H. R. 440

AN ACT

To provide for the establishment of the Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Seven Baha’i leaders in Iran have been wrongfully imprisoned since 2008.

(2) In May 2010, suspected terrorists attacked two mosques in Pakistan belonging to the Ahmaddiya minority Muslim sect, killing at least 80 people. Ahmadis consider themselves Muslim, but Pakistani law does not recognize them as such.

(3) Said Musa, an Afghan Christian convert, was arrested in May 2010 on charges of apostasy, a crime which can carry the death sentence, and was released in February 2011 only after sustained international pressure.

(4) On October 31, 2010, gunmen laid siege on Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad, Iraq killing at least 52 police and worshipers, including two priests, making it the worst massacre of Iraqi Christians since 2003.

(5) Iraq’s ancient and once vibrant Christian population that numbered an estimated 1,500,000 out of a total population in Iraq of 30,000,000 in 2003 has been reduced by at least one half, due in significant part to Christians fleeing the violence.

(6) In November 2010, a Pakistani court sentenced Aasia Bibi, a Christian mother of five, to
death under the country’s blasphemy law for insulting the Prophet Muhammad.

(7) On New Year’s Eve 2010, 23 people were killed when a suicide bomber attacked a Coptic Christian church in Alexandria, Egypt.

(8) On March 2, 2011, Pakistani Federal Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti, the only Christian member of the Cabinet, who was outspoken in his opposition to Pakistan’s blasphemy laws was assassinated by extremists.

(9) The Department of State’s 2010 International Religious Freedom Report stated that many religious minority groups in Uzbekistan “faced heavy fines and/or short jail terms for violations of restrictive religion laws”.

(10) The Special Envoy for Anti-Semitism, Hannah Rosenthal, has noted that Holocaust glorification “is especially virulent in the Middle East media”.

(11) A number of countries in the Middle East have recently undergone popular revolutions which in some countries have left security vacuums making religious minorities especially vulnerable to violent attacks, such as—
(A) in March 2011, the Shahedin Church in Helwan province, Egypt, was torched, leading to protests which spurred sectarian clashes in the streets of Cairo;

(B) on March 20, 2011, a group of Salafists in Upper Egypt cut off a Christian man’s ear and burned his home and car; and

(C) news reports from April 2011 indicate that Salafi organizations in Egypt have been implicated in the destruction of Sufi shrines across the country fueling violent conflict.

(12) Many of these ancient faith communities are being forced to flee the lands which they have inhabited for centuries.

(13) The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has recommended that Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan be designated by the Department of State as Countries of Particular Concern in accordance with the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

(14) The situation on the ground in the region continues to develop rapidly and the United States Government needs an individual who can respond in
kind and focus on the critical situation of religious minorities in these countries.

SEC. 2. SPECIAL ENVOY TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE NEAR EAST AND SOUTH CENTRAL ASIA.

(a) APPOINTMENT.—The President shall appoint a Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia (in this Act referred to as the “Special Envoy”) within the Department of State.

(b) QUALIFICATIONS.—The Special Envoy should be a person of recognized distinction in the field of human rights and religious freedom and with expertise in the Near East and South Central Asia regions. The Special Envoy shall have the rank of ambassador and shall hold the office at the pleasure of the President.

(c) PROHIBITION.—The person appointed as Special Envoy may not hold any other position of Federal employment for the period of time during which the person holds the position of Special Envoy.

SEC. 3. DUTIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Special Envoy shall carry out the following duties:

(1) Promote the right of religious freedom of religious minorities in the countries of the Near
East and the countries of South Central Asia, de-
nounce the violation of such right, and recommend
appropriate responses by the United States Govern-
ment when such right is violated.

(2) Monitor and combat acts of religious intol-
erance and incitement targeted against religious mi-
norities in the countries of the Near East and the
countries of South Central Asia.

(3) Work to ensure that the unique needs of re-
ligious minority communities in the countries of the
Near East and the countries of South Central Asia
are addressed, including the economic and security
needs of such communities to the extent that such
needs are directly tied to religious-based discrimina-
tion and persecution.

(4) Work with foreign governments of the coun-
tries of the Near East and the countries of South
Central Asia to address laws that are inherently dis-
criminatory toward religious minority communities
in such countries.

(5) Coordinate and assist in the preparation of
that portion of the report required by sections
116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act
of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151n(d) and 2304(b)) relating
to the nature and extent of religious freedom of reli-
religious minorities in the countries of the Near East
and the countries of South Central Asia.

(6) Coordinate and assist in the preparation of
that portion of the report required by section 102(b)
(22 U.S.C. 6412(b)) relating to the nature and ex-
tent of religious freedom of religious minorities in
the countries of the Near East and the countries of
South Central Asia.

(b) COORDINATION.—In carrying out the duties
under subsection (a), the Special Envoy shall, to the max-
imum extent practicable, coordinate with the Bureau of
Population, Refugees and Migration of the Department of
State, the Ambassador at Large for International Reli-
gious Freedom, the United States Commission on Inter-
national Religious Freedom, and other relevant Federal
agencies and officials.

SEC. 4. DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION.

Subject to the direction of the President and the Sec-
retary of State, the Special Envoy is authorized to rep-
resent the United States in matters and cases relevant to
religious freedom in the countries of the Near East and
the countries of South Central Asia in—

(1) contacts with foreign governments, intergov-
ernmental organizations, and specialized agencies of
the United Nations, the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, and other international organizations of which the United States is a member; and

(2) multilateral conferences and meetings relevant to religious freedom in the countries of the Near East and the countries of South Central Asia.

SEC. 5. PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND CONSULTATION.

(a) PRIORITY COUNTRIES.—In carrying out this Act, the Special Envoy shall give priority to programs, projects, and activities for Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

(b) CONSULTATION.—The Special Envoy shall consult with domestic and international nongovernmental organizations and multilateral organizations and institutions, as the Special Envoy considers appropriate to fulfill the purposes of this Act.

SEC. 6. FUNDING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Of the amounts made available for “Diplomatic and Consular Programs” for fiscal years 2011 through 2015, $1,000,000 is authorized to be appropriated for each such fiscal year for the hiring of staff, for the conduct of investigations, and for necessary travel to carry out the provisions of this Act.

(b) FUNDING OFFSET.—To offset the costs to be incurred by the Department of State for the hiring of staff,
for the conduct of investigations, and for necessary travel
to carry out the provisions of this Act for fiscal years 2011
through 2015, the Secretary of State shall eliminate such
positions within the Department of State, unless otherwise
authorized or required by law, as the Secretary determines
to be necessary to fully offset such costs.

(e) LIMITATION.—No additional funds are authorized
to be appropriated for “Diplomatic and Consular Pro-
grams” to carry out this Act.

SEC. 7. SUNSET.

This Act shall cease to be effective beginning on Octo-
ber 1, 2015.

Passed the House of Representatives July 29, 2011.

Attest:

Clerk.
H. R. 440

AN ACT

To provide for the establishment of the Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia.