

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520-0099

Secretary Kerry:

We write today to raise our deep concerns about the grim situation for religious freedom in Pakistan. Over the past year, the already poor environment for religious freedom worsened dramatically, impacting all Pakistanis but particularly Christians, Shi'a Muslims, Ahmadi Muslims, and Hindus. We thus respectfully urge you to name Pakistan as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for these particularly severe violations of religious freedom. We believe the United States must bear witness to these horrible abuses.

The Pakistani government enforces its regressive and abusive laws that violate religious freedom standards. As you know, Pakistani courts in March and April sentenced three Christians to death for allegedly blasphemous activity. They join at least 32 other individuals who are on death row or serving life sentences under Pakistan's abusive blasphemy law. According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Pakistan has the dubious distinction of having the largest number of people in the world jailed for blasphemy. In addition, the anti-Ahmadi provisions in the constitution and penal code have created an apartheid-like system criminalizing the basic practices of their faith. We welcomed that President Obama raised their plight during his speech at the National Prayer Breakfast.

Terrorists and extremists also persecuted religious groups, with little or no government response. Over 100 Christians were killed during the largest attack on their community in the country's history when the All Saints Church in Peshawar was struck by suicide bombers in September, and a Christian village was burned to the ground in March 2013. In both cases, no one has held to account for planning or participating in these attacks. Ahmadi Muslims regularly are attacked and their places of worship assaulted. Furthermore, estimates place the death toll of Shi'a Muslims in the past year at over 700 due to continuous suicide bombings of their religious sites, pilgrimage routes, and gathering places. Pakistan's historic Hindu community is beset by kidnappings and forced conversions, with a Hindu shrine recently destroyed.

Secretary Kerry, designating Pakistan as a "country of particular concern" is simply the right thing to do. It is required by law and reflects American values. In addition, this designation would elevate U.S. concerns and clearly convey our interest in seeing the Pakistani government address these troubling situations.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,



Sean P. Duffy
Member of Congress



Frank Wolf
Member of Congress



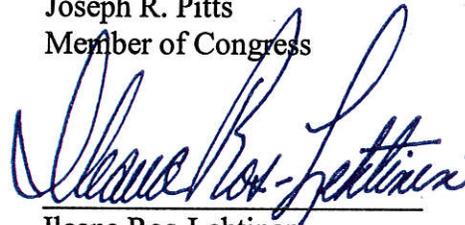
Anna Eshoo
Member of Congress



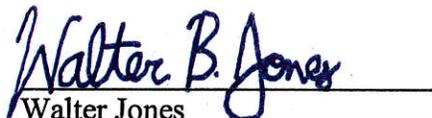
Joseph R. Pitts
Member of Congress



Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



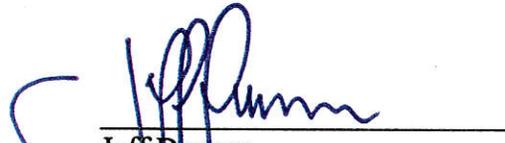
Walter Jones
Member of Congress



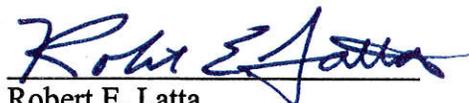
Trent Franks
Member of Congress



Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress



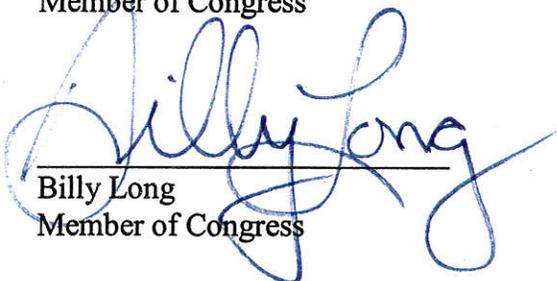
Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



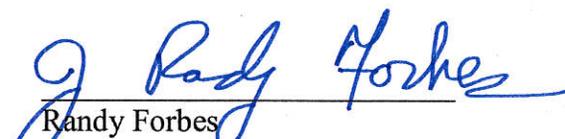
Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress



James Lankford
Member of Congress



Billy Long
Member of Congress



Randy Forbes
Member of Congress