

Lifting Up Photos of Persecuted Christians, Congressman Presents 'Disturbing Reality'

The global persecution of Christians has gone from bad to worse, said U.S. Rep. Chris Smith at a congressional hearing on Capitol Hill Tuesday.

Smith, a New Jersey Republican, along with other U.S. House subcommittee members and various speakers gave testimony about religious hostilities against Christians worldwide. Speakers noted that **religious persecution** violates basic human rights.

Smith likened the persecution of Christians in Iraq to genocide.

"Christians remain the most persecuted group in the world and thus deserve special attention," he said.

Elliott Abrams, senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, said that past administrations have not taken the issue of Christian persecution seriously enough.

"The system isn't working properly," said Abrams, who serves on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. "It sends a message to other countries that we don't care."

Abrams held up several photos of Christians who had either been harassed or killed for their faith. "These images reflect a disturbing reality," he said.

Other countries such as Nigeria, Vietnam, Burma and Egypt are notorious for persecuting Christians.

Abrams and Smith stressed that those countries that experience religious liberty must hold other countries to a higher standard.

John Allen, an associate editor at *The Boston Globe*, agreed by saying that in the Western world, Christianity is seen as a “social institution.”

“It is hard for Christians to wrap their minds around persecution that takes place around the world,” Allen said.

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