

rights. But I also believe there is a right time and a right way to do so. This legislation is premature. I urge my colleagues to give diplomacy a chance to work, to give our Latin American neighbors time to promote dialogue, one that de-escalates tensions, identifies and holds to account those responsible for killings and human rights violations, and helps Venezuela not only to resolve this crisis but to advance a more pluralistic society. Don't throw gasoline on the fire. I urge my colleagues to vote "no" and oppose H.R. 4587.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4587, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT OF 1998 AMENDMENT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4028) to amend the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to include the desecration of cemeteries among the many forms of violations of the right to religious freedom, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4028

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Cemeteries are sacred sites that are of great spiritual, cultural, and historical significance to many religious and ethnic groups.

(2) Congress is committed to protecting and preserving the heritage and sacred sites of national, religious, and ethnic groups, which includes cemeteries in the United States and abroad.

(3) Cemeteries around the world have and continue to be defaced or destroyed as a direct result of their affiliation with a particular religious or spiritual group.

(4) Such attacks constitute an assault on the fundamental right to freedom of religion, and are especially egregious when sponsored or tolerated by the local or national governments in the countries in which such offenses occur.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENT TO INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT OF 1998.

Section 2(a)(4) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401(a)(4)) is amended in the fourth sentence by inserting "desecration of cemeteries," after "confiscations of property,".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MENG) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Mem-

bers may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the fundamental freedom to practice the religion of one's choosing is a fundamental right and an essential element of democratic governance. Religious organizations of all kinds view their cemeteries, Mr. Speaker, as hallowed ground, deserving of respect and protection. Freedom of religion includes the right to gather at these sacred sites and to pay our respects to the beloved faithful who have gone before us.

Yet, in many places around the world, the desecration of religious cemeteries is an ongoing problem: sometimes through vandalism by intolerant groups; sometimes by construction or demolition without proper consultation of religious authorities. For example, Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, more than 50 graves were vandalized in a Jewish cemetery in north-east Hungary—their headstones toppled and smashed.

I was proud to be an original cosponsor of a similar effort by former Congressman Robert Turner last Congress, and I want to commend the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MENG) for her leadership in introducing H.R. 4028 this year. The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, which this bill modifies, guides U.S. policy in promoting freedom of religion around the world.

Among other aspects, that law requires the State Department to report annually on violations of religious freedom abroad. By adding "desecration of cemeteries" to the examples of religious freedom violations listed in that act, H.R. 4028 says loudly and clearly that Congress and the American people stand in staunch opposition to the deliberate desecration of religious burial grounds.

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In this way, the bill provides extra incentives for foreign governments to respect the rights of religious organizations regarding cemetery preservation.

In addition to Ms. MENG, I also want to recognize the important contributions of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) during the Foreign Affairs Committee markup of this bill. Their bipartisan efforts have led to the good bill before us today, which deserves our unanimous support.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MENG. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in strong support of H.R. 4028, the Protect Cemeteries Act, which I authored.

This resolution amends the International Religious Freedom Act to in-

clude the desecration of cemeteries among the forms of violations of the right to religious freedom.

I would like to thank Chairman ROYCE and Ranking Member ENGEL for helping to craft and advance this bipartisan resolution and for recognizing the seriousness of cemetery desecration. There is truly a bipartisan and collaborative spirit on the Foreign Affairs Committee, and that is a testament to its excellent leadership.

I would also like to thank Congressman DOUG COLLINS for his partnership here and valuable contributions to the bill, and thank you to both Republican and Democratic committee staffs for recognizing the value of this resolution and working so hard to bring it to the floor today.

I would particularly like to thank Janice Kaguyutan, Jessica Kahan, and Doug Campbell for all their help and great work. Thanks as well to Agudath Israel and to Dr. Bernard Fryshman for his dogged advocacy on this issue over many years.

The resolution is short, but—I believe—very significant. We are strengthening the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 by addressing the sanctity of burial grounds. Pursuant to this act, the United States can impose penalties on countries that obstruct religious freedom. These include, but are not limited to cutting foreign aid, imposing trade sanctions, and canceling cultural and scientific exchanges.

There are two related problems we seek to address through this legislation. One is the religiously motivated vandalism of cemeteries that occurs with alarming regularity. The second is the building and development over cemeteries in places where there are no communities remaining to protect and look out for the cemeteries. H.R. 4028 will give our diplomats a new tool they can use to protect our interests.

H.R. 4028 also empowers the commissions on International Religious Freedom and on the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. The latter commission was established in the 1980s through legislation introduced by the late Congressman Stephen Solarz.

It works to identify and preserve cemeteries, memorials, and buildings in foreign countries that are associated with the cultural heritage of Americans, and it does much work in areas of the former Soviet Union, where Jewish communities were destroyed by the Holocaust and where power subsequently passed to atheistic, communist regimes.

It is essential that we act to protect religious freedom in these areas where, as we know, political instability and anti-Semitism are widespread. The genocides of the 20th century destroyed communities and left their burial grounds uncared for and unpreserved.

The preservation of cemeteries often reflects the religious tolerance and freedom of the countries in which they

are located. It is my hope that this resolution will help promote such preservation and greater tolerance, respect, and empathy around the world, as well as honest assessments of history. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4028.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4028 introduced by my good friend and colleague, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MENG), which adds desecration of cemeteries as a violation of religious freedom identified in the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

Sadly, such an addition is necessary because we have seen repeated acts of desecration of cemeteries occurring throughout the world, especially in Europe, but also in the United States, including my own State of New Jersey.

Jewish cemeteries seem to be a particular target of desecration. By some counts, attacks on Jewish cemeteries have been on the rise over the last several years. We have tried to document that again and again in our work at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Organization for Security Cooperation itself.

A number of Jewish organizations as well have come forward with extraordinarily demoralizing numbers of cemeteries, as well as synagogues that have been attacked, as there is a rising tide of anti-Semitism.

I chaired a hearing on May 22 on the International Religious Freedom Act with a focus on the Commission on Religious Freedom, and one of the things that was brought forward in vivid detail has been the lack of enforcement and the lack of due diligence on the part of the administration when it comes to the International Religious Freedom Act. Not since 2011 has there been a designation of what we call country of particular concern, CPC status, or the dishonorable status that it conveys ought to be done every year.

Congressman FRANK WOLF, the author of IRFA, the International Religious Freedom Act, made it very clear it is law, and I would point out for the record that I chaired all of the hearings in the House as that bill was working its way through the House. We have had, I believe, a dereliction of duty on the part of the administration to do what it has to do under IRFA.

There has been no designation since 2011. The commission pointed out that there are eight countries that ought to be so designated, followed by eight others, including Vietnam, that needed to be added to the list, making a total of 16 countries that are then liable to sanctions, the 18 or so sanctions that are prescribed in the legislation, again, authored by Mr. WOLF.

I am so glad Ms. MENG is adding this to the list, but the list itself and all of the other violations need to be taken seriously by the administration. Hope springs eternal. I hope they do it sooner rather than later—like today—but I won't hold my breath.

I say this because it is a very, very serious issue, and that was brought forward at our hearing just the other day.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there are other groups, including the Ahmadi religious minority in Pakistan. We heard testimony on May 22 about how their grave-stones are being violated as well.

By far, Jewish people have their cemeteries desecrated and others as well, and it is a terrible and despicable act of violence against individuals and religious freedom.

Ms. MENG. Seeing no other speakers, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, anti-Semitism and religious intolerance remain all too prevalent in our world. We grapple with these issues in some form every day.

This resolution will give American officials real tools with which to promote not only religious tolerance, but truth, truth in the form of preservation and recognition of the memories of those who came before us, and only through truth can we realize a better world.

I yield back the balance of my time. Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to, again, thank Ms. MENG for her wonderful leadership role in this and many other pieces of legislation going through our Foreign Affairs Committee and commend Mr. COLLINS, as well, for this blow against hatred and intolerance and in favor of religious free exercise around the world. I strongly support the bill by Ms. MENG, H.R. 4028.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Congresswoman MENG's legislation. Including language that protects cemeteries is consequential as every culture and faith hold final resting places as sacred ground.

Just two months ago in March vandals broke into a Jewish cemetery in Hungary. The vandals spray-painted swastikas and anti-Semitic messages on the Jewish tombstones to show their hatred.

This is a stark reminder of the travesties against personal freedoms abroad. These incidents are not isolated and often coincide with other violations against religious freedom.

Desecrating the cemetery of another religious or ethnic group is a very defiant way to express hatred and inflict pain. The religious or ethnic groups that care for the cemeteries are having their religious rights trampled on.

These prejudice acts are especially devastating when tolerated or encouraged by the local or national government.

The final resting place for the deceased deserve the respect of all regardless of personal beliefs or religion and deserve to be added to the list of violations to the International Religious Freedom Act.

I want to thank Congresswoman MENG for authoring this legislation and bringing this issue to Congress' attention.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4028, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

URGING CHINA TO RESPECT THE FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY, EXPRESSION, AND RELIGION AND ALL FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 599) urging the Government of the People's Republic of China to respect the freedom of assembly, expression, and religion and all fundamental human rights and the rule of law for all its citizens and to stop censoring discussion of the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations and their violent suppression.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 599

Whereas on June 4, 1989, peaceful demonstrations held in and around Beijing's Tiananmen Square were brutally crushed by the People's Liberation Army, carrying out the orders of China's Communist Party leadership;

Whereas the peaceful demonstrations of 1989 called upon the Chinese Communist Party to eliminate corruption, accelerate economic and political reforms, and protect human rights, particularly the freedoms of expression and assembly;

Whereas by early May 1989, an estimated 1,000,000 people joined the protests in Tiananmen Square and citizens in over 400 Chinese cities staged similar protests for democratic reform, including not only students, but also government employees, journalists, workers, police officers, members of the armed forces, and other citizens;

Whereas on May 20, 1989, martial law was declared in Beijing, China, after authorities had failed to persuade demonstrators to leave Tiananmen Square;

Whereas during the late afternoon and early evening hours of June 3, 1989, thousands of armed troops, supported by tanks and other armor, moved into Beijing to "clear the Square" and surrounding streets of demonstrators;

Whereas on the night of June 3, 1989, and continuing into the morning of June 4, 1989, soldiers fired into crowds, inflicting high civilian casualties, killing or injuring unarmed civilians;

Whereas tanks crushed to death some protesters and onlookers;

Whereas independent observers report that hundreds, perhaps thousands, were killed and wounded by the People's Liberation Army soldiers and other security forces;

Whereas 20,000 people throughout China suspected of taking part in the democracy movement were reportedly arrested and sentenced without trial to prison or reeducation