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[Brownback Points to Nigeria, China, and Global Spread of Religious Persecution](#)

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U.S. Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom Sam Brownback has warned that religious persecution is spreading worldwide, and highlighted the examples of anti-Christian violence in Nigeria and a growing religious surveillance state in China.

Speaking to CNA on Thursday, Feb. 27, Ambassador Brownback highlighted the ongoing violence in Nigeria, where local Christians have been the victims of violent attacks and abductions.

Brownback said he is concerned the situation in Nigeria will spread to nearby countries if nothing is done to crack down on religious persecution.

"There's a lot of people getting killed in Nigeria, and we're afraid it is going to spread a great deal in that region," he told CNA. "It is one that's really popped up on my radar screens -- in the last couple of years, but particularly this past year."

In January, a Nigerian seminarian was abducted and murdered by militants, and several priests and seminarians have been abducted in the country. Brownback expressed frustration that the Nigerian government was not doing enough to protect religious groups.

"I think we've got to prod the [Nigerian President Muhammadu] Buhari government more. They can do more," he said. "They're not bringing these people to justice that are killing religious adherents. They don't seem to have the sense of urgency to act."

While he acknowledged that there had been "some pretty good meetings recently," he predicted that religious persecution in Nigeria will continue to worsen unless the government takes concerted action.

"We really think that they've got to act more," he said, calling for dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the country, "really try to get them working together instead of killing each other."

"We need to engage the religious leaders more, to see if we can really start to tamp that down," he said.

Later in the day, Brownback spoke during a panel event titled "Without Religious Freedom, What's Left?" The event took place at the Conservative Political Action Conference in National Harbor, Maryland.

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"The problem is that [religious persecution] still grows and grows," said Brownback during the event. "Eighty percent of the world's population is in a country that has religious persecution," he said.

"It's the most deadly time in the history of Christendom for you to be a Christian. There's more Christian persecution than any time in the history of mankind."

"The future of oppression isn't going to look like what it looks like now," said Brownback, highlighting the crackdown on religious practice in China.

"The past, you'd see people locked up, killed for being a minority faith or this or that. The future of oppression is you're going to be marginalized in the society, that people are going to have your face, and they're going to know your DNA and they're gonna know who you are and you're not going to be able to participate [in society]."

He cited China's development of a "social credit" system over the last 10 years; the system has been used to track and punish religious minorities. If a person has a low social credit score, said Brownback, they could be prohibited from obtaining an education or living in a certain area.

"And it won't just be you. It will be your friends with you, if anyone pings your cell phone, that will be tracked and they'll get the same low social credit score that you get. And these are the systems being modeled and worked on and done now today in China," he said.

The ambassador said that Congressional action against China had established limits on what kind of technology can be sent from the United States to China, and that the Trump administration is "very concerned about the use of technology" in the country.

"The technology is amoral; it's neither good nor bad, it's technology," said Brownback. "But what you do with it has a big moral component to it. And these are things--this is why, on my radar screen, that area of oppression and that growth of oppression and that nature is one of the most fearful things I see coming in this space."

"And we've got to be active and we are active. We just got to do more," said Brownback.

China, he said, is "best in the world" at religious persecution and surveillance of religious groups, and has been engaged in a "war with faith."

In response, he said, the Trump administration is defending religious freedom "more than any administration has previously."

"And we consider [religious freedom] a God-given human right, not one that's given by governments," he said. Brownback applauded the Trump administration for organizing two ministerials on religious freedom, held in 2018 and 2019, calling them the largest human rights events ever held at the State Department. The 2020 ministerial on religious freedom will be held in Poland.