

108<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
2<sup>D</sup> SESSION

# H. CON. RES. 363

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 14, 2004

Received and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the continuing gross violations of human rights and civil liberties of the Syrian and Lebanese people by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Whereas the Syrian Arab Republic is governed by an authoritarian regime which continues to commit serious human rights abuses, including the use of torture and arbitrary arrest and detention;

Whereas the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003 states that Syria "significantly restricts freedom of speech and of the press",

that “freedom of assembly does not exist under the law”, and that “the Government restricted freedom of association”;

Whereas Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”;

Whereas Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.”;

Whereas Syria’s September 2001 press law permits the government to arbitrarily deny or revoke publishing licenses for vague reasons and compels media to submit all material to government censors;

Whereas Syrian authorities have arrested, or, in the case of foreigners, expelled two journalists for writing critically about Syria’s policies;

Whereas Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have reported that the security forces of Syria are targeting emerging Syrian human rights organizations, as well as their attorneys, in an apparent attempt to intimidate those organizations;

Whereas on March 8, 2004, Syrian security forces arrested more than 30 human rights dissidents and civilians at a sit-in in front of the parliament;

Whereas a United States diplomat who was watching the peaceful demonstrations was also arrested and held for an hour in what the United States Government called an

unacceptable violation of diplomatic practice and which the United States protested “in the strongest terms”;

Whereas Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.”;

Whereas the criminal law of Syria provides for reduced sentences in cases of “honor” killings, and spousal rape is not illegal;

Whereas the infringement by Syria on human rights and civil liberties extends into the Lebanese Republic, which it continues to occupy in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions;

Whereas Human Rights Watch, in its 2003 World Report, stated that “political activists in Lebanon continued to demand the withdrawal of all Syrian forces from the country and organized demonstrations throughout the year, many of which the internal security forces dispersed forcibly”;

Whereas hundreds of Lebanese civilians are believed to have been killed or “disappeared” by Syrian occupation forces or its secret police;

Whereas hundreds of Kurdish civilians were injured or killed in clashes with the Syrian authorities that began on March 12, 2004, in Qamishli, a city in northeastern Syria and, according to Syrian Kurdish sources, security forces used live ammunition against unarmed civilians; and

Whereas human rights and democracy groups in Syria have sponsored a petition urging greater freedoms and the re-

lease of all political prisoners, which has garnered more than 6,000 signatures: Now, therefore, be it

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

3            (1) condemns the consistent pattern of gross  
4 violations of internationally recognized human rights  
5 by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic;

6            (2) calls on the international community to  
7 adopt a resolution at the upcoming session of the  
8 United Nations General Assembly which details the  
9 dismal human rights record of Syria;

10           (3) expresses its support for the people of Syria  
11 in their daily struggle for freedom, respect for  
12 human rights and civil liberties, democratic self-gov-  
13 ernance, and the establishment of the rule of law;

14           (4) encourages the President and the Secretary  
15 of State to reach out to dissidents, human rights ac-  
16 tivists, and the nonviolent democratic opposition in  
17 Syria, and to assist them in their efforts; and

18           (5) urges the adoption and pursuit of these and  
19 other policies to seek a democratic government in  
20 Syria that will—

21            (A) bring freedom and democracy to the  
22 people of Syria;

23            (B) cease the illegal occupation by Syria of  
24 the Lebanese Republic;

1           (C) abandon support for terrorism by  
2           Syria;

3           (D) not pursue research, development, ac-  
4           quisition, production, transfer, or deployment of  
5           biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons, will  
6           provide credible assurances that such behavior  
7           will not be undertaken in the future, and will  
8           agree to allow United Nations and other inter-  
9           national observers to verify such assurances;  
10          and

11          (E) live in peace and security with the  
12          international community.

Passed the House of Representatives September 13,  
2004.

Attest:

JEFF TRANDAHL,

*Clerk.*