

[Will Nepal Remain the World's Only Hindu Nation?](#)

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Congressional Resolution #323 "Concerning Human Rights and Democracy in Nepal" raised Hindu hackles across the world. The non-binding resolution was passed by the US House of Representatives, with the Senate concurring, on June 12, 1990. The short statement congratulates the success of the pro-democracy movement in Nepal and "urges all individuals and groups in Nepal to work peacefully toward...a political system that guarantees internationally recognized human rights including the rights of freedom of expression, association and assembly and the right of...fair elections." The US Congress urged "the Government of Nepal to ensure that no Nepalese citizens is punished for exercising religious rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the freedom to change one's religion or belief and the freedom, in public or private, to manifest one's religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." The resolution also states that the US "has friendly relations with Nepal and has provided more that US \$300,00,000" in aid since 1951.

The Nepal-based World Hindu Federation sent a strong rejoinder to President Bush on June 17th saying that they took the resolution to mean, "Behave yourself in this matter or be prepared to say goodbye to more aid and assistance from our side." The New Delhi newspaper, Organizer, subtitled their article on the resolution, "American, Christina pressure for dropping Hindu status." They also said Nepal's "sovereignty is under pressure from Western countries." Ramesh Sharma of Kenya wrote to HINDUISM TODAY saying that the US Congress passed a resolution "asking the new Nepal government to make Nepal a secular state" and threatened aid cuts if this was not done.

The resolution actually makes no statement about the Hindu/secular state issue and contains no threats to aid. To clarify the intent, HINDUISM TODAY contacted the offices of Congressman Steven Solarz, author of the resolution and widely regarded as a friend of India. A spokesperson for his office said, "The resolution seems to be very clear in that it calls upon the Nepalese government to live up to its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But the resolution is silent on the question of secular state versus Hindu state. That issue has not

been addressed by Congressman Solarz and is not addressed by the resolution, though...it would have been a simple matter to do so. That the resolution is silent is a strong implication that the House of Representatives has chosen not to take any stand on the issue."

The particular section on religious freedom was inserted by Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey, a frequent champion of human rights. He had been involved with efforts to free Hare Krishna devotees in Russia and has protested the treatment of Hindus in Pakistan, according to a spokesperson for his office. He too has taken no stand on the Hindus/secular state issue.

This is not to say that several congressmen were not mainly focused on the Christians in Nepal, as most of the remarks contained in the Congressional Record regarding the resolution are about Christian, even listing by name those imprisoned for proselytization - a degree of concern Congress has not expressed for the Hindus oppressed in Bangladesh, just for one example.

Those directly involved with framing the constitution are divided by former Prime Minister of Nepal, N.P. Rijal. The Nepalese Congress has declared itself in favor of a continued Hindu state. The equally strong communists want a secular state. These Nepalese communists are "old-style," following Lenin and Mao, rather than the reformers in Russia and eastern Europe. The few Christians that are in Nepal are very vocally in favor of a secular state, and those outside of Nepal audaciously make the case that true religious freedom can only be guaranteed by a secular government - despite the fact one-half the countries of the world have official religions. Prior to the success of the pro-democracy movement, a February, 1990, "Special Report" of the Christian "News Network International" stated, "The Christian religion...is fundamentally opposed to the notion of a monarch with total power, to say nothing of a society that makes Hindu truth its lodestar."

The US has not history or general policy of opposing state religions. Congressional resolutions carry no force of law, and the US State Department has made no comment on Nepal beyond expressing the desire that full human rights be incorporated in the new constitution. Hindus in Nepal will need to assure the same freedom of religion for their citizens that Hindus expect in other countries. But those who interpreted the words of Congress as calling for a secular state in Nepal need no longer worry, and can now push the cause of Hindu state religion forward with confidence in this 93% Hindu nation.

State Religions

Approximately one-half of the world's nations have an official state religion. They are:

* 1 Hindu: Nepal

* 1 Jewish: Israel

* 4 Buddhist: Bhutan, Sikkim, Sri Lanka and Thailand

* 23 Islamic: Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and North Yemen.

* 44 Christian: Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Channel Islands, Columbia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Faeroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Guatemala, Haiti, Holy See, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Macao, Malta, Monaco, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Pitcairn Islands, Portugal, St. Helena, Samoa, Spain, Spanish North Africa, Svalbard and Jan Mayen Island, Sweden, Tonga, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, and Venezuela.

* 28 Unspecified "Religious": Barbados, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, Johnston Island, Lebanon, Midway Islands, Namibia, Nauru, Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, Switzerland, Wake Island and Zaire.

* 92 nations are Secular

* 30 are declared Atheistic

A Hindu Holy Land

King Birendra proclaimed, "Our Hindu faith guides all our actions from dawn to dusk, from birth till death and from this world into the next. It is in Hinduism that the continuity of our [Nepalese] society has expressed itself." Nepal was not colonized by India. Its people, who are mostly of Mongoloid racial stock, have been Saivite Hindus throughout recorded history. Even parts of the Rig Veda, Hinduism's earliest scripture, are attributed to a Nepalese sage.

Nepal's many illustrious sons and daughters of Hinduism include: Sita, wife of Lord Rama born at Janakapur, the ancient city of Mithila, and place where Rama broke the mighty bow of Siva to win her; Buddha, revered by Vaisnavites as the 9th incarnation of Lord Vishnu, born at Lumbini. Sage Vyas, author of the Mahabharata, born at Jumala; Maharishi Valmiki, author of the Ramayana, born at Bhaisalotan; Sage Vishvamitra, author of the third chapter of the Rig Veda, born at Panchpokhari; Maharishi Yagnavalkya, author of the White Yajur Veda and whose famous debate is in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, born at Krishna-Kaushita.

The most renown pilgrimage sites in Nepal is Kathmandu's Pasupatinath temple of Lord Siva, consisting of 235 shrines, 8 monasteries, and many ashrams and dharmasalas dating back as far as two thousand years.

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