

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Ambassador - Designate Suzan Johnson Cook by  
Senator Richard Lugar (#1)  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
March 29, 2011**

**Question:**

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 established the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to review annually the state of international religious freedom and to make policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress. The Commission's mandate is set to expire September 30, 2011. Does the Administration support the re-authorization of the Commission? Why or why not?

**Answer:**

USCIRF has played and continues to play an important and positive role in advocating for religious freedom throughout the world. The respective roles of the Department of State and USCIRF under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRF Act) are complementary. Each continues to focus on the mutual goal of promoting religious freedom while fulfilling their statutory mandates, which include publishing annual reports. If confirmed I will seek out USCIRF's input and will welcome their recommendations. I will increase collaboration between USCIRF and the Department of States' Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF Office) toward our shared goal of ending religious persecution and advancing freedom of religious belief and practice around the world. With regard to a re-

authorization, I understand that the legislation that has not yet been introduced. Since I am not confirmed, I am not yet in a position to speak on legislative matters.

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When enacted 13 years ago, the IRF Act envisioned clear and distinct roles for the Ambassador at Large as head of the IRF Office, and USCIRF as an independent Congressionally-funded Commission. Passage of the IRF Act brought heightened emphasis to the cause of religious freedom as a central component in U.S. human rights policy and U.S. foreign policy generally. In 1998, as evidenced by the structure of the IRF Act itself, Congress created USCIRF as an

additional voice on religious freedom, and to evaluate progress on U.S. religious freedom policy and make recommendations accordingly.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Ambassador - Designate Suzan Johnson Cook by  
Senator Richard Lugar (#2)  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
March 29, 2011**

**Question:**

In Pakistan, a Christian government official, and the first ever Federal Minister for Minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, was shot and killed after advocating the reformation of local blasphemy laws. This assassination followed on the heels of the assassination of Punjab governor, Salman Taseer in January 2011 who also called for the reformation of these laws. What strategy would you employ to combat such religious intolerance?

**Answer:**

I am very concerned about the attacks on religious minorities in Pakistan, including abuses under the blasphemy laws; the treatment of Christians, Ahmadis, and reform-minded Muslims; and the increase in the number and severity of reported high-profile cases against members of religious minorities.

I am deeply saddened by the brutal killing of Minister Bhatti and Governor Taseer and condemn the killings in the strongest possible terms. My deepest sympathies are with their families and friends. Both men gave their lives to defend the principles of religious freedom, equality, and human rights for all Pakistanis. The assassination of Minister Bhatti, merely two months after the assassination of Governor Taseer, emphasizes the need for aggressive advocacy of religious freedom and tolerance in Pakistan.

I am committed to the same principles Minister Bhatti and Governor Taseer fought for, and, if confirmed, I will prioritize and elevate U.S. efforts to promote freedom of religion in Pakistan. I will work with Government officials to urge them to take the necessary measures to address the serious religious freedom problems in the country and to address discriminatory and repressive blasphemy and anti-Ahmadi laws. These laws have been exploited to harass religious minorities, sectarian opponents, and Muslims, and to retaliate in personal disputes. I will also work with civil society, including religious leaders, to encourage voices of tolerance and to support their efforts to promote religious freedom and interfaith respect and understanding in Pakistan.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Ambassador - Designate Suzan Johnson Cook by  
Senator Richard G. Lugar (#3)  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
March 29, 2011**

**Question:**

A New Year's Day car bombing in Alexandria, Egypt killed 21 worshippers at a local Coptic church and marked one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Egypt since 2006. Many Coptic Christians worry that religious persecution will escalate given the uncertain political landscape in Egypt at this time. What role, if any, would your office play in addressing religious violence in the region and protecting religious minorities?

**Answer:**

The Middle East must be a top priority in promoting religious freedom, now more than ever, given both the attacks on members of religious minorities in the region and opportunities to build upon the common purpose that emerged as Muslims and Christians supported each other in Cairo's Tahrir Square. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues in the U.S. Government to support those in Egypt and throughout the region who seek meaningful progress on religious freedom. If confirmed, I will encourage opportunities that have emerged from calls for political reform. I will join forces with my colleagues to combat efforts to exploit sectarian tensions. I remain very concerned about longstanding

violence and discrimination against members of religious minorities in Egypt and elsewhere in the region.

If confirmed, I would plan to visit this region soon and press the governments to protect religious freedom, and to discourage sectarian violence and societal intolerance. Governments that justify restricting religious freedom out of security and stability concerns only encourage impunity and often lead to more sectarian violence. I would emphasize that point to governments in the region. I would work with my USG colleagues to press governments to protect members of vulnerable religious minorities by taking effective measures to prevent future attacks and to bring to justice the perpetrators of attacks on Christians, Jews, and members of other religious minorities.

I will also work to strengthen civil society that promotes religious tolerance, and programs that promote tolerance and mutual respect between different religious communities. If confirmed, I will advocate for increasing U.S. programs and activities to support initiatives in several areas directly related to religious freedom, such as funding for programs that work with Coptic and Muslim community groups, reform of official curricula to remove religious bias, as well as support for NGOs that monitor the country's media for occurrences of sectarian bias.

Regarding Egypt in particular, if confirmed, I will work closely with our Ambassador and other USG officials to advocate for an end to acts of sectarian violence, for greater protection of religious freedom and equal rights under the law for persons of all faiths. I will advocate for the removal of laws that discriminate against religious minorities and for the adoption of a unified law on places of worship. I will also work with the government of Egypt in its efforts to address concerns of the Coptic community. I am heartened to see that the Egyptian Prime Minister has met with the leadership of the Coptic community following the recent destruction of a Coptic church in Sol.

I have also been encouraged by calls for unity and mutual respect among Egypt's various religious groups. If confirmed, I will support and encourage our embassy in Cairo in its continuous efforts to promote religious freedom values with government officials, civil society, and political and religious leaders. I will also strongly support our embassy's efforts to maintain and broaden an active dialogue with leaders of the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Baha'i religious communities, human rights groups, and other activists.



**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Ambassador - Designate Suzan Johnson Cook by  
Senator Richard Lugar (#4)  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
March 29, 2011**

**Question:**

While religious minorities in Iran face constant persecution and harassment, many members of the Baha'i community have been arrested for proselytizing in Tehran, Bam, and Kerman, and seven Baha'i leaders who were sentenced to twenty years in prison in August 2010. Given the lack of diplomatic relations the U.S. has with Iran, what strategies, if any, would your office employ to foster religious freedom in Iran?

**Answer:**

I have been following the persecution of Baha'is and other religious communities in Iran with great concern. I understand that the State Department is working closely with representatives of these communities and other like-minded countries to develop best strategies for improving both religious freedom in Iran and the morale of the persecuted populations. President Obama's criticism of the Iranian government's persecution of the Baha'i and Sufis in his March 20 remarks marking the Persian holiday Nowruz, got the attention of the Iranian government and was enthusiastically received by Baha'is and other religious minorities in and outside of Iran.

If confirmed, I will continue these efforts of targeted and effective statements, partner with like-minded governments and the newly created UN

Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran, and develop additional opportunities to sanction those who continue to persecute Baha'is because of their faith.

Under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010, the U.S. Government has applied targeted sanctions against Iranian officials for serious human rights abuses. Just last month, the Prosecutor General of Tehran – who among his many actions against minorities and others, ordered the arrest of seven Baha'i – was added to the sanctions list.