

Netanyahu: “I completely agree with the leaders of Hamas”

Originally published in [Breaking Israeli News](#)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu makes a shocking statement regarding the recent Hamas-led riots that threatened Israel’s southern border: Netanyahu stated that he agrees with the declarations made by Hamas leaders.

[PM NETANYAHU ON HAMAS](#)

Prime Minister Netanyahu: "Ready for a real shocker"?

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Turkey slammed for ‘sham’ trial of US pastor



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In an outrageous miscarriage of justice, the trial in Turkey of captive American Pastor Andrew Brunson, just got a lot worse.

In a cruel show of abject hostility and blatant disregard for any semblance of the rule of law – proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that this trial is a completely and utter sham – the Turkish judges essentially threw out all the witnesses for Pastor Andrew's defense.

We recently reported how over the course of 11 grueling hours, seven witnesses for the prosecution (two secret and five open – two of whom were prisoners and only one of whom had ever actually even met Pastor Andrew) were allowed to give testimony against him. When the pastor's Turkish attorney pointed out that one of these men had been convicted on 14 counts of fraud, the lead judge claimed he didn't see how the fact was relevant. In fact, the judge said that all the prosecution witnesses' statements would be taken as fact.

But when Pastor Andrew's Turkish attorney then submitted his own list of witnesses for the defence, the head judge declared that anyone who was a suspect would not be allowed to testify. Even worse, he disregarded the remaining witnesses for the pastor, stating that they wouldn't have anything relevant to say.

Essentially the message is they aren't going to allow anyone to testify on Pastor Andrew's behalf. This ruling can't even be appealed until after it is put in writing– even more delays.

This isn't justice. This is a sham, a show trial built on made-up charges to imprison an American pastor because of his Christian faith. In fact, this isn't a trial at all. It's a hostage taking.

The judges then delayed the trial yet again – this time until July 18. That's two months away, while Pastor Andrew continues

to languish in a prison in Turkey.

Pastor Andrew is being held as a political prisoner. He has been charged with “Christianisation.” He has committed no crime.

It’s an absolute outrage.

Turkey is playing political games with an innocent Christian pastor’s life. They’re dangling him while demanding the exchange of a Turkish cleric freely living in the United States.

Enough is enough.

We need the whole world to apply maximum pressure on Turkey – a supposed NATO ally. We told you how 66 U.S. senators and 50 members of the European Parliament sent letters to Turkey’s president demanding Pastor Andrew’s freedom. President Trump has also called for his release, and recently tweeted he should be “allowed to come home to his beautiful family.” We must build on this momentum before it is too late.

We remain directly involved in his legal defense in Turkey. We continue to work aggressively in Congress, with the State Department, the White House, the European Parliament, and the European Council to fight for Pastor Andrew’s freedom. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has agreed to take his case and we are hopeful they too will find this is a gross violation of his human rights.

This sham trial must end and he must be set free. Please join with over half a million supporters and [sign the petition](#) demanding his freedom.

British group repent in Israel as war clouds hang over anniversary celebrations



A dark shadow of imminent war hangs over Israel's 70th anniversary celebrations, just as it had done at the nation's re-birth in 1948.

President Trump's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran hastened the prospect of the rogue state taking out its frustration on Israel for striking its military installations in Syria.

In an incident on Tuesday night, at least nine Iranian soldiers are reported to have been killed.¹ And in the early hours of Thursday the Israeli Defense Force launched an unprecedented massive air strike destroying Iranian and Syrian targets in response to a barrage of rockets fired from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

Also coinciding with what should have been a joyful birthday is an event recalling a very sad – indeed shameful – episode in Britain's history.

At a special ceremony organised by Love Never Fails (an alliance of Christian groups supporting the Jewish state) and held yesterday in Atlit, near the port of Haifa, Israelis

spoke of how they suffered at the time and UK representatives responded with expressions of sorrow for our failures both then and now.

Granted a League of Nations mandate to prepare a safe homeland for Jews, Britain instead severely restricted immigration just when it was needed most during the Nazi genocide.

And in the immediate aftermath of World War II, Britain shattered the hopes of traumatised survivors by turning their ships away or by herding them into detention camps. Some were even sent back to Germany where millions of their fellow Jews had been slaughtered.

Thousands of Jewish refugees were held in the Atlit Camp, interred behind barbed wire complete with watchtowers – and this in their own land, promised by Britain in 1917.

As part of a prepared declaration of sorrow, the UK delegation told their Jewish friends: “We grieve that [Britain’s policies] led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews who could have escaped Hitler’s ‘Final Solution’ if the gates to their ancient homeland had been fully open.”

And they added: “We are deeply sorry that our nation caused indescribable distress to untold numbers of your people and their surviving families, and that as a nation we dared to stand against the purpose of Almighty God to restore you to Eretz (the land of) Israel.”

A particularly shocking incident – on July 18 1947 – involved an attack by British forces on a ship carrying 4 515 Holocaust survivors, spraying fuel and throwing smoke bombs in order to deter the immigrants from landing.

I have touched on this and many other aspects of Britain’s role with Israel in my new book, *A Nation Reborn (Christian Publications International)*.

As Italian author Edda Fogarollo put it: “Quite apart from the

suffering experienced by these exiles during the Nazi atrocities, they also had to face the humiliation of having hoped in vain for freedom as their dream turned into a nightmare. After seizing the ship, the British re-routed it back to Europe – to the former concentration camp of Poppendorf, near Hamburg, of all places!”²

One of our great callings as Gentile Christians is to bring comfort to God’s chosen people, who have experienced so much suffering at the hands of those who hate them, just as Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, was despised and rejected of men.

Like him, they were led like lambs to the slaughter during the Holocaust – and we too have blood on our hands, having played our part in causing them to suffer such terrible grief and horror. For that we must repent.

Yet out of the ashes – a valley of dry bones – rose a new nation reflecting something of the resurrection power of Christ. Surviving a series of wars against overwhelming odds to emerge as a world leader in hi-tech innovation and much else besides has been nothing short of miraculous. They are even first on the scene of major disasters to help other nations in distress while their doctors treat the wounded among their enemies.

And they have been so keen to live at peace with their neighbours that they have given up land to which they were legally entitled. But that hasn’t proved enough for Iran and its proxies, Hezbollah and Hamas, who have vowed to wipe Israel off the map.

However, God has not called us to join the UN-sponsored chorus of disapproval, but to “Comfort, comfort my people...” and tell them that “her sin has been paid for...” (Isaiah 40.1f)

Not only must we bless and support them, but we are especially charged to tell them that their sins have been paid for – in other words, that the Lord Jesus, whom we Christians serve,

also died for them. We have the awesome privilege of sharing the good news that our beloved Christ is their Messiah, who came to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But a furious battle for truth rages on as belligerent rioters further inflame tensions on the Gaza border in the mistaken belief that they have been robbed of their land and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is forced to counter Iranian propaganda about their nuclear program.

Citing intelligence reports, he said Iran had lied about never having pursued nuclear weapons and had continued to preserve and expand its knowledge of the same even after signing the 2015 deal with global powers designed to curb Iranian capabilities.³

The Bible clearly speaks of such deceit, thus: “Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with malice. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they tell lies.” (Psalm 5.9)

All who desire to follow the truth – specifically manifested in Jesus Christ (John 14.6) – must surely see where the path leads.

¹World Israel News, 9th May 2018

²Towards the Establishment of the State of Israel (Christians for Israel)

³JNN, 1st May 2018, quoting Reuters

Tanzania opens embassy in Israel



Tanzania's Minister for Foreign Affairs Augustine Phillip Mahiga addresses the United Nations General Assembly in the Manhattan borough of New York, September 26 2016. (PHOTO: Reuters)

Originally published in [The Jerusalem Post](#)

Tanzania opened an embassy in Ramat Gan on Tuesday, the 15th African state to open an embassy in Israel, and the fourth to open one in the last three years.

Tanzanian Foreign Minister Augustine Mahiga, on his first visit to Israel and the highest level visit here by a Tanzanian official, said the embassy signifies the importance his country attaches to its "renewed" friendship with Israel.

Tanzania established diplomatic ties with Israel in 1963, and – like most other African states – severed them under intense Arab pressure after the Yom Kippur War in 1973. The ties were re-established in 1995.

The election of President John Magufuli in 2015 led to a distinct uptick in ties between the two countries. Magufuli, a devout Christian, replaced his Muslim predecessor. When Netanyahu met Mahiga at a mini-summit with six African leaders at Entebbe in 2016, he received a promise that Tanzania would

open an embassy in Israel.

Tanzania's Ambassador to Israel Job D Masima took his position here nine months ago and has worked until now out of temporary offices.

Asked by The Jerusalem Post why Tanzania elected to open its embassy in Ramat Gan [instead of Jerusalem](#), Masima replied that the important thing was to open it somewhere inside Israel.

Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, who attended the official opening of the Tanzanian Embassy and who visited that country two weeks ago, said at the ceremony that she hoped one day to see the Tanzanian flag fly in Jerusalem. She said Israel was grateful to Magufuli for opening the embassy and hoped the new embassy will signify an upgrade of Israeli-Tanzanian cooperation.

Israel does not have an embassy in Tanzania and is represented there by its embassy in Nairobi.

Iranian Christian converts sentenced to 10 years after losing appeal



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A court has rejected an appeal made on behalf of four Iranian Christian converts who were all charged with propagating house churches and promoting “Zionist Christianity”.

Yousef Nadarkhani, Mohamadreza Omid, Yasser Mossayebzadeh and Saheb Fadaie were told that their 10-year sentences received on 6 July 2017 would remain unchanged.

However, Nadarkhani and Omid have also been sentenced to two years internal exile in areas far away from their families.

Mossayebzadeh, Fadaie and Omid faced separate charges for the consumption of wine as they were taking communion at the time of their arrest, and were sentenced to 80 lashes each in 2016.

Their appeal against this sentence remains outstanding.

On December 13 2017 all four defendants attended an appeal hearing at the Revolutionary Court in Tehran in front of two judges.

Christian charity Middle East Concern has urged Christians to pray for “the Lord to comfort and encourage the four men and their families” and to pray “it will not be necessary for the four men to serve such harsh sentences”.

Archaeologists uncover ruins of ancient Christian hideout under town formerly held by

ISIS



“This place is so special. Here is where I think the security guard would stand at the gate watching for any movement outside,”

Originally published in [Faith Wire](#)

The ancient ruins of a Christian refuge or early church dating as far back as the first centuries of the Roman Empire were recently discovered in Manbij, Syria. The area, which was formerly under ISIS control, managed to escape the attention of the terror group known for destroying churches and other Christian artefacts of the regions they conquer.

ISIS invaded Manbij in 2014. During this time, Abdulwahab Sheko, head of the Exploration Committee at the Ruins Council in Manbij, was studying the area. In an interview with Fox News, Sheko noted that the site was lucky to have escaped the group’s attention. He kept quiet about the ruins until 2016, when ISIS was driven out by the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

During their two-year occupation of the area, ISIS forces failed to notice the tip of an old gate on an empty mound of land where they dumped garbage. But Sheko explained that the gate, which ran several feet into the ground down, leads

straight to the old Christian ruins.

“I was so excited, I can’t describe it. I was holding everything in my hands,” Sheko said of the discovery.

Several crosses etched into columns and walls, and writings carved into stone indicate that the underground ruin was a special place where persecuted Christians under the Roman Empire congregated.

“This place is so special. Here is where I think the security guard would stand at the gate watching for any movement outside,” Sheko explained as he led reporters through the “first location” of the site. “He could warn the others to exit through the other passage if they needed to flee.”

American archaeologist John Wineland told Fox that the discovery of this “secret church” could be crucial to understanding the lives of Christians under Roman rule.

“They indicate that there was a significant Christian population in the area which felt they needed to hide their activities,” said Wineland, who is a professor of history and archaeology at South-eastern University. “This is probably an indication of the persecution by the Roman government, which was common in the period.”

Sheko explained that due to the area being riddled with dangerous mines and booby traps, excavation of the site couldn’t begin until late August last year. By March, however, Sheko and his team had uncovered enough artefacts to host “a festival” for locals to come and see the long-hidden treasure.

A recently discovered “second location” – which is still full of insects, trash and even a stray dog who made his home there – harbours an underground cave with “a multitude of rooms” containing “overt Christian symbols” that are “etched into the stone walls and across the arched ceilings.”

Sheko noted that it is believed this second location was added following a more widespread acceptance of Christianity in the region.

“We think this place after Christianity was no longer a secret anymore,” he explained, pointing to the symbols.

Wineland agreed, telling Fox that based on the photographs he’s seen, “the crosses chiselled into the walls, along with geometric designs consistent with the Roman era, appear to have been added later, after wider acceptance of the Christian faith.”

The subterranean ruins also contain a “graveyard,” which Sheko explained was likely reserved for the church clergy. Each tomb contains an elevated “stone cushion” for the deceased’s head.

Sheko added that there are many more potential ruins that have yet to be uncovered, but residential buildings located above them make the excavation process complicated.

The city of Manbij is located in north eastern Aleppo Governorate, near the Turkish border. It was once considered one of Syria’s most ancient and prized townships, according to Fox. Archaeologists believe many more Christian sites could be unearthed as ISIS loses ground in these areas.

“This has led to a significant decline of Christians in the region. Some have been killed, others have fled, and still others have been coerced into converting to Islam,” he said.

Sheko, who is Muslim, hopes his efforts to preserve the incredible historical relics will help to distinguish himself and others from the incredibly hostile ISIS Muslims.

“We are Muslim, but we are not like ISIS Muslims,” he said. “We take care of these Christian ruins. We respect them. We respect humanity.”

Israel's 70th Birthday: A miracle amid thanks and threats



Celebrating at the Western Wall
(PHOTO: CBN News, John Waage).

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Israel opened its 70th anniversary festivities yesterday with song, dance and fireworks, albeit under the shadow of an Iranian threat.

Israel's national celebration wove a theme of technological progress and survival through seven decades of its modern history. They told the story of the Jewish people from Moses to the early pioneers, through the Holocaust to the planting of the land growth of technology. They said the rebirth of their nation was where prophecy became their reality and the answer to their prayers.

"We pray to God to return to Jerusalem, His city and now in 1948, 70 years ago, Jerusalem, His city became available to

us,” Nobel Prize-winning economist Robert Auman said.

“The Jewish prayers always talked about returning to Zion, returning to Jerusalem and here we are 70 years despite all the things that have happened and the threats from Iran they talk about, there’s still the technology and the things going on that do seem quite miraculous,” Jerusalem-based photographer and author Sharon Alshul told CBN News.

Earlier, a siren wailed throughout the country as Israelis stood silent and remembered their fallen through their many wars and terror attacks. The commemoration and celebrations took place despite threats from Iran. An Iranian spokesman blamed Israel for an attack on an Iranian base inside Syria and warned that Iran would retaliate. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would face the Iranian threat.

-> INSERT VIDEO HERE

“Today too we are not deterred from a struggle against those who strive to annihilate us because we know how to defend ourselves with our own forces, which is the essence of independence,” he said.

“We all appreciate the strong alliance with the United States,” Netanyahu continued. “We all welcome President Donald Trump’s historic decision to recognize Jerusalem as our capital and to transfer the embassy of the strongest power in the world to it. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, America.”

The celebration ended with a rendition of the song “Hallelujah” for the things that were and the things to come.

Trump speaks out for Pastor Andrew Brunson after 'disturbing' trial twist



Pastor Andrew Brunson. (PHOTO: [WND](#))

Originally published in [CBN News](#)

President Donald Trump is speaking out for captive American Pastor Andrew Brunson who's being held in a Turkish prison.

Tuesday night the president tweeted: "Pastor Andrew Brunson, a fine gentleman and Christian leader in the United States, is on trial and being persecuted in Turkey for no reason. They call him a Spy, but I am more a Spy than he is. Hopefully he will be allowed to come home to his beautiful family where he belongs!

Pastor Andrew Brunson, a fine gentleman and Christian leader in the United States, is on trial and being persecuted in Turkey for no reason. They call him a Spy, but I am more a Spy than he is. Hopefully he will be allowed to come home to his beautiful family where he belongs!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [April 18, 2018](#)

On trial for his Christian faith

Brunson, who is on trial for his Christian faith, was sent back to prison following his hearing Monday.

“The judge late today said the trial will be continued until May 7 and ordered Pastor Andrew Brunson to return to prison. Instead of being returned to the prison he was at prior to this hearing date, he’s been sent back to a prison that is notorious for its overcrowding and it is a prison where eight prisoners are to be held in one cell. Instead, there are 22,” [American Centre for Law and Justice](#) Chief Counsel Jay Sekulow said on his podcast Monday.

Sekulow called this latest development “disturbing” and is asking the international community to continue to call for the pastor’s release.

Brunson has been imprisoned for 18 months in both grossly overcrowded prison cells and solitary confinement.

“His pre-trial detention, I would argue, has become a sort of torture,” Aykan Erdemir told CBN News. Erdemir is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies and a former member of Turkey’s parliament.

He says Brunson’s trial was historically long – 12 hours.

“Right after the noon break when he came back and was defending himself he had a mental breakdown. He sat down; it’s reported that he started crying and he told the judge how difficult it is to survive in this kind of isolation chamber,” Erdemir said.

“The next three weeks are critical to turn up the pressure on Turkey,” Sekulow warned.

Trying his best to convince the court of his innocence

Pastor Brunson took the stand Monday and did his best to convince the court to give him his freedom. He faces 35 years in prison.

"I've never done something against Turkey. I love Turkey. I've been praying for Turkey for 25 years. I want truth to come out," Brunson told the court, according to [Reuters](#). "I do not accept the charges mentioned in the indictment. I was never involved in any illegal activities."

ACLJ Senior Counsel Cece Heil told CBN News the Turkish government is using false testimonies and anonymous witnesses to build a case against the pastor.

"According to Mr Cem Halavurt (Turkish attorney representing Pastor Brunson) Turkey has resorted to false testimony by secret witnesses, stating in the recent interrogation report that, 'This is one of those operations that we all have witnessed in many investigations within the Turkish judicial system with fake digital data and directed statements by secret witnesses. We clearly see that a similar operation has already been started against my client,'" Heil reports.

Meanwhile, Sekulow is encouraging believers to join more than half a million others in signing a [petition](#) calling for the pastor's release.

Both Sam Brownback, US ambassador-at-large for religious freedoms, and North Carolina Sen Thom Tillis attended Brunson's trial.

"I know that neither of the two had confirmation ahead of the visit that they would be allowed into the courtroom. They took a risk and I'm glad they did. They certainly raised the profile of this case. I think their presence conveyed to their Turkish counterparts that Pastor Brunson is not forgotten," Erdemir said.

“The administration is deeply concerned about this case. We completely believe factually he is innocent. Andrew Brunson is innocent. We are hopeful that the judicial system will find that, that he will be released, released soon,” Brownback told reporters after the trial.

Accused of helping orchestrate a coup

Turkey accuses the 50-year-old North Carolina native of helping orchestrate a coup that threatened President Recep Erdoğan’s leadership in 2016.

The 62-page indictment also charges the pastor with committing an act of terrorism by spreading the Gospel in the majority Muslim country.

“Turkey has literally taken the position that Christianisation is terrorism,” ACLJ Senior Counsel Cece Heil told CBN News. “They have no specific evidence that Pastor Brunson has committed any crime. The fact that he is a Christian, and specifically a Christian pastor, is what they are equating as terrorism.”

Sen Tillis travelled from North Carolina to attend the trial and expressed “deep disappointment” in the court ruling.

“After the questionable evidence presented at the hearing, I am more convinced than ever that Pastor Brunson has a compelling case to be released and should be exonerated,” Tillis said in a statement provided to CBN News.

“Turkey and the United States have a long history of alliance and partnership, and I hope the Turkish government will make a good faith effort to serve proper justice to Pastor Brunson and allow him to be free once again,” Tillis added.

Erdemir says Brunson is simply a pawn in Erdogan’s effort to practice “hostage diplomacy” with the US.

“At the centre of his paranoia is his fixation with the West

and what he sees as the Judeo-Christian civilisation. This is part of his crusade against the West,” Erdemir said.

A group of Christians gathered just outside the White House gates Monday to pray for Brunson’s release and protest his captivity.

“Hebrews 13:3 says this: *Remember those in prison as if you were in prison with them and those who are suffering, you suffer along with them,* ” Rev Pat Mahoney, director of the Christian Defence Coalition, told CBN News at the prayer vigil.

‘Multitude’ of Egyptians coming to Christ despite persecution from Muslim extremists



Christian worshippers carry crosses as they take part in the Eastern and

Orthodox Church's Good Friday procession in the Old City of Jerusalem April 13 2012. (PHOTO: Reuters)

Originally published in [The Gospel Herald](#)

Despite continued persecution from Muslim extremists, Christians in Egypt remain unwavering in their faith, compelling a "multitude" to come to Christ, church leaders have revealed.

The Rev Sameh Hanna, associate pastor at the Evangelical Church in Cairo, told [Premier](#) on Monday that the "mood is very, very good amongst Christians who are living in Egypt."

"Not because the situation is good or bad – that is not the reason," he explained. "We have two kinds of news – earthly news, which is very ugly, very discouraging and I think in the West, you get only the earthly news – a bombing here or there."

"But there is heavenly news. We know what is going on spiritually. We see things that not everybody is seeing. We see things you are not hearing. We see the multitude coming to the knowledge of Christ from every background, so this brings joy to us."

Faith in God alone

The Rev Andrea Zaki Stephanous, president of the Protestant Community of Egypt, said that believers in the country put their faith in God alone, as further attacks by the Islamic State terror group or other extremists are a very real possibility – even in church.

"When security knows I'm going to a certain church there will be double security, but you never know. You can expect at any moment that someone will come with a bomb and create a massacre. So every day we trust God and we go," he said.

Fr Kyrillos Fathy was at St Mark's Coptic Church, one of the houses of worship that was bombed by Islamic extremists during Palm Sunday of last year, and said that he narrowly escaped crossing paths with the suicide bomber during the attack.

"Even though the incident was very terrible and it left us emotionally vulnerable, we believe in the Bible and in the verse in the Bible that says everything works out for the good," Fathy shared.

He explained that the church was full for service after the attack on Palm Sunday despite the horror the people had suffered through.

Sharing the gospel with everyone

Albert Falzi, SAT 7's Egypt director told Premier they want to share the message of Christ with everyone – no matter how resistant to the gospel.

"Many times we receive comments from people who are not Christian and we welcome them. Even when people send hostile messages, we just react in the Christian way," he said.

Last Palm Sunday, ISIS carried out [twin attacks](#) on churches in Egypt, leaving 45 people dead and 126 injured. In a letter written to persecution watchdog [Open Doors USA](#), believers in the region declared they would not give in to the spirit of fear, but would attend Easter services to worship Jesus.

"We love Egypt. We will not leave Egypt. We cast out the spirit of fear by the power of His love," the believers wrote. "We will go to churches on Easter and beyond to worship the Name of Jesus."

"We will spread out the light we were given by His grace, in every street, village, town and city," the letter continued. "We will keep praying for all Egyptians, especially for those dark minded, brainwashed and miss-led so that our Father may cleanse their minds and hearts."

Saudi textbooks still teaching hate, says US Commission



Secondary students sit for an exam in a government school in Riyadh June 15 2008. (PHOTO: Reuters)

Originally published in [CBN News](#)

Despite a highly publicised reform movement in Saudi Arabia, Saudi school textbooks still include violent and intolerant content, [according to a new study](#).

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) found passages praising jihad against non-Muslims, calling for the execution of apostates and those who mock Allah or Muhammed, demeaning non-Muslims and warning Muslims not to associate with them.

“USCIRF is disappointed to find inflammatory content in Saudi

textbooks that was previously thought to have been removed," said Chairman Daniel Mark.

The State Department last year designated Saudi Arabia as a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for "engaging or tolerating systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom."

Officials expressed disappointment that the reform efforts of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is trying to bring religious tolerance to the desert kingdom, have not been extended to the nation's school textbooks.

USCIRF is urging Congress and the administration to make textbook reform a priority in its engagement with the Saudi government.