

Rashad Hussain confirmed as first Muslim US religious freedom ambassador

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [January 26, 2022](#) issue



(US State Department/US Mission Geneva)

Rashad Hussain has been confirmed as the US ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, making him the first Muslim American in the role.

Hussain was confirmed by the US Senate by an 85-5 vote.

Hussain, 42, previously served as White House counsel during the Obama administration, as special envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and as US special envoy for the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications.

When President Joe Biden announced his nomination of Hussain in July, the White House noted his work on countering antisemitism and defending religious minorities in countries with Muslim majorities.

Hussain, who has served as a judicial clerk in the Sixth US Circuit Court of Appeals and as editor of the Yale Law Journal, speaks Spanish, Arabic, and Urdu. He also is a hafiz: someone who has memorized the entire Qur'an in Arabic.

Sam Brownback, who served as religious freedom ambassador during the Trump administration, had cheered the recent movement of Hussain's confirmation process and applauded its outcome.

"Religious persecution is rampant around the world, and the international community looks to the United States for leadership that can make a difference," Brownback, now a senior fellow at international persecution watchdog Open Doors USA, said in a statement. "That's why I'm glad Rashad Hussain has been confirmed by a bipartisan Senate majority." —Religion News Service