

Persecution a recent concern in SBC resolutions

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP)—While staunch defenders of human rights and religious liberty for all, Southern Baptists rarely mentioned religious persecution in convention resolutions until the 1990s.

That coincides with increased calls by social conservatives, including the newly conservative leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention, for the U.S. government to emphasize religious freedom in setting its foreign policy.

Those appeals became law when Congress voted overwhelmingly in 1998 to enact the International Religious Freedom Act, establishing religious freedom as an integral part of the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

A [2006 SBC resolution](#) objected to China's treatment of North Korean refugees "who are persecuted for conscience sake."

A similar [resolution in 2001](#) drew attention to "victims of persecution and genocide" in Sudan.

[In 1997](#), the SBC voiced opposition to "religious persecution" and encouraged government officials to "elevate religious liberty concerns to the highest priority in foreign policy, invoking sanctions against those nations which tolerate persecution of those with differing religious beliefs."

A 1996, SBC resolution [cited growing numbers](#) of Christian minorities facing persecution as scapegoats and for "the venting of popular hatred of the West and the United States."

[In 1995](#), the convention passed a resolution urging prayer and support for “those persecuted for their faith,” mentioning occurrences of oppression in Bulgaria, Russia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, Sudan, Yemen, Cuba, Romania, India and China.

A [1988 resolution protesting](#) the firing of a *Dayton Daily News* publisher by Cox Newspapers for refusing to sell advertising to gay and lesbian groups was titled “Resolution on Persecution of Christians.”

Before that, the last mentions of persecution were resolutions passed at consecutive conventions in [1974](#) and [1975](#) expressing solidarity with those “who are being persecuted because they are believers in Jesus Christ” and calling for prayer on their behalf on Baptist World Alliance Sunday.

[In 1931](#), the convention, “representing four million white Baptists of the Southern States of the United States of America,” denounced “persecution by the Russian Soviet government of the various religious communions on account of their religious opinions.”

A resolution [passed in 1923](#) noted “with astonishment and indignation that many acts of persecution have been directed against Baptists” in Romania. That was the year the nation adopted a new constitution establishing the Romanian Orthodox Church as the dominant faith.

A 1915 resolution on religious liberty decried “Romish schemes and legislation” intended to allow the “Roman Catholic hierarchy to gain control of our government.” Messengers warned of a return to “the dark and persecuting age of the past” represented by a union of church and state, “making the United States government the executive of the Romish church against religious and civil liberty.”

A resolution [on cooperation with other Baptists](#) in 1899 called for a meeting with the czar of Russia to intercede on behalf of persecuted [“Stundists,”](#) a religious revival movement of the 19th century among the German and

Russian population of the Ukraine which led to the establishment of a number of Protestant churches, especially Baptists.