

105TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 54

Recognizing the anniversary of the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Belarus, expressing concern over the Belarusian Government's infringement on freedom of the press in direct violation of the Helsinki Accords and the Constitution of Belarus, and expressing concern about the proposed union between Russia and Belarus.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 21, 1997

Mr. PALLONE submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Recognizing the anniversary of the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Belarus, expressing concern over the Belarusian Government's infringement on freedom of the press in direct violation of the Helsinki Accords and the Constitution of Belarus, and expressing concern about the proposed union between Russia and Belarus.

Whereas the seedlings of an independent and democratic Republic of Belarus, for which generations of Belarusian patriots had fought and died, are now in danger of being swept away as a result of the policies of Belarusian President Alaksandr Lukashenka and the efforts of Russian nationalist leaders to reunite the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union;

Whereas on March 25, 1918, the members of the Council of the Belarusan Democratic Republic liberated their country from the harsh and oppressive czarist rule;

Whereas representatives of the United Councils of the First Belarusan Congress, meeting in Miensk (Minsk) on March 25, 1918, issued a proclamation of independence of the Belarusan National Republic (BNR), adopted a national flag with 3 horizontal stripes of white, red, and white, and subsequently received widespread international recognition;

Whereas the armed forces of the BNR gallantly defended their independence and were brutally crushed by the armies of Soviet Russia in November 1920 in the Slucak region;

Whereas in 1921 Belarus was divided between Soviet Russia and Poland in accordance with the Treaty of Riga;

Whereas in 1994, the Government of Belarus democratically adopted its Constitution, however, President Lukashenka's actions during November 1996 ushered in a de facto 1-man dictatorship;

Whereas the new Constitution allows President Lukashenka to dissolve Parliament, veto its decisions, hire and fire heads of key political that include the Central Bank, Supreme Court, and the Constitutional Court;

Whereas on March 14, 1997, the Department of State issued a statement that calls on the Lukashenka regime to exercise restraint during upcoming political demonstrations recognizing Constitution Day and to observe the international human rights agreements to which it is a party;

Whereas the United States recently reviewed its relations with Belarus and adopted a policy of "selective engage-

ment” because President Lukashenka’s refusal to implement economic and political reform and his government’s flagrant violations of human rights have forced the United States to limit its possibilities for engagement with Belarus;

Whereas the United States will increase contact with non-governmental organizations and the independent media sources in Belarus and encourage democratic reforms in Belarus;

Whereas although the current Government of Belarus purports to accept dissent, it is time for President Lukashenka’s regime to prove its commitment to this pledge;

Whereas the Government of Belarus continues to jeopardize fundamental human rights and democratic tenets;

Whereas Belarus has yet to comply with its commitments to international financial organizations;

Whereas in March 1996 the Russian Duma voted to declare void the 1991 agreement dissolving the Soviet Union; and

Whereas the Government of President Lukashenka has monopolized the mass media, undermined the constitutional foundation for the separation of powers, suppressed the freedom of the press, defamed the national culture, narrowed the educational basis for patriotic upbringing of youth, maligned the Belarusian language, and undercut the ground for all-Belarusian unity: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
 2 *concurring), That—*

1 (1) the House of Representatives recognizes the
2 anniversary of the declaration of the independent
3 Republic of Belarus;

4 (2) the United States press the Government of
5 President Lukashenka to abide by the provisions of
6 the Helsinki Accords and the Constitution of the Re-
7 public of Belarus and guarantee freedom of the
8 press, allow for the flowering of Belarusian culture,
9 and enforce the separation of powers; and

10 (3) the Congress join with the people of Belarus
11 and Belarusians throughout the world in defending
12 the statehood and democracy of Belarus, sustaining
13 the country's Constitution, and preventing the loss
14 by Belarus of its hard-won nationhood and its op-
15 portunity to survive as an equal and full-fledged
16 member state among the sovereign nations of the
17 world.

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