

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 17

Expressing concern over the disappearance of Austin Tice, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 3, 2017

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

RESOLUTION

Expressing concern over the disappearance of Austin Tice,
and for other purposes.

Whereas Austin Tice is a 34-year-old former United States Marine infantry officer and Georgetown law student and graduate of Georgetown University, from Houston, Texas;

Whereas Austin was an Eagle Scout, National Merit Finalist, and eldest of seven children;

Whereas Austin was a contributing freelancer to McClatchy Newspapers, the Washington Post and other media outlets and a recipient of the 2012 George Polk Award for War Reporting;

Whereas in May 2012, Austin reportedly slipped under a fence at the Turkey-Syria border to report on the intensifying civil war from in and around Damascus, Syria;

Whereas, on August 11, 2012, Austin celebrated his 31st birthday in Darayya, Syria, then was scheduled to travel to Beirut, Lebanon;

Whereas in August 2012, Austin did not travel as planned to Lebanon and his frequent emails to his family stopped;

Whereas in late September 2012, a video clip appeared on YouTube showing Austin blindfolded and being prodded up a hillside by masked militants;

Whereas in the more than 1,000 days since Austin's disappearance, no group has claimed responsibility for his capture;

Whereas the Syrian government has never acknowledged detaining Austin and has denied the same to Austin's parents;

Whereas U.S. officials believe the government of Bashar al-Assad or a group affiliated with it is holding him;

Whereas Austin Tice's parents, Marc and Debra Tice have been diligent in their efforts to find their son, by partnering with Reporters Without Borders and a New York ad agency to launch "The Blindfold Pledge" to dramatize the increasing dangers to journalists in repressive regimes around the world;

Whereas the couple also helped deploy four billboards across Harris County, Texas, last fall bearing their son's likeness and the phrase: "Over 1,000 days in captivity for being a journalist";

Whereas the Tices have appeared at forums and panels discussions on the threats facing journalists around the world, including one during the week of April 4, 2016, at Georgetown, Austin's alma mater;

Whereas the couple has promoted an online petition urging the U.S. Government to ramp up efforts to bring their son home;

Whereas nearly 270 newspapers and media organizations have highlighted the journalist's case on their Web sites as a result of the Tices' efforts;

Whereas according to the Houston Chronicle, the Obama administration first confirmed they spoke with Syrian officials about Austin's case sometime in 2015, though they denied visiting or seeing Austin, as had been initially reported by the French newspaper Le Figaro; and

Whereas, on April 8, 2016, U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Austin remains a focus of the administration's diplomatic efforts, often working through Czech officials who serve as intermediaries between the United States and the Syrian Arab Republic governments: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) expresses its ongoing concern about the dis-
3 appearance of Austin Tice in Damascus, Syria, in
4 August 2012;

5 (2) encourages the Department of State and
6 the intelligence community to jointly continue inves-
7 tigations and to consider all plausible explanations
8 for Austin's disappearance;

1 (3) urges the Department of State and the in-
2 telligence community to coordinate investigations
3 with the Syrian Arab Republic government and so-
4 licit information from appropriate regional affairs
5 and law enforcement experts on plausible expla-
6 nations for Austin's disappearance;

7 (4) encourages the Department of State to
8 work with foreign governments known to have diplo-
9 matic influence with the Government of Syria;

10 (5) encourages the intelligence community to
11 assess the possibility of the involvement of the Gov-
12 ernment of Syria in Austin Tice's disappearance and
13 to possibly seek his recovery; and

14 (6) requests that the Department of State and
15 the intelligence community continue to work with
16 and inform Congress and the family of Austin Tice
17 on efforts to possibly recover Austin and to resolve
18 his disappearance.

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