

REPLY TO:

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WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501
(202) 224-3744
www.grassley.senate.gov
- ☐ 721 FEDERAL BUILDING
210 WALNUT STREET
DES MOINES, IA 50309-2106
(515) 288-1145
- ☐ 111 7TH AVENUE, SE, BOX 13
SUITE 6800
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA 52401-2101
(319) 363-6832

United States Senate

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501

October 31, 2018

REPLY TO:

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- ☐ 307 FEDERAL BUILDING
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(712) 322-7103

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

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

I am very concerned about the increased persecution of religious minorities in the People's Republic of China. Reports published by the State Department as well as prominent human rights organizations indicate that the government of China is engaged in a massive effort to repress the natural right of Chinese citizens to practice their faith free from coercion and government influence.

I have been alarmed to read reports about the ongoing crisis in Xinjiang Province, where the Chinese government is illegally detaining upwards of one million Uighur and Kazak Muslims in internment camps simply for expressing their religious beliefs.¹ This coincides with an increasingly severe campaign of persecution against Christians throughout the whole of China. According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, throughout 2017, the Chinese government increased its surveillance of churches, detained preachers and parishioners, and employed physical violence against individuals attempting to save their churches from destruction.² These recent campaigns against Christians and Muslims are on top of longstanding human rights abuses suffered by Tibetan Buddhists and practitioners of Falun Gong.

The ongoing efforts of the Chinese Communist Party to suppress religious liberty have implications for the whole of our bilateral relationship with the country. As the U.S. celebrates the 20th anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, I would like to take this opportunity to address this important issue with you and to expand upon our recent discussions.

I appreciate efforts by the State Department to advance the cause of international religious liberty and to engage our international partners. The Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom as well

¹ Human Rights Watch, "Eradicating Ideological Viruses: China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims," 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/09/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs> (Accessed September 21, 2018).

² USCIRF, "United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2018 Annual Report," 2018, <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2018USCIRFAR.pdf> (Accessed September 17, 2018).

Committee Assignments:

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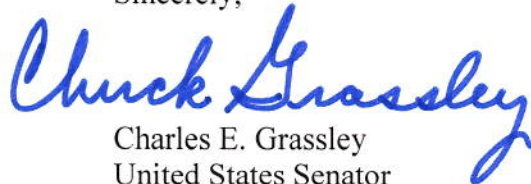
as the release of the Potomac Declaration and the Potomac Plan of Action reflect the principles expressed in President Trump's 2017 National Security Strategy that protecting international religious liberty advances America's security.³

I know you share my concerns about this issue based on our previous conversation. In order to further our dialogue, I would appreciate your answers to the following questions:

- What steps are being taken by the State Department to target Chinese government officials engaged in the persecution of religious believers under existing statutory authority such as the Global Magnitsky Act, including the widespread imprisonment of Muslims in Xinjiang Province, destruction of churches and other activities to prevent Christians from practicing their faith, and the repression of Tibetan Buddhists as well as Falun Gong practitioners?
- The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 requires that each year the president designate as a "Country of Particular Concern" each country the government of which has engaged in or tolerated systematic, ongoing violations of religious freedom. China has earned this designation each year since the law's passage in 1998. Countries of Particular Concern are to be designated "Not later than September 1 of each year". To date, there has not been a determination that the People's Republic of China will be relisted under this designation. Does the State Department intend to re-designate China as a Country of Particular Concern, and if so, will that include a determination that it commits "particularly severe" violations of religious freedom?
- There are numerous reports of Chinese foreign nationals, particularly Uighurs, being forcibly repatriated to China from foreign countries at the behest of Chinese government officials.⁴ What actions are being taken with our international partners to prevent the forcible repatriation of Chinese nationals who may face persecution on the basis of the religious beliefs?

Advancing the cause of international religious liberty must be an integral component of our government's bilateral relationship with China. I encourage the State Department, working with other departments and agencies that interact with China, to integrate concern for religious freedom into all aspects of our bilateral relationship. Respect for natural rights, including freedom of religion, is in our country's DNA from our founding. While we cannot always control what a foreign government does to its own people, our national character dictates that we use what tools we can to advocate for those whose rights are being denied.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator

CC Ambassador Sam Brownback

³ Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, "Remarks at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom," 2018, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/07/284550.htm> (Accessed September 21, 2018).

⁴ Youssef, Nour, "Egyptian Police Detain Uighurs and Deport Them to China." *New York Times*, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/06/world/asia/egypt-muslims-uighurs-deportations-xinjiang-china.html> (Accessed September 25, 2018).