

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5408

To oppose violations of religious freedom in Ukraine by Russia and armed groups commanded by Russia.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 12, 2019

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina (for himself, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. MEADOWS, Ms. MOORE, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. COHEN, Mr. HARRIS, Mr. VEASEY, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. LIPINSKI, and Ms. KAPTUR) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To oppose violations of religious freedom in Ukraine by Russia and armed groups commanded by Russia.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Ukraine Religious
5 Freedom Support Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1 (1) Russia invaded the Crimea region of
2 Ukraine in February 2014, continues to occupy and
3 control that region, and has exercised control over
4 part of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine since
5 April 2014 through non-state armed groups and ille-
6 gal entities it has established, instigated, com-
7 manded, and supported, including with military and
8 intelligence personnel on the ground from Russia,
9 such as the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Repub-
10 lic and the Luhansk People’s Republic.

11 (2) International humanitarian law, including
12 the Geneva Conventions, to which Russia is a signa-
13 tory, requires Russia to respect and protect the reli-
14 gious freedom of the inhabitants of the territory it
15 occupies and controls, or controls through organized
16 non-state armed groups it commands, and holds
17 Russia responsible for violations of religious freedom
18 in this territory.

19 (3) According to the Department of State’s
20 International Religious Freedom Reports, and other
21 reporting, violations of religious freedom in the Cri-
22 mea region of Ukraine since Russia invaded and oc-
23 cupied the territory have included abduction, deten-
24 tion and imprisonment, torture, forced psychiatric
25 hospitalizations, fines, restrictions on missionary ac-

1 tivities, confiscations of property, including churches
2 and meeting halls, expulsions and obstructions to re-
3 entry, denying registration of religious groups, van-
4 dalism, fines, and banning peaceful religious groups,
5 and targeted groups have included Muslim Crimean
6 Tatars, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly
7 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patri-
8 archate, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church,
9 Protestant Christians, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

10 (4) According to the Department of State's
11 International Religious Freedom Reports, violations
12 of religious freedom in the part of the Donbas region
13 of Ukraine controlled by armed groups commanded
14 by Russia have included detention and imprison-
15 ment, torture, confiscation of property, including
16 churches and meeting halls, physical assaults and
17 threats of violence, vandalism, fines, restrictions on
18 missionary activities, religious services, ceremonies,
19 gatherings, and literature, and banning of peaceful
20 religious groups, and targeted groups have included
21 the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly the
22 Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate, the
23 Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Protestant Chris-
24 tians, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

1 (5) The International Religious Freedom Act of
2 1998, as amended by the Frank R. Wolf Inter-
3 national Religious Freedom Act, requires the Presi-
4 dent to—

5 (A) designate a foreign country as a coun-
6 try of particular concern for religious freedom
7 when its government has engaged in or toler-
8 ated particularly severe violations of religious
9 freedom in that country over the previous 12
10 months;

11 (B) to take 15 actions, or commensurate
12 actions in substitution, following the designa-
13 tion of a country as a country of particular con-
14 cern for religious freedom; and

15 (C) designate a foreign country on a “Spe-
16 cial Watch List” when its government has en-
17 gaged in or tolerated severe violations of reli-
18 gious freedom in that country over the previous
19 12 months.

20 (6) On November 28, 2018, the Secretary of
21 State designated Russia on the “Special Watch
22 List”.

23 (7) The National Security Strategy of the
24 United States issued in 2017, 2015, 2006, 2002,
25 2000, 1999, 1998, and 1997, committed the United

1 States to promoting international religious freedom
2 to advance the security, economic, and other na-
3 tional interests of the United States.

4 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

5 It is the policy of the United States to consider—

6 (1) any alien who, while serving as an official
7 of the Government of Russia, was responsible for or
8 directly or indirectly carried out particularly severe
9 violations of religious freedom in the territory of
10 Ukraine that Russia occupies and controls, or con-
11 trols through non-state armed groups it commands;
12 and

13 (2) the spouse and children, if any, of such
14 alien,

15 to have committed particularly severe violations of reli-
16 gious freedom for purposes of applying section
17 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8
18 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to any such alien and
19 spouse and children of such alien.

20 **SEC. 4. DESIGNATION OF RUSSIA AS A COUNTRY OF PAR-**
21 **TICULAR CONCERN FOR RELIGIOUS FREE-**
22 **DOM.**

23 For purposes of making a determination of whether
24 to designate Russia as a country of particular concern for
25 religious freedom under section 402 of the International

1 Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6442), the
2 President shall consider any particularly severe violation
3 of religious freedom in the territory of Ukraine that Rus-
4 sia occupies and exercises controls, or controls through
5 non-state armed groups it commands, during the period
6 of time that is the basis for the determination and des-
7 ignation, to be a particularly severe violation of religious
8 freedom that the Government of Russia has engaged in
9 or tolerated.

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