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U.S. CSW concerned by potential loss of United States Commission for International Religious Freedom

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is deeply concerned at the potential loss of a key mechanism in monitoring religious freedom worldwide, if the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is not reauthorized by Congress before its mandate expires on December 16.

USCIRF is a nonpartisan federal body that reviews the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress. The Commission would have shut down on November 18, but a spending bill passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate on November 17 granted it a four-week reprieve, the third time such a measure has been approved since Senator Richard Durbin, Senate Majority Whip (Democrat), put a hold on its reauthorization.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "USCIRF has for more than a decade played an important role as a leading watchdog on religious freedom worldwide. Its closure would not only be a significant loss to the work of promoting religious freedom but also an indication to others that the US is less willing to treat this issue with the seriousness it deserves. More than that, USCIRF is a key mechanism within the broader US government framework for promoting religious freedom worldwide. For that reason, CSW calls on Congress not only to reauthorize USCIRF but to take up amendments to the International Religious Freedom Act -- offered earlier this year by Congressman Frank Wolf -- that would require the US State Department to give greater priority to promoting international religious freedom. Given the terrible fate of religious minorities the world over, we believe these steps are vital".

Notes to Editors:

1. As an agency specializing in religious freedom, CSW finds USCIRF reports to be an impartial and insightful resource. For example, the report [Connecting the Dots: Education and Religious Discrimination in Pakistan](#), sponsored by the Commission, contributes a critical nuance to a broader long-term policy debate, with implications for the place of religious freedom among future generations in the country.