

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-D022
Title: Respecting the Human Rights of Religious and Ethnic Minorities in China
Proposer: Ms. Sarah Lawton
Topic: Human Rights, Religious Freedom

Directly Related: (Attached)

2018-D009 Set Forth Christian Principles to Guide Responses to Human Migration
2018-D050 Encourage Advocacy and Prayer for Victims of Religious Persecution
2012-A016 Affirm the Moral Responsibility to Protect Populations from Atrocities
2003-D020 Oppose Legal Systems Which Violate Human Rights
1994-D015 Reaffirm Support for Human Rights
1991-D127 Affirm Support for Religious Freedom in the People's Republic of China

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2018-A222 Condemn Caste- or Descent-Based Discrimination
2015-D035 Support the Church of Pakistan Against Persecution
2000-D024 Call on the US to Condemn All Forms of Caste-Based Discrimination
1994-D020 Advocate on Behalf of Human Rights in Burma
1991-C019 Express Solidarity With the Chinese People
1991-D052 Urge Government of Japan to Uphold Minority Rights
1988-D050 Join in Expressing Support for Human Rights in Japan

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2018, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#) or call 800-525-9329.

D022 - Respecting the Human Rights of Religious and Ethnic Minorities in China

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Ms. Sarah Lawton

Endorsed by: Mr. Alan Murray, The Rev. Dr. Cameron Partridge

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

HiA: HB

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 07 - Social Justice & International Policy

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That this 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church recognize with grave concern growing authoritarianism, attacks on democratic systems, and human rights abuses linked to ethnic and religious nationalism in many countries and regions around the world, and urge vigilance by Christians and all people of faith, civil society organizations, and governments in resisting this troubling trend; and be it further

Resolved, that the Episcopal Church take note of a pattern of repression and surveillance by the Government of the People's Republic of China against many different minority ethnic and religious groups, recognizing especially, with deep alarm, the recent campaign to control and constrain Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and other Turkic Muslim people in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China and around the world, which has been characterized by global human rights organizations as a crime against humanity due to the mass scale of surveillance, arbitrary arrest and detention, forced labor, cultural and religious suppression and erasure, and family separation in Xinjiang as well as surveillance of members of these ethnic communities living abroad from China, including in the United States; and be it further

Resolved, that the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations and Episcopal Public Policy Network support policies to pressure the Chinese government to respect the human rights of these and other minority peoples in China and to protect members of the diasporic communities of Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups from

intimidation by Chinese embassies and agents and stop their repatriation to China; and be it further

Resolved, that the Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church take this resolution into account in the implementation of its corporate human rights screen for the Church's investment portfolio, with attention to the use of forced labor in the supply chain of companies in which the church is invested, in Xinjiang and elsewhere in the world.

Explanation

Human rights advocates have watched in growing alarm as the Chinese government has cracked down on the majority-Muslim autonomous region of Xinjiang in the northwest part of China, which began with the “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism” campaign in 2014. Amnesty International^[i], Human Rights Watch,^[ii] The New York Times,^[iii] the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists,^[iv] and others have exposed the massive scale of human rights violations occurring in the region, with as many as one million people detained in hundreds of prisons and prison camps, mass surveillance and control, family separation, and cultural suppression including the destruction of two-thirds of the mosques in the region. Surveillance and harassment have also extended to Uyghurs and Chinese Turkic Muslims living abroad.

Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7, a “crime against humanity” is defined as certain acts knowingly committed in a widespread and systematic manner against a civilian population.^[v] Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have characterized the Chinese government's Xinjiang campaign as a crime against humanity, which is among the gravest categories of human rights abuses in international law. Several governments, including the United States Department of State^[vi] and the parliaments of Canada and the Netherlands, have listed the campaign as genocide, an even graver characterization; and Human Rights Watch noted in its 2021 report that while the organization had “not documented the existence of the necessary genocidal intent at this time . . . nothing in this report precludes such a finding and, if such evidence were to emerge, the acts being committed against Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang—a group protected by the 1948 Genocide Convention—could also support a finding of genocide.”^[vii]

While most of these policies are not under the control of U.S. policy, the United States and other countries in which the Episcopal Church is located can bring diplomatic pressure to bear on China; moreover, we all, including the Episcopal Church, are potentially implicated in forced-labor goods that are being produced in Xinjiang that are part of our supply chain of consumer goods and other products. We can lift our voices in advocacy and through corporate engagement or divestment in support of these minority ethnic communities in China. We can also urge our governments to protect the diaspora communities living in our countries from harassment and surveillance.

[i] “Nowhere Feels Safe: Uyghurs Tell of China-Led Intimidation Campaign Abroad,” Amnesty International, February 2020.
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2020/02/china-uyghurs-abroad-living-in-fear/>.

[ii] “Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China’s Crimes Against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims,” Human Rights Watch, April 19, 2021.
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting>.

[iii] <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/16/world/asia/china-xinjiang-documents.html>.

[iv] “Exposed: China’s Operating Manuals for Mass Internment and Arrest by Algorithm,” International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, November 24, 2019.
<https://www.icij.org/investigations/china-cables/exposed-chinas-operating-manuals-for-mass-internment-and-arrest-by-algorithm/>.

[v] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resource-library/Documents/RS-Eng.pdf>.

[vi] 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: China (Includes Hong Kong, Macau, and Tibet), US Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/china/>.

[vii] “Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots: China’s Crimes Against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims,” Human Rights Watch, April 19, 2021, Summary.
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting>.



Resolution Number: 2018-D009
Title: Set Forth Christian Principles to Guide Responses to Human Migration
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church recognize that human migration has always been part of the human condition, and that human migration will continue in future, and will likely increase due to any number of variables including the effects of climate change on human habitat, economic instability, or ongoing war and conflict, and remembering the call in both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures to welcome the stranger, building stronger and more diverse community: “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:19) and “I was a stranger, and you welcomed me; Truly I tell you, just as you did it to the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25: 35, 40); and be it further

Resolved, That this General Convention set forth these principles to guide our church’s response to human migration, including internal migration, in the future:

1. We recognize the fundamental human rights of all people as expressed in our Baptismal Covenant and we reaffirm that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights applies to all refugees and both regular and irregular migrants;
2. We remember that Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were refugees, as they were forced to flee into a foreign land to escape violence;
3. We call on all governments to keep their commitments and legal obligations to respect the rights and dignity of all people, including access to justice and social services, while recognizing the complexity of developing just immigration policies in any country, and the legitimate need to protect borders and address security threats to sovereign nations;
4. We commit the church to learning and engaging migration issues as part of the Jesus Movement, sacredly holding the voices and leadership of migrants themselves and honoring their leadership in this process;
5. We will endeavor to learn and address root causes of migration and advocate for just solutions with Anglican/Episcopal, ecumenical, and interfaith partners;
6. We acknowledge the connection between U.S. policies, and the policies of other states, and the root drivers of migration, including climate change, armed conflict, and disruption of local economies through global trade policies;
7. We stress the importance of demonstrating hospitality and welcome as Christian values at the local level, preaching hospitality and positive storytelling to overcome xenophobia;
8. We insist that the United States of America and other powerful, wealthy nations, and all nations to the best of their ability, contribute to resettlement, establish and maintain safe and orderly humanitarian protection for refugees, internally displaced persons, and other migrants seeking long-term solutions and safety;
9. We call on all nations to maintain family unity and safety during migration;
10. We insist that economic and foreign relationships among governments should not increase the need of migration due to economic hardships, persecution, and violence;
11. We insist that governments strive to maintain conditions which are conducive to internal stability and employment opportunity;

12. **In the event that people are forced to migrate, we insist that our governments address the drivers holistically, without racial, ethnic, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental ability, health status, or religious prejudice;**
13. **We insist that our governments adhere to the internationally accepted principle known as non-refoulement, that stipulates that countries should not return migrants and refugees to unsafe conditions in their home countries or other countries;**
14. **We recognize the links between migrants in vulnerable transit situations and human trafficking and other dangers, and will seek to establish and maintain robust, safe, and orderly routes for refugees;**
15. **We urge governments to expand refugee resettlement as a humanitarian response that offers individuals safety and opportunity;**
16. **We recognize that displacement due to climate change already happens and will increase, and we insist that our governments and the international community must commit to development of long-term protection solutions for persons displaced by climate change; and be it further**

Resolved, That this General Convention recognize the process underway at the United Nations to establish a Global Compact on Refugees,[i] and a Global Compact on Migration, processes that have included advocacy by The Episcopal Church Representative to the UN and by the Office of Government Relations Refugee and Immigration Policy Advisor; and be it further

Resolved, That this General Convention urge the Office of the Presiding Bishop to ensure continued representation of The Episcopal Church at the United Nations and other multinational consultations with faith communities on refugee and migrant issues, alongside the Anglican Communion Office, Lutheran World Federation, and other ecumenical and interfaith partners in responding to the global refugee crisis; and be it further

Resolved, That this General Convention encourage all congregations and dioceses to learn about the intricacies of migration, including root causes through the resources provided by Episcopal Migration Ministries and its Partners in Welcome network and engage in aiding migrants to the best of their ability.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), pp. 1065-1067.



Resolution Number: 2018-D050
Title: Encourage Advocacy and Prayer for Victims of Religious Persecution
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church reaffirm its commitment to the freedom of all people in all places to profess and practice their religious beliefs as a universal human right; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention express its concern that adherents of religious minorities in many nations and cultures are persecuted by religious majorities and by governments hostile to religion through gratuitous criticism, legal strictures, social exclusion, economic discrimination, sanctuary desecration, and physical violence; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention encourage dioceses, congregations and mission organizations to include outreach to persecuted religious minorities in their international mission work; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention encourage dioceses, congregations and mission organizations to establish in their international mission work relationships of solidarity with Christians experiencing persecution by reason of their faith in Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request congregations to include in the Prayers of the People intercessions for persecuted Christians and other persecuted religious minorities on the second Sunday of each of the following seasons of the Church Year: Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention encourage congregations and dioceses to support reputable organizations that help those who are victims of religious persecution; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Episcopal Church's Office of Governmental Relations to advocate on behalf of legislation and international appeals to protect religious freedom; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention Office communicate this resolution to the United States Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and to the bipartisan United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), pp. 369-370.



Resolution Number: 2012-A016
Title: Affirm the Moral Responsibility to Protect Populations from Atrocities
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention affirms that our Lord's commandment to love thy neighbor implies a binding moral responsibility on sovereign states to protect their populations from mass atrocities, including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as defined by international law; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention welcomes the United Nations' establishment of the responsibility to protect as an international norm, and its efforts to uphold it through collective action when individual states fail to do so; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention commends the President of the United States for adopting the responsibility to protect as a principle of United States foreign policy; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention most strongly discourages the abuse of this norm to rationalize military actions in sovereign states for political ends; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention encourages the Presiding Bishop through the Office of Government Relations to join the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect so as to shape the continued development of precautionary principles for this norm and promote its faithful implementation; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention urges all Episcopalians to understand and reflect upon the principle of the responsibility to protect, and to advocate for its adherence by their respective governmental leaders.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), p. 226.



Resolution Number: 2003-D020
Title: Oppose Legal Systems Which Violate Human Rights
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention support the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Anglican leaders who have jointly affirmed with Islamic leaders in various countries our shared desire to honor those teachings in our respective traditions which work to avoid coercion and respect individual liberty; and be it further

Resolved, That in further dialogue, particular attention be paid to vigorously oppose any nation's or other governmental body's imposition or continuation of a legal system which violates fundamental human rights; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention urge the application of these principles by the United States government to the reconstruction underway in Iraq and Afghanistan, in peace negotiations in Sudan, and in ongoing discussions with Nigeria and Indonesia, with particular attention to the rights of religious minorities, women, and those seeking to change their faith.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 677.



Resolution Number: 1994-D015
Title: Reaffirm Support for Human Rights
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 71st General Convention commend to the National Council of Churches, which has requested dialogue with its member commissions on human rights as it prepares its own policy statement on this subject, the perspective contained in this resolution; and be it further

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention reaffirm its support for human rights throughout the world and states its conviction that civil rights and political freedom are the universal bedrock of any meaningful scheme of human rights; and be it further

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention commend ecumenical and interfaith support for human rights as a moral imperative for Christians, growing out of the biblical understandings that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, that they are endowed by God with an inalienable dignity, and that they thereby possess a value that is prior to and not dependent upon the acknowledgment of such rights by a political entity; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention commend to the National Council of Churches, which has requested dialogue with its member communions on human rights as it prepares its own policy statement on that subject, the perspective contained in this resolution and its accompanying explanation; and be it further

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention encourage the President and the Secretary of State to take the initiative internationally in promoting the cause of human rights and in restoring the primary focus of human rights effort[s] to the civil rights and political freedoms that are the building blocks of decent and humane societies; and be it further

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention commend continuing dialogue, both within the churches and between other faith communities and their governments, on issues of human rights, especially those issues relevant to their own jurisdictions.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), pp. 183-84.



Resolution Number: 1991-D127
Title: Affirm Support for Religious Freedom in the People's Republic of China
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church call on the government of the People's Republic of China to release Liu Huanwen and Xu Yongze as a sign of good will and cooperation; and be it further

Resolved, That the Episcopal Church support the rights of Chinese Christians to form associations free from government control and that these associations be permitted contact with co-religionists outside of China; and be it further

Resolved, That the Episcopal Church affirm its support for religious freedom for Christians in the People's Republic of China to worship and express their faith without fear or hindrance, and for the recognition of all human rights by the government; and be it further

Resolved, That the Executive Council encourage the organization of delegations of clergy and laity to the People's Republic of China to meet with government and church leaders to encourage the guarantee of religious liberty for all believers; and be it further

Resolved, That all official Episcopal representatives on delegations to China, including those on trips sponsored by ecumenical bodies, present to government leaders in the People's Republic of China the names of known religious prisoners of conscience, as identified by Amnesty International, and other such organizations; and be it further

Resolved, That the findings of these delegations be made publicly available through news organizations and the publications of the Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the Convention call on the government of the People's Republic of China to release all political prisoners being held because of their religious activities and permit them to function freely, without interference from the state; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be delivered to the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the United States, the Secretary of State of the United States, the Chairman of the Committees on Ways and Means and on Foreign Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives, and to the Chairman of the Finance and Foreign Relations Committees of the United States Senate.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 245.