



International Religious Freedom Report 2022

For Prelims: USCIRF, International Religious Freedom Report 2022

For Mains: Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests , Religious Freedom in India and relation Issues

Why in News?

Recently, the [US Commission on International Religious Freedom \(USCIRF\)](#) has recommended for the **second year in the row to put India on a list (Countries of Particular Concern or CPCs)** for the worst violations of religious freedoms in 2021.

- Earlier, the US State Department released a [strong and critical report on human rights in India in 2021.](#)

What is USCIRF?

- USCIRF is an **independent, bipartisan US federal government commission**, dedicated to defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad.
- It is an **advisory body to the US Congress.**
- USCIRF's 2022 Annual Report **provides recommendations to enhance the U.S. government's promotion** of freedom of religion or belief abroad.
- It is **Headquartered in Washington DC.**
- Established by the US government in 1998 after the inaction of the International Religious Freedom Act, **recommendations of USCIRF are non-binding on the state department.**
 - Traditionally, India does not recognize the view of USCIRF.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- The Report's primary focus is on **two groups of countries:**
 - **Country of Particular Concern (CPC):** It is a designation by the **US Secretary of State of a nation engaged in severe violations** of religious freedom under IRFA (**International Religious Freedom Act of 1998**).
 - **Special Watch List:** A "**Special Watch List**" country is one that is deemed not to meet all the CPC criteria but engages in or tolerates severe violations of [religious freedom.](#)
- The Report also **includes USCIRF's recommendations of violent nonstate** actors for designation by the US State Department as **Entities of Particular Concern (EPCs), under International Review of Financial Analysis (IRFA).**
- The report also **highlights important global developments and trends related to religious freedom** during 2021—including in countries that do not meet the criteria for CPC or SWL recommendations.

- These include the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) and religious freedom, blasphemy and [hate speech law enforcement](#), transnational repression, religious intolerance in Europe, deteriorating religious freedom conditions in South Asia, and political upheaval that raises religious freedom concerns.

What are the Latest Recommendations of USCIRF?

- **For the CPC List:**
 - Other than India, countries recommended for the CPC designation are **Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria, and Vietnam.**
 - Countries recommended **for redesignating include Myanmar, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea,** Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as CPCs.
- **For A Special Watch List:**
 - Algeria, Cuba, and Nicaragua were **placed in 2021.**
 - **Others include** Azerbaijan, CAR, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan.
- **For EPCs:**
 - Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, the Houthis, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP or ISIS-West Africa), and Jamaat Nasr al-Islam Wal Muslimin (JNIM).

What are the Concerns Raised about India?

- The report highlighted that the government had **“repressed critical voices”**, especially minority communities and individuals reporting on them.
 - It mentions the **arrest of rights activist Khuran Pervez in Kashmir**, and the July 2021 death of octogenarian Father Stan Swamy, arrested in October 2020 under the [Unlawful Activities Prevention Act 1967 \(UAPA\)](#).
- The report also touches on challenges faced by [Non Governmental Organisations \(NGOs\)](#), especially about foreign funding.
- It also highlights [anti-conversion laws](#). In October 2021, **Karnataka’s government ordered a survey of churches and priests** in the state and authorized police to conduct a door-to-door inspection to find Hindus who have converted to Christianity.

What is the State of 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 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 interests of minorities.

[Source: TH](#)