

What Is the State of Religious Freedom Around the World?

This week, the U.S. State Department released the religious freedom portion of its 2015 Annual Report on International Freedom.

Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom David Saperstein discussed the findings during a press conference. He said his office “continued to make headway” on Obama Administration priorities.

“In many countries, religious freedom flourishes,” he said. “According to the 2014 annual Pew study on global religious freedom trends, 76 percent of the world’s countries provide the basic conditions for people to freely practice their religion or beliefs.

“Our work, however, focuses on those 24 percent of the countries with serious restrictions on religious freedom, whether caused by government policies or the hostile acts of individuals, organizations, or societal groups. These are countries in which 74 percent of the world’s population lives.

“In countries where religious minorities have long contributed to their national societies in relative comity for decades, centuries, even millennia, we continue to witness violent upheavals, some of historic proportions, in which entire communities are in danger of being driven out of their homelands based solely on their religious or ethnic identities. In the pages of this report, we’re able to put a human face on this incredibly important issue that touches so many lives and remains a value of such concern in the hearts of the American people.”

Not surprisingly, Saperstein focused much of his comments on Muslim persecution of religious minorities in Africa and Asia, and in Europe through “blasphemy laws.” [Click here](#) to view his full comments and answers to press questions. [Click here](#) to read the religious freedom report.