

Whereas the people of the United States generously offered humanitarian assistance to the Greek people during their struggle for independence;

Whereas Greece played a major role in the World War II struggle to protect freedom and democracy through such bravery as was shown in the historic Battle of Crete, which provided the Axis land war with its first major setback, setting off a chain of events that significantly affected the outcome of World War II;

Whereas hundreds of thousands of Greek civilians were killed in Greece during World War II in defense of the values of the Allies;

Whereas, throughout the 20th century, Greece was one of a few countries that allied with the United States in every major international conflict;

Whereas Greece is a strategic partner and ally of the United States in bringing political stability and economic development to the volatile Balkan region, having invested more than \$20,000,000,000 in the countries of the region, thereby helping to create more than 200,000 new jobs, and having contributed more than \$750,000,000 in development aid for the region;

Whereas Greece actively participates in peacekeeping and peace-building operations conducted by international organizations including the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe;

Whereas Greece received worldwide praise for its extraordinary handling during the 2004 Olympic Games of more than 14,000 athletes and more than 2,000,000 spectators and journalists, a feat Greece handled efficiently, securely, and with hospitality;

Whereas Greece, located in a region where Christianity meets Islam and Judaism, maintains excellent relations with Muslim nations and Israel;

Whereas the Government of Greece has taken important steps in recent years to further cross-cultural understanding and rapprochement with Turkey, as seen by Prime Minister of Greece George Papandreou's trip to Turkey, just days after being elected and the Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Greece in May 2010, during which Greece and Turkey established a Joint Ministerial Council, made up of 10 ministers from each country, to discuss tangible ways to enhance cooperation in various fields of interest;

Whereas Greece and the United States are at the forefront of the effort for freedom, democracy, peace, stability, and human rights;

Whereas those and similar ideals have forged a close bond between Greece and the United States; and

Whereas it is proper and desirable for the United States to celebrate March 25, 2011, Greek Independence Day, with the Greek people and to reaffirm the democratic principles from which these two great nations were born: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) extends warm congratulations and best wishes to the people of Greece as they celebrate the 190th anniversary of the independence of Greece;

(2) expresses support for the principles of democratic governance to which the people of Greece are committed; and

(3) notes the important role that Greece has played in the wider European region and in the community of nations since gaining its independence 190 years ago.

CONDEMNING THE ELECTIONS IN BELARUS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that we proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 105.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 105) to condemn the December 19, 2010, elections in Belarus, and to call for the immediate release of all political prisoners and for new elections that meet international standards.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, much of the world's recent attention has understandably been on the Middle East—and of course this week on the terrible situation with one of America's closest allies—Japan. I understand that USAID has sent disaster relief teams to help in the earthquake and tsunami devastated cities and that the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan is off the coast to help with relief operations.

Events there are truly heartbreaking and we stand in solidarity with our Japanese friends during this time of continued crisis and rebuilding.

Amid these major global events I want to make sure we don't lose sight of the continuing political repression in the last dictatorship of Europe—Belarus.

You see, despite the transformations that swept through eastern and central Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarus remains stuck in time under the tyranny of Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the country with an iron fist for most of the last two decades.

Lukashenko's security forces that help prop up his illegitimate regime are actually still called the KGB—and they have the same despicable tactics as the old Soviet KGB.

Under Lukashenko's regime, those who dare to speak up against the government or attempt to participate in any semblance of democratic activity find themselves arrested, beaten, or worse.

In December, six of the seven candidates who chose to run against Lukashenko were arrested on election day when protesting the sham electoral process. Some were beaten and one, Vladimir Nekliaev, was even yanked out of a hospital and taken for interrogation by Lukashenko's KGB henchmen.

Over 600 other protesters were also arrested.

I had the opportunity to visit Belarus some weeks after the election and meet with the family members of these brave candidates and activists and I must tell you, it was a very moving experience.

I want to tell you about Milana Mikhalevich a 34-year-old mother of two, whose husband Ales was a Presidential candidate.

She told me of her harassment by Belarusian officials since her husband's arrest; how they denied her access to see him or even exchange letters. Any attorneys brave enough to defend him faced disbarment or criminal charges.

As she described this Lukashenko nightmare, Milana's 14-month-old daughter Alena scrambled around her feet—her father held somewhere in a Lukashenko KGB nightmare.

Just a few weeks ago Ales was finally released from detention. He promptly issued a statement detailing the abuse and torture that he endured in his 2-month KGB detention, including being beaten, stripped naked, and hung by his hands.

He said that following his torture he was forced to sign a document in which he pledged to cooperate, noting "after my joints crunched I did all they wanted."

Madam President, can anyone believe this kind of barbarism is still happening in Europe?

At the end of January, following repeated condemnations of the December election and demands for the release of all political prisoners, the United States and the European Union imposed targeted travel and financial sanctions on Lukashenko and his group of enablers.

Tragically, since then, Lukashenko's KGB has continued daily raids on the homes and offices of those suspected of ties to the democratic opposition, human rights organizations, or independent media.

Lukashenko has ignored election monitor reports questioning the credibility of the election and international demands to release all political prisoners. He has pulled his country even further into isolation and made it the subject of international scorn.

Following the old Soviet playbook, his government has tried to blame outside forces and other countries—everyone but Lukashenko himself—for the shameful political mess he has created.

You may have read his very troubling interview recently in the Washington Post in which he brazenly claimed "We told you clearly that there is no less democracy in Belarus than there is in the United States" and that despite the international condemnation and sanctions, he would order the same arrests and repression on election night all over again given the chance.

Just last week his government formally sentenced a number of protesters to terms of between 3-4 years in a high security prison. Others still face trials and possible 15 year sentences.

That is why last week, Senators LIEBERMAN, MCCAIN, CARDIN, SHAHEEN, GRAHAM, KYL, BARRASSO, MARK UDALL, KIRK, LAUTENBERG and I submitted a Senate resolution on Belarus that, among other things:

Condemns the December election as illegitimate and fraudulent and calls for new elections that are genuinely democratic; calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners in

Belarus and an end to the harassment of their families and lawyers; and urges the U.S. and the EU to expand the list of Belarusian officials and their families responsible for maintaining Lukashenko's rein of tyranny to be subject to travel and asset sanctions.

The resolution also calls on the International Ice Hockey Federation to suspend its 2014 International World Ice Hockey championship to be hosted in Minsk, Belarus until all political prisoners are released.

No such distinguished international sport championship should be awarded to Lukashenko's dictatorship while political prisoners are rotting away and being tortured in his secret KGB prisons.

Madam President, the people of Belarus only want the same basic freedoms that so many of us take for granted—and that so many are protesting for in the Middle East—the freedom to choose one's own government, to be free from indiscriminate arrest and torture, and to speak and debate issues freely within a democratic process.

We in the Senate owe the Belarusian people nothing less than to stand in solidarity with them as they continue their struggle.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements related to the resolution be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 105) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 105

Whereas the people of Belarus have lived under the brutal dictatorship of Alexander Lukashenko for almost 2 decades;

Whereas, under Mr. Lukashenko's rule, Belarus—which is known as “the last dictatorship of Europe”—has defied the post-Soviet democratic transformation that swept eastern and central Europe by maintaining an abhorrent human and political rights record and denying its citizens fundamental freedoms;

Whereas, according to the United States Department of State 2009 Human Rights Country Report on Belarus, elections in Belarus are consistently unfair and undemocratic; politically motivated arrests and detentions are ongoing; Belarus' judiciary is not independent; beatings, poor treatment, and disease are widespread in prisons in Belarus, where detainees lack access to food, proper clothing, and medical treatment; and the Government of Belarus has severely and systematically restricted basic freedoms of press, speech, assembly, association, and religion;

Whereas Mr. Lukashenko had an opportunity to move Belarus closer to the community of democracies by holding free and fair presidential elections on December 19, 2010, and allowing for multiple opposition candidates to run for president;

Whereas the Lukashenko regime squandered this opportunity for the people of

Belarus by orchestrating a fraudulent election that failed to meet minimal international standards;

Whereas, following the elections, the Lukashenko regime arrested 5 of the 6 opposition presidential candidates, severely beating one candidate, Uladzimir Niakliayeu, and arbitrarily beating many of the thousands of Belarusians who were peacefully protesting the stolen election in the largest public demonstration the country had seen in over 5 years;

Whereas, during the course of election day and its aftermath, Lukashenko's security forces, the State Security Agency (KGB), detained or arrested over 600 additional people, including journalists, civil society representatives, political activists, and ordinary Belarusians who were peacefully seeking to exercise their fundamental human rights to free assembly and expression;

Whereas the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Election Observation Mission, which monitored the election in Belarus, issued a statement of preliminary findings and conclusions on December 20, 2010, that criticized the election's campaign environment as “characterized by the lack of a level-playing field” and reported that international observers assessed the vote count as “non-transparent” and “bad or very bad in almost half of all observed polling stations”;

Whereas, according to Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe observers, prominent international websites, including Gmail and Hotmail, and Belarusian websites including Charter97.org, euronradio.by, gazetaby.com, and zapraudu.info were rendered inaccessible on election day;

Whereas, on February 22, 2011, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe stated in its final report on the December 19, 2010, election that the final vote count was “flawed and lacked transparency”;

Whereas Department of State spokesperson Philip J. Crowley said on December 20, 2010, “We cannot consider the election results as legitimate.”;

Whereas, on December 20, 2010, the Obama Administration called for the release of all detained presidential candidates and protestors arrested around the election and strongly condemned the violence used by the Lukashenko regime to “undermine the democratic process”;

Whereas on December 23, 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton strongly condemned the Lukashenko regime's disproportionate use of violence and called for “the immediate release of the presidential candidates and the over 600 demonstrators who have been taken into custody in the wake of the presidential elections in Belarus”;

Whereas the heads of the foreign affairs committees of the German and Polish parliaments issued a joint statement on December 31, 2010, stating that the presidential election in Belarus showed “a complete lack of respect for European values and standards”;

Whereas, on January 20, 2011, the European Parliament adopted a resolution that condemns the December 19, 2010, elections in Belarus and their violent aftermath; demands the immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners; and calls for “new elections to be held” in Belarus under “free and democratic conditions” and “according to OSCE standards”;

Whereas, on December 31, 2010, the Government of Belarus refused to extend the mandate of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe office in Minsk, thereby

shuttering the democratic institution building efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Belarus;

Whereas, on January 4, 2011, Department of State spokesperson Philip J. Crowley and Darren Ennis, Spokesperson for European Union High Representative Catherine Ashton, issued a joint statement expressing regret over the closure of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office in Belarus and calling on authorities in Belarus “to fulfill their commitments to the OSCE by reforming the election process and providing greater respect for human rights”;

Whereas the Belarusian KGB continues to detain at least 32 political opposition leaders and activists associated with the December 19, 2010, elections who face dubious charges that carry prison sentences up to 15 years;

Whereas, on February 28, 2011, Ales Mikhalevich, a presidential candidate who was arrested following the December 19, 2010, elections and released on January 19, 2011, issued a statement detailing the abuse and torture that he endured during his 2-month detention by the Belarusian KGB, in violation of existing Belarusian laws as well as international agreements, including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, done at New York December 10, 1984, to which Belarus has been a signatory since December 1985;

Whereas families of presidential candidates and political opposition leaders and their lawyers face continued harassment and intimidation by Lukashenko's KGB, including repeated interrogations, raids, pressure, and threats of dismissal from places of employment and schools;

Whereas the detained presidential candidates and political opposition leaders are being denied regular access to family, lawyers, medical treatment, and open legal proceedings;

Whereas authorities in Belarus continue to carry out searches and seizures across the country, including the offices and homes of journalists, political activists, civil society representatives, former presidential candidates and their advisers, and ordinary Belarusians with tenuous connections to members of the political opposition;

Whereas, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, an internationally reputable source on global arms trade, the Lukashenko regime delivered a shipment of military equipment to the Qaddafi regime in Libya in February 2011, just before Qaddafi prepared to initiate the widely condemned bloody crackdown undertaken against the people of Libya;

Whereas, on January 31, 2011, the United States and the European Union imposed targeted travel and financial sanctions on an expanded list of officials of the Government of Belarus, including Alexander Lukashenko and those helping prop up his regime;

Whereas, on January 31, 2011, the United States Government also restricted economic transactions with Lakokraska OAO and Polotsk Steklovokno OAO, 2 subsidiaries of Belarus's largest state-owned petroleum and chemical conglomerate, Belneftekhim;

Whereas, on February 2, 2011, the United States Government pledged to supplement its democracy assistance to Belarus by \$4,000,000 in fiscal year 2011;

Whereas, on March 2, 2011, Lukashenko's regime sentenced 3 of the political detainees, Alyaksandr Atroshchankau, Zmitster Novik, and Alyaksandr Malchanau, to between 3 and 4 years in a top-security prison;

Whereas on March 4, 2011, Department of State Spokesman P.J. Crowley said, “The United States remains gravely concerned over the continuing post-election crackdown

by the Government of Belarus on civil society, independent media, and the political opposition. Through its ongoing detentions, trials, and harsh prison sentences, the government is creating new political prisoners. We urge the unconditional release of those detained in the crackdown without trials, and the creation of space for the free expression of political views, the development of civil society, and the ability of citizens to expand their contact with open societies.”; and

Whereas Congress passed the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-347) and the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-480) as expressions of support consistent with these aims: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the December 19, 2010, election in Belarus as illegitimate, fraudulent, and not representative of the will or the aspirations of the voters in Belarus, and joins the European Parliament in calling for new elections to be held in Belarus that meet international standards;

(2) condemns the beating, arrest, fining, and imprisonment of presidential candidates, opposition leaders, and activists by Alexander Lukashenko’s KGB in the wake of the December 19, 2010, election;

(3) condemns the Lukashenko regime’s systematic efforts to prevent freedom of expression and association in Belarus, including its efforts to censor the Internet and stifle freedom of the press;

(4) stands in solidarity with the people of Belarus, those political prisoners being unjustly detained, and those who continue to fight for peaceful democratic change and their fundamental human rights in Belarus;

(5) applauds the pledges of the United States Government and the European Union to impose targeted sanctions, including visa bans and asset freezes, on Belarusian officials and their associates responsible for the recent crackdown and human rights abuses against the people of Belarus;

(6) applauds the decisions of the United States Government, the European Union, and other democratic allies to expand assistance to civil society in Belarus;

(7) calls on the Lukashenko regime—

(A) to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners in Belarus who were arrested in association with the December 19, 2010, election, including 3 presidential candidates, Andrei Sannikov, Nikolai Statkevich, and Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu, who are still in prison or under house arrest;

(B) to immediately cease the harassment of the families, friends, and lawyers of political prisoners in Belarus;

(C) to authorize the extension of the mandate of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office in Belarus;

(D) to hold new presidential and parliamentary elections in Belarus that are free, fair, inclusive, and meet international standards; and

(E) to meet its international obligations and cease any illegal efforts related to the provision of arms to rogue regimes;

(8) urges the President and the Secretary of State—

(A) to continue to closely coordinate United States and European Union policies towards Belarus;

(B) to resume direct technical and material support to the opposition and civil society in Belarus, including political parties, civic groups, and independent media outlets;

(C) to ensure that the United States list includes any other officials of the Government of Belarus responsible for the crackdown following the December 19, 2010, election in Belarus, associated human rights abuses, and the continued detention, prosecution, and

mistreatment of all political prisoners, and to impose targeted sanctions on those individuals and their family members where warranted; and

(D) to identify any other entities that enrich Mr. Lukashenko and his regime at the expense of the people of Belarus and prohibit business with and freeze the assets of such entities;

(9) urges the European Union—

(A) to join the United States in prohibiting business with, and freezing the assets of, the Belarusian state-owned oil and petrochemicals company Belneftekhim and its subsidiaries Lakokraska OAO and Polotsk Steklovokno OAO, as well as other entities that enrich Mr. Lukashenko and his regime at the expense of the people of Belarus;

(B) to cut all European projects linked to the authorities in Belarus responsible for the crackdown and associated human rights abuses and to exclude officials of the Government of Belarus from meetings under the European Union’s Eastern Partnership policy—including the planned European Union summit with post-Soviet countries scheduled to take place in Budapest in May 2011—but to ensure that this suspension not apply to non-governmental and civil society organizations in Belarus;

(C) to ensure that the European Union list includes any other officials of the Government of Belarus responsible for the crackdown following the December 19, 2010, election in Belarus, associated human rights abuses, and the continued detention, prosecution, and mistreatment of political prisoners, and to impose targeted sanctions on those officials and their family members where warranted; and

(D) to increase support to the opposition and civil society in Belarus, including political parties, civic groups, and independent media outlets;

(10) calls on other members of the international community, including Russia, to take similar targeted actions against the leaders of the Government of Belarus;

(11) calls on the Government of Lithuania, as chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for 2011, to make the reestablishment of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office in Belarus one of its chief priorities for its tenure; and

(12) calls on the International Ice Hockey Federation to suspend its 2014 International World Ice Hockey championship to be hosted in Minsk, Belarus until all political prisoners in Belarus are released.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST COMPANY FIRE

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 106.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 106) recognizing the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire in New York City on March 25, 1911 and designating the week of March 21, 2011 through March 25, 2011 as the “100th Anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Remembrance Week.”

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with

no intervening action or debate, and any statements relating to the resolution be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 106) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 106

Whereas the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire was the deadliest industrial disaster in the City of New York’s history and resulted in the 4th greatest loss of life from an industrial accident in the history of the United States, claiming the lives of 146 garment workers, many of whom were young immigrants;

Whereas this human catastrophe exposed the need to strengthen labor laws, fire regulations, and health and safety protections for workers;

Whereas the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire helped spur the growth of the modern-day organized labor movement, particularly the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union, which continued to fight for better conditions for sweatshop workers;

Whereas from the ashes of this horrific event emerged the modern celebration of International Women’s Day, and the death of 129 women workers in the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire demonstrated the need for workers’ rights and women’s rights;

Whereas more than 5,000 workers lose their lives each year on the job, and protecting the health and safety of workers continues to be a critical issue in the United States today; and

Whereas national events will be held to remember the victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire, and to educate citizens about the important role this tragic event played in the history of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate designates the week of March 21, 2011 through March 25, 2011 as the “100th Anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Remembrance Week”.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR AUXILIARIES DAY

Mr. REID. Madam President, I now ask we proceed to S. Res. 107.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 107) designating April 4, 2011, as “National Association of Junior Auxiliaries Day.”

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid on the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 107) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 107

Whereas the National Association of Junior Auxiliaries and the members of the National Association of Junior Auxiliaries provide valuable service and leadership opportunities for women who wish to take an active role in their communities;