Suspend the Rules And Pass the Bill, H.R. 4821, with Amendments
(The amendments strike all after the enacting clause and insert a
new text and a new title)

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4821

To hold accountable senior officials of the Government of the People’s Republic of China who are responsible for, complicit in, or have directly persecuted Christians in China, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 29, 2021

MRS. HARTZLER (for herself, MR. DUNCAN, MR. GALLAGHER, MR. LAMBORN,
MR. ADERHOLT, MR. LATTA, MR. BILIRAKIS, MR. WEBER of Texas, MS.
SALAZAR, MR. TIMMONS, MR. GOOD of Virginia, MR. HICE of Georgia,
MR. BUDD, MR. HARRIS, MR. STEUBE, MR. GUEST, MR. GOHMERT, MRS.
MILLER-MEEKS, MR. GAETZ, MR. BABIN, MR. MULLIN, MR. BROOKS,
MRS. WAGNER, MR. PFLUGER, MR. RESCHENTHALER, MR. GROTHMAN,
MR. JOHNSON of Ohio, MS. LETLOW, MR. SMITH of New Jersey, MR.
MANN, MR. WALTZ, MR. ALLEN, MR. OWENS, MR. BUCK, MRS. MILLER
of Illinois, and MS. STEFANIK) introduced the following bill; which was
referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the
Committees on the Judiciary, and Ways and Means, 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

A BILL

To hold accountable senior officials of the Government of the People’s Republic of China who are responsible for, complicit in, or have directly persecuted Christians in China, and for other purposes.
Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Combating the Perse-
cution of Religious Groups in China Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) According to the Department of State’s
International Religious Freedom (IRF) report esti-
mates, Buddhists comprise 18.2 percent of the coun-
try’s total population, Christians, 5.1 percent, Mus-
lims, 1.8 percent, followers of folk religions, 21.9
percent, and atheists or unaffiliated persons, 52.2
percent, with Hindus, Jews, and Taoists comprising
less than one percent.

(2) The Government of the People’s Republic of
China (PRC) recognizes five official religions, Bud-
dhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholi-
cism (according to the State Department’s IRF re-
port) and only religious groups belonging to one of
the five sanctioned “patriotic religious associations”
representing these religions are permitted to register
with the government and hold worship service, ex-
cluding all other faiths and denying the ability to
worship without being registered with the government.

(3) The activities of state-sanctioned religious organizations are regulated by the Chinese Communist Party, which manages all aspects of religious life.

(4) The Chinese Communist Party is actively seeking to control, govern, and manipulate all aspects of faith through the “Sinicization of Religion”, a process intended to shape religious traditions and doctrines so they conform with the objectives of the Chinese Communist Party.

(5) On February 1, 2018, the PRC Government implemented new religious regulations that imposed restrictions on Chinese contacts with overseas religious organizations, required government approval for religious schools, websites, and any online religious service, and effectively banned unauthorized religious gatherings and teachings.

(6) There are numerous reports that authorities forced closures of Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, and Taoist houses of worship and destroyed public displays of religious symbols throughout the country.

(7) Authorities arrested and detained religious leaders trying to hold services online.
(8) There are credible reports of Chinese authorities raiding house churches and other places of religious worship, removing and confiscating religious paraphernalia, installing surveillance cameras on religious property, pressuring congregations to sing songs of the Chinese Communist Party and display the national flag during worship, forcing churches to replace images of Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary with pictures of General Secretary Xi Jinping, and banning children and students from attending religious services.

(9) It has been reported that the PRC is rewriting and will issue a version of the Bible with the “correct understanding” of the text according to the Chinese Communist Party. Authorities continued to restrict the printing and distribution of the Bible, Quran, and other religious literature, and penalized publishing and copying businesses that handled religious materials.

(10) According to the Department of State’s IRF reports, the PRC Government has imprisoned thousands of individuals of all faiths for practicing their religious beliefs and often labels them as “cults”.

The Political Prisoner Database maintained by the human rights NGO Dui Hua Foundation counted 3,492 individuals imprisoned for “organizing or using a ‘cult’ to undermine implementation of the law.” Prisoners include—

(A) the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who has been held captive along with his parents since May 17, 1995;

(B) Pastor Zhang Shaojie, a Three-Self church pastor from Nanle County in central Henan was sentenced in July 2014 to 12 years in prison for “gathering a crowd to disrupt the public order”;

(C) Pastor John Cao, a United States permanent resident from Greensboro, North Carolina, who was sentenced for 7 years in prison in March 2018 under contrived charges of organizing illegal border crossings; and

(D) Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain Covenant Church who was arrested and sentenced to 9 years in prison for “inciting to subvert state power” and “illegal business operations”.

(12) Authorities continue to detain Falun Gong practitioners and subject them to harsh and inhuman treatment.

(13) Since 1999, the Department of State has designated the PRC as a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.


SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

(a) HOLDING PRC OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ABUSES TARGETING CHINESE CHRISTIANS OR OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES.—It is the policy of the United States to consider senior officials of the Government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) who are responsible for or have directly carried out, at any time, persecution of Christians or other religious minorities in the PRC to have committed—

(1) a gross violation of internationally recognized human rights for purposes of imposing sanctions with respect to such officials under the Global
Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (22 U.S.C. 2656 note); and

(2) a particularly severe violation of religious freedom for purposes of applying section 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to such officials.

(b) DEPARTMENT OF STATE PROGRAMMING TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA.—The Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom should support efforts to protect and promote international religious freedom in the PRC and for programs to protect Christians and other religious minorities in the PRC.

c) DESIGNATION OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AS A COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN.—It is the policy of the United States to continue to designate the PRC as a “country of particular concern”, as long as the PRC continues to engage in systematic and egregious religious freedom violations, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–292).

SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that the United States should promote religious freedom in the PRC by—
(1) strengthening religious freedom diplomacy on behalf of Christians and other religious minorities facing restrictions in the PRC;

(2) raising cases relating to religious or political prisoners at the highest levels with PRC officials because experience demonstrates that consistently raising prisoner cases can result in improved treatment, reduced sentences, or in some cases, release from custody, detention, or imprisonment;

(3) encouraging Members of Congress to “adopt” a prisoner of conscience in the PRC through the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission’s “Defending Freedom Project”, raise the case with PRC officials, and work publicly for their release;

(4) calling on the PRC Government to unconditionally release religious and political prisoners or, at the very least, ensure that detainees are treated humanely with access to family, the lawyer of their choice, independent medical care, and the ability to practice their faith while in detention;

(5) encouraging the global faith community to speak in solidarity with the persecuted religious groups in the PRC; and
(6) hosting, once every two years, the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom organized by the Department of State in order to bring together leaders from around the world to discuss the challenges facing religious freedom, identify means to address religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, and promote great respect for and preservation of religious liberty.

SEC. 5. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING ACTIONS AT UNITED NATIONS.

It is the sense of Congress that the United Nations Human Rights Council should issue a formal condemnation of the People’s Republic of China for the ongoing genocide against Uyghurs and other religious and ethnic minority groups, as well as for its persecution of Christians, Falun Gong, and other religious groups.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to hold accountable senior officials of the Government of the People’s Republic of China who are responsible for or have directly carried out, at any time, persecution of Christians or other religious minorities in China, and for other purposes.”