

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. _____

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

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. LIEBERMAN (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. KIRK, Mr. CASEY, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. COONS, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. KYL, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. BARRASSO, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Ms. AYOTTE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

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 indiscriminate 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 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, 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, on May 6, 2011, envoys of the European Union's 27 nations agreed to impose sanctions on the Govern-

ment 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, association, 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; and

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: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

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 deploras 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;

10 (3) strongly condemns and deploras the Govern-
11 ment of Syria’s extrajudicial killings, enforced dis-
12 appearances, torture, and arbitrary and mass arrests
13 against civilians in Syria;

14 (4) strongly condemns and deploras the delib-
15 erate cut-off of water, electricity, food, telecommuni-
16 cations, and other basic services to civilian popu-
17 lation centers in Syria;

1 (5) strongly condemns the Government of Iran
2 for assisting the Government of Syria in its cam-
3 paign of violence and repression against the people
4 of Syria;

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

9 (7) finds that the Government of Syria, led by
10 Bashar al-Assad, through its campaign of violence
11 and gross human rights abuses, has lost legitimacy
12 and expresses support for the people of Syria to de-
13 termine their future for themselves;

14 (8) commends President Obama for authorizing
15 targeted sanctions on human rights abusers in
16 Syria, including United States visa bans and asset
17 freezes, and using that authority to designate 3 indi-
18 viduals;

19 (9) urges the President to act swiftly to expand
20 the list of sanctioned persons to include all individ-
21 uals responsible for gross human rights abuses in
22 Syria, including Bashar al-Assad;

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

1 (11) urges the President to work, in conjunc-
2 tion with international partners, to ensure access of
3 humanitarian 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 (12) 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 (13) 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 (14) 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 (15) 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 (16) 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 and terminate the consideration
18 of Syria's candidacy.