

112TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 549

Calling for democratic change in Syria.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 15, 2012

Mr. ELLISON submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the
Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Calling for democratic change in Syria.

Whereas the Syrian Arab Republic is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted at New York December 16, 1966, the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, done at New York December 10, 1984, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted at Paris, December 10, 1948.

Whereas, in March 2011, peaceful demonstrations in Syria began against the authoritarian rule of Bashar al-Assad;

Whereas, in response to the demonstrations, the Government of Syria launched a brutal crackdown, which has resulted in gross human rights violations, use of force against civilians, torture, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary execu-

tions, sexual violence, and interference with access to medical treatment;

Whereas the United Nations estimated that, as of January 25, 2012, more than 5,400 people in Syria had been killed since the violence began in March 2011;

Whereas, on August 18, 2011, President Barack Obama called upon President Bashar al-Assad to step down from power;

Whereas the Department of State has repeatedly condemned the Government of Syria's crackdown on its people, including on January 30, 2012, when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated "The status quo is unsustainable. . . . The longer the Assad regime continues its attacks on the Syrian people and stands in the way of a peaceful transition, the greater the concern that instability will escalate and spill over throughout the region.";

Whereas President Obama, on April 29, 2011, designated 3 individuals subject to sanctions for human rights abuses in Syria: Mahir al-Assad, the brother of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and brigade commander in the Syrian Army's 4th Armored Division; Atif Najib, the former head of the Political Security Directorate for Daraa Province and a cousin of Bashar al-Assad; and Ali Mamluk, director of Syria's General Intelligence Directorate;

Whereas, on May 18, 2011, President Obama issued an executive order sanctioning senior officials of the Syrian Arab Republic and their supporters, specifically designating seven people: President Bashar al-Assad, Vice President Farouk al-Shara, Prime Minister Adel Safar, Minister of the Interior Mohammad Ibrahim al-Shaar, Minister of

Defense Ali Habib Mahmoud, Head of Syrian Military Intelligence Abdul Fatah Qudsiya, and Director of Political Security Directorate Mohammed Dib Zaitoun;

Whereas President Obama, on August 17, 2011, issued Executive Order 13582, blocking property of the Government of Syria and prohibiting certain transactions with respect to Syria;

Whereas, on December 1, 2011, the Department of the Treasury designated two individuals, Aus Aslan and Muhammad Makhlef, under Executive Order 13573 and two entities, the Military Housing Establishment and the Real Estate Bank of Syria, under Executive Order 13582;

Whereas, on May 6, 2011, the European Union's 27 countries imposed sanctions on the Government of Syria for the human rights abuses, including asset freezes and visa bans on members of the Government of Syria and an arms embargo on the country;

Whereas, on November 12, 2011, the League of Arab States voted to suspend Syria's membership in the organization;

Whereas, on December 2, 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed Resolution S-18/1, which recalls General Assembly resolution A/RES/66/176 of December 19, 2011, as well as Human Rights Council resolutions S-16/1, S-17/1 and S-18/1, and further deplores the human rights situation in Syria, commends the League of Arab States, and supports implementation of its Plan of Action;

Whereas the League of Arab States approved and implemented a plan of action to send a team of international monitors to Syria, which began December 26, 2011;

Whereas, on January 28, 2012, the League of Arab States decided to suspend its international monitoring mission due to escalating violence within Syria;

Whereas, on February 4, 2012, the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China vetoed a United Nations Security Council Resolution in support of the League of Arab States' Plan of Action;

Whereas the Governments of the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran remain major suppliers of military equipment to the Government of Syria notwithstanding that government's violent repression of demonstrators; and

Whereas the gross human rights violations perpetuated by the Government of Syria against the people of Syria represent a grave risk to regional peace and stability: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) strongly condemns the ongoing, widespread,
3 and systemic violations of human rights conducted
4 by authorities in Syria, including the use of force
5 against civilians, torture, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary
6 executions, sexual violence, and interference
7 with access to medical treatment;

8 (2) maintains that Bashar al-Assad has lost all
9 claims to legitimacy due to the perpetuation of mass
10 atrocities against the people of Syria and continued
11 violations of human rights;

1 (3) calls upon Bashar al-Assad to step down
2 from power;

3 (4) strongly condemns the Governments of the
4 Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran
5 for providing military and security equipment to the
6 Government of Syria, which has been used to repress
7 peaceful demonstrations and commit mass atrocities
8 against unarmed civilian populations in Syria;

9 (5) commends the League of Arab States' ef-
10 ferts to bring about a peaceful resolution in Syria;

11 (6) regrets that the League of Arab States ob-
12 server mission was not able to monitor the full im-
13 plementation of the League of Arab States' Action
14 Plan of November 2, 2011, due to the escalating vio-
15 lence in Syria;

16 (7) commends President Obama for authorizing
17 targeted sanctions on human rights abusers in Syria
18 and for extending these sanctions to 12 individuals;

19 (8) encourages the President to continue desig-
20 nating for sanctions all individuals responsible for
21 human rights violations in Syria;

22 (9) urges the President to support an effective
23 transition to democracy in Syria by identifying and
24 providing substantial material and technical support,
25 upon request, to Syrian organizations that are rep-

1 representative of the people of Syria, make demon-
2 strable commitments to protect human rights and
3 religious freedom, reject terrorism, cooperate with
4 international counterterrorism and nonproliferation
5 efforts, and abstain from destabilizing neighboring
6 countries;

7 (10) urges the President to develop a plan to
8 identify weapons stockpiles and prevent the pro-
9 liferation of conventional, biological, chemical, and
10 other types of weapons in Syria;

11 (11) urges the Department of State to establish
12 a “Friends of the Syrian People” Contact Group of
13 countries committed to democratic change in Syria,
14 including Turkey, members of the League of Arab
15 States, and members of the European Union;

16 (12) urges the Department of State to develop
17 a strategy to encourage defections from the military
18 of the Government of Syria;

19 (13) urges the President to diplomatically en-
20 gage with the Republic of Turkey and members of
21 the League of Arab States and the European Union
22 to discuss options to protect the people of Syria, in-
23 cluding the provision of robust humanitarian assist-
24 ance, the viability of establishing a safe haven along
25 the borders of Syria, and the use of all means avail-

1 able to monitor and publicly report on abuses inside
2 the country; and

3 (14) urges the international community to mo-
4 bilize in support of a post-Assad democratic and in-
5 clusive Government of Syria that holds accountable
6 those responsible for crimes against humanity and
7 gross violations of human rights.

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