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H. CON. RES. 262

Expressing the sense of Congress regarding Saudi Arabia's policies relating to religious practice and tolerance, including Saudi Arabia's commitment to revise Saudi textbooks to remove intolerant and violent references.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 15, 2007

Mr. ISRAEL (for himself, Mr. WOLF, and Mr. WEINER) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress regarding Saudi Arabia's policies relating to religious practice and tolerance, including Saudi Arabia's commitment to revise Saudi textbooks to remove intolerant and violent references.

Whereas, in September 2004, the Secretary of State, as the President's designee, designated Saudi Arabia as a "country of particular concern" (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401 et seq.) for engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom;

Whereas, in July 2006, as a result of bilateral discussions mandated by Saudi Arabia's CPC designation, the Secretary of State identified and announced, and the Government of Saudi Arabia confirmed, policies that the

Government of Saudi Arabia was “pursuing and will continue to pursue for the purpose of promoting greater freedom for religious practice and increased tolerance for religious groups”;

Whereas as a result of the Government of Saudi Arabia confirming such policies, the Secretary of State, as the President’s designee, continued to waive the application of actions under section 405(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, as authorized by section 407 of such Act;

Whereas such policies include a comprehensive review and revision of educational materials and other literature sent outside Saudi Arabia to ensure that all intolerant references are removed, including, when possible, attempting to retrieve previously distributed materials that contain intolerant references;

Whereas such policies include revising Saudi textbooks to remove intolerant references that disparage Muslims or non-Muslims or that promote hatred toward other religions or religious groups;

Whereas the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 (Public Law 110–53) requires the President to report to Congress on progress made by the Government of Saudi Arabia “to facilitate political, economic, and social reforms, including greater religious freedom . . .”;

Whereas members of United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) traveled to Saudi Arabia in May and June of 2007, and found that the Government of Saudi Arabia has made insubstantial progress toward implementing its July 2006 policies re-

lating to religious practice and tolerance, and has not been transparent in the implementation of such policies;

Whereas USCIRF found that the Government of Saudi Arabia permits the public practice of only one interpretation of Islam in Saudi Arabia and requires public behavior to conform to this interpretation, thereby violating standards of universal human rights and resulting in discrimination and human rights violations against members of indigenous Muslim communities who follow other interpretations of Islam, such as Shi'as, Ismailis, and nonconforming Sunnis;

Whereas the Government of Saudi Arabia's harsh enforcement of its interpretation of Islam adversely affects the human rights of women in Saudi Arabia, including freedoms of speech, movement, association, and religion, freedom from coercion, access to education, and full equality before the law;

Whereas the Government of Saudi Arabia's harsh enforcement of its interpretation of Islam also adversely affects the human rights of both Muslim and non-Muslim expatriate workers;

Whereas between two million and three million non-Muslim workers, including Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and others, reside in Saudi Arabia for temporary employment;

Whereas labor contracts in Saudi Arabia often include provisions requiring expatriate workers to conform to Saudi religious customs and traditions, thereby violating the expatriate workers' human rights;

Whereas the Government of Saudi Arabia's Commission to Promote Virtue and Prevent Vice exercises largely unchecked power to curtail the freedoms of speech, assem-

bly, and association, and the courts in Saudi Arabia offer neither due process to protect the individual nor effective remedies for violations of such rights;

Whereas official school textbooks in Saudi Arabia have previously included language encouraging violence that adversely affects the interests of the United States;

Whereas several studies, including studies by Saudi experts, point to serious concerns that language encouraging violence toward others misguides students into believing that in order to safeguard their religion, they must violently repress, and even physically eliminate, the “other”;

Whereas a 2006 report by the Center for Religious Freedom and the Gulf Institute analyzing several Saudi textbooks from the 2005–2006 school year found that “a ninth grade Saudi textbook on Hadith teaches teenagers in apocalyptic terms that violence towards Jews, Christians and other unbelievers is sanctioned by God”;

Whereas such textbook states, “the hour [of judgment] will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them”;

Whereas the Government of Saudi Arabia claimed publicly that it revised its textbooks and removed language that promotes intolerance and encourages violence;

Whereas the Government of Saudi Arabia, despite repeated requests by the Secretary of State and Members of Congress over a period of several years, has failed to make a complete set of its current textbooks available to support its claim that such language has been eliminated;

Whereas, in June 2007, during its visit to Saudi Arabia, USCIRF found evidence that intolerant and inflam-

matory text remains in textbooks provided by the Government of Saudi Arabia;

Whereas Saudi textbooks are used outside Saudi Arabia, including in the United States;

Whereas the Islamic Saudi Academy (ISA), with campuses in Alexandria and Fairfax, Virginia, is the only school in the United States that operates with the direct authority of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia;

Whereas the ISA operates on two northern Virginia properties owned or leased by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, with property being leased by “the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia d/b/a (doing business as) the Islamic Saudi Academy”;

Whereas Saudi Arabia’s Ambassador to the United States is the chairman of the ISA’s board of directors, which, according to the ISA’s Web site, “oversees the educational and administrative operation” and “provides direction and guidance to every aspect of” the ISA’s operations;

Whereas the ISA is funded by the Government of Saudi Arabia, and, on numerous occasions, officials from the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia have spoken to the press on the ISA’s behalf, including in response to inquiries about the ISA’s curriculum;

Whereas the ISA uses the Government of Saudi Arabia’s “curriculum, syllabus, and materials” in the portion of its programming taught in Arabic;

Whereas USCIRF has recommended that the Secretary of State open diplomatic talks with the Government of Saudi Arabia in order to obtain official Saudi textbooks used at the ISA; and

Whereas USCIRF recommends that the ISA should be closed until the official Saudi textbooks used at the ISA are made available for comprehensive public examination and are found to be consistent with the Government of Saudi Arabia's commitment to revise such textbooks to remove intolerant and violent references: 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 Secretary of State, as the President's
 4 designee, should continue to designate Saudi Arabia
 5 as a “country of particular concern” under the
 6 International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22
 7 U.S.C. 6401 et seq.) for engaging in systematic, on-
 8 going, and egregious violations of religious freedom;

9 (2) the Secretary of State should create a for-
 10 mal mechanism to monitor implementation of the
 11 Government of Saudi Arabia's July 2006 policies re-
 12 lating to religious practice and tolerance as part of
 13 every meeting of the United States-Saudi Arabia
 14 Strategic Dialogue, and ensure that United States
 15 representatives to each relevant working group of
 16 such Strategic Dialogue, after each session, or at
 17 least every six months, submit to Congress a report
 18 on their findings;

19 (3) the Secretary of State should submit to
 20 Congress a report on progress by the Government of
 21 Saudi Arabia toward implementing its July 2006

1 policies relating to religious practice and tolerance,
2 including—

3 (A) the transparency of the Government of
4 Saudi Arabia toward the implementation of
5 such policies; and

6 (B) any benchmarks or timetables estab-
7 lished for implementation of such policies;

8 (4) the Secretary of State should immediately
9 begin diplomatic discussions with the Government of
10 Saudi Arabia with the goals of—

11 (A) having the Government of Saudi Ara-
12 bia close the Islamic Saudi Academy (ISA)
13 until such time as the official Saudi textbooks
14 used at the ISA are made available for com-
15 prehensive public examination in the United
16 States; and

17 (B) ensuring a verifiable prohibition of any
18 scheme aimed at continuing funding by the
19 Government of Saudi Arabia to the ISA
20 through other indirect means;

21 (5) the Secretary of State should conclude such
22 discussions not later than 90 days after the date of
23 the adoption of this concurrent resolution, and, while
24 the discussions are ongoing, the Secretary should
25 also be preparing to take action under title II of the

1 State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22
2 U.S.C. 4301 et seq.) (relating to authorities relating
3 to the regulation of foreign missions), if such action
4 becomes necessary; and

5 (6) at the conclusion of the 90-day period, the
6 Secretary of State should submit to Congress a re-
7 port on the results of such discussions, including—

8 (A) if the Secretary secured the release of
9 the Saudi textbooks used at the ISA for com-
10 prehensive public examination, and if the Sec-
11 retary has determined that such textbooks con-
12 tain language encouraging violence, what ac-
13 tions the Secretary plans to take in response
14 under applicable United States laws, including
15 under title II of the State Department Basic
16 Authorities Act of 1956; and

17 (B) if the Secretary did not secure the re-
18 lease of the Saudi textbooks, what actions the
19 Secretary plans to take under title II of the
20 State Department Basic Authorities Act of
21 1956 to close the ISA on the grounds that the
22 nondiplomatic activities of the ISA cannot be
23 conducted by and through an embassy, and be-
24 cause significant concerns remain about wheth-
25 er what is being taught at the ISA promotes re-

- 1 religious intolerance and may adversely affect the
- 2 interests of the United States.

