

USA lists some countries including Pak, China for violation of religious freedom

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In news

Recently, the USA has designated Pakistan, China as countries of particular concern for violation of religious freedom

What is religious freedom?

Freedom of religion or belief is an expansive right that includes the freedoms of thought, conscience, expression, association, and assembly.

Which are the other countries that have been listed as countries of particular concern by the USA?

Myanmar, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were placed in the list for engaging in or tolerating systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom.

Special Watch List

The USA's State Department placed the Comoros, Cuba, Nicaragua and Russia on a Special Watch List (SWL) for governments that have engaged in or **tolerated severe violations of religious freedom.**

Which countries are out of the Special watch list?

Sudan and Uzbekistan have been removed from the Special Watch List based on significant, concrete progress undertaken by

their respective governments over the past year

Entities of Particular Concern

The USA designated the following countries as Entities of Particular Concern:

It has designated al-Shabaab, al-Qaida, Boko Haram, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Houthis, ISIS, ISIS-Greater Sahara, ISIS-West Africa, Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin and the Taliban in this category

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) praised the State Department's move to put 10 nations in the list of Countries of Particular Concern (CPCs), including Nigeria for the first time, and four countries on the SWL for severe violations, pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA).

US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)

- USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission created by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) that monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad.
- USCIRF uses international standards to monitor religious freedom violations globally, and makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress.
- USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and Congressional leaders of both political parties.
- Their work is supported by a professional, nonpartisan staff. USCIRF is separate from the State Department, although the Department's Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom is a non-voting ex officio Commissioner.

USCIRF issues an Annual Report by May 1st of each year. The report assesses the U.S. government's implementation of

“International Religious Freedom Act; recommends countries that the Secretary of State should designate as “**Countries of Particular Concern**” for engaging in or tolerating “systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom;” documents country conditions in around 30 countries; reports on significant trends; and recommends U.S. policies.