

President's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad

Excerpts Adapted to the Canadian Situation

Advance religious freedom and oppose religious persecution as a foreign policy issue

Prime Minister should

- Deliver a major address explaining importance of religious freedom at home and abroad
- Give greater weight to religious freedom in issues considered in foreign policy decision making
- PM raise religious freedom issues in meetings with foreign leaders
- Instruct ADMs to give priority to supporting religious freedom policy
- Encourage greater dialogue among Canadian citizens on issues of religious freedom to encourage understanding, tolerance, and activities to end violations of religious freedom
- Direct additional funds to government agencies with this responsibility

DFAIT

- Instruct Embassies to give freedom of religion greater priority in their reporting of country conditions
- Assign more resources to support integration of Religious Freedom into foreign policy initiatives
- Establish an advisory committee from the Faith and Academic and NGO communities and meet twice annually to review religious freedom issues and take stock of foreign policy initiatives
- Incorporate Religious freedom in all appropriate high level meetings
- Speak out forcefully and frequently on instances of religious persecution and when religious freedom is violated
- Include Freedom of Religion in Human Rights training given to Foreign service officers
- Annual evaluations of DFAIT officials should include evaluation of their understanding of human rights, including religious freedom, and on their advocacy of human rights issues with foreign governments and their engagement with local religious and belief communities and human rights groups

Embassies

- Embassies should assign priority to investigating, monitoring and reporting on issues of religious freedom
- Adequate staff should be assigned in countries experiencing serious religious persecution
- Religious persecution should be discussed in ongoing contact with host governments
- Embassy staff should intervene on behalf of victims of religious persecution
- Embassy staff should establish relationships with religious leaders, groups and experts
- Embassy staff should be alert to religious discrimination and include it in country reports
- Embassy staff should be in contact with NGOs etc. and facilitate their access to difficult regions
- Embassies should allocate funds for groups that promote religious freedom etc.
- Embassies should press host government to give human rights monitoring groups access

Refugee Assistance

- Training of CIC personnel posted at Embassies overseas should include sensitization to all forms of religious persecution and other human rights issues
- Such training should include Refugee and Human Rights and Faith communities as appropriate
- Asylum and refugee personnel should be provided with updated information and refresher training
- Those making refugee determinations at home and abroad should be sensitized to credible fear as it relates to religious persecution