

**SENATE**  
**STATE OF MINNESOTA**  
**EIGHTY-NINTH SESSION**

**S.F. No. 15**

(SENATE AUTHORS: BROWN and Kiffmeyer)

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A resolution

expressing concern for the worldwide growth in the persecution of Christians.

WHEREAS, the United States House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee recently held a hearing highlighting what author John Allen has referred to as a "global war" on Christians; and

WHEREAS, studies indicate that Christians are killed every day for their faith, including a study by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary estimating that at least 100,000 Christians were killed in the 21st century and another estimate by Thomas Schirrmacher of the World Evangelical Alliance estimating that 20 Christians per day or 7,300 per year are killed for their faith; and

WHEREAS, while it is difficult to estimate the actual number of Christians killed for their faith, social harassment of Christians by country is more clearly calculated and, according to research by the Pew Research Center, reached a six-year high in 2012; and

WHEREAS, despite Christians accounting for approximately one-third of the world's population, the Pew Research Center reports that they face persecution in 151 countries - more countries than any other group; and

WHEREAS, according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Christians are the only group at risk in each of the 16 worst countries for religious persecution; and

2.1 WHEREAS, government restrictions and social hostility toward Christians is highest in  
2.2 countries where they are not in the majority, causing Christians to be treated as second-class  
2.3 citizens and face indiscriminate violence with impunity; and

2.4 WHEREAS, government restrictions affecting Christian communities worldwide include  
2.5 government control over which religions are permitted through regulations on registration of  
2.6 religious communities, recognition on national identity cards, public expression of beliefs through  
2.7 blasphemy and apostasy or anti-conversion and proselytism laws, and the harassment of, or  
2.8 discrimination toward, groups whose beliefs the government will not tolerate; and

2.9 WHEREAS, historic Christian communities throughout the Middle East - Syriac, Coptic,  
2.10 Assyrian, Chaldean, and more - have been decimated by recent violence and their populations  
2.11 greatly reduced as they are forced to flee their homeland or face terrorist attacks, kidnappings,  
2.12 forced conversion, destruction of their churches and homes, rape, trafficking, indiscriminate  
2.13 violence, official discrimination, and failure of government protection; and

2.14 WHEREAS, in Saudi Arabia, where religious freedom is nonexistent and leaving Islam  
2.15 is punishable by death, families' members nearly always execute converts to Christianity, and  
2.16 non-Muslim worship is banned; and

2.17 WHEREAS, in Burma, government militias routinely target and attack Christian villages,  
2.18 raping the women to ethnically cleanse the non-Burmese population of Christians, sending men  
2.19 into forced labor, and destroying homes and crops so villagers can't return; and

2.20 WHEREAS, in China, the government continues to regulate religious activity through the  
2.21 government sanctioned and controlled official Three Self Churches, with Christians attending  
2.22 unregistered churches facing constant harassment and fines, imprisonment, and forced labor  
2.23 in re-education camps; and

2.24 WHEREAS, in North Korea, once home to the "Church of the East," an estimated 300,000  
2.25 Christians have disappeared since the mid-20th century, while thousands of Christians are  
2.26 currently imprisoned in labor camps, facing torture and death along with their families to the  
2.27 third generation; and

2.28 WHEREAS, in Egypt, since the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, Christian  
2.29 communities, which account for nine percent of the population and are the largest Christian  
2.30 community in the Middle East, have faced the worst persecution seen in the country's history,  
2.31 with thousands of Christians murdered and hundreds of churches attacked and destroyed amidst  
2.32 lawlessness and political turmoil; and

3.1 WHEREAS, in India, Christians in Odisha State experienced one of the most violent attacks  
3.2 against a religious community of the 21st century in 2008, when Hindu mobs attacked Christians  
3.3 in their villages, forcing 50,000 people out of their homes, killing 120, and destroying thousands  
3.4 of homes, churches, and schools; the subsequent lack of justice has led to further attacks in other  
3.5 states and created a climate of fear and insecurity among Christians throughout the country; and

3.6 WHEREAS, in Russia, the government has used a 2012 law on unauthorized public  
3.7 meetings to permit the destruction of churches, and routinely denies Christians registration; and

3.8 WHEREAS, in Sudan, government forces in the Nuba Mountains have destroyed churches  
3.9 and one Bible college, with attacks on Christians throughout Khartoum intensifying since the  
3.10 secession of South Sudan in mid-2011, whereby many Christians have faced charges of espionage  
3.11 and been stripped of citizenship and forced to flee the country, and have been imprisoned and  
3.12 tortured; and

3.13 WHEREAS, in Pakistan, blasphemy laws foster an atmosphere of violent extremism and  
3.14 vigilante violence against Christians, including the sentencing of Asia Bibi to death for blasphemy,  
3.15 for which she has been imprisoned for five years, and the destruction of entire Christian villages  
3.16 in 2009 and 2013, among numerous other attacks by the Taliban and other social actors; and

3.17 WHEREAS, religious freedom is one of the most fundamental human rights to be secured  
3.18 for all people everywhere, and as such was prioritized by the United States Congress under  
3.19 the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998, which established the office of an  
3.20 Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom; and

3.21 WHEREAS, the Ambassador-at-Large post has remained vacant since October 2013,  
3.22 and the President has not issued any recommendations for Countries of Particular Concern as  
3.23 required by IRFA since August 2011; and

3.24 WHEREAS, religious freedom is recognized under Article 18 of the United Nations  
3.25 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of  
3.26 thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief,  
3.27 and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his  
3.28 religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance"; NOW, THEREFORE,

3.29 BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota that it:

3.30 (1) recognizes the increasing persecution of Christians worldwide;

3.31 (2) calls for the immediate appointment of an Ambassador-at-Large for International  
3.32 Religious Freedom by the President and Secretary of State;

4.1 (3) calls on the Governor to include education about religious freedom in state educational  
4.2 curriculum; and

4.3 (4) urges the President to make the promotion of religious freedom a priority in all foreign  
4.4 policy.

4.5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State of the State of Minnesota is  
4.6 directed to prepare copies of this memorial and transmit them to the President of the United  
4.7 States, the President and the Secretary of the United States Senate, the Speaker and the Clerk  
4.8 of the United States House of Representatives, the Governor, and Minnesota's Senators and  
4.9 Representatives in Congress.