



# drishti

## International Religious Freedom Report 2019

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **US State Department** has released its annual **International Religious Freedom (IRF) Report 2019**, which is a survey of the state of **religious freedom** across the world.

- It published a report i.e. **the country report for India** to highlight the issue of religious freedom in the country.
- Earlier, **the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF report)** downgraded India's religious freedom to the lowest grade — in the 'Country of Particular Concern (CPC)' category.

### Key Points

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- The IRF report listed countries for **positive developments in religious freedom** and **negative examples**.
  - **Nicaragua, Nigeria and China** were cited as negative examples.
  - It stated that in China, state-sponsored repression against all religions continues to intensify because of the Chinese Communist Party.
  - **India is not cited in either list.**

- **The Country Report for India:**
  - It highlighted the developments that took place in 2019 i.e. **the status of Jammu and Kashmir, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).**
  - It discussed in detail about **mob lynchings, anti-conversion laws, cow vigilantism** and related issues.
  - Taking note of the alleged attacks and discrimination **against religious and ethnic minorities in India, the report emphasised the need to ensure full protection to minorities in the country as guaranteed under the Constitution.**
  - It also outlines the U.S. engagement with India on these issues.
- **India's Stand:**
  - The Indian government **has rejected the report by asserting** that there is no locus standi **for a foreign government to comment on the state of its citizens' constitutionally protected rights.**
  - It also emphasised that the report **did not talk about the religious freedom given to various communities** in India.

## **Freedom of Religion in India**

- Freedom of religion in India is a **fundamental right** guaranteed by **Article 25-28 of the Constitution of India.**
  - **Article 25** (Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion)
  - **Article 26** (Freedom to manage religious affairs)
  - **Article 27** (Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion).
  - **Article 28** (Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions)
- Further Article 29 and 30 of the Constitution deal with the protection of interest of minorities.

## **Religious Freedom in the US:**

- The US government has signed an executive order which included a move to formally prioritise religious freedom in the U.S. foreign policy.
- The order also directed the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** to allocate \$50 million in its yearly budget towards programmes that sought to promote religious freedom.
- Recently, the US faced domestic protests in response to the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man at the hands of a white police officer.

**Source: TH**