

116TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. RES. 1085

Condemning targeted terrorist attacks against members of the Sikh, Hindu, and other religious minority communities in Afghanistan and supporting refugee protection for Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan in recognition of the systematic religious persecution, discrimination, and existential danger faced by the members of these communities.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 14, 2020

Ms. SPEIER (for herself, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. COX of California, Mr. COSTA, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. LOFGREN, and Mr. RASKIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## RESOLUTION

Condemning targeted terrorist attacks against members of the Sikh, Hindu, and other religious minority communities in Afghanistan and supporting refugee protection for Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan in recognition of the systematic religious persecution, discrimination, and existential danger faced by the members of these communities.

Whereas Sikhs and Hindus are indigenous but endangered minorities in Afghanistan, numbering approximately 700

out of a community that recently included over 8,000 members;

Whereas members of the Islamic State-Khorasan, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) affiliate in Afghanistan, attacked a Sikh temple in Kabul, Afghanistan, on March 25, 2020, killing 25 worshipers, including Tanya Kaur, a four-year-old girl;

Whereas Islamic State-Khorasan militants made further attempts on the lives of the survivors before and after the funeral ceremony held for the victims;

Whereas the Islamic State-Khorasan claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, on July 1, 2018, which took the lives of 19 people, including most of the senior leadership of the Sikh and Hindu communities in Afghanistan, who had assembled to meet the Afghan President;

Whereas these acts of violence follow a greater pattern of targeted violence against Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious minorities in Afghanistan in recent years;

Whereas the Department of State and United States Commission on International Religious Freedom have documented systemic discrimination against Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, including restrictions on religious practices, illegal seizure of property, the inability to send their children to public schools due to harassment, judicial bias against religious minorities, and constitutional limitations on the political rights of religious minorities;

Whereas the former Taliban-led government routinely persecuted and discriminated against the Afghan Sikh community, restricting their funeral rites and forcing the

community to publicly identify themselves by wearing yellow armbands; and

Whereas the President of the United States has proposed resettling up to 18,000 refugees pursuant to section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1157) for fiscal year 2020, in contrast to the Obama administration's proposal of 110,000 refugees for fiscal year 2016: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2               (1) expresses concern for the safety of Sikhs  
3               and Hindus in Afghanistan;

4               (2) condemns all terrorist attacks, religious per-  
5               secution, and discrimination against members of the  
6               Sikh and Hindu religious minority communities in  
7               Afghanistan;

8               (3) recognizes that members of the Sikh and  
9               Hindu communities face existential danger in Af-  
10              ghanistan; and

11              (4) supports resettling Sikhs and Hindus from  
12              Afghanistan in the United States under the United  
13              States Refugee Admissions Program pursuant to  
14              section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act  
15              (8 U.S.C. 1157).

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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 25, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We are writing to express our concern about the serious threats facing religious minorities in Afghanistan. Terrorist attacks by ISIS Khorasan (ISIS-K) threaten the very survival of Afghanistan's Sikh and Hindu communities, which have already reached historically low numbers. To protect members of these vulnerable religious minority communities, we urge the State Department to provide emergency refugee protection to Afghanistan's Sikhs and Hindus as they face terrorist violence at the hands of ISIS-K. We further urge the State Department and USAID to ensure that U.S. COVID-19 assistance reaches religious minorities in Afghanistan.

ISIS-K targets religious minorities in Afghanistan and poses an existential threat to Afghanistan's Sikh and Hindu communities in particular. The Sikh and Hindu communities once numbered around 250,000 people but now have fewer than 1,000 individuals due to decades of persecution. The communities continue to face discrimination in access to housing and employment, and the Taliban has previously mandated that Sikhs and Hindus wear yellow armbands or patches as a marker of their religious status. In recent years a new threat to Afghanistan's Sikh and Hindu communities has emerged: terrorist attacks from ISIS-K. In March ISIS-K launched an attack on a Sikh gurdwara in Kabul that killed 25 worshippers, and later detonated an explosion during a funeral service for those victims. As ISIS-K continues to attack civilians and international troops draw down in Afghanistan, Sikhs and Hindus are likely to face more violence.

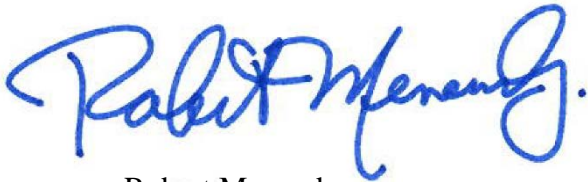
In light of this existential threat, we urge the State Department to provide emergency refugee protection to Afghanistan's Sikhs and Hindus by referring them to the FY20 U.S. Refugee Admissions Program through Priority 1 (P1) embassy referrals. We further request that the Department consider designating this group for Priority 2 (P2) referrals. We believe the potential to eliminate this population of less than 1,000 people represents a dire circumstance that requires both the urgency of individual P1 referrals as well as access to the P2 designation. A P2 designation would maximize opportunities for resettlement of Afghanistan's Sikhs and Hindus under the FY20 allocations ceilings for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, including the allocation for refugees who "have been persecuted or have a well-founded fear of persecution on account of religion." For members of the Sikh and Hindu communities who prefer to remain in Afghanistan despite this existential threat, we urge State to work with the Government of Afghanistan to ensure that it provides proper protection for these communities.

In addition, the United States has provided \$20.6 million in total assistance to Afghanistan to address COVID-19. We urge the State Department and USAID to ensure that religious minorities in Afghanistan benefit from this assistance, as well as from any future COVID-19 assistance sent there. Ensuring that religious minorities receive U.S. COVID-19 assistance should be a priority in all countries where protection of religious minorities is a challenge.

Finally, we recommend that you engage with other members of the International Religious Freedom Alliance and encourage them to help ensure the security of vulnerable religious minorities in Afghanistan in the face of this existential threat.

This Administration has repeatedly highlighted protecting religious freedom as a top foreign policy priority. Sikh and Hindu communities in Afghanistan face an existential threat from ISIS-K because of their religion. To protect religious freedom, we urgently ask that you take these essential steps to defend these threatened religious minorities.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



James Lankford  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

/s/ Patrick Leahy


Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator

**/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.**

Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

**/s/ Chris Van Hollen**

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

DAVID TRONE  
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May 18, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

I write to you to express my grave concerns regarding the safety of the Sikh religious minority in Afghanistan, which has been under threat from attacks by Islamic State terrorists. Two attacks this past March, one at a Sikh gurdwara (house of worship) in Kabul and another at the funeral for those killed, highlight the perils the Afghan Sikh community faces.

As Secretary of State, you have upheld the importance of religious freedom through significant actions such as establishing the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in July 2018 and more recently speaking at the International Religious Freedom Alliance in February 2020. I urge you to take action to protect members of the vulnerable Sikh and Hindu populations in Afghanistan by facilitating the safe and expeditious relocation of the Sikh and Hindu religious minorities in Afghanistan, if at all possible with the cooperation of other like-minded countries. In addition, I support the recommendation my colleagues conveyed to you in a letter led by Representative Garamendi to refer these vulnerable individuals to the U.S. Refugee Admission Program through Priority 1 embassy referrals.

The Sikh community faces what many believe to be an existential crisis in Afghanistan. Now is the time to demonstrate the United States' resolve and commitment to the principles on which the International Religious Freedom Alliance was founded.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Trone".

David Trone  
Member of Congress

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

May 4, 2020

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write to express our deep concern about the safety of the vulnerable Sikh religious minority in Afghanistan, which continues to be under grave threat from Islamic State terrorist attacks directed at Sikhs. As you know, on March 25, Islamic State terrorists attacked a Sikh gurdwara (house of worship) in Kabul, killing 25 people, including a four-year old girl. A second attack targeted the funeral for those killed at the gurdwara, compounding the tragedy and highlighting that the threat against this community remains profound.

Once a thriving community of nearly 250,000 people, the Sikh and Hindu community in Afghanistan has endured years of discrimination and violence from extremists, and the community is now estimated to comprise fewer than 100 families across the country. The immediate threat to the Sikh religious minority in Afghanistan from the Islamic State remains severe, and much of the community is now seeking relocation outside of Afghanistan for their safety.

Throughout your tenure as Secretary of State, you have consistently touted the importance of religious freedom as a fundamental principle. Two months ago, you marked the establishment of an International Religious Freedom Alliance, a group of like-minded countries committed to advancing religious freedom and “predicated on the idea that more must be done to protect members of religious minority groups.”

Mr. Secretary, more must be done to protect the vulnerable Sikh and Hindu religious minorities in Afghanistan. We recognize that travel restrictions resulting from the global outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) have led to the temporary suspension of admissions for most refugees. However, the situation is urgent for Afghan Sikhs and Hindus. This community already faces existential danger in Afghanistan, and the severity of that threat is only likely to increase in the weeks and months to come.



As such, we urge you to take all available steps to facilitate the safe and expeditious relocation of members of the Sikh and Hindu religious minorities in Afghanistan. In particular, we strongly recommend that you consider referring these vulnerable individuals to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) through Priority 1 embassy referrals.

We understand that such referrals to the USRAP are generally used in small numbers and situations of extreme danger, but we believe this situation is extremely grave and urge you to expand the use of this measure to save Afghan Sikhs and Hindus. We also urge you to reallocate current refugee admissions priorities based on global needs to allow for Afghan Sikhs and Hindus to come to the United States this fiscal year.

We strongly encourage you to engage the other member countries in the International Religious Freedom Alliance to secure their support and involvement in helping to protect and safely relocate this vulnerable religious minority community from Afghanistan.

The protection of religious freedom is one of principles on which the International Religious Freedom Alliance was founded, and now is the time to demonstrate the administration's commitment to that principle by leading this alliance in coordinated, multilateral action to protect an endangered religious minority community.

Sincerely,



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John Garamendi  
Member of Congress

/s/

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TJ Cox  
Member of Congress

/s/

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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

/s/

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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

/s/  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Paul Cook  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Abigail D. Spanberger  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Josh Harder  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress

/s/  
André Carson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

RO KHANNA  
17th DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON  
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and Consumer Policy  
Subcommittee on Government Operations

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-0517

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April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf  
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

United States Embassy (Kabul)  
Chargé d'Affaires Ross  
Wilson Bibi Mahru Kabul, Afghanistan

Secretary Pompeo, Secretary Wolf and Ambassador Wilson,

Thank you for your leadership in trying to bring about an end to the two-decades long war in Afghanistan. It is long past time that we end this war, which has cost our nation trillions of dollars and thousands of lives.

As U.S. forces complete our departure from Afghanistan, I am deeply worried about the health and safety of Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious minorities under threat of religious persecution and genocidal violence in Afghanistan.

Just last month, a terrorist organization linked to an ISIS affiliate killed 25 Sikh worshipers in Kabul, including a four-year-old girl named Tanya Kaur. During her funeral service, a bomb was detonated, and additional explosives were planted outside their Sikh house of worship. The terrorist group presented the mourners an ultimatum: leave Afghanistan within ten days or suffer more attacks.

Unfortunately, persecution of religious minorities in Afghanistan and the neighboring region is nothing new, nor uncommon. In 2018, a terrorist group carried out a suicide bombing on a

convoy of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs that were on their way to meet with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani that killed 19 people and injured 20 others.

There are deeply troubling reports of ties between the Pakistan's InterServices Intelligence and the terrorist organizations that carried out the 2018 and 2020 attacks, which warrant thorough investigation.

According to the U.S. State Department and U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Afghan Sikhs and Hindus experience systemic religious discrimination. This persecution takes the form of restrictions on religious practices, illegal theft of their property, bullying of children, and judicial bias. There are approximately 200 Hindu and Sikh families left in Afghanistan.

The U.S. proposed resettling 18,000 refugees in this fiscal year, including up to 5,000 individuals who are persecuted for their religion or other protected grounds. Additionally, up to 7,500 individuals can be referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) by a U.S. embassy in any location.

Because the rampant religious violence against Afghan Sikhs and Hindus poses an existential threat for them, I urge the U.S. Embassy in Kabul to refer Sikhs and Hindus still in Afghanistan for emergency refugee protection under the USRAP and for the Department of State and Department of Homeland Security to accept this referral without objection to ensure their safety.

Given the 20-year U.S. presence in Afghanistan, we are in a unique position to help alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable people who suffer relentless religious persecution. Therefore, I urge you to pay attention to the dire situation facing the Afghan Sikhs and Hindus and other religious minorities facing persecution, and to enact the suggested policy to protect these innocent people.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ro Khanna". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

**JIM COSTA**

16TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA  
WEB PAGE: [www.costa.house.gov](http://www.costa.house.gov)

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**  
CHAIR – SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIVESTOCK AND  
FOREIGN AGRICULTURE

**COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER, OCEANS, AND  
WILDLIFE



**Congress of the United States**  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, EURASIA, ENERGY  
AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**TRANSATLANTIC LEGISLATORS'  
DIALOGUE**  
CHAIR

**NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**  
MEMBER

April 17, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

This letter serves to express my concern about the dire situation facing Afghanistan's Sikh and Hindu communities and asks for immediate action to save lives. Given recent levels of violence in the country targeting these groups, I respectfully request that the United States Embassy in Kabul, the United States Refugee Admissions Program, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees collaborate to provide immediate assistance to these imperiled and vulnerable families.

Sikhs and Hindus have a long history in Afghanistan but now, tragically, face unprecedented threats to their survival. On March 25, 2020, more than two dozen Sikhs were brutally murdered in their Gurdwara in Kabul by ISIS-linked extremists. Violence targeting any place of worship is deeply troubling and, sadly, this is only the most recent of a long series of attacks on these communities. In July 2018, Afghanistan's only Sikh parliamentary candidate, Rawail Singh, was among 19 people, including 17 Sikhs and Hindus, killed by a suicide bomber in Jalalabad. Since then the threat posed by extremists against these communities has only increased.

The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) regularly prioritizes refugee admissions based on humanitarian considerations. Given the level of threat these communities now face, I request that the U.S. Embassy in Kabul coordinate with USRAP to examine the situation, meet with Afghan Sikh and Hindu families, and evaluate them for resettlement under the Fiscal Year 2020 USRAP.

In addition, I request that the U.S. government work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide immediate protection for these communities and examine the possibility of relocating families to a location outside Afghanistan where resettlement screening can take place under more stable circumstances.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. By working together, we can protect these vulnerable individuals who are in great need of our assistance.

Sincerely,

JIM COSTA  
Member of Congress

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