

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 296

Expressing support for peaceful demonstrations and universal freedoms in Syria and condemning the human rights violations by the Assad Regime.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 3, 2011

Mr. LAMBORN (for himself, Mr. DEUTCH, Mrs. MYRICK, Mr. SCHOCK, Mr. KING of Iowa, Mr. LANCE, Mr. WALSH of Illinois, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. CULBERSON, Mr. POSEY, Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. VISCLOSKY, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. PETERS, Mr. CARTER, and Mr. TERRY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for peaceful demonstrations and universal freedoms in Syria and condemning the human rights violations by the Assad Regime.

Whereas, in March 2011, large-scale peaceful demonstrations began to take place in Syria;

Whereas the Government of Syria, led by President Bashar al-Assad, responded to protests by launching a violent crackdown, committing human rights abuses, and violating its international obligations, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the United Nations Convention against Torture and

Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

Whereas demonstrations have now spread to more than a dozen towns and cities across all parts of Syria;

Whereas demonstrators initially demanded political reform, but under violent attack by the Government of Syria, have increasingly demanded a change in the Syrian regime;

Whereas Insan, a respected international nongovernmental organization, has documented more than 600 deaths since demonstrations began in Syria, and reported that “arbitrary detained and enforceable disappearance in the country easily exceeds 8,000 people”;

Whereas the Government of Syria has deployed tanks and snipers against civilian population centers, including the cities of Daraa and Baniyas, and the Damascus suburbs of Douma, Harasta, Saqba, and Zabadani;

Whereas the Government of Syria has cut off civilian population centers from access to food, water, electricity, mobile and land lines, Internet, and medical services;

Whereas several respected international human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies, have documented a nationwide campaign of arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances of activists, protesters, and their family members, by the Government of Syria;

Whereas the International Crisis Group, an independent international nongovernmental organization, reported on May 3, 2011, that there is “ongoing, credible evidence” in Syria of “abundant instances of excessive and indis-

criminate state violence . . . including arbitrary arrests, torture and firing into peaceful crowds”;

Whereas the International Crisis Group has also reported a “determined and cynical attempt to exploit and exacerbate” sectarian tensions by the Government of Syria;

Whereas, despite sectarian provocations by the Government of Syria, demonstrations have maintained a message of national unity and solidarity;

Whereas, on April 15, 2011, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, Christof Heyns, stated that live ammunition has been used by the Syrian regime against demonstrators “in clear violation of international law”;

Whereas international organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have documented evidence that peaceful protestors detained by Government of Syria security forces are being subjected to torture, including with electro-shock devices, cables, sticks, and whips, and are being held in overcrowded cells, deprived of sleep, food, and water for days at a time;

Whereas international non-governmental organizations, including the International Committee on the Red Cross and Human Rights Watch, have reported that Government of Syria security forces have prevented injured protesters from accessing hospitals and have denied medical personnel and humanitarian relief organizations access to those in need of medical attention;

Whereas the Government of Iran is providing material support to assist the Government of Syria in its efforts to suppress peaceful protestors, including the transfer of

equipment to help security forces crack down on protests and curtail and monitor protesters' use of the Internet, cell phones, and text-messaging;

Whereas the White House Press Secretary has repeatedly condemned the Government of Syria's brutal crackdown, including on May 6, 2011, when he stated, "The Syrian government continues to follow the lead of its Iranian ally in resorting to brute force and flagrant violations of human rights in suppressing peaceful protests.";

Whereas the Department of State has repeatedly condemned the Government of Syria's brutal crackdown, including on May 6, 2011, when Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton condemned "in the strongest possible terms" the Government of Syria's continued use of force and intimidation against peaceful protestors and pledged to "hold to account senior Syrian officials and others responsible for the reprehensible human rights abuses";

Whereas Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton denounced the Government of Syria's actions on May 11, 2011, when she stated, "There may be some who think this is a sign of strength, but treating one's own people in this way is in fact a sign of remarkable weakness.";

Whereas Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton also stated, "Syria's future will only be secured by a government that reflects the popular will of all of the people and protects their welfare";

Whereas, on April 29, 2011, President Obama issued an Executive Order authorizing targeted sanctions against individuals and organizations responsible for the human rights abuses in Syria;

Whereas President Obama on April 29, 2011, designated 3 individuals pursuant to the Executive Order issued that same day: Mahir al-Assad, the brother of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and brigade commander in the Syrian Army's 4th Armored Division; Atif Najib, the former head of the Political Security Directorate for Daraa Province and a cousin of Bashar al-Assad; and Ali Mamluk, director of Syria's General Intelligence Directorate;

Whereas President Obama on May 18, 2011, designated seven individuals pursuant to the Executive Order issued that same day, Bashar al-Assad, the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Farouk al-Shara, Vice President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Adel Safar, Prime Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mohammad Ibrahim al-Shaar, Minister of the Interior of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ali Habib Mahmoud, Minister of Defense of the Syrian Arab Republic, Abdul Fatah Qudsiya, Head of Syrian Military Intelligence, Mohammed Dib Zaitoun, Director of Political Security Directorate;

Whereas, on May 18, 2011, the United States Department of the Treasury designated ten individuals and entities pursuant to Executive Order 13572 authorizing the United States to sanction any person that is owned or controlled by, or acts for or on behalf of any person designated pursuant to Executive Order 13460, Hafiz Makhluf, cousin of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and senior official of the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate, Qasem Soleimani, Commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force, Mohsen Chizari, Commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force Operations and Training, Syrian Mili-

tary Intelligence, Syrian National Security Bureau, Syrian Air Force Intelligence, Cham Holdings and its Chairman Nabil Rafik al Kuzbari, Bena Properties, and Al Mashreq Investment Fund;

Whereas, on May 6, 2011, envoys of the European Union's 27 nations agreed to impose sanctions on the Government of Syria for the human rights abuses it is perpetrating, including asset freezes and visa bans on 13 members of the Government of Syria and an arms embargo on the country;

Whereas, on April 29, 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed Resolution S-16/1, which condemns the Syrian regime for its human rights abuses and establishes a mandate for an international inquiry led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law in Syria "with a view to avoiding impunity and ensuring full accountability";

Whereas the Government of Syria, prior to March 2011, had a well-documented track record of human rights abuses against its own citizens and violations of international agreements and international law;

Whereas, in February 1982, the Syrian army, under the orders of then-Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, killed at least 10,000 civilians in the city of Hama in an effort to quell an uprising there;

Whereas, according to the Department of State's most recent Human Rights Country Report, published on April 8, 2011, the Government of Syria commits unlawful killings against civilians; has severely and systematically restricted basic freedoms of speech, press, assembly, asso-

ciation, and religion; is responsible for ongoing politically motivated arrests, detentions, and disappearances; lacks an independent judiciary system; and maintains prisons where torture and physical abuse are widespread and where detainees lack access to food, proper clothing, and medical treatment;

Whereas the Department of State has designated Syria since 1979 as a “state sponsor of terrorism” and according to the Department of State’s most recent “Country Reports on Terrorism,” published in August 2010, the Government of Syria provides “political and material support to Hizballah in Lebanon and allowed Iran to resupply this organization with weapons”;

Whereas the Government of Syria’s transfer of weapons to Hizballah in Lebanon is in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006), which established an arms embargo requiring all states to prevent the supply of arms and weapons to militias and terrorists in Lebanon;

Whereas the Government of Syria has violated the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon in contravention of United Nations Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 425 (1978), Resolution 520 (1982), and Resolution 1701 (2006);

Whereas Syria, as a party to the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, is legally bound to declare all its nuclear activity to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and to place such activity under the monitoring of the IAEA;

Whereas the IAEA issued a report on February 25, 2011, criticizing Syria’s implementation of the NPT Safeguards

Agreement, concluding that “Syria has not cooperated with the Agency since June 2008” in connection with the Agency’s investigation of the Dair Alzour site and 3 other locations” and warning that “the Agency has not been able to make progress towards resolving the outstanding issues related to those sites”;

Whereas it has been widely reported that the Government of Syria was developing a covert nuclear program, in violation of its international obligations under the NPT, until that site was bombed by Israel in September 2007;

Whereas, on December 12, 2003, Congress passed the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–175) in order to, among other purposes, hold the Government of Syria accountable for its actions and as expression of support consistent with these aims; and

Whereas, on May 19, 2011, President Obama stated “Most recently, the Syrian regime has chosen the path of murder and the mass arrests of its citizens.”: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—
- 2 (1) expresses solidarity and support for the peo-
- 3 ple of Syria as they seek to exercise universal rights
- 4 and pursue peaceful democratic change;
- 5 (2) strongly condemns and deplores the human
- 6 rights abuses of the Government of Syria, including
- 7 the use of arbitrary and lethal violence and deploy-
- 8 ment of military forces against peaceful demonstra-
- 9 tors;

1 (3) strongly condemns and deplores the Govern-
2 ment of Syria's extrajudicial killings, enforced dis-
3 appearances, torture, and arbitrary and mass arrests
4 against civilians in Syria;

5 (4) strongly condemns and deplores the delib-
6 erate cut-off of water, electricity, food, telecommuni-
7 cations, and other basic services to civilian popu-
8 lation centers in Syria;

9 (5) strongly condemns the Government of Iran
10 for assisting the Government of Syria in its cam-
11 paign of violence and repression against the people
12 of Syria;

13 (6) warns that international crimes are being
14 committed by the Government of Syria against its
15 people, for which the responsible officials must be
16 held accountable;

17 (7) finds that the Government of Syria, led by
18 Bashar al-Assad, through its campaign of violence
19 and gross human rights abuses, has lost legitimacy
20 and expresses support for the people of Syria to de-
21 termine their future for themselves;

22 (8) urges the President to speak out directly,
23 and personally, to the people of Syria about the situ-
24 ation in their country;

1 (9) urges the President to work, in conjunction
2 with international partners, to ensure access of hu-
3 manitarian relief organizations, medical workers,
4 and international media to affected areas of Syria,
5 and to impose consequences on the Government of
6 Syria and its leaders if access by these organizations
7 continues to be impeded;

8 (10) urges the President to work, in conjunc-
9 tion with international partners, to ensure access by
10 the people of Syria to accurate news and informa-
11 tion, as well as information and social networking
12 technologies;

13 (11) urges the President to continue to work
14 with the European Union, the Government of Tur-
15 key, the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council,
16 and other allies and partners to bring an end to
17 human rights abuses in Syria, hold the perpetrators
18 accountable, and support the aspirations of the peo-
19 ple of Syria;

20 (12) encourages United States officials, includ-
21 ing through the United States Embassy in Damas-
22 cus, to engage with civil society in Syria, including
23 human rights and democracy activists, political dis-
24 sidents, and opposition leaders;

1 (13) urges the President to work with our allies
2 and partners at the United Nations Security Council
3 to condemn and hold accountable human rights
4 abusers in Syria and to support the human rights of
5 the people of Syria; and

6 (14) urges the United Nations Human Rights
7 Council—

8 (A) to swiftly implement United Nations
9 Human Rights Council Resolution S-16/1 and
10 to ensure that the international investigation
11 into violations by the Government of Syria of
12 international human rights law called for in the
13 resolution is undertaken immediately; and

14 (B) reinforce the crucial need for the
15 United Nations General Assembly to reject Syr-
16 ia's candidacy for membership on the Human
17 Rights Council pending democratic reform.

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