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Expressing the sense of Congress with respect to human rights in Central Asia.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 11, 2003

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself and Mr. LANTOS) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress with respect to human rights in Central Asia.

Whereas the Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan provided the United States with important assistance in the war in Afghanistan, from military basing and overflight rights to the facilitation of humanitarian relief;

Whereas America's victory over the Taliban in turn provided important benefits to the Central Asian nations, removing a regime that threatened their security, and significantly weakening the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a terrorist organization that had previously staged armed raids from Afghanistan into the region;

Whereas the United States has consistently urged the nations of Central Asia to open their political systems and economies and to respect human rights, both before and since the attacks of September 11, 2001;

Whereas Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are members of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), both of which confer a range of human rights obligations on their members;

Whereas, according to the Department of State, the Government of Kazakhstan harasses and monitors independent media and human rights activists, restricts freedom of association and opposition political activity, has engaged in selective prosecution of opposition leaders, and allows security forces to commit extrajudicial executions, torture, and arbitrary detention with impunity;

Whereas, according to the Department of State, the Government of Kyrgyzstan engages in arbitrary arrest and detention, restricts the activities of political opposition figures, religious organizations deemed “extremist”, human rights activists, and nongovernmental organizations, and discriminates against ethnic minorities, and recently conducted a flawed constitutional referendum that will further concentrate power in the presidency and weaken the role of civil society;

Whereas, according to the Department of State, the Government of Tajikistan remains authoritarian, curtailing freedoms of speech, assembly, and association, with security forces committing extrajudicial executions, kidnappings, disappearances, and torture;

Whereas, according to the Department of State, Turkmenistan is a Soviet-style one-party state centered around the glorification of its president, which engages in serious human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest and detention, severe restrictions of personal privacy, repression of political opposition, and restrictions on freedom of speech and nongovernmental activity, and most recently has engaged in sweeping arrests and summary convictions, as well as torturing of suspects, in the aftermath of the attack on the President's motorcade and has refused to cooperate with the OSCE fact-finding mission;

Whereas, according to the Department of State, the Government of Uzbekistan continues to commit serious human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest, detention and torture in custody, particularly of Muslims who practice their religion outside state controls, to severely restrict freedom of speech, the press, religion, independent political activity, and nongovernmental organizations, and detains over 7,000 people for political or religious reasons;

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has expressed concern about religious persecution in the region, recommending that Turkmenistan be named a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, and that Uzbekistan be placed on a special "Watch List";

Whereas, by continuing to suppress human rights and to deny citizens peaceful, democratic means of expressing their convictions, the nations of Central Asia risk fueling popular support for violent and extremist movements, thus undermining the goals of the war on terrorism;

Whereas President Bush has made the defense of "human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state,

respect for women and private property and free speech and equal justice and religious tolerance” strategic goals of United States foreign policy in the Islamic world, arguing that “a truly strong nation will permit legal avenues of dissent for all groups that pursue their aspirations without violence”; and

Whereas Congress has expressed its desire to see deeper reform in Central Asia in resolutions and other legislation, most recently conditioning assistance to Uzbekistan on its progress in meeting human rights and democracy commitments to the United States: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that—*

3 (1) the Governments of Kazakhstan,
4 Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and
5 Uzbekistan should accelerate democratic reforms
6 and fulfill their human rights obligations, including,
7 where appropriate, by—

8 (A) releasing from prison all those jailed
9 for peaceful political activism or the nonviolent
10 expression of their political or religious beliefs,
11 including Felix Kulov in Kyrgyzstan;

12 (B) fully investigating any credible allega-
13 tions of torture and prosecuting those respon-
14 sible;

15 (C) permitting the free and unfettered
16 functioning of independent media outlets, inde-
17 pendent political parties, and nongovernmental

1 organizations, whether officially registered or
2 not;

3 (D) permitting the free exercise of reli-
4 gious beliefs and ceasing the persecution of
5 members of religious groups and denominations
6 not registered with the state;

7 (E) holding free, competitive, and fair elec-
8 tions; and

9 (F) making publicly available documenta-
10 tion of their revenues and punishing those en-
11 gaged in official corruption;

12 (2) the President, the Secretary of State, and
13 the Secretary of Defense should—

14 (A) continue to raise at the highest levels
15 with the governments of the nations of Central
16 Asia specific cases of political and religious per-
17 secution, and urge greater respect for human
18 rights and democratic freedoms at every diplo-
19 matic opportunity;

20 (B) take progress in meeting the goals out-
21 lined in paragraph (1) into account when deter-
22 mining the level and frequency of United States
23 diplomatic engagement with the governments of
24 the Central Asian nations, the allocation of
25 United States assistance, and the nature of

1 United States military engagement with the
2 countries of the region;

3 (C) ensure that the provisions of the an-
4 nual foreign operations appropriation Act are
5 fully implemented to ensure that no United
6 States assistance benefits security forces in
7 Central Asia implicated in violations of human
8 rights;

9 (D) follow the recommendations of the
10 United States Commission on International Re-
11 ligious Freedom by designating Turkmenistan a
12 “Country of Particular Concern” under the
13 International Religious Freedom Act of 1998
14 and by making clear that Uzbekistan risks des-
15 ignation if conditions in that country do not im-
16 prove;

17 (E) urge the Government of Turkmenistan
18 to respect the right of imprisoned opposition
19 leader Boris Shikmuradov to due process and a
20 fair trial and to release democratic activists and
21 their family members from prison, and urge the
22 Government of the Russian Federation not to
23 extradite to Turkmenistan members of that
24 country’s political opposition;

1 (F) work with the Government of
2 Kazakhstan to create a political climate free of
3 intimidation and harassment, including releas-
4 ing political prisoners and permitting the return
5 of political exiles, most notably Akezan
6 Kazegeldin, and to reduce official corruption,
7 including by urging the Government of
8 Kazakhstan to cooperate with the ongoing De-
9 partment of Justice investigation, and if con-
10 victed independent journalist Sergey Duvanov
11 decides to appeal his verdict, to ensure that due
12 process will be strictly followed in accordance
13 with Kazakhstani law and international stand-
14 ards of justice;

15 (G) work with the Government of
16 Uzbekistan to address the serious concerns
17 about systemic torture documented in the re-
18 ports of the United Nations Special Rapporteur
19 on Torture and to implement recommendations
20 made in the report;

21 (H) work with the Government of
22 Kyrgyzstan to introduce changes in the recently
23 adopted constitution that would address con-
24 cerns about protections for human rights and
25 balance of powers; and

1 (I) support through United States assist-
2 ance programs those individuals, nongovern-
3 mental organizations, and media outlets in Cen-
4 tral Asia working to build more open societies,
5 to support the victims of human rights abuses,
6 and to expose official corruption;

7 (3) increased levels of United States assistance
8 to the governments of the Central Asian nations
9 made possible by their cooperation in the war in Af-
10 ghanistan can be sustained only if there is substan-
11 tial and continuing progress towards meeting the
12 goals outlined in paragraph (1).

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