AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H.R. 4821

OFFERED BY M .

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Combating the Persecution 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 estimates, Buddhists comprise 18.2 percent of the country’s total population, Christians, 5.1 percent, Muslims, 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, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism (according to the State Department’s IRF report) and only religious groups belonging to one of
the five sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” representing these religious are permitted to register with the government and hold worship service, excluding 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”.

(11) The Political Prisoner Database main-
tained by the human rights NGO Dui Hua Founda-
tion counted 3,492 individuals imprisoned for “orga-
nizing 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 per-
manent resident from Greensboro, North Caro-
lina, who was sentenced for 7 years in prison in
March 2018 under contrived charges of orga-
nizing illegal border crossings; and

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

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

(14) The Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 states that the United States overall trade negotiating objectives must “take into account conditions relating to religious freedom of any party to negotiations for a trade agreement with the United States”.


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, complicit in, or have directly persecuted 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) ENSURING TRADE NEGOTIATIONS CONSIDER RELIGIOUS FREEDOM CONDITIONS.—It is the policy of the United States to ensure that trade negotiations with the PRC include religious freedom conditions as mandated by the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (19 U.S.C. 4201 et seq.).

(c) DEPARTMENT OF STATE PROGRAMMING TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA.—Consistent with section 401 of the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (Public Law
of the funds available to the Department of State for international religious freedom programs, 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.

(d) 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 Commiss-
ion’s “Defending Freedom Project”, raise the case
with PRC officials, and work publicly for their re-
lease;

(4) calling on the PRC Government to uncondi-
tionally release religious and political prisoners or, at
the very least, ensure that detainees are treated hu-
manely 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 Ministe-
rial to Advance Religious Freedom organized by the
Department of State in order to bring together lead-
ers 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.
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, complicit in, or have directly persecuted Christians or other religious minorities in China, and for other purposes.”