

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2140

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 11, 2019

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

AN ACT

To prevent child marriage in refugee settlements
administered by the United Nations, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Preventing Child Mar-
3 riage in Displaced Populations Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

6 (1) According to UNICEF, 12 million girls
7 marry before the age of 18 every year.

8 (2) Early marriage denies children, especially
9 girls, their right to make vital decisions about their
10 well-being, including relating to their health, family,
11 and career. Child brides are less likely to finish their
12 education, and are at higher risk for abuse, con-
13 tracting HIV, and dying while pregnant or giving
14 birth.

15 (3) Child marriage also imposes substantial eco-
16 nomic costs to developing countries, impeding devel-
17 opment and prosperity gains.

18 (4) Displaced populations are particularly vul-
19 nerable to child marriage, in communities where pov-
20 erty, instability, and displacement put pressure on
21 families to marry children, particularly young girls,
22 off at a young age.

23 (5) One United Nations (UN) study found that
24 child marriage rates were 4 times higher among dis-
25 placed Syrian refugees than among Syrians before

1 the crisis. This indicates that displacement, insta-
2 bility, and poverty are driving child marriages.

3 (6) United Nations agencies, including
4 UNICEF and UNHCR, have acknowledged the dan-
5 gers of child marriage and taken steps to address its
6 risk in the populations they serve.

7 (7) The UN Joint Program on Child Marriage
8 supports this work by building the resilience of pop-
9 ulations to indirectly prevent child marriage and by
10 generating new data and evidence on the prevalence
11 of child marriage in humanitarian and fragile set-
12 tings. For example, in Uganda, the UN Joint Pro-
13 gram on Child Marriage helped 27,000 adolescent
14 girls strengthen critical skills through school clubs
15 and Go Back to School campaigns, as well as life-
16 skills and financial literacy training.

17 (8) After the UN Joint Program on Child Mar-
18 riage identified Yemen as one of its focus countries,
19 65,000 people, of whom 45,000 are adolescents,
20 were reached with awareness raising activities on the
21 harms of child marriage in 2018 alone. As a result,
22 local council representatives, elders, and community
23 leaders from six districts signed a pledge to support
24 advocacy efforts to end child marriage.

1 **SEC. 3. PREVENTING CHILD MARRIAGE IN DISPLACED POP-**
2 **ULATIONS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall direct the
4 United States Permanent Representative to the United
5 Nations to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United
6 States at the United Nations to call for an adoption of
7 an agreed-upon definition of “child marriage” across
8 United Nations agencies.

9 (b) STRATEGY.—The President shall direct the
10 United States Permanent Representative to the United
11 Nations to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United
12 States at the United Nations to call for the development
13 of a comprehensive strategy to address child marriage in
14 refugee settlements administered by the United Nations.
15 Such strategy should include the following:

16 (1) A mandate to regularly collect and report
17 data related to the number of known or suspected
18 child marriages taking place inside each such settle-
19 ment.

20 (2) Protocols for United Nations personnel re-
21 garding prevention and monitoring of child mar-
22 riages inside each such settlement.

23 (3) A description of United Nations programs
24 administered at such settlements that include—

1 (A) physical, mental, and emotional reha-
2 bilitation and support to children who have ex-
3 tricated themselves from child marriage; and

4 (B) alternatives to child marriage, such as
5 education initiatives.

6 (4) Protocols regarding how United Nations
7 personnel should—

8 (A) report adults participating in illegal
9 child marriages in each such settlement; and

10 (B) monitor the prosecution of such adults
11 by the authorities of the country in which the
12 settlement at issue is located.

13 (c) RESEARCH.—The President shall direct the
14 United States Permanent Representative to the United
15 Nations to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United
16 States at the United Nations to advocate for the United
17 Nations and its appropriate agencies to include, as appro-
18 priate, in all of its research into child marriage the rela-
19 tionship between child marriage and violence against girls,
20 including young children and infants.

21 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

22 (1) CHILD MARRIAGE.—The term “child mar-
23 riage” means a formal marriage or informal union
24 involving at least one person younger than age 18.

(2) **ILLEGAL CHILD MARRIAGE.**—The term “il-
legal child marriage” means a child marriage that is
illegal under the laws of the country in which the
child marriage occurs.

Passed the House of Representatives June 10, 2019.

Attest: **CHERYL L. JOHNSON,**
Clerk.