

# Nina Shea

## *Director, Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom*



An international human-rights lawyer for over thirty years, Nina Shea joined Hudson Institute as a Senior Fellow in November 2006, where she directs the Center for Religious Freedom, an entity she founded in 1986. Shea works extensively for the advancement of individual religious freedom and other human rights in U.S. foreign policy. She undertakes scholarship and advocacy in defense of those persecuted for their religious beliefs and identities and on behalf of diplomatic measures to end religious repression and violence abroad, whether from state actors or Islamist extremist groups.

Shea was appointed by the U.S. House of Representatives to serve seven terms as a Commissioner on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (June 1999 - March 2012). During the Soviet era, Shea's first client before the United Nations was Soviet Nobel Peace Laureate Andrei Sakharov. Since then, she has been appointed as a U.S. delegate to the United Nation's main human rights body by both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Shea played a leading role in building grass root support for the adoption of the International Religious Freedom Act (1998). For seven years ending in 2005, she helped organize and lead a coalition of churches and religious groups that worked to end a religious war against non-Muslims and dissident Muslims in southern Sudan. In 2014, she initiated and helped lead a coalition of hundreds of prominent American religious leaders to issue *The Pledge of Solidarity for Persecuted Iraqi, Syrian and Egyptian Christians and Other Minorities*, which was released by a bi-partisan Congressional panel on May 7. In 2014 and 2016, she briefed Pope Francis on ISIS.

At Hudson, she has organized conferences for Nigerian schoolgirls and others who survived Boko Haram attacks, Christian converts formerly imprisoned in Iran, Coptic bishops from Egypt, Vietnamese Buddhist leaders, Catholic bishops, evangelical pastors, and Tibetan Buddhist monks from China, and many others. Shea advocates in the nation's capital on behalf of a broad

range of persecuted religious minorities around the world; and, for such work, was honored with annual awards by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA, and Coptic Solidarity.

She has authored and/or edited four widely-acclaimed reports on Saudi state educational materials that promote extremist views and in 2011 had an opportunity to travel to Saudi Arabia and speak directly about her findings with the Ministers of Education, Justice and Islamic Affairs. Her reports include: *Ten Years On: Saudi Arabia's Textbooks Still Promote Religious Violence* (2011), *Update: Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance* (2008), *Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance* (2006), and *Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques* (2005), all of which translated and analyzed Saudi governmental publications that teach violence against the "other."

She is the co-author of *Silenced: How Apostasy & Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide*, with a Foreword by Abdurrahman Wahid, the former President of Indonesia (Oxford University Press, 2011). She also co-authored, is *Persecuted: The Global Assault on Christians* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2013). She is also co-author of a new book on ISIS and genocide law released in June 2017, entitled, *The Persecution and Genocide of Christians in the Middle East*.

In 2016, she helped lead a successful campaign to press the Obama administration to designate ISIS as responsible for genocide against Christians and Yizidis in areas under its control. She has intensively focused on the persecution of these groups by various extremists since 2003 and has written widely on this, including the authoring of a briefing report in August 2016 on ISIS' propaganda. She co-chairs the bi-partisan Genocide Working Group, a coalition in Washington, D.C. She is recognized as a foremost expert on the issue of ISIS religious genocide and persecution.

She regularly presents testimony before Congress, delivers public lectures, organizes briefings and conferences, and writes frequently on religious freedom issues. Her writings have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *CQ Researcher*, *Weekly Standard*, *National Review Online*, *CNN*, *Fox*, *The Daily Beast*, *HuffingtonPost*, and *RealClearWorld*, among others. Her most recent piece will be published in *Foreign Affairs*.

For the ten years prior to joining Hudson (1996-2006), Shea worked at Freedom House, from where she directed the Center for Religious Freedom. In 1986, Shea helped found the Puebla Institute, a lay Catholic initiative to defend against religious persecution. From 1980 to 1986, Shea worked as the program director of the International League for Human Rights, a non-profit based in New York and affiliated with the United Nations. There, Shea defended prominent Soviet dissidents and Jewish *refuseniks*.

Shea was admitted to the bar of the District of Columbia. She graduated *magna cum laude* from Smith College, and earned a J.D. from American University's Washington College of Law.

Contact Information: [shea@hudson.org](mailto:shea@hudson.org)

