

STOP THE BAN ON SHI'A RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Recent US policies jeopardize the constitutional rights of American Shi'a Muslims and all faith communities. We must repeal the set of sanctions on Iran restricting study at the international religious seminary (*hawza*) and preventing pilgrimage (*ziyarah*) to the Imam Reza Shrine, which impose a substantial burden on the free exercise of religion

AL-MUSTAFA UNIVERSITY

- On December 8th, 2020, the US Department of the Treasury's OFAC office placed sanctions on Al-Mustafa International University (MIU) in Qum, Iran
- MIU is the premiere institution for religious learning for English-speaking students around the world who endeavor to become Shi'a Muslim clergy
- There are currently 50-100 Americans at this religious seminary and have been residing there for many years with their families
- Graduates return home to serve American Shi'a communities providing spiritual guidance and leadership throughout the year

IMAM REZA SHRINE

- On January 13th, 2021, US Department of the Treasury's OFAC office placed sanctions on Astan Quds Razavi (AQR), which is the charitable trust responsible for running the Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad, Iran
- Imam Reza Holy Complex is an internationally recognized place of worship on the tentative list of UNESCO's World Heritage sites
- A sacred site of pilgrimage for 20 million pilgrims from around the world every year, including thousands of Americans
- Founded over 1200 years ago and the largest mosque in the world

IMPACT

- These sanctions stifle the free exercise of religion for 550K - 1.12M American Shi'a Muslims, creating a de facto Ban on Shi'a Religious Freedom
- This sets a dangerous precedent for all American faith communities that rely on hundreds of study abroad programs for religious learning and thousands of sacred sites for pilgrimage around the world
- Such overly broad policies that restrict the rights of religious freedom and practice of any faith community are unconstitutional and un-American

ASKS OF OUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

1. Make a public statement that these policies create a severe burden on the religious freedom and practice of the American Shi'a Muslim Community
2. Work on passing a Resolution in Congress to ensure such overly broad policies that restrict religious freedom and practice are not pursued again in the future
3. Urge the Biden Administration to rescind the sanctions on MIU and AQR

SOURCES

home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/sanctions-programs-and-country-information/iran-sanctions
home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1234
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_mosques
apnews.com/article/7b8f420db1a339116d66bc55c9085d7c
whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6194/
web.archive.org/web/20120916051122/http://pewresearch.org/assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf
www.gooverseas.com/study-abroad/religious-studies
sacredsites.com/