

Hussain confirmed as global religious freedom ambassador

December 20, 2021

By an 85-5 vote, the U.S. Senate on Dec. 16 approved Rashad Hussain as the U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom.

Hussain, most recently the director for partnerships and global engagement at the U.S. National Security Council, is the first Muslim to serve in the religious freedom post.

He served previously as U.S. Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and U.S. Special Envoy for strategic counterterrorism communications, and he was senior counsel at the Department of Justice's National Security Division.



Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback delivers closing remarks at the 2018 Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, on July 26, 2018. (Photo by State Department/Public Domain)

Hussain succeeds Sam Brownback, who had called on the Senate to confirm Hussain as ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom.

“Religious persecution is rampant around the world, and the international community looks to the United States for leadership that can make a difference,” Brownback said. “That’s why I’m glad Rashad Hussain has been confirmed by a bipartisan Senate majority.”

Leaders of the [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom](#) voiced support for Hussain and appreciation for his Senate confirmation.

“We are gratified that the administration and Congress have prioritized appointing and confirming Rashad Hussain to this essential position,” said Nadine Maenza, chair of the commission.

“The right to freedom of religion or belief is under sustained threat globally. The ambassador-at-large serves a vital role in leading the U.S. government’s efforts to protect this fundamental right. With his years of knowledge and experience, Ambassador Hussain is well placed to advance the U.S. government’s promotion of international religious freedom.”

Widespread support from religious freedom advocates

Elijah Brown, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, [tweeted](#) his congratulations to Hussain, adding the BWA “looks forward to working with you to stand on behalf of religious freedom for all people in all places.”



Randel Everett

Randel Everett, founding president of the 21Wilberforce human rights organization, commended the confirmation as a vital step for religious freedom.

“With the rising challenges to religious freedom confronting the world, this confirmation came not a moment too soon. 21Wilberforce looks forward to collaborating with Ambassador Hussain on the work of challenging oppression and standing with the persecuted,” said Everett, former executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Brent Leatherwood at the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission [tweeted](#) his congratulations to Hussain, saying his organization “is eager to work with him, and we will be praying for his success.”

“Religious freedom is a fundamental right, and it is under assault around the globe,” Leatherwood added.

Tom Farr, president of the [Religious Freedom Institute](#) in Washington, D.C., applauded Hussain’s confirmation by the Senate.

“This is a critically important position in American foreign policy, and Rashad Hussain is eminently qualified to fill it,” Farr said.

“My colleagues and I look forward to working with Ambassador Hussain as he takes on the enormous challenges now set before him. We are in the midst of a global crisis of religious freedom, and the United States must continue to be a leader in addressing it.”

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, a United Kingdom-based organization that advocates for freedom of conscience globally, issued a statement saying Hussain has “a proven track record of standing up for the right of freedom of religion or belief, particularly in combatting anti-Semitism and hostility towards Christians and other religious minorities in countries around the world.”

“Mr. Hussain’s confirmation is welcome news at a time when challenges to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief remain acute,”

said Mervyn Thomas, CSW founder.