



## **Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing Discrimination and Persecution of Muslims Worldwide**

**Thursday, June 30, 2022  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Virtual via Cisco WebEx**

### **Co-Chair Chris Smith**

Thank you, Co-Chair McGovern for your opening remarks, and for convening today's hearing on the discrimination and persecution against Muslims worldwide, which complements this week's important summit on international religious freedom held this week here, in Washington, D.C.

The advancement of religious freedom internationally should also be a core objective of U.S. foreign policy, which is why I introduced [H.R. 7829](#), *the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Reauthorization Act of 2022*, and I invite other members of Congress to co-sponsor this bipartisan legislation which would allow USCIRF to continue its critical work to promote and protect religious freedom through FY2024.

As I said last year, and I continue to emphasize, however,  
[“Religious freedom is under siege all over the world.”](#)

While Christians are by far and away the most persecuted religious group in the world, we cannot overlook the persecution by two states in particular against predominantly Muslim minorities within their own countries which I believe are tantamount to genocide – namely, what the People’s Republic of China under Xi Jinping is doing to millions of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other Turkic Muslims, and what the government of Burma is doing to the Rohingya people.

In late May, we saw leaked photos, thousands of them, showing the inside of concentration camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where the inmates are victims of forced labor, sexual exploitation, and even the horrific practice of forced organ harvesting. Last month, I [chaired a hearing at the Commission](#), where we heard testimony regarding this barbaric harvesting of human beings in the prime of their life. According to Ethan Guttman the “cull rate” among Uyghurs age 28 – deemed by the Chinese medical establishment as the ideal age for ripe organs – is estimated to be between 2.5 and 5% per year, based on consistent witness testimony from roughly 20 concentration camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

And what motivates this cruelty?

It is hatred directed at ethnicity and religion.

We know that the Communists [hate all religion](#) – Christianity, Falun Gong, Buddhism – but in the case of the Uyghurs and other Turkic Central Asians, the targeted religion is predominantly Islam.

Thus the CCP bulldozes mosques and shrines in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, while leaked documents show that the order to commit genocide comes from Xi Jinping himself – he is quoted as [saying](#) “show no mercy.”

I held a hearing in November 2018 where a Uyghur woman named [Mihrigul Tursun](#) testified how her jailers tortured her by sending electrical currents coursing through her body. She said the pain was so intense that she pleaded that her life be ended.

And why was she tortured like this? Because she was Uyghur, and she was Muslim.

We also see similar cruelty in Burma, where people are targeted because of ethnicity and religion – because one is Rohingya, and one is Muslim.

During this 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, I cosponsored [H. Res. 896](#), which officially condemned the Burmese military for perpetrating systemic, gross violations against the Rohingya, a Sunni Muslim ethnic minority.

The armed attacks in 2016 and 2017 against this group created a humanitarian and human rights crisis that is both saddening and maddening, where over 9,000 Rohingya were killed, and which led to a huge exodus of the population into neighboring countries. More than [890,000 refugees](#) are in Bangladesh, while [142,000 individuals are internally displaced](#).

Long before this, however, the Burmese military, also known as the Tatmadaw, has systematically oppressed the Rohingya.

I am thus grateful for the State Department's [acknowledgment](#) in March of 2022 that members of the Tatmadaw have committed genocide and crimes against humanity against the Rohingya.

I also want to add, however, that we also see persecution of Muslims in Muslim-majority countries. Still today, for example, in Pakistan, Algeria, and Malaysia, Ahmadiyya Muslims and Shia Muslims, face legal, social, and political persecution.

In Pakistan's case, the Constitution specifically defines "[who is or is not a Muslim](#)." In addition, the [Penal Code Ordinance](#) notes that those who "defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet...shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life...", which oftentimes, targets minority Muslims, Christians, and Hindus, but also Ahmadiyya Muslims.

Beyond state actors, extremist groups like ISIS, Boko Haram, and al-Shaabab also continue their reign of terror targeting both Muslims and [non-Muslims](#).

With that – we must redouble our efforts now more than ever to protect international religious freedom. I would like to thank our witnesses, Chair of USCIRF, Nury Turkel, and Ambassadors Rashad Hussain and Beth Van Schaack. I look forward to your testimony, and to future collaboration to ensure that the fundamental right to religious belief – freely chosen – is protected globally.