



# REPORT from the Capital

## Pentagon debunks media reports of anti-Christian military policies

Widely circulated reports in conservative media outlets that Christian soldiers could be court-martialed for sharing their faith have alarmed some Christians in recent weeks.

But the Department of Defense on May 2 sought to debunk that speculation, saying that while aggressive proselytizing is barred, evangelization is still permitted and the rights of all believers — and non-believers — are secure.

“The U.S. Department of Defense has never and will never single out a particular religious group for persecution or prosecution,” Pentagon spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen said in a statement. “The Department makes reasonable accommodations for all religions and celebrates the religious diversity of our service members.

“Service members can share their faith (evangelize), but must not force unwanted, intrusive attempts to convert others of any faith or no faith to one’s beliefs (proselytization),” Christensen added.

He also said that “when religious harassment complaints are reported, commanders take action based on the gravity of the occurrence on a case by case basis.” He did not specify what the range of penalties could be.

Whether the push back will be successful in dispelling suspicions, even within the ranks, is uncertain. Even as Christensen released his statement, Rear Adm. William D. Lee of the U.S. Coast Guard warned of threats to faith within the military while speaking at National Day of Prayer observances on Capitol Hill.

“I am not talking about proselytizing; I am vehemently against that,” the admiral said in remarks that drew a standing ovation. “I’m talking about gently whispering

the gospel.”

After the Pentagon’s statement, two Southern Baptist Convention leaders issued their own statement asking the military to clarify what it means by making “proselytizing” a punishable offense.

Kevin Ezell, head of the SBC North American Mission Board, which oversees chaplains, and Russell Moore, president-elect of the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, released a 1,500-word statement of concern May 6 about the media reports.

The leaders said that, while some of the reports alleging hostility toward evangelical Christianity were mistaken or exaggerated, others contained elements “indicative of a troubling lack of respect for true

religious diversity in our military.”

Baptist Joint Committee Executive Director J. Brent Walker said this issue does not need to cause “a battle in the culture war to break out.”

“It’s really pretty simple. Military personnel should be allowed to share their faith when it is welcomed. But uninvited proselytizing should not be permitted, especially when it follows the inherently coercive chain of command,” Walker said.

The current controversy seems to have originated with Fox News contributor Todd Starnes, who on April 30 wrote about a Pentagon meeting on harassment and tolerance issues; among the attendees was the head of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, Mikey Weinstein.

Weinstein is known for his inflammatory rhetoric about religious believers and Christians in the military in particular. He told *The Washington Post* after the April 23 meeting that proselytizing in the military is akin to “spiritual rape,” among other



Magazine of the Baptist Joint Committee

Vol. 68 No. 5

May 2013

### INSIDE:

- ❑ World report . . . . 2
- ❑ Public prayer . . . . 4
- ❑ Ground Zero cross 5
- ❑ Marriage debates . . 6

Connect with the BJC

BJCOnline.org or  
BJCmobile.org



BJCOnline.org/  
Blog



Facebook.com/  
ReligiousLiberty



@BJCOntheHill

# 15 countries cited for religious freedom violations

WASHINGTON – It can be hard to come up with a list of countries with the most egregious records on religious freedom when some of the world’s worst offenders are not even nation states.

For its annual report of violators, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom counts 15 nations where abuse of religious liberty is “systemic, egregious, and ongoing.”

But the commission, which was created by Congress in 1998 as an independent watchdog panel, also wants to highlight the crimes of non-nations, which for the first time this year get their own section in the report.

“USCIRF added a special emphasis on non-state actors, as their violent actions are a growing threat to religious freedom,” said Knox Thames, the commission’s director of policy and research.

“Violence perpetrated by non-state actors against religious minorities and others who conflict with their world view is increasingly common, with incidents occurring in places as diverse as Pakistan and Nigeria.”

Somalia, for example, which does not make the list, is home to al-Shabaab, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization that has brutally suppressed Christians and Sufi Muslims who do not subscribe to its radical interpretation of Islam.

“Somalis accused of committing crimes or who al-Shabaab deems to have deviated from accepted behaviors are punished through stoning, amputation, flogging, and/or detention,” according to the report.

On its 15-nation list of the worse offenders, USCIRF includes eight that the U.S. State Department also considers “Countries of Particular Concern”: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Uzbekistan.

But as in years past, the commission wants the State Department to add seven more: Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Vietnam.

This year’s USCIRF list is one country smaller than it

was in 2012. Gone is Turkey, whose addition caused an uproar among Turks who called the designation unfounded and damaging to USCIRF’s reputation.

Orthodox Christians welcomed the 2012 designation after years of arguing that Turkey – home to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, spiritual leader of the world’s 250 million Orthodox Christians – continues to shutter their seminary in that country and withholds legal status from many religious groups.

Thames said the commission’s decision against designating Turkey as a “country of particular concern” this year was unanimous.

The nation can point to a genuine loosening of restrictions on religious communities, but “nevertheless,” the report concludes, “the Turkish government’s interpretation of secularism requires absolute state control over all aspects of religion in the public sphere.”

But the decision to “promote” Turkey to a country “to be monitored” struck several commissioners as too lenient.

Last year, it was “an error to place Turkey among the world’s worst violators of religious freedom,” four of eight commissioners wrote in a dissent included in this year’s report. “But this year’s designation has erred in the opposite direction.”

The dissenters want it to be designated a “Tier 2” country, just below the most concerning 15.

The USCIRF is not formally part of any branch of the federal government. The agency has nine commissioners (appointed by the president and the Congressional leadership of both political parties) and more than a dozen full time staff members. The 2011 bill reauthorizing the USCIRF was held up in Congress for months. The bill that passed cut the agency’s budget and imposed term limits on the commissioners.

The USCIRF’s current authorization will expire on Sept. 30, 2014.

—Lauren Markoe, Religion News Service and BJC staff reports



## *Honorary and memorial gifts to the Baptist Joint Committee*

**In honor of John Minott**  
by John B. Butler

**In honor of Dean Stewart**  
by Genetha B. McRoy

**In honor of Brent Walker and Holly Hollman**  
by Walter B. and Kay W. Shurden

**In memory of William Horace Boyette**  
by Lewis and Karen Liles

**In memory of Lindsey E. Martin**  
by Laveta M. Martin

**In memory of Loyd M. Starrett**  
by Elaine Starrett

# REFLECTIONS

## Reaching out to our Muslim neighbors

In the wake of the Boston Marathon bombing, a cab driver was dispatched to pick up a fare at a country club in northern Virginia. The driver, Mohamed Salim, an immigrant from Somalia, is Muslim. (He is also a naturalized U.S. citizen, an army reservist who served in Baghdad, and a married father of four!) When the passenger — who had been drinking but was said not to be intoxicated — found out Mr. Salim was Muslim, he allegedly became abusive, attacked Mr. Salim and fractured his jaw. Most of this was captured by video on Mr. Salim's cell phone. According to *The Washington Post*, the passenger, claiming that the Quran mandates Muslims to kill non-believing infidels, declared: "If you're a Muslim, you're a [expletive] jihadist," and continued, "You are just as bad as the rest of them."

In our post-9/11 world, this attitude is not that unusual. In fact, I have heard similar sentiments expressed in Baptist churches — sans the inebriation and expletives, of course.

Islamophobia is born of ignorance, mixed with a toxic dose of fear and anger. Can somebody cherry pick proof texts for violence in the Quran? Yes, you can. But you can do the same in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Should all of Islam — practiced by about one fifth of the world's population — be impugned by aberrant acts of criminals who happened to be motivated by their perverted understanding of their religion? Absolutely not, no more than all of Christendom can be blamed for violence spawned over the years by the Ku Klux Klan or all Baptists because of the rhetorical terrorism spewed by members of the Westboro Baptist Church.

The threat of violent Islamic terrorism is out there and must be resisted with all our might. But equally real are peace-loving, patriotic American Muslims — shall we hazard a guess of 99.99 percent? — whom we need to befriend and get to know.

Yes, a more mature understanding of Islam must be accompanied by a better relationship with Muslims. Here, it seems to me, Baptists are making major strides.

First, in our nation's capital, the Baptist Joint Committee has long worked with Muslim groups including the Islamic Society of North America (led by Dr. Sayyid Syeed) and Muslim Advocates (led by Farhana Khera). We have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with our Muslim friends on religious liberty issues dealing with construction of mosques and misguided congressional investigations of terrorism focused only on Islam.

Second, at the denominational level, Dr. Roy Medley, General Secretary of the American Baptist

Churches, USA, joined with other Baptist groups to convene two national Muslim-Baptist dialogues in the Boston area — one in January 2009 and another in December 2012. (The proceedings of the 2009 conference have been published.) Several Baptist groups — including the Alliance of Baptists, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Baptist World Alliance — cooperated with the American Baptists in the conversation with Muslim leaders, including Dr. Syeed. Reinforcing these two groundbreaking national conversations, three regional events were held to further the effort to promote understanding and peace between Islam and Christianity. These were hosted by Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas, American Baptist Seminary of the West in California and Virginia Union University in Virginia. Kudos to all of the leaders of and participants in these valuable conversations.

Third, much can be done at the local, congregational levels.

Associated Baptist Press reports, for example, that Grandin Court Baptist Church in Roanoke, Va., planned to provide housing and meals for a group of University of Michigan students volunteering for a community service project in southwest Virginia. Only after they showed up did Pastor Kevin Meadows and church members learn that all of the students were Muslims.

After quickly making a few changes in menus to accommodate Islamic dietary requirements and providing quiet prayer sanctuaries, the spring break service project went forward without a hitch. The students even joined the church for worship on Sunday morning. One of the students reportedly blogged, "The worship service itself was interesting. We constantly outline the differences in our religions when in fact there are tenets that hold true in many religions. ... The service was filled with music — a unique experience for me, yet one I enjoyed. There was a genuine sense of community and family within the church, and even as a visitor from Michigan, I felt accepted." Way to go, Kevin, and the brothers and sisters of Grandin Court Baptist. You're showing us all how to do it right.

Common sense, as well as Christian charity, tells us that it is wrong to scapegoat — to blame an entire religion for the despicable acts of a handful of murderous outliers who claim that religious affiliation. The face of Islam for us here in this country must be our Muslim neighbor, our Muslim conversation partner, our Muslim coalition colleague, and, yes, a Muslim cab driver trying to earn a living for his family.



J. Brent Walker  
Executive Director

---

“Common sense, as well as Christian charity, tells us that it is wrong to scapegoat — to blame an entire religion for the despicable acts of a handful of murderous outliers who claim that religious affiliation.”

# County boards in Md., N.C. challenged over prayer

County governing boards in Maryland and North Carolina are under fire for giving preference to Christian prayers in opening official meetings, joining a growing number of others in the region whose official prayer practices have been challenged.

Two residents of Carroll County, Md., filed suit May 1 in U.S. District Court, saying the commissioners' sectarian prayers violate the First Amendment. During 2011 and 2012, the board of commissioners opened its meetings on at least 54 separate occasions with prayers referring to "Jesus," "Savior" and the Lord's Prayer, according to the lawsuit.

None of the prayers referred to "non-Christian deities or used non-Christian language," the lawsuit says.

Doug Howard, president of the five-member board, told *The Baltimore Sun* the prayers — which rotate among commissioners at each meeting — pass constitutional muster.

"It is simply that commissioner's indi-

vidual thoughts," Howard told the *Sun*.

In May 2012, some watchdog groups were concerned when one Carroll County commissioner emailed an invitation to about 850 government employees to attend a monthly prayer session, to be led by her in the basement of the county office building. And three months earlier the board ran into opposition when it asked employees to attend a seminar on the Maryland Constitution, led by a conservative Christian minister.

In Union County, N.C., the Wisconsin-based Freedom from Religion Foundation sent the board of commissioners a letter in February and another in May calling its sectarian prayers unconstitutional, according to *The Charlotte Observer*.

Since 2011, sectarian prayers by government bodies in at least four North Carolina counties and one in Virginia have been challenged. In two — Forsyth County, N.C., and Pittsylvania County, Va. — courts ruled that, while official opening prayers are permissible, the First

Amendment requires that they be non-sectarian.



The suburbanization — and accompanying diversity and shifts in cultural norms — of counties like Carroll and Union may partly explain the increased challenges to official sectarian prayers.

Union County Commissioner Jonathan Thomas told the *Observer* he was shocked the county had to deal with criticism over the invocations in a community where "most people on a Sunday morning are in some type of Christian setting."

On April 1, two legislators introduced a resolution in the North Carolina House of Representatives asserting the state is not prohibited from establishing an official religion. The measure was effectively killed April 4 when Speaker Thom Tillis said it would not come up for a vote.

—Robert Dilday, *The Religious Herald*  
and BJC staff reports

---

## PENTAGON CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

things.

The Fox News report on Weinstein's remarks also cited a statement from Christensen, the Pentagon spokesman, who reiterated the preexisting policy against proselytizing. But the Starnes piece went on to claim that the policy also applied to evangelizing, or sharing the gospel. In addition, the story highlighted court martial as a possible penalty.

Outlets like Breitbart.com then amplified the reports with stories such as "Pentagon May Court Martial Soldiers Who Share Christian Faith." The Washington-based Family Research Council then launched a petition drive — which had more than 160,000 signatures a week later — to urge the Pentagon "to scrub plan to court-martial Christians" according to the petition's headline.

But this latest dust up did not occur in a vacuum.

In recent years the U.S. military has become a battleground in the culture wars as the growing pluralism of the armed forces, along with increasing assertiveness of both Christian and secular activists, have led the Pentagon to clarify and develop policies of neutrality.

The Obama administration's 2011 decision to end the military's "Don't Ask/Don't Tell" policy on gay service personnel caused friction.

Then in early April it was reported that during a U.S. Army Reserve presentation, an outside contractor had included Catholics and evangelicals in a PowerPoint show listing possible "extremists." While the Army removed the

offending slide, the incident was reported as another example of anti-Christian bias in the military.

Just three weeks later, when some soldiers and chaplains complained that they were blocked from logging onto the website of the Southern Baptist Convention, Christian conservatives accused the military of targeting evangelicals for censorship.

Even after it turned out that the problem lay with a malware issue in the SBC's own website, the May 6 statement released by Ezell and Moore addressed the issue, saying previous incidents give "a sense of plausibility" to claims that the website was blocked due to "hostile content." The Family Research Council and others insisted the incident revealed a troubling pattern of military antipathy to Christians — a charge that critics said was akin to crying wolf.

"Conservatives are supposed to stand for truth against relativism. But that seems not to be the play in this case," wrote RealClearReligion columnist Jeffrey Weiss. "Truth that doesn't fit a predetermined narrative is stood on its head and square-peg-crammed into a round hole."

The activist group Alliance Defending Freedom claimed victory May 2, saying the Pentagon had "backtracked" on its previous position, but said it was still going to pursue legal channels to investigate "this gross error."

—Religion News Service, *Associated Baptist Press*,  
and BJC staff reports

# Ground Zero Cross: A display is not a shrine

By Charles C. Haynes

In March, a group of atheists in New York lost round one in their legal battle to keep the “Ground Zero Cross” out of the National September 11 Museum in lower Manhattan.

Federal Judge Deborah Batts ruled that the object – two steel beams in the shape of a cross that survived the collapse of the World Trade Center on 9/11 – may be displayed in the memorial museum without violating the Establishment clause of the First Amendment. (*American Atheists, Inc. v. Port Authority of NY and NJ*)

The court acknowledged that many Americans see these steel beams as a symbol of religious hope and meaning.

After all, during the recovery at the site, worship services were held in front of the cross. And in 2011, when it was moved back to Ground Zero from the grounds of a nearby church where it had been temporarily housed, a priest led a ceremonial blessing of the cross.

But for First Amendment purposes, it doesn’t matter how many citizens see the cross as the Cross. What counts constitutionally is how the government uses the object.

As Judge Batts explained in her decision, a “reasonable observer” would understand that the cross is part of an historical exhibit in a memorial museum that includes hundreds of secular artifacts. In that context, viewers are highly unlikely to see the cross-shaped beams as government endorsement of Christianity.

American Atheists calls this ruling an “injustice” and vows to appeal.

At issue in this case – and in the growing number of cases challenging all religious symbols in public spaces – are two very different views of “separation of church and state.”

Judge Batts, correctly in my view, holds that the First Amendment separates church from state, but not religion from public life.

In other words, the Establishment Clause prohibits the government from setting up a religious shine at Ground Zero, but does not bar a publicly supported memorial museum from including religious objects or images that inspired recovery workers, victims’ families, and the general public.

By contrast, American Atheists advocates an “absolute separation of church and state,” which would appear to call for a society in which public spaces are entirely religion-free zones.

But “separation” taken this far is no friend of religious liberty.

For James Madison, Thomas Jefferson and other early supporters of church-state separation, authentic religious liberty requires that government remain neutral toward religion while simultaneously upholding the right of religious people and institutions to participate fully in the public square of America.

Ignoring the role of religion – in this case by excluding an artifact with religious significance from a publicly financed museum – is hardly “neutral.” On the contrary, such exclusion sends a message of government hostility to the religious.



Pictured here are the steel beams in the shape of a cross at Ground Zero a few years after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The recent ruling paves the way for their display in the National September 11 Museum.

The First Amendment does not guarantee atheists or anyone else “freedom from religion.” Frequent exposure to religious symbols and messages is inevitable in our religiously diverse society.

The First Amendment does, however, guarantee “freedom from government-imposed religion” – a core condition of liberty of conscience.

Including the “Ground Zero Cross” in the 9/11 Memorial Museum acknowledges the religious meaning of that tragic day for millions of Americans – without in any way creating a state establishment of religion.

*Charles C. Haynes is director of the Religious Freedom Education Project at the Newseum.*



K. Hollyn Hollman  
General Counsel

# HollmanREPORT

## Religious liberty and same-sex marriage

The U.S. Supreme Court recently dedicated two days to hearing landmark cases dealing with the rights of same-sex couples. One of those cases, *Hollingsworth et al. v. Perry*, challenges California's "Proposition 8," a law passed by referendum in 2008 that amended the state constitution to deny legal recognition of marriages between same-sex couples. The other case, *U.S. v. Windsor*, challenges the federal Defense of Marriage Act, known as DOMA, which restricts federal marriage benefits to apply only to opposite-sex couples. Without knowing how these cases will be decided, it is likely that legal rights for same-sex couples will continue to expand. Currently, about a dozen states recognize same-sex marriage. As marriage equality meets with growing acceptance at the state level, familiar questions (and new conflicts) arise about how this sea change will affect the religious freedom of those who have religious objections to same-sex marriage.

Many conversations about religious liberty and same-sex marriage are oversimplified. Some supporters of same-sex marriage dismiss any impact on religious liberty. For them, religious liberty refers to the right of religious communities to define their beliefs and conduct their worship and marriage ceremonies in accord. That right is not endangered by legalizing *civil* marriage for same-sex couples. Indeed, no state that recognizes same-sex marriage has required churches to host, or clergy to officiate, same-sex weddings, nor would the First Amendment allow it. On the other hand, religious liberty advocates rightly note the constitutionally protected status of religious exercise that includes conduct and belief and extends beyond the confines of home and house of worship. Some of those who have religious objections to same-sex marriage assert free exercise rights to resist treating same-sex relationships on par with traditional marriage in commercial or governmental contexts, even if the state grants legal marital status to same-sex couples.

Religious liberty legal experts and advocates, including some who support same-sex marriage and others who oppose it, have predicted the myriad conflicts for years, offering various approaches for resolution. A handful of thoughtful scholars and practitioners contributed essays to a book called *Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty: Emerging Conflicts*, published in 2008,

that has been part of the policy conversation ever since. Many of the predicted conflicts are now pending in courts and legislatures. In one case on appeal to the New Mexico Supreme Court, a commercial photographer specializing in significant life events such as weddings and graduations refused to offer services to same-sex couples. A rejected customer successfully asserted that the photography business had violated the state's "public accommodations" law. Such laws ensure that commercial businesses do not discriminate on the basis of protected categories and have long played a crucial role in the advancement of civil rights laws. On appeal, the business and its owners argue that such interpretation of the law violates its rights of free speech and religious freedom. Similarly, the state of Washington has filed a lawsuit against a florist who, citing biblical beliefs, refused to provide services for a same-sex wedding.

Too often what is lost in these understandably impassioned battles are the striking similarities between the claims of each side. As law professors Doug Laycock and Tom Berg have written, "[s]exual minorities and religious minorities make essentially parallel claims on the larger society, and the strongest features of the case for same-sex civil marriage make an equally strong case for protecting the religious liberty of dissenters." In particular, both same-sex couples and religious believers view their convictions as intrinsic to their very being — things that, as the professors put it, "do not change because the government says they must, or because the individual decides they should." It is easy to see why many are pessimistic about the possibility of compromise. This type of thinking, however, harms all stakeholders and insults our constitutional tradition of seeking workable solutions that honor universal freedom of conscience.

The barriers to finding common ground are substantial, but they are not insurmountable in all instances. While there are competing interests that require careful consideration, those interests are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and different contexts may produce different solutions. Understanding the similarity of the claims, appreciating the fundamental importance of both religious freedom and marriage rights, and recognizing the rights of others are necessary steps for reducing conflicts during a time of great change.

"Too often what is lost in these understandably impassioned battles are the striking similarities between the claims of each side."

## Religious Liberty Council Luncheon set for June 28

Tickets are available for the 2013 Religious Liberty Council Luncheon, to be held June 28 in Greensboro, N.C. Each ticket is \$35, and tables of 10 are available for purchase. The event is open to the public, but you must have a ticket to attend.

The speaker will be Suzii Paynter, the executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. She will receive the BJC's highest honor — the J.M. Dawson Religious Liberty Award — for her work defending our first freedom.

**If you cannot make it to Greensboro, you can still be part of the luncheon.** You can sponsor a table in honor of your church or favorite college or seminary and encourage others to attend.

To purchase your tickets for the event, visit [BJCOnline.org/luncheon](http://BJCOnline.org/luncheon) or call our office at 202-544-4226. For more information, contact Taryn Deaton at [tdeaton@BJCOnline.org](mailto:tdeaton@BJCOnline.org).



Paynter

## BJC, others oppose religious profiling in immigration bill

As the Senate opened formal debate on a proposal for comprehensive immigration reform, the Baptist Joint Committee and a group of religious organizations called on senators to include a ban on religious profiling in the final package.

An 844-page legislative plan developed by a bipartisan group of eight senators prohibits the use of race or ethnicity as a factor in "routine or spontaneous law enforcement decisions, such as ordinary traffic stops" but does not specify factors of religion and national origin.

In a joint statement organized by the Interfaith Alliance, faith leaders called it a "glaring loophole" that needs to be closed.

"By omitting religion and national origin in this manner, Congress would effectively give law enforcement the go-ahead to target Americans based on these defining characteristics," the faith leaders said May 9.

Since other sections of the same bill prohibit discrimination based on religion, the faith leaders inferred the omission is intentional.

They endorsed an amendment proposed by Sen. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii, to "prohibit federal officers from using religion or national origin in making law enforcement decisions."

Signers of the letter include Interfaith Alliance head Welton Gaddy, an ordained Baptist minister, and Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee.

"We appreciate that most law enforcement officials discharge their duties honorably," they said. "Yet, when law enforcement profiles individuals based solely on their real or perceived religion, it undermines our nation's commitment to religious liberty and equal protection of the law — not to mention our security."

The faith leaders said such actions "not only have the effect of discriminating against religion generally and religious

minorities in particular," but they also "fuel divisiveness by casting suspicion over an entire religious community."

—Bob Allen, *Associated Baptist Press*

## Poll: U.S. Muslims more moderate than Muslims worldwide

Muslims in America are much less inclined to support suicide bombing than other Muslims abroad, and are more likely to believe that people of other faiths can attain eternal life in heaven, according to a new report released April 30 by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.

"The World's Muslims" report looks at Muslim views across seven categories: Islamic law; religion and politics; morality; women; relations among Muslims; interfaith relations; and religion, science, and pop culture. There is also a special section on U.S. Muslims.

Of the countries surveyed, only a majority of Muslims in America — 56 percent — believe people of other faiths can go to heaven; by contrast, that figure among U.S. Christians is about 64 percent. U.S. Muslims are also less likely than Muslims abroad to believe in evolution, sharing views that are closer to those of U.S. Christians.

On suicide bombing, 81 percent of U.S. Muslims said it was never justified, 7 percent said it was justified to "defend Islam," and 1 percent said it was "sometimes justified."

Globally, most Muslims also reject suicide bombing, although significant minorities in several countries say such acts are at least sometimes justified, including 26 percent of Muslims in Bangladesh, 29 percent in Egypt, and 39 percent in Afghanistan.

At least half of Muslims in most countries surveyed say they worry about religious extremists in their own country, including two-thirds or more of Muslims in Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq and Indonesia.

The percentage of Muslims who say they want Sharia, or Islamic law, to be "the official law of the land" varies widely around the world, from fewer than 8 percent in Azerbaijan to 99 percent in Afghanistan. "Solid majorities" in most predominantly Muslim countries surveyed, however, favor the establishment of Islamic law. (The report did not ask the same question of American Muslims.)

That view did not preclude religious tolerance, the survey found, as most Muslims also favor religious freedom for people of other faiths.

The reason for the variation? "Muslims have different understandings of what Sharia means in practice," said James Bell, the Pew Research Center's director of international survey research, adding that support for Sharia cut across age, gender, and economic groups.

In most countries surveyed, majorities of Muslim women and men agreed that a wife is always obliged to obey her husband, including more than 90 percent in Morocco, Tunisia, Afghanistan and Indonesia.

The 157-page report is based on more than 38,000 face-to-face interviews conducted in more than 80 languages with self-identifying Muslims in 39 countries and territories. The report combines findings from a 2011-2012 survey of 24 countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe and a 2008-2009 survey of 15 other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

—Omar Sacirbey, *Religion News Service*



200 Maryland Ave., N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002-5797

Phone: 202.544.4226  
Fax: 202.544.2094  
E-mail: [bjc@BJCOnline.org](mailto:bjc@BJCOnline.org)  
Website: [www.BJCOnline.org](http://www.BJCOnline.org)

Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Riverdale, MD  
Permit No. 5061

### Baptist Joint Committee Supporting Bodies

- Alliance of Baptists
- American Baptist Churches USA
- Baptist General Association of Virginia
- Baptist General Conference
- Baptist General Convention of Missouri
- Baptist General Convention of Texas
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina
- National Baptist Convention of America
- National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc.
- National Missionary Baptist Convention
- North American Baptist Conference
- Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.
- Religious Liberty Council
- Seventh Day Baptist General Conference

## REPORT from the Capital

J. Brent Walker  
Executive Director

Jeff Huett  
Editor

Cherilyn Crowe  
Associate Editor

Report from the Capital (ISSN-0346-0661) is published 10 times each year by the Baptist Joint Committee. For subscription information, please contact the Baptist Joint Committee.

## Expanding our work in Washington

With our state-of-the-art facility and your continued support, the Baptist Joint Committee has an amazing opportunity in the heart of the nation's capital to impact the United States and the world defending and extending religious liberty for all. We are now making a new, major commitment to engage the next generation of religious liberty advocates. In the next few months, the BJC will hire a full-time Education and Outreach Specialist to join our staff and help carry out our mission.

This is a big step for the BJC. Adding a full-time member to our small staff is a major investment. We need your ongoing support to fund the new position and the exciting new programs she or he will implement.

Please consider making a financial contribution on our website at [www.BJCOnline.org/donate](http://www.BJCOnline.org/donate) and support these bold new plans for educating young people about religious liberty and the separation of church and state.



Other ways to give:

### BJC PARTNERS

Become a BJC Partner by making a monthly gift on your credit card. BJC Partners provide lasting support that makes a difference. By establishing an automatic monthly gift, BJC Partners supply income the BJC can count on and show their dedication to protecting religious liberty. Become a BJC Partner today by selecting "monthly" instead of "one-time" gift on the online donation form.

### PLANNED GIFTS

By including the Baptist Joint Committee in your will or estate plans, you commit to ensuring the BJC's mission into the future. There are several options for making a lasting commitment to the BJC. Please consult with your lawyer or financial adviser if you wish to make a planned gift to the BJC. Contact Taryn Deaton, director of development, at 202-544-4226 or [tdeaton@BJCOnline.org](mailto:tdeaton@BJCOnline.org) for more information.