literature listed, although he admits to being in possession of some of them. However, possession of Ahmadiyya literature is not a crime in Pakistan.

On January 2, 2016, Mr. Shakoor was given a five-year prison sentence for violating article 11-W of the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) which involves “printing, publishing, or disseminating any material to incite hatred.” He also was given a three-year sentence for violating article 298-C of the Pakistani Penal Code, for a total of eight years. (Section 298 of Pakistan’s penal code criminalizes acts and speech that insult a religion or religious beliefs or defile the Qur’an, the Prophet Muhammad, a place of worship, or religious symbols.) Mazhar Abbas was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment for violating article 11-W of the ATA. Mr. Shakoor filed a writ petition for bail and appeal against the verdict with the Lahore High Court. On multiple occasions the Lahore High Court listed Mr. Shakoor’s appeal on the daily docket, but each time the case was postponed. The last postponed hearing date was believed to be June 22, 2017.

Mr. Shakoor remains in prison and is suffering from a hernia and back pain.



For more information on Pakistan, see p. 64. For more information on Chairman Daniel Mark, see p. 205.

PATRIARCH ABUNE ANTONIOS



COUNTRY

Eritrea

KEY FACT

Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church

DETAINED SINCE

May 27, 2007

USCIRF ADVOCATE

Commissioner Thomas Reese

BIOGRAPHY

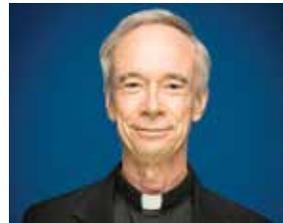
Patriarch Abune Antonios was born on July 12, 1927, in Himberti, a town north of the Eritrean capital, Asmara. He was ordained as the third Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Tawahedo Church in 2004.

At age five, Patriarch Antonios was sent by his father to be educated at the Debre Tsege Abuna Andrewes monastery. Serving as a monk, he was ordained a priest in 1942 and an abbot in 1955. In 1994, Antonios was one of five abbots sent to Egypt to establish a Holy Synod for what would become the autocephalous Eritrean Orthodox Church, one of the largest religious denominations in Eritrea. On June 19, 1994, Antonios was ordained as Bishop Antonios of Hamasien-Asmara in Saint Mark's Cathedral in Cairo by His Holiness Shenouda III, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and returned to Eritrea.

Very early in his reign as Patriarch, Abune Antonios confronted state interference within his church. He resisted government demands that he excommunicate 3,000 members and protested the arrest of priests. On January 20, 2006, authorities notified Patriarch Antonios he would be removed as Patriarch and placed him under house arrest.

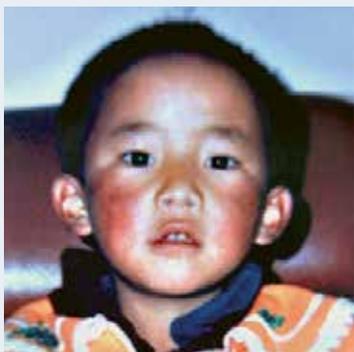
One year later, on January 20, 2007, authorities confiscated Patriarch Antonios' personal pontifical insignia.

On May 27, 2007, the Eritrean government replaced Patriarch Antonios with Bishop Dioscoros of Mendefera, forcefully removed the Patriarch from his home, and detained him at an undisclosed location. Patriarch Antonios continues to be held incommunicado and is reportedly being denied medical care despite suffering from severe diabetes. On July 16, 2017, authorities allowed Antonios to make a public appearance for the first time in over a decade. While under heavy security, Antonios attended Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Asmara, but was prevented from giving a sermon or subsequently speaking with congregants. Three days later, on July 19, the government moved Antonios to a new location, reportedly to provide better living conditions.



For more information on Eritrea, see p. 38. For more information on Commissioner Thomas Reese, see p. 209.

GEDHUN CHOEKYI NYIMA – THE PANCHEN LAMA



COUNTRY

China

KEY FACT

11th Panchen Lama

DISAPPEARED SINCE

May 17, 1995

USCIRF ADVOCATE

Commissioner Tenzin Dorjee

BIOGRAPHY

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was born on April 25, 1989, in Lhari County, Tibet. After the death of the 10th Panchen Lama, His Holiness the Dalai Lama chose Gedhun on May 15, 1995, to be the 11th Panchen Lama, which is the second-highest position in Tibetan Buddhism.

Three days after his selection as Panchen Lama, Chinese government authorities kidnapped then six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family. On November 11, 1995, Chinese authorities announced their own pick to serve as the Panchen Lama: Gyancaïn Norbu.

Most Tibetans reject this choice, as well as the government's interference in their religious practices. The Chinese government maintains strict control over Tibetan Buddhists, suppressing their cultural and religious practices. Government-led raids on monasteries continue, and Chinese party officials in Tibet infiltrate monasteries with Communist Party propaganda and officials.

In the more than 20 years since Gedhun's abduction, Chinese authorities have provided little information about his whereabouts, alleging that they need to protect him from being "kidnapped by

separatists." In May 2007, Asma Jahangir, then United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, suggested that the Chinese government allow an independent expert to visit and confirm Gedhun's well being. On July 17, 2007, the Chinese authorities said that he is a "perfectly ordinary Tibetan boy" attending school and leading a normal life, and that he "does not wish to be disturbed." Authorities say that the state employs both of his parents and that his brothers and sisters are either working or at university.



For more information on China, see p. 30. For more information on Commissioner Tenzin Dorjee, see p. 208.

GULMIRA IMIN



COUNTRY

China

KEY FACT

Website administrator and Uighur Muslim

DETAINED SINCE

July 14, 2009

CHARGES

Splittism, leaking state secrets, and organizing an illegal demonstration

SENTENCE

Life imprisonment

USCIRF ADVOCATE

Vice Chairwoman Sandra Jolley

BIOGRAPHY

Gulmira Imin is a Uighur Muslim and former web administrator for the Uighur-language website Salkin. Ms. Imin was also a government employee in Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in northwest China. Xinjiang is home to the majority of the country's Uighur Muslim population.

Ms. Imin was born in Aksu in Xinjiang and graduated in 2000 from the Chinese-Uighur translation department of Xinjiang University. In spring 2009, Ms. Imin became the moderator of Salkin, a Uighur-language culture and news website to which she had previously contributed poetry and short stories. Many of her online writings criticized government policies.

On July 5, 2009, Ms. Imin participated in a major demonstration protesting the deaths of Uighur migrant workers in Guangdong Province. Initially peaceful, the protests turned violent, with about 200 people, including ethnic Han Chinese, killed during the riots and confrontations with police. On July 14, 2009, Ms. Imin was arrested in Aksu after authorities alleged she had organized the protests, posted an announcement for them on Salkin, and leaked state secrets by phone to her husband in Norway. Her family was not notified of the arrest and was unaware of her location until the October

2009 airing of a China Central Television documentary that depicted Imin in prison garb.

On April 1, 2010, the Urumqi Intermediate People's Court sentenced Ms. Imin to life in prison under articles 103, 111, and 296 of China's Criminal Law on charges of "splittism, leaking state secrets, and organizing an illegal demonstration." She alleges she was tortured and forced to sign documents while in detention. She reportedly was not allowed to meet with her lawyer until the trial. Her appeal subsequently was rejected. Ms. Imin is currently detained in the Xinjiang Women's Prison (Xinjiang No. 2 Prison) located in Urumqi, where she is allowed one family visit every three months.



For more information on China, see p. 30. For more information on Vice Chairwoman Sandra Jolley, see p. 206.

RAIF BADAWI



COUNTRY

Saudi Arabia

KEY FACT

Blogger

DETAINED SINCE

June 27, 2012

CHARGES

Insulting Islam and breaking the anti-cybercrime law

SENTENCE

10-year imprisonment, 1,000 lashes, a fine of one million riyals, and 10-year travel and media ban following release

USCIRF ADVOCATE

Commissioner Clifford D. May

BIOGRAPHY

Raif Badawi is a blogger and human rights activist who cofounded the website Free Saudi Liberals in 2008. Badawi and his colleagues intended for the website to encourage debate on religious and political issues in Saudi Arabia despite the country's restricted civic space.

Badawi faced harassment and questioning following the creation of Free Saudi Liberals, beginning with charges of insulting Islam in 2008, continuing through a 2009 travel ban and asset freeze, and culminating in his June 2012 arrest and December 2012 trial on charges of insulting Islam. Evidence for this charge reportedly included posts on Free Saudi Liberals that criticized Saudi religious authorities and raised theological questions. The Saudi courts originally also recommended charging Badawi with apostasy, a crime punishable by death, reportedly due to his liking a Saudi Christian Facebook page and saying that "Muslims, Jews, Christians, and atheists are all equal." The judge dropped this charge after Badawi stated that he was a Muslim and recited the Islamic declaration of faith.

In July 2013, a Saudi court sentenced Badawi to 600 lashes and seven years in prison for insulting Islam and breaking the anti-cybercrime law by founding a liberal website. Following an appeal of the sentence, a criminal court resented him in May 2014 to 10 years in prison, 1,000 lashes, a one million riyal fine, and a

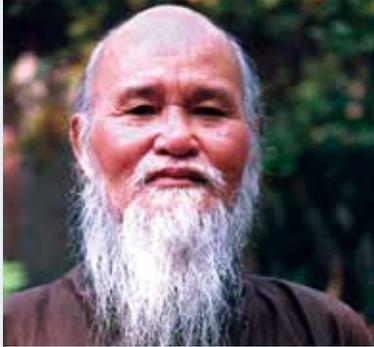
10-year travel and media ban following release. Badawi received the first 50 lashes in January 2015 in front of Al Juffali Mosque in Jeddah. Following an international outcry and a medical doctor's finding that Badawi could not physically endure more lashings, no further lashings have yet been carried out. However, in June 2015 and March 2017, Saudi Arabia's Supreme Court upheld the sentence of 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes.

In December 2015, the European Parliament honored Badawi with the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, which his wife Ensaf Haidar accepted on his behalf. Haidar, who is now based in Quebec, Canada, with their three children, campaigns tirelessly for Badawi's release and serves as president of the Raif Badawi Foundation for Freedom.



For more information on Saudi Arabia, see p. 82. For more information on Commissioner Clifford D. May, see p. 209.

THICH QUANG DO



COUNTRY

Vietnam

KEY FACT

Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam; advocate for religious freedom, democracy, and human rights for Vietnam

DETAINED SINCE

October 8, 2003

CHARGES

Never formally charged for his most recent detention; accused of “possessing state secrets”

SENTENCE

House arrest at Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Ho Chi Minh City

USCIRF ADVOCATE

Vice Chairwoman Kristina Arriaga

BIOGRAPHY

Most Venerable Thich Quang Do was born on November 27, 1928, in Thai Binh Province. Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) since 2008, Thich Quang Do has been a lifelong advocate for democracy, religious freedom, and human rights.

Vietnamese authorities have repeatedly targeted, harassed, and detained Thich Quang Do both for practicing his faith and for his tireless advocacy for religious freedom and related human rights. For example, in 2001, he launched a plan called “Appeal for Democracy in Vietnam,” which was supported by more than 300,000 Vietnamese from different faith backgrounds, as well as international stakeholders. As a result, the government placed him under administrative detention without trial at Thanh Minh Zen Monastery and prevented him from receiving medical treatment despite suffering from diabetes.

During a brief reprieve beginning in June 2003, Thich Quang Do attempted to participate in a UBCV Assembly called by then Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang. But in October 2003, authorities accused him of “possessing

state secrets” and again confined him to Thanh Minh Zen Monastery where he has been under constant surveillance and effective house arrest ever since.

In 2018, Thich Quang Do will turn 90. Despite the Patriarch’s age and declining health, Vietnamese authorities continue to surveil the monastery, enforce his confinement, and consistently deny him access to medical care.

USCIRF most recently met with Thich Quang Do at Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in August 2015.



For more information on Vietnam, see p. 112. For more information on Vice Chairwoman Kristina Arriaga, see p. 207.