

Mr. Speaker, this important measure by Congresswoman NORMA TORRES affirms this body's support for all efforts to combat corruption in Central America. The people of this region have been living in societies that, because of corruption, and that corruption has become endemic, has led to gang violence, to criminality, to high levels of impunity. And these conditions directly affect the ability of these governments to bring peace and prosperity to all of its citizens, and that, in turn, fuels the flows of those who leave illegally, migrants, to the Northern Hemisphere—well, to the United States.

So the citizens of Northern Triangle countries, those in this region, want to live in safety in their own countries, and we can help by supporting efforts by the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala and its counterpart in Honduras, and those others in the region that are fighting for these efforts that enable an independent judiciary and a judiciary that combats corruption.

NORMA TORRES' work on Central America has helped to build capacity in these countries to begin providing security for its citizens, and I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 145, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CAESAR SYRIA CIVILIAN PROTECTION ACT OF 2017

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1677) to halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, encourage a negotiated political settlement, and hold Syrian human rights abusers accountable for their crimes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1677

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2017”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title and table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Sense of Congress.
- Sec. 3. Statement of policy.

TITLE I—ADDITIONAL ACTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO SYRIA

Sec. 101. Sanctions with respect to Central Bank of Syria and foreign persons that engage in certain transactions.

Sec. 102. Prohibitions with respect to the transfer of arms and related materials to Syria.

Sec. 103. Rule of construction.

Sec. 104. Definitions.

TITLE II—AMENDMENTS TO SYRIA HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2012

Sec. 201. Imposition of sanctions with respect to certain persons who are responsible for or complicit in human rights abuses committed against citizens of Syria or their family members.

Sec. 202. Imposition of sanctions with respect to the transfer of goods or technologies to Syria that are likely to be used to commit human rights abuses.

Sec. 203. Imposition of sanctions with respect to persons who hinder humanitarian access.

Sec. 204. Report on certain persons who are responsible for or complicit in certain human rights abuses in Syria.

TITLE III—REPORTS AND WAIVER FOR HUMANITARIAN-RELATED ACTIVITIES WITH RESPECT TO SYRIA

Sec. 301. Briefing on monitoring and evaluating of ongoing assistance programs in Syria and to the Syrian people.

Sec. 302. Assessment of potential methods to enhance the protection of civilians.

Sec. 303. Assistance to support entities taking actions relating to gathering evidence for investigations into war crimes or crimes against humanity in Syria since March 2011.

TITLE IV—SUSPENSION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO SYRIA

Sec. 401. Suspension of sanctions with respect to Syria.

Sec. 402. Waivers and exemptions.

TITLE V—REGULATORY AUTHORITY, COST LIMITATION, AND SUNSET

Sec. 501. Implementation and regulatory authorities.

Sec. 502. Cost limitation.

Sec. 503. Authority to consolidate reports.

Sec. 504. Sunset.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) Bashar al-Assad's murderous actions against the people of Syria have directly contributed to the deaths of more than 480,000 civilians, led to the destruction of more than 50 percent of Syria's critical infrastructure, and forced the displacement of more than 14,000,000 people, precipitating one of the worst humanitarian crises in more than 60 years;

(2) international actions to protect vulnerable populations from attack by uniformed and irregular forces associated with the Assad regime, including Hezbollah, on land and by air, including through the use of barrel bombs, chemical weapons, mass starvation, industrial-scale torture and execution of political dissidents, sniper attacks against pregnant women, and the deliberate targeting of medical facilities, schools, residential areas, and community gathering places, including markets, have been insufficient to date;

(3) Assad's use of chemical weapons, including chlorine, against the Syrian people violates the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Syria is a party;

(4) Assad's abhorrent use of chemical weapons, most recently on April 4, 2017, in an attack on the town of Khan Shakhyn in which

more than 90 people died, including women and children, and more than 600 hundred people were injured, is condemned in the strongest terms;

(5) violent attacks resulting in death, injury, imprisonment or threat of prosecution against humanitarian aid workers and diplomatic personnel, as well as attacks on humanitarian supplies, facilities, transports, and assets, and acts to impede the access and secure movement of all humanitarian personnel are in violation of international humanitarian law and impede the lifesaving work of humanitarian organizations and diplomatic institutions; and

(6) Assad's continued claim of leadership and war crimes in Syria have served as a rallying point for the extremist ideology of the Islamic State, Jabhat al-Nusra, and other terrorist organizations.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States that all diplomatic and coercive economic means should be utilized to compel the government of Bashar al-Assad to immediately halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people and to support an immediate transition to a democratic government in Syria that respects the rule of law, human rights, and peaceful co-existence with its neighbors.

TITLE I—ADDITIONAL ACTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO SYRIA

SEC. 101. SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO CENTRAL BANK OF SYRIA AND FOREIGN PERSONS THAT ENGAGE IN CERTAIN TRANSACTIONS.

(a) APPLICATION OF CERTAIN MEASURES TO CENTRAL BANK OF SYRIA.—Except as provided in subsections (a) and (b) of section 402, the President shall apply the measures described in section 5318A(b)(5) of title 31, United States Code, to the Central Bank of Syria.

(b) BLOCKING PROPERTY OF FOREIGN PERSONS THAT ENGAGE IN CERTAIN TRANSACTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning on and after the date that is 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall impose on a foreign person the sanctions described in subsection (c) if the President determines that such foreign person, on or after such date of enactment, knowingly engages in an activity described in paragraph (2).

(2) ACTIVITIES DESCRIBED.—A foreign person engages in an activity described in this paragraph if the foreign person—

(A) knowingly provides significant financial, material or technological support to (including engaging in or facilitating a significant transaction or transactions with) or provides significant financial services for—

(i) the Government of Syria (including government entities operating as a business enterprise) and the Central Bank of Syria, or any of its agencies or instrumentalities; or

(ii) a foreign person subject to sanctions pursuant to—

(I) the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) with respect to Syria or any other provision of law that imposes sanctions with respect to Syria; or

(II) a resolution that is agreed to by the United Nations Security Council that imposes sanctions with respect to Syria;

(B) knowingly—

(i) sells or provides significant goods, services, technology, information, or other support that directly and significantly facilitates the maintenance or expansion of the Government of Syria's domestic production of natural gas or petroleum or petroleum products of Syrian origin in areas controlled by the Government of Syria or associated forces;

(ii) sells or provides to the Government of Syria crude oil or condensate, refined petroleum products, liquefied natural gas, or petrochemical products that have a fair market value of \$500,000 or more or that during a 12-month period have an aggregate fair market value of \$2,000,000 or more in areas controlled by the Government of Syria or associated forces;

(iii) sells or provides aircraft or spare parts, or provides significant goods, services, or technologies associated with the operation of such aircraft or air carriers to any foreign person operating in areas controlled by the Government of Syria or associated forces that are used, in whole or in part, for military purposes; or

(iv) sells or provides significant goods, services, or technology to a foreign person operating in the shipping (including ports and free trade zones), transportation, or telecommunications sectors in areas controlled by the Government of Syria or associated forces;

(C) knowingly facilitates efforts by a foreign person to carry out an activity described in subparagraph (A) or (B); or

(D) knowingly provides significant loans, credits, including export credits, or financing to carry out an activity described in subparagraph (A) or (B).

(c) **SANCTIONS AGAINST A FOREIGN PERSON.**—The sanctions to be imposed on a foreign person described in subsection (b) are the following:

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The President shall exercise all of the powers granted to the President under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) to the extent necessary to block and prohibit all transactions in property and interests in property of the foreign person if such property and interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or are or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

(2) **ALIENS INELIGIBLE FOR VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.**—

(A) **VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.**—An alien who the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries) knows, or has reason to believe, meets any of the criteria described in subsection (a) is—

(i) inadmissible to the United States;

(ii) ineligible to receive a visa or other documentation to enter the United States; and

(iii) otherwise ineligible to be admitted or paroled into the United States or to receive any other benefit under the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.).

(B) **CURRENT VISAS REVOKED.**—

(i) **IN GENERAL.**—The issuing consular officer, the Secretary of State, or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries) shall revoke any visa or other entry documentation issued to an alien who meets any of the criteria described in subsection (a) regardless of when issued.

(ii) **EFFECT OF REVOCATION.**—A revocation under clause (i)—

(I) shall take effect immediately; and

(II) shall automatically cancel any other valid visa or entry documentation that is in the alien's possession.

(3) **EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT.**—Sanctions under paragraph (2) shall not apply to an alien if admitting the alien into the United States is necessary to permit the United States to comply with the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947, between the United Nations and the United States, or other applicable international obligations.

(4) **PENALTIES.**—The penalties provided for in subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) shall apply to a person that knowingly violates, attempts to violate, conspires to violate, or causes a violation of regulations promulgated under section 501(a) to carry out paragraph (1) of this subsection to the same extent that such penalties apply to a person that knowingly commits an unlawful act described in section 206(a) of that Act.

SEC. 102. PROHIBITIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE TRANSFER OF ARMS AND RELATED MATERIALS TO SYRIA.

(a) **SANCTIONS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Beginning on and after the date that is 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall impose on a foreign person the sanctions described in subsection (b) if the President determines that such foreign person, on or after such date of enactment, knowingly exports, transfers, or provides significant financial, material, or technological support to the Government of Syria to—

(A) acquire or develop chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons or related technologies;

(B) acquire or develop ballistic or cruise missile capabilities;

(C) acquire or develop destabilizing numbers and types of advanced conventional weapons; or

(D) acquire defense articles, defense services, or defense information (as such terms are defined under the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2751 et seq.)), if the President determines that a significant type or amount of such articles, services, or information has been so acquired.

(2) **APPLICABILITY TO OTHER FOREIGN PERSONS.**—The sanctions described in subsection (b) shall also be imposed on any foreign person that is a successor entity to a foreign person described in paragraph (1).

(b) **SANCTIONS AGAINST A FOREIGN PERSON.**—The sanctions to be imposed on a foreign person described in subsection (a) are the following:

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The President shall exercise all powers granted by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) to the extent necessary to freeze and prohibit all transactions in all property and interests in property of the foreign person if such property and interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or are or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

(2) **ALIENS INELIGIBLE FOR VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.**—

(A) **VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.**—An alien who the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries) knows, or has reason to believe, meets any of the criteria described in subsection (a) is—

(i) inadmissible to the United States;

(ii) ineligible to receive a visa or other documentation to enter the United States; and

(iii) otherwise ineligible to be admitted or paroled into the United States or to receive any other benefit under the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.).

(B) **CURRENT VISAS REVOKED.**—

(i) **IN GENERAL.**—The issuing consular officer, the Secretary of State, or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries) shall revoke any visa or other entry documentation issued to an alien who meets any of the criteria described in subsection (a) regardless of when issued.

(ii) **EFFECT OF REVOCATION.**—A revocation under clause (i)—

(I) shall take effect immediately; and

(II) shall automatically cancel any other valid visa or entry documentation that is in the alien's possession.

(3) **EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT.**—Sanctions under paragraph (2) shall not apply to an alien if admitting the alien into the United States is necessary to permit the United States to comply with the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947, between the United Nations and the United States, or other applicable international obligations.

(4) **PENALTIES.**—A person that violates, attempts to violate, conspires to violate, or causes a violation of any regulation, license, or order issued to carry out this section shall be subject to the penalties set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) to the same extent as a person that commits an unlawful act described in subsection (a) of that section.

SEC. 103. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this title shall be construed to limit the authority of the President pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.).

SEC. 104. DEFINITIONS.

In this title:

(1) **ADMITTED; ALIEN.**—The terms “admitted” and “alien” have the meanings given such terms in section 101 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101).

(2) **FINANCIAL, MATERIAL, OR TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT.**—The term “financial, material, or technological support” has the meaning given such term in section 542.304 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations, as such section was in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(3) **FOREIGN PERSON.**—The term “foreign person” means any citizen or national of a foreign country, or any entity not organized solely under the laws of the United States or existing solely in the United States.

(4) **GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA.**—The term “Government of Syria” has the meaning given such term in section 542.305 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations, as such section was in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(5) **KNOWINGLY.**—The term “knowingly” has the meaning given such term in section 566.312 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations, as such section was in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(6) **PERSON.**—The term “person” means an individual or entity.

(7) **PETROLEUM OR PETROLEUM PRODUCTS OF SYRIAN ORIGIN.**—The term “petroleum or petroleum products of Syrian origin” has the meaning given such term in section 542.314 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations, as such section was in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(8) **SIGNIFICANT TRANSACTION OR TRANSACTIONS; SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL SERVICES.**—A transaction or transactions or financial services shall be determined to be a significant for purposes of this section in accordance with section 566.404 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations, as such section was in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(9) **SYRIA.**—The term “Syria” has the meaning given such term in section 542.316 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations, as such section was in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(10) **UNITED STATES PERSON.**—The term “United States person” means any United States citizen, permanent resident alien, entity organized under the laws of the United States (including foreign branches), or any person in the United States.

TITLE II—AMENDMENTS TO SYRIA HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2012

SEC. 201. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN PERSONS WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OR COMPLICIT IN HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES COMMITTED AGAINST CITIZENS OF SYRIA OR THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 702(c) of the Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8791(c)) is amended to read as follows:

“(c) SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The President shall exercise all powers granted by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) to the extent necessary to freeze and prohibit all transactions in all property and interests in property of a person on the list required by subsection (b) if such property and interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or are or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

“(2) ALIENS INELIGIBLE FOR VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.—

“(A) VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.—An alien who the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries) knows, or has reason to believe, meets any of the criteria described in subsection (b) is—

“(i) inadmissible to the United States;

“(ii) ineligible to receive a visa or other documentation to enter the United States; and

“(iii) otherwise ineligible to be admitted or paroled into the United States or to receive any other benefit under the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.).

“(B) CURRENT VISAS REVOKED.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The issuing consular officer, the Secretary of State, or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries) shall revoke any visa or other entry documentation issued to an alien who meets any of the criteria described in subsection (b) regardless of when issued.

“(ii) EFFECT OF REVOCATION.—A revocation under clause (i)—

“(I) shall take effect immediately; and

“(II) shall automatically cancel any other valid visa or entry documentation that is in the alien's possession.

“(3) PENALTIES.—A person that violates, attempts to violate, conspires to violate, or causes a violation of this section or any regulation, license, or order issued to carry out this section shall be subject to the penalties set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) to the same extent as a person that commits an unlawful act described in subsection (a) of that section.

“(4) REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—The President shall, not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this section, promulgate regulations as necessary for the implementation of this section.

“(5) EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT.—Sanctions under paragraph (2) shall not apply to an alien if admitting the alien into the United States is necessary to permit the United States to comply with the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947, between the United Nations and the United States, or other applicable international obligations.

“(6) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the authority of the President pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.), relevant Execu-

tive orders, regulations, or other provisions of law.”.

(b) SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES DESCRIBED.—Section 702 of the Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8791) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d) SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES DESCRIBED.—In subsection (b), the term ‘serious human rights abuses’ includes—

“(1) the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure to include schools, hospitals, markets, and other infrastructure that is essential to human life, such as power and water systems; and

“(2) the deliberate diversion, hindering, or blocking of access for humanitarian purposes, including access across conflict lines and borders.”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to the imposition of sanctions under section 702(a) of the Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 on after such date of enactment.

SEC. 202. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE TRANSFER OF GOODS OR TECHNOLOGIES TO SYRIA THAT ARE LIKELY TO BE USED TO COMMIT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.

Section 703(b)(2)(C) of the Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8792(b)(2)(C)) is amended—

(1) in clause (i), by striking “or” at the end;

(2) in clause (ii), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(iii) any article—

“(I) designated by the President for purposes of the United States Munitions List under section 38(a)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2778(a)(1)); and

“(II) with respect to which the President determines is significant for purposes of the imposition of sanctions under subsection (a); or

“(iv) other goods or technologies that the President determines may be used by the Government of Syria to commit human rights abuses against the people of Syria.”.

SEC. 203. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO PERSONS WHO HINDER HUMANITARIAN ACCESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8791 et seq.) is amended—

(1) by redesignating sections 705 and 706 as sections 706 and 707, respectively;

(2) by inserting after section 704 the following:

“SEC. 705. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO PERSONS WHO HINDER HUMANITARIAN ACCESS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall impose sanctions described in section 702(c) with respect to each person on the list required by subsection (b).

“(b) LIST OF PERSONS WHO HINDER HUMANITARIAN ACCESS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2017, the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a list of persons that the President determines have engaged in deliberate diversion, hindering, or blocking of access for humanitarian purposes for the United Nations, its specialized agencies and implementing partners, national and international nongovernmental organizations, and all other actors engaged in humanitarian relief activities in Syria, including through the deliberate targeting of such humanitarian actors and activities in Syria and across conflict lines and borders.

“(2) UPDATES OF LIST.—The President shall submit to the appropriate congressional

committees an updated list under paragraph (1)—

“(A) not later than 300 days after the date of the enactment of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2017 and every 180 days thereafter; and

“(B) as new information becomes available.

“(3) FORM.—The list required by paragraph (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form but may contain a classified annex.”; and

(3) in section 706 (as so redesignated), by striking “or 704” and inserting “704, or 705”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents for the Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 704 the following new item:

“Sec. 705. Imposition of sanctions with respect to persons who hinder humanitarian access.”.

SEC. 204. REPORT ON CERTAIN PERSONS WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OR COMPLICIT IN CERTAIN HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN SYRIA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a detailed report with respect to whether each person described in subsection (c) meets the requirements described in section 702(b) of the Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8791(b)) for purposes of inclusion on the list of persons who are responsible for or complicit in certain human rights abuses under such section.

(b) JUSTIFICATION.—The President shall include in the report required by subsection (a) a description of the reasons why any of the persons described in subsection (c) do not meet the requirements described in section 702(b) of the Syria Human Rights Accountability Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8791(b)), including information on whether sufficient credible evidence of responsibility for such abuses was found or whether any of the persons described in subsection (c) have been designated pursuant to—

(1) Executive Order 13572 of April 29, 2011 (76 Fed. Reg. 24787; relating to blocking property of certain persons with respect to human rights abuses in Syria);

(2) Executive Order 13573 of May 18, 2011 (76 Fed. Reg. 29143; relating to blocking property of senior officials of the Government of Syria);

(3) Executive Order 13582 of August 17, 2011 (76 Fed. Reg. 52209; relating to blocking property of the Government of Syria and prohibiting certain transactions with respect to Syria); or

(4) Executive Order 13606 of April 22, 2012 (77 Fed. Reg. 24571; relating to blocking the property and suspending entry into the United States of certain persons with respect to grave human rights abuses by the Governments of Iran and Syria via information technology).

(c) PERSONS DESCRIBED.—The persons described in this subsection are the following:

(1) Bashar Al-Assad.

(2) Asma Al-Assad.

(3) Rami Makhoul.

(4) Bouthayna Shaaban.

(5) Walid Moallem.

(6) Ali Al-Salim.

(7) Wael Nader Al-Halqi.

(8) Jamil Hassan.

(9) Suhail Hassan.

(10) Ali Mamluk.

(11) Muhammed Khadour, Deir Ez Zor Military and Security.

(12) Jamal Razzouq, Security Branch 243.

(13) Munzer Ghanam, Air Force Intelligence.

(14) Daas Hasan Ali, Branch 327.

(15) Jassem Ali Jassem Hamad, Political Security.

(16) Samir Muhammad Youssef, Military Intelligence.

(17) Ali Ahmad Dayoub, Air Force Intelligence.

(18) Khaled Muhsen Al-Halabi, Security Branch 335.

(19) Mahmoud Kahila, Political Security.

(20) Zuhair Ahmad Hamad, Provincial Security.

(21) Wafiq Nasser, Security Branch 245.

(22) Qussay Mayoub, Air Force Intelligence.

(23) Muhammad Ammar Sardini, Political Security.

(24) Fouad Hammouda, Military Security.

(25) Hasan Daaboul, Branch 261.

(26) Yahia Wahbi, Air Force Intelligence.

(27) Okab Saqer, Security Branch 318.

(28) Husam Luqa, Political Security.

(29) Sami Al-Hasan, Security Branch 219.

(30) Yassir Deeb, Political Security.

(31) Ibrahim Darwish, Security Branch 220.

(32) Nasser Deeb, Political Security.

(33) Abdullatif Al-Fahed, Security Branch 290.

(34) Adeb Namer Salamah, Air Force Intelligence.

(35) Akram Muhammed, State Security.

(36) Reyad Abbas, Political Security.

(37) Ali Abdullah Ayoub, Syrian Armed Forces.

(38) Fahd Jassem Al-Frej, Defense Ministry.

(39) Issam Halaq, Air Force.

(40) Ghassan Al-Abdullah, General Intelligence Directorate.

(41) Maher Al-Assad, Republican Guard.

(42) Fahad Al-Farouch.

(43) Rafiq Shahada, Military Intelligence.

(44) Loay Al-Ali, Military Intelligence.

(45) Nawfal Al-Husayn, Military Intelligence.

(46) Muhammad Zamrini, Military Intelligence.

(47) Muhammad Mahallah, Military Intelligence.

(d) FORM.—The report required by subsection (a) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex if necessary.

(e) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, the Committee on Ways and Means, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Finance, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate.

TITLE III—REPORTS AND WAIVER FOR HUMANITARIAN-RELATED ACTIVITIES WITH RESPECT TO SYRIA

SEC. 301. BRIEFING ON MONITORING AND EVALUATING OF ONGOING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN SYRIA AND TO THE SYRIAN PEOPLE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development shall brief the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate on the monitoring and evaluation of ongoing assistance programs in Syria and for the Syrian people, including assistance provided through multilateral organizations.

(b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The briefing required by subsection (a) shall include—

(1) the specific project monitoring and evaluation efforts, including measurable goals and performance metrics for assistance in Syria;

(2) a description of the memoranda of understanding entered into by the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, and their respective Inspectors General and the multilateral organizations through which United States assistance will be delivered that formalize requirements for the sharing of information between such entities for the conduct of audits, investigations, and evaluations; and

(3) the major challenges to monitoring and evaluating such programs.

SEC. 302. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL METHODS TO ENHANCE THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that—

(1) assesses the potential effectiveness, risks, and operational requirements of the establishment and maintenance of a no-fly zone over part or all of Syria, including—

(A) the operational and legal requirements for United States and coalition air power to establish a no-fly zone in Syria;

(B) the impact a no-fly zone in Syria would have on humanitarian and counterterrorism efforts in Syria and the surrounding region; and

(C) the potential for force contributions from other countries to establish a no-fly zone in Syria;

(2) assesses the potential effectiveness, risks, and operational requirements for the establishment of one or more safe zones in Syria for internally displaced persons or for the facilitation of humanitarian assistance, including—

(A) the operational and legal requirements for United States and coalition forces to establish one or more safe zones in Syria;

(B) the impact one or more safe zones in Syria would have on humanitarian and counterterrorism efforts in Syria and the surrounding region; and

(C) the potential for contributions from other countries and vetted non-state actor partners to establish and maintain one or more safe zones in Syria;

(3) assesses the potential effectiveness, risks, and operational requirements of other non-military means to enhance the protection of civilians, especially civilians who are in besieged areas, trapped at borders, or internally displaced; and

(4) describes the Administration's plan for recruitment, training, and retention of partner forces, including—

(A) identification of the United States partner forces operating on the ground;

(B) the primary source of strength for each armed actor engaged in hostilities;

(C) the capabilities, requirements, and vulnerabilities of each armed actor;

(D) the United States role in mitigating vulnerabilities of partner forces; and

(E) the Administration's measures of success for partner forces, including—

(i) increasing Syrian civilian security; and

(ii) working toward an end to the conflict in Syria.

(b) FORM.—The report required by subsection (a) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex if necessary.

(c) CONSULTATION.—The report required by subsection (a) shall be informed by consultations with the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, the Department of Defense, and international and local organizations operating in Syria or in neighboring countries to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

(d) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate.

SEC. 303. ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT ENTITIES TAKING ACTIONS RELATING TO GATHERING EVIDENCE FOR INVESTIGATIONS INTO WAR CRIMES OR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY IN SYRIA SINCE MARCH 2011.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of State, acting through the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and the Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, is authorized to provide assistance to support entities that are conducting criminal investigations, building Syrian investigative capacity, supporting prosecutions in national courts, collecting evidence and preserving the chain of evidence for eventual prosecution against those who have committed war crimes or crimes against humanity in Syria, including the aiding and abetting of such crimes by foreign governments and organizations supporting the Government of Syria, since March 2011.

(b) BRIEFING.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall brief the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate on assistance provided under subsection (a).

TITLE IV—SUSPENSION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO SYRIA

SEC. 401. SUSPENSION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO SYRIA.

(a) SUSPENSION OF SANCTIONS.—

(1) NEGOTIATIONS NOT CONCLUDING IN AGREEMENT.—If the President determines that internationally recognized negotiations to resolve the violence in Syria have not concluded in an agreement or are likely not to conclude in an agreement, the President may suspend, as appropriate, in whole or in part, the imposition of sanctions otherwise required under this Act or any amendment made by this Act for a period not to exceed 120 days, and renewable for additional periods not to exceed 120 days, if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees in writing a determination and certification that the Government of Syria has ended military attacks against and gross violations of the human rights of the Syrian people, specifically—

(A) the air space over Syria is no longer being utilized by the Government of Syria and associated forces to target civilian populations through the use of incendiary devices, including barrel bombs, chemical weapons, and conventional arms, including air-delivered missiles and explosives;

(B) areas besieged by the Assad regime and associated forces, including Hezbollah and irregular Iranian forces, are no longer cut off from international aid and have regular access to humanitarian assistance, freedom of travel, and medical care;

(C) the Government of Syria is releasing all political prisoners forcibly held within the Assad regime prison system, including the facilities maintained by various security, intelligence, and military elements associated with the Government of Syria and allowed full access to the same facilities for investigations by appropriate international human rights organizations; and

(D) the forces of the Government of Syria and associated forces, including Hezbollah, irregular Iranian forces, and Russian government air assets, are no longer engaged in deliberate targeting of medical facilities, schools, residential areas, and community

gathering places, including markets, in flagrant violation of international norms.

(2) **NEGOTIATIONS CONCLUDING IN AGREEMENT.**—

(A) **INITIAL SUSPENSION OF SANCTIONS.**—If the President determines that internationally recognized negotiations to resolve the violence in Syria have concluded in an agreement or are likely to conclude in an agreement, the President may suspend, as appropriate, in whole or in part, the imposition of sanctions otherwise required under this Act or any amendment made by this Act for a period not to exceed 120 days if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees in writing a determination and certification that—

(i) in the case in which the negotiations are likely to conclude in an agreement—

(I) the Government of Syria, the Syrian High Negotiations Committee or its internationally-recognized successor, and appropriate international parties are participating in direct, face-to-face negotiations; and

(II) the suspension of sanctions under this Act or any amendment made by this Act is essential to the advancement of such negotiations; and

(ii) the Government of Syria has demonstrated a commitment to a significant and substantial reduction in attacks on and violence against the Syrian people by the Government of Syria and associated forces.

(B) **RENEWAL OF SUSPENSION OF SANCTIONS.**—The President may renew a suspension of sanctions under subparagraph (A) for additional periods not to exceed 120 days if, for each such additional period, the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees in writing a determination and certification that—

(i) the conditions described in clauses (i) and (ii) of subparagraph (A) are continuing to be met;

(ii) the renewal of the suspension of sanctions is essential to implementing an agreement described in subparagraph (A) or making progress toward concluding an agreement described in subparagraph (A);

(iii) the Government of Syria and associated forces have ceased attacks against Syrian civilians; and

(iv) the Government of Syria has publicly committed to negotiations for a transitional government in Syria and continues to demonstrate that commitment through sustained engagement in talks and substantive and verifiable progress towards the implementation of such an agreement.

(3) **BRIEFING AND REIMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS.**—

(A) **BRIEFING.**—Not later than 30 days after the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees a determination and certification in the case of a renewal of suspension of sanctions under paragraph (2)(B), and every 30 days thereafter, the President shall provide a briefing to the appropriate congressional committees on the status and frequency of negotiations described in paragraph (2).

(B) **RE-IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS.**—If the President provides a briefing to the appropriate congressional committees under subparagraph (A) with respect to which the President indicates a lapse in negotiations described in paragraph (2) for a period that equals or exceeds 90 days, the sanctions that were suspended under paragraph (2)(B) shall be re-imposed and any further suspension of such sanctions is prohibited.

(4) **DEFINITION.**—In this subsection, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, the Committee on Ways and Means, and the Com-

mittee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Finance, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate.

(b) **SENSE OF CONGRESS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR DETERMINING A TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT IN SYRIA.**—It is the sense of Congress that a transitional government in Syria is a government that—

(1) is taking verifiable steps to release all political prisoners and is providing full access to Syrian prisons for investigations by appropriate international human rights organizations;

(2) is taking verifiable steps to remove former senior Syrian Government officials who are complicit in the conception, implementation, or cover up of war crimes, crimes against humanity, or human rights abuses and any person subject to sanctions under any provision of law from government positions;

(3) is in the process of organizing free and fair elections for a new government—

(A) to be held in a timely manner and scheduled while the suspension of sanctions or the renewal of the suspension of sanctions under this section is in effect; and

(B) to be conducted under the supervision of internationally recognized observers;

(4) is making tangible progress toward establishing an independent judiciary;

(5) is demonstrating respect for and compliance with internationally recognized human rights and basic freedoms as specified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

(6) is taking steps to verifiably fulfill its commitments under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and is making tangible progress toward becoming a signatory to Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction, entered into force March 26, 1975, and adhering to the Missile Technology Control Regime and other control lists, as necessary;

(7) has halted the development and deployment of ballistic and cruise missiles; and

(8) is taking verifiable steps to remove from positions of authority within the intelligence and security services as well as the military those who were in a position of authority or responsibility during the conflict and who under the authority of their position were implicated in or implicit in the torture, extrajudicial killing, or execution of civilians, to include those who were involved in decisionmaking or execution of plans to use chemical weapons.

SEC. 402. WAIVERS AND EXEMPTIONS.

(a) **EXEMPTIONS.**—The following activities and transactions shall be exempt from sanctions authorized under this Act or any amendment made by this Act:

(1) Any activity subject to the reporting requirements under title V of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3091 et seq.), or to any authorized intelligence activities of the United States.

(2) Any transaction necessary to comply with United States obligations under—

(A) the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947;

(B) the Convention on Consular Relations, done at Vienna April 24, 1963, and entered into force March 19, 1967; or

(C) any other international agreement to which the United States is a party.

(b) **HUMANITARIAN, STABILIZATION, AND DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE WAIVER.**—

(1) **STATEMENT OF POLICY.**—It shall be the policy of the United States to fully utilize the waiver authority under this subsection to ensure that adequate humanitarian relief or support for stabilization and democracy promotion is provided to the Syrian people.

(2) **WAIVER.**—Except as provided in paragraph (5) and subsection (d), the President may waive, on a case-by-case basis, for a period not to exceed one year, and renewable for additional periods not to exceed one year, the application of sanctions authorized under this Act with respect to a person if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees a written determination that the waiver is necessary for purposes of providing humanitarian or stabilization assistance or support for democracy promotion to the people of Syria.

(3) **CONTENT OF WRITTEN DETERMINATION.**—A written determination submitted under paragraph (2) with respect to a waiver shall include a description of all notification and accountability controls that have been employed in order to ensure that the activities covered by the waiver are humanitarian or stabilization assistance or support for democracy promotion and do not entail any activities in Syria or dealings with the Government of Syria not reasonably related to humanitarian or stabilization assistance or support for democracy promotion.

(4) **CLARIFICATION OF PERMITTED ACTIVITIES UNDER WAIVER.**—The President may not impose sanctions authorized under this Act against a humanitarian organization for—

(A) engaging in a financial transaction relating to humanitarian assistance or for humanitarian purposes pursuant to a waiver issued under paragraph (2);

(B) transporting goods or services that are necessary to carry out operations relating to humanitarian assistance or humanitarian purposes pursuant to such a waiver; or

(C) having incidental contact, in the course of providing humanitarian assistance or aid for humanitarian purposes pursuant to such a waiver, with individuals who are under the control of a foreign person subject to sanctions under this Act or any amendment made by this Act unless the organization or its officers, members, representatives or employees have engaged in (or the President knows or has reasonable ground to believe is engaged in or is likely to engage in) conduct described in section 212(a)(3)(B)(iv)(VI) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(3)(B)(iv)(VI)).

(5) **EXCEPTION TO WAIVER AUTHORITY.**—The President may not exercise the waiver authority under paragraph (2) with respect to a foreign person who has (or whose officers, members, representatives or employees have) engaged in (or the President knows or has reasonable ground to believe is engaged in or is likely to engage in) conduct described in section 212(a)(3)(B)(iv)(VI) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(3)(B)(iv)(VI)).

(c) **WAIVER.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The President may, for periods not to exceed 120 days, waive the application of sanctions under this Act with respect to a foreign person if the President certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that such waiver is vital to the national security interests of the United States.

(2) **CONSULTATION.**—

(A) **BEFORE WAIVER ISSUED.**—Not later than 5 days before the issuance of a waiver under paragraph (1) is to take effect, the President shall notify and brief the appropriate congressional committees on the status of the foreign person's involvement in activities described in this Act.

(B) AFTER WAIVER ISSUED.—Not later than 90 days after the issuance of a waiver under paragraph (1), and every 120 days thereafter if the waiver remains in effect, the President shall brief the appropriate congressional committees on the status of the foreign person's involvement in activities described in this Act.

(3) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, the Committee on Ways and Means, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Finance, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate.

(d) CODIFICATION OF CERTAIN SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS' ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), section 542.516 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations (relating to certain services in support of nongovernmental organizations' activities authorized), as in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act, shall—

(A) remain in effect on and after such date of enactment; and

(B) in the case of a nongovernmental organization that is authorized to export or reexport services to Syria under such section on the day before such date of enactment, shall apply to such organization on and after such date of enactment to the same extent and in the same manner as such section applied to such organization on the day before such date of enactment.

(2) EXCEPTION.—Section 542.516 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations, as codified under paragraph (1), shall not apply with respect to a foreign person who has (or whose officers, members, representatives or employees have) engaged in (or the President knows or has reasonable ground to believe is engaged in or is likely to engage in) conduct described in section 212(a)(3)(B)(iv)(VI) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(3)(B)(iv)(VI)).

(e) STRATEGY REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report containing a strategy to ensure that humanitarian organizations can access financial services to ensure the safe and timely delivery of assistance to communities in need in Syria.

(2) CONSIDERATION OF DATA FROM OTHER COUNTRIES AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS.—In preparing the strategy required by paragraph (1), the President shall consider credible data already obtained by other countries and nongovernmental organizations, including organizations operating in Syria.

(3) FORM.—The strategy required by paragraph (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form but may contain a classified annex.

TITLE V—REGULATORY AUTHORITY, COST LIMITATION, AND SUNSET

SEC. 501. IMPLEMENTATION AND REGULATORY AUTHORITIES.

(a) IMPLEMENTATION AUTHORITY.—The President may exercise all authorities provided to the President under sections 203 and 205 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1702 and 1704) for purposes of carrying out this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

(b) REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—The President shall, not later than 90 days after the

date of the enactment of this Act, promulgate regulations as necessary for the implementation of this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

(c) BRIEFING TO CONGRESS.—Not less than 10 days before the promulgation of regulations under subsection (a), the President shall brief the appropriate congressional committees on the proposed regulations and the provisions of this Act and the amendments made by this Act that the regulations are implementing.

(d) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate.

SEC. 502. COST LIMITATION.

No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act and the amendments made by this Act. Such requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized.

SEC. 503. AUTHORITY TO CONSOLIDATE REPORTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Any reports required to be submitted to the appropriate congressional committees under this Act or any amendment made by this Act that are subject to a deadline for submission consisting of the same unit of time may be consolidated into a single report that is submitted to appropriate congressional committees pursuant to such deadline. The consolidated reports shall contain all information required under this Act or any amendment made by this Act, in addition to all other elements mandated by previous law.

(b) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate.

SEC. 504. SUNSET.

This Act shall cease to be effective beginning on December 31, 2021.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by commending the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), the ranking member, for his leadership in authoring this critical legislation. Mr. ENGEL has long been the voice on Syria, and I must mention that the outline that he has given in terms of the initial problems when we saw those citizens on the streets of Damascus, walking, saying,

“Peaceful, peaceful,” and then, as we saw on CNN, the automatic weapons open up and saw the Assad regime mow those civilians down—he was the first to begin to ring the alarm. I wish this body, and previous administrations as well, had done more to heed his calls.

For 6 years, we have watched the Syrian regime launch wave after wave of unrelenting destruction on the people of Syria. Airstrikes, chemical weapons attacks, forced starvation, industrial-scale torture, the deliberate targeting of hospitals, schools, marketplaces, and this done with precision bombs and with crude barrel bombs, and, as a consequence, Syrians suffering every day.

Now, just last month, we saw footage of entire families killed, suffocated by sarin gas, a chemical weapon that Assad supposedly gave up under a deal brokered by Russia and the previous administration. The number of dead is estimated now to be close to 500,000, and another 14 million have been driven from their homes.

And while ISIS plays a role in the violence in Syria, it is Bashar al-Assad and his backers—among them, Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah—who are the main drivers of this death and destruction. ISIS has no airplanes. It is Russian and Syrian fighter planes and helicopters that drop those bombs on those hospitals and schools.

It is Hezbollah and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps fighters who attack cities, who burn crops, who prevent food and water and medical supplies from reaching vulnerable civilians.

It is Assad's secret police and intelligence groups who kidnap and torture and murder civilians from every ethnic group and political party, Sunni, Shia, Christians, Alawite; none are safe.

One of the worst facilities is just 20 miles from Damascus, Sednaya, a prison, a place so terrible that it is called a human slaughterhouse. Thousands and thousands of people have been tortured and hung and shot and left to starve to death within the prison. And the numbers are so high that, in 2013, Assad began constructing a crematorium to dispose of the bodies.

Over the past 4 years, our committee heard agonizing testimony from Syrians caught up in this horror, including the brave Syrian defector known to the world as Caesar and for whom this bill is named. Caesar testified about the shocking scale of torture being carried out within the prisons of Syria.

We saw his photographs and the tens of thousands of photographs he took with those bodies numbered numerically. I don't know what it is about totalitarian regimes that leads them to want to number their dead and catalog it, but, because of his bravery, we have those photographs.

We have also heard from doctors who treat victims of chemical attacks, volunteers who dig through rubble with their bare hands to rescue those trapped within, and we have heard

from the survivors of torture in Assad's prisons.

As Syria drags on and on, vital U.S. national security interests are at stake. Assad's brutality is both a magnet for terrorist recruitment and a destabilizing force driving tens of millions of refugees out of that country. We have 14 million Syrians, as I said, who are displaced right now, many of them still in the country, and millions outside of the country, yet we have taken no steps to apply the economic tools that are available to us with respect to Assad and his backers.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is designed to increase the cost to Assad and to those outside backers by targeting the sectors of the economy that allow Assad to murder with impunity. Under the bill, foreign companies and banks will have to choose between doing business with the regime or with the United States. It would also sanction anyone who flies weapons or sends fighters into Syria to support the Assad regime.

This bill is also about creating economic leverage to push the parties to negotiate, creating the conditions for a negotiated peace. It is about finding a way forward to be determined by the Syrian people that does not allow Assad to exterminate his own community; it does not allow him to do it with impunity; does not guarantee ISIS a safe space from which to operate; and does not drive another 10 million people from their homes.

For there to be peace in Syria, the parties must come together, and so long as Assad and his backers can slaughter the people of Syria with no consequences, there is no hope for peace.

As we speak, Russia and Iran have proclaimed themselves the guarantors of peace and have promised to create de-escalation zones where military operations can be curtailed and civilians can seek safety. But these zones would be policed by the Syrian Army, supported by Russian military police, by Hezbollah fighters, and IRGC, Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps commanders, backed by those Shia militias—the very same people who have murdered thousands of Syrian civilians with impunity throughout this conflict and who are actively engaged in fomenting sectarian-based violence throughout the region. With this scenario, peace does not have a chance.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is long overdue. And last year, ELIOT ENGEL and I brought this up, and we passed it unanimously, yet the other body did not take it up before we adjourned.

I urge all Members to support this legislation as we seek to ease the suffering of the Syrian people.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, DC, April 20, 2017.

Hon. EDWARD R. ROYCE,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ROYCE: I write with respect to H.R. 1677, the "Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act." As a result of your having consulted with us on provisions within H.R. 1677 that fall within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on the Judiciary, I forego any further consideration of this bill so that it may proceed expeditiously to the House floor for consideration.

The Judiciary Committee takes this action with our mutual understanding that by foregoing consideration of H.R. 1677 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over subject matter contained in this or similar legislation and that our committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as this bill or similar legislation moves forward so that we may address any remaining issues in our jurisdiction. Our committee also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving this or similar legislation and asks that you support any such request.

I would appreciate a response to this letter confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 1677 and would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the Congressional Record during floor consideration of H.R. 1677.

Sincerely,

BOB GOODLATTE,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, April 24, 2017.

Hon. BOB GOODLATTE,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN GOODLATTE: Thank you for consulting with the Foreign Affairs Committee on agreeing to be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1677, the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, so that the bill may proceed expeditiously to the House floor.

I agree that your forgoing further action on this measure does not in any way diminish or alter the jurisdiction of your committee, or prejudice its jurisdictional prerogatives on this resolution or similar legislation in the future. I would support your effort to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees from your committee to any House-Senate conference on this legislation.

I will seek to place our letters on H.R. 1677 into the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the resolution. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation and look forward to continuing to work together as this measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

EDWARD R. ROYCE,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES,
Washington, DC, May 11, 2017.

Hon. ED ROYCE,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ROYCE: I am writing concerning H.R. 1677, the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2017.

As a result of your having consulted with the Committee on Financial Services concerning provisions in the bill that fall within our Rule X jurisdiction, I agree to forgo action on the bill so that it may proceed expeditiously to the House Floor. The Committee on Financial Services takes this action with our mutual understanding that, by foregoing consideration of H.R. 1677 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in this or similar legislation, and that our Committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as this or similar legislation moves forward so that we may address any remaining issues that fall within our Rule X jurisdiction. Our Committee also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving this or similar legislation, and requests your support for any such request.

Finally, I would appreciate your response to this letter confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 1677 and would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be placed in the Congressional Record during floor consideration thereof.

Sincerely,
JEB HENSARLING,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, May 11, 2017.

Hon. JEB HENSARLING,
Chairman, Committee on Financial Services,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN HENSARLING: Thank you for consulting with the Foreign Affairs Committee and agreeing to be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1677, the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, so that the bill may proceed expeditiously to the House floor.

I agree that your forgoing further action on this measure does not in any way diminish or alter the jurisdiction of your committee, or prejudice its jurisdictional prerogatives on this resolution or similar legislation in the future. I would support your effort to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees from your committee to any House-Senate conference on this legislation.

I will seek to place our letters on H.R. 1677 into the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the bill. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation and look forward to continuing to work together as this measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,
EDWARD R. ROYCE,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,
Washington, DC, May 16, 2017.

Hon. EDWARD R. ROYCE,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ROYCE: I am writing with respect to H.R. 1677, the "Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2017." As a result of your having consulted with us on provisions on which the Committee on Ways and Means has a jurisdictional interest, I will not request a sequential referral on this measure.

The Committee on Ways and Means takes this action with the mutual understanding that we do not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in this or similar legislation, and the Committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as the bill or similar legislation moves forward so that we may address any remaining issues that fall within our jurisdiction. The Committee also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving this or similar legislation, and requests your support for such request.

Finally, I would appreciate your response to this letter confirming this understanding,

and would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the Congressional Record during floor consideration of H.R. 1677.

Sincerely,

KEVIN BRADY,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, May 16, 2017.

Hon. KEVIN BRADY,
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BRADY: Thank you for consulting with the Foreign Affairs Committee on H.R. 1677, the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2017, and for agreeing to forgo a sequential referral request so that the bill may proceed expeditiously to the House floor.

I agree that your declining to pursue a sequential referral in this case does not diminish or alter the jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means, or prejudice its jurisdictional prerogatives on this bill or similar legislation in the future. I would support your effort to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees from your committee to any House-Senate conference on this legislation.

I will seek to place our letters on this bill into the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the bill. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation and look forward to continuing to work with the Committee on Ways and Means as this measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

EDWARD R. ROYCE,
Chairman.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation, and I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful that the House is considering my bill today, the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act.

I want to thank my friend, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, ED ROYCE, for joining as the lead Republican cosponsor of this measure. I am proud that we are bringing it up to the floor with 108 cosponsors, Members from both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, every week, more and more bad news pours in about the civil war in Syria. I am grateful to Chairman ROYCE for making the comments he just made because my heart has been bleeding for Syria, or crying out for Syria, for 4 or 5 years now, ever since, as Mr. ROYCE said, there were peaceful demonstrations and they were mowed down by the Assad regime.

The United States didn't do much. We sort of watched and retreated and perhaps were afraid that we would be bogged down in another war. But we should have, at that point, in my estimation, helped the free Syria Army, which begged us for help, not people, not troops, but help, and we didn't do it. We didn't give it to them.

We thought that Assad would fall on his own, ultimately, but he didn't, and we are bearing the price today. We are paying the price today. The people of Syria, unfortunately, are the ones paying the price. Millions of people have died and have been misplaced and just

the horrors of war and the horrors of civilians. So my heart really bleeds for the Syrian people.

This week, it was the revelation of a crematorium, a furnace where the criminals who do Assad's bidding can pile the bodies and try to burn away the evidence of their atrocities.

Also this week, Russia announced that they will work with Iran, Iraq, and Assad to open a secure road from Baghdad to Damascus. What that really means, Mr. Speaker, is a road from Beirut to Tehran in Iran, a permanent Iranian foothold right in the Middle East, a permanent Iranian foothold right on Israel's border, a permanent Iranian foothold to do mischief and the usual nefarious things that the Iranian Government does.

This crisis has been burning out of control for six long years. I was an early vocal supporter, as I mentioned before, of arming the moderate Syrian opposition. I thought we should have done much more to help push Assad out of power and help the Syrian people chart the course for their country's future. When we didn't, I spoke out.

Since then, Assad has plowed ahead with his campaign of carnage. The few times he appeared to be taking on water, he was given a lifeline by his devoted enablers, Russia and Iran, through its terrorist proxy, Hezbollah. Every time Assad seemed to be losing, he was given a lifeline and, as I just mentioned, by Hezbollah, also given a lifeline by the Russians who came in.

So while it was suspected in the highest annals of Washington that Assad wouldn't last more than a few months, no one would have imagined that 4 and 5 years later there would be Assad winning the war, again, with the help of Russia, Iran, and their terrorist proxy.

It is a disgrace, Mr. Speaker, and we need to act out. We need to help.

Today, we find ourselves no closer to a solution, and 4 months into the new administration, we have yet to hear a strategy for dealing with Syria. The Tomahawk missile strike last month was an appropriate response to the chemical weapons attack, although I believe the administration's policy shift, with respect to Assad, emboldened Assad to launch that attack, and a single missile strike is not a strategy.

We need a plan to stop the violence, push a political transition that sees the end of Assad's rule and helps the Syrian people recover and move forward. My bill, this bill, would be part of that strategy.

□ 1715

It is named, as Mr. ROYCE pointed out, for Caesar, a former Syrian Government photographer. Fed up with documenting the brutality of the Assad regime, he defected and escaped so he could show the world exactly what was happening to the regime's victims.

I will never forget the images he showed us when he came to the Foreign Affairs Committee. Those images are

still seared in my brain and I will never forget them; the depth of brutality and indifference to human life.

We have named this bill after him because we want to send a message. If you are supporting this murder, if you are enabling the butcher in Damascus to continue waging that sort of violence against his own people, you are going to face consequences.

This bill would sanction anyone who provides material support for the Assad regime. We want to go after the actual hardware that keeps his war machine running, the planes and bombs that terrorize the Syrian people, and the spare parts and oil that keep everything running. If you do business with Assad, the blood of the Syrian people is on your hands and you are going to get caught up in these sanctions. Yes, that means Iran and Russia.

If conditions on the ground change and negotiations were in sight, it might be useful to dial back these sanctions in order to help end the violence. So we have built in some degree of flexibility. The measures are tough, but we all want them to be a roadblock to peace.

This bill also seeks to provide some relief to the Syrian people who are now suffering terribly. It would improve oversight of assistance flowing into Syria and evaluate the feasibility of a no-fly zone.

We also need to think about what must happen after the violence has ended, about who must be held accountable. So this bill requires reporting on human rights violators, and would support efforts to gather evidence of crimes against humanity. This bill isn't a silver bullet. It isn't a strategy for resolving the crisis in Syria.

Congress can do a lot, though, when it comes to foreign policy. We can give an administration tools and resources, but it is up to the White House to lead on this issue. If the first step in a serious strategy is stopping the violence—and I think it is—this legislation can help dial up pressure on those driving the war.

So I continue to push ahead; Mr. ROYCE at my side, and I am grateful to my colleagues for their support. I am grateful to the Foreign Affairs Committee for moving this swiftly.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KINZINGER), a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and an Air Force pilot.

Mr. KINZINGER. Mr. Speaker, I thank you and the chairman. I want to commend Mr. ENGEL for his foresight in this bill and for bringing it to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I was just recently in Auschwitz. It was my first visit to Auschwitz and, obviously, seeing something like that is not something you are going to forget very quickly. Seeing something like that and an industrial machine put together to eliminate people is not something that people thought humanity was capable of

until they found out that it actually was possible.

So in preserving Auschwitz, the purpose was to say: Hey, this is possible. Never forget that this can happen again.

Mr. Speaker, it was just recently that we learned about the crematorium that was built in the Syrian prison.

Now, why was this built?

It was built to hide the massive amounts of bodies coming out, tortured to death; destroyed the lives cut short in this Syrian prison. It was used to disguise that. It was used to prevent mass graves from being dug.

I think that proves that Bashar al-Assad is actually a modern-day Hitler. In fact, if you look at when, as was mentioned prior, Caesar came to our committee and showed us the images of brutality—the government cataloging the victims of the Syrian regime with markers written on the body, a numbering system, and a catalog to say, in essence, document these massive amounts of death—it became very clear to us in a very visual sense what was going on in Syria.

Mr. Speaker, oftentimes it is easy in the United States of America, where we have a lot of comforts and we have a lot of things granted to us that we take for granted, to look at a situation happening overseas and think it doesn't apply to us or doesn't affect us; and it is really tempting sometimes to get into that because it is easy sometimes to pretend something doesn't affect us. But it does.

We see the massive amounts of migration from Syria, the young 7-, 8-, and 9-year-olds who are not going to school now because they have been disrupted and their lives have been disrupted, and in 5 or 6 years, if they don't get an education and don't get hope and opportunity, they will provide now the next recruiting ground for ISIS, or ISIS two, or al-Qaida three, because people without hope and without opportunity are easy to bring into a terrorist ideology like those.

Mr. Speaker, the President rightly decided to enforce the red line in Syria when it came to the use of chemical weapons—something that the Western world has held very dear, that chemical weapons on the battlefield have no place—and he destroyed a Syrian airfield. It was the right move. It began to shift the balance of power in Syria, but way more needs to be done.

I have called for action in Syria, as many on this committee have for a very long time, and this, the Caesar bill, is a fantastic first step to doing it. It would increase sanctions on the Assad regime and its supporters for continued atrocities committed against the Syrian people. It requires this administration and any future administration to stand up and impose costs on the Russians, on the Iranians, and on the Syrian backers for the barrel bombing and gassing of innocent civilians.

Think about that, a barrel filled with explosives dropped indiscriminately on

a population center intended to commit the largest amounts of casualties possible; a GPS-guided bomb, or a laser-guided bomb intentionally dropped into a hospital, and then a delay of 20 minutes so they can hit it again, or hit areas where first responders have responded to.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't a legitimate way of fighting war, if there is a legitimate way of fighting war. This is brutality to the top level, and this is a great step for this Congress to take. We unanimously passed this the last time. I sure hope we can do that again.

Again, I thank the leadership for leading on this. I thank Mr. ENGEL and Chairman ROYCE for their leadership.

I ask my colleagues to join me and join us in supporting this very important bill.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the distinguished Democratic whip, someone who I know, through our meetings, feels so strongly about this and feels as we do.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from New York, the ranking member on the Foreign Affairs Committee for yielding. I thank Mr. KINZINGER for his leadership as well as his statement.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bipartisan legislation, which will impose tough sanctions on entities aiding the Assad regime in Syria.

Bashar al-Assad is brutal murderer. Very frankly, there are too many countries facilitating and complicit in the murders that he perpetrates. He has gassed his own people and waged a civil war that has displaced millions from their homes and their country.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, I had the honor of meeting some of the White Helmet civil defense workers who are risking their lives daily to rescue civilians caught in the crossfire and targeted by government forces; facilitated, I might say, by Mr. Putin's troops in Syria.

The Assad regime is being propped up by Iran and Russia in a dangerous and destabilizing geopolitical game. There are reports that the Assad government is now cremating victims of mass murder in an attempt to hide the evidence of its numerous crimes. While this is taking place, Americans watched in disbelief; frankly, as President Trump met in the Oval Office with those who are protecting, aiding and abetting Bashar al-Assad and those committing atrocities by his command and in his name.

Not only does that show how little this President understands about the conflict in Syria and its broader complexities, it also reminds us that he has articulated no clear strategy on how to end that conflict and to defeat ISIS.

Having said that, let me congratulate the President for taking the actions against the airfield after the chemical attack. But, frankly, that was a significant, but small, step.

The continuation of the war that the Assad government is waging against its own people only makes it harder to defeat the terrorists who threaten America, the region, and the world. Today's legislation will help address this problem.

I see on the floor, my friend, Chairman ROYCE, who is a great leader on issues relating to our foreign policy and to human rights. I congratulate him for his leadership. Working with his partner, Mr. ENGEL, we have taken significant steps to raise both the moral and the foreign policy issues that need to be raised. The efforts are bipartisan and reflect hard work on the part of the ranking member, the chairman, as well as members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

I thank them for their efforts, and I urge my colleagues to join in strong and, hopefully, unanimous support of this important resolution.

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROSELEHTNEN), who chairs the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa.

Ms. ROSELEHTNEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman ROYCE again for yielding the time.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL's Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, H.R. 1677, of which I am proud to be an original cosponsor, and I commend him and the chairman for all of their hard work in authoring the bill and bringing it before us today.

During our committee's hearing on Syria in April—and we have had so many hearings—one of our witnesses made a point that I think bears repeating, a point that highlights the importance of the ranking member's bill before us today. As long as Assad remains in power, there is very little chance that we will be able to defeat ISIS or its offshoots because Assad, in many ways, has facilitated the growth of the very jihadist groups for which he claims are protecting Syria. Hoguewash.

As we talk about how to stop the slaughter in Syria, we must remember that no one bears more responsibility for that slaughter than Assad. He and his regime are the ones dropping barrel bombs. They are the ones unleashing chemical weapons on their own people. And if we want to have any chance of stopping the bloodbath, of defeating ISIS, or of putting an end to the immense humanitarian challenges spreading throughout the region and beyond, we must put a stop to Assad.

This bill ratchets up the pressure on Assad and his collaborators, especially his main allies—Russia and Iran—while expanding on the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act, a bill which I authored and which became law in 2012. It gives the administration new tools to go after individuals and entities working with Assad in the finance, aircraft, transportation, telecom, and energy sectors, as well as

it gives them the tools to target individuals complicit in human rights abuses.

I am glad to have worked with the ranking member and our esteemed chairman to include my amendments in this bill, amendments that would determine that denying or hindering access to humanitarian aid is a serious human rights violation, and, as such, it would allow the administration to sanction any individual responsible for doing so.

All of these tools, Mr. Speaker, are vital components of doing something that we still desperately need in Syria: a comprehensive, holistic strategy that looks beyond short-term tactical successes and, instead, targets the foundation of so many of the problems rippling through the region.

If we continue to narrowly focus on ISIS without getting at the root of the Syrian conflict—Assad, Russia, and Iran—then we will only be treating the symptoms instead of the disease.

□ 1730

If we are to have any hope of finding a solution in Syria, the kind of pressure that this bill would achieve is an essential piece of that puzzle.

I offer my full support for this bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) will control the time.

There was no objection.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I certainly add my voice to that of my colleagues in support of this important legislation. Syria is a mess. It does affect all of us, as Mr. KINZINGER said, whether we like it or not. It is destabilizing the entire region. I believe this bill can be a useful tool in our diplomatic efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. FRANKEL), my friend and colleague.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chair and ranking member for their great leadership.

Mr. Speaker, imagine a mother crying in despair while holding her child in her arms, a child who is gasping for his last breath, an innocent victim of a barrel bomb filled with sarin gas dropped on his school.

The situation in Syria is the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II. President Assad's brutal regime has killed half a million innocent victims and displaced 14 million more, with millions fleeing into Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and over Europe, straining their resources, threatening regional stability, weakening European institutions, and undermining United States economic and security interests.

We must hold Assad and his supporters responsible for their atrocities. American leadership is needed more now than ever. I urge my colleagues to support the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act.

Mr. Speaker, I fear that one day we will look back and we will ask: Why did we not do more?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) has reclaimed the time from the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY).

There was no objection.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ).

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2017.

Since 2011, the Assad regime's forces have killed an estimated 500,000 people, mostly civilians, by unconscionably targeting and attacking major population centers. According to Human Rights Watch, last month, the Syrian regime used a nerve agent in northwest Syria that killed at least 92 people, including 30 children.

Even more heartbreaking is the fact that this was not the first chemical weapons attack by the Syrian Government against its own people. To the contrary, reports suggest that the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons has become "widespread and systematic," and it has dropped bombs with nerve agents on at least four other occasions since December 12.

Just yesterday, our own State Department revealed that the Syrian regime is actively using a large crematorium to dispose of the remains of thousands of Syrian men, women, and children, whom they continue to slaughter.

Not only has the Syrian Government become a source of such crimes against humanity, but Syria has also indisputably become a hotbed for terrorist activity, propped up by Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah. Both ISIS and al-Qaida are operating near the Syria-Israel border, putting the Jewish State of Israel and our regional security in grave danger.

As a mother and a Jew, I cannot turn my cheek to this unadulterated evil. As a Member of the United States Congress, I have a duty to keep the American people safe and hold the Assad regime accountable for its war crimes and brutality. That is why I strongly support this critical legislation, and I thank Ranking Member ENGEL for all of his hard work in sponsoring it.

This bipartisan legislation would expand sanctions on those individuals who commit such monstrous acts of violence and inflict such extreme suffering upon innocent Syrians. It would ensure that the United States has the tools it needs to reach its ultimate goal of ending the Assad regime's campaign of carnage once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this important legislation.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard both sides simply agree. This is as bipartisan as you can get. It is as unanimous, hopefully, as you can get.

Six years into the Syrian civil war, with hundreds of thousands dead and millions more driven from their homes, we cannot waste time looking backward or just simply placing blame. We need to face the reality of this crisis today and do all we can to forge a new strategy to deal with it.

Three, four, five years ago, no one would have imagined that Assad would still be clinging to power over more and more deaths of his own people. We need to find a way to push for an end to the violence and bring about a political resolution that gets Assad out of power. By the way, that is going to be harder to do because the Russians and Ukrainians are really backing him.

Let's allow the Syrian people to start their long journey forward. This legislation will help us meet that challenge. It will impose a new cost on those who so far have aided the Assad regime with impunity. It will apply new pressure to the regime, which relies on the patronage of its enablers in Moscow. It will signal to the Syrian people that we share a vision of a future in which they make the decisions and Assad has no role.

The bill passed the House unanimously a year ago. I am hopeful we will soon pass it in a little while again overwhelmingly. I urge the other body to act on it without delay so we can get it to the President's desk.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to once again recognize the work of Ranking Member ENGEL and the other committee members who have contributed to this bill.

Our committee has heard the firsthand accounts of the suffering. We heard the testimony from Raed Saleh of the Syrian White Helmets as he spoke of their efforts to rescue and treat those who were killed and injured in Assad's brutal air assaults. When the bombs come in, as they often do, his organization, which was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, runs toward those shelters being destroyed to provide relief for the victims and to pull them out.

We have heard of the terror. More than a year ago, Dr. Mohamed Tennari of the Syrian American Medical Society described for the committee the sound of helicopters overhead, the thump of exploding bombs, and the overpowering smell of bleach in the air. This brave doctor described the horrendous effects this toxic gas has on the human body and the slow, agonizing deaths as the chlorine gas turned to hydrochloric acid in the lungs of victims.

Many of those victims he spoke of were children. They were targeted by the regime. People were targeted as they slept in their beds in their neighborhoods. Just a few weeks ago, one family lost 20 relatives in a single sarin

gas attack. Of the 92 victims of that attack on that day, 23 were children.

Mr. Speaker, in 2016, efforts to establish a lasting cease-fire failed, resulting in an aggressive campaign by Syrian and Russian air assets against eastern Aleppo. U.N. officials described that assault as “crimes of historic proportions.”

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1677 “Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2017.”

This bill, introduced by my colleague, Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL, uses sanctions to put pressure on the Syrian government and anyone supporting it to stop committing war crimes against humanity.

I support this legislation for its important and necessary purpose to halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, encourage a negotiated political settlement, and hold Syrian human rights abusers accountable for their crimes.

The Syrian government, empowered with support from Iran and Russia, has pursued a strategy of targeting civilians to eliminate any opposition to its rule, including arresting anyone who opposes it.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has reported the deaths of 60,000 people in prisons since the start of the conflict.

The Syrian government is the main aggressor in a conflict that has resulted in at least 400,000 dead and 14 million Syrians displaced; between 2011 and 2015, the Syrian Network for Human Rights attributed 96 percent of civilian deaths to the Syrian regime.

Additionally, President Bashar al-Assad has blocked United Nations humanitarian aid from reaching the intended recipients.

Who is Caesar? Caesar, who uses the pseudonym to remain anonymous as a way to protect his family, defected from the Syrian military in 2013.

He worked as a crime scene photographer for the Assad government after joining the military, years before the current conflict began.

As the conflict escalated, so did the number of bodies he would photograph each day.

Photographing the torture and rising death began to change his attitude towards the regime and in 2013, with help from the opposition, he faked his own death and defected from the Syrian military.

When he fled in August 2013, Caesar had collected over 53,000 photographs of detainees who had been tortured and killed.

He handed these photographs over to an anti-government political group, the Syrian National Movement, who then distributed the photographs to other groups, including Human Rights Watch (HRW).

With these photographs, HRW “found evidence of widespread torture, starvation, beatings, and disease in Syrian government detention facilities.”

With the conflict in Syria in its fifth year, the U.S. House of Representatives introduced a bill intended to punish the Assad regime and its supporters and based it on both Caesar's photographs and his testimony in front of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs this past July.

The photographs and testimony show a clear connection between the reported human rights violations and the Assad government, legitimizing the bill and giving clear evidence to the international courts if President Assad stands trial for international war crimes.

H.R. 1677 is intended to sanction both the Syrian regime and any actors, what the bill refers to as a “foreign person,” who support its human rights violations by imposing sanctions on them.

This support can be in any capacity, such as economic or military support.

H.R. 1677 is important and necessary as the United States cannot sit in silence while tens of thousands innocent civilians are slaughtered by Assad's authoritative regime.

Assad's crimes are not only against humanity but also against democracy, and I fully support legislation aiming to stop these atrocities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HULTGREN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1677, 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.

RAISING A QUESTION OF THE PRIVILEGES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to a question of the privileges of the House and offer the resolution previously noticed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the resolution.

The Clerk read as follows:

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the President shall immediately disclose his tax return information to Congress and the American people.

Whereas, in the United States' system of checks and balances, Congress has a responsibility to hold the Executive Branch of government to the highest standard of transparency to ensure the public interest is placed first;

Whereas, according to the Tax History Project, every President since Gerald Ford has disclosed their tax return information to the public;

Whereas, tax returns provide an important baseline disclosure because they contain highly instructive information including whether the candidate paid taxes, what they own, what they have borrowed and from whom, whether they have made any charitable donations, and whether they have taken advantage of tax loopholes;

Whereas, disclosure of the President's tax returns could help those investigating Russian influence in the 2016 election understand the President's financial ties to the Russian Federation and Russian citizens, including debts owed and whether he shares any partnership interests, equity interests, joint ventures or licensing agreements with Russia or Russians;

Whereas, the President fired FBI Director James Comey last week, whose FBI was investigating whether the Trump campaign colluded with Russia to influence the 2016 election;

Whereas, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who made the recommendation to fire Director Comey, during sworn testimony ne-

glected to mention his contacts with the Russian ambassador and recused himself from anything involving the Russian investigation;

Whereas, Senate Russia investigators have requested information from the Treasury Department's criminal investigation division, the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, or FinCEN, which handles cases of money laundering, for information related to President Trump, his top officials and campaign aides. FinCEN has been investigating allegations of foreign money-laundering through purchases of U.S. real estate;

Whereas, the President's tax returns would show us whether he has foreign bank accounts and how much profit he receives from his ownership in myriad partnerships;

Whereas, the President hired a law firm to send a letter to Senator Lindsey Graham to fight suggestions he has Russian business ties; this letter left open the question whether Mr. Trump or his firms received Russian income or loans or derived income from Russian-linked partnerships.

Whereas, Donald Trump Jr. said the Trump Organization saw money “pouring in from Russia” and that “Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets.”

Whereas, the White House will not confirm whether the President has filed a 2016 tax return;

Whereas, Congress gave itself the authority to review an individual's tax returns to investigate and reveal possible conflicts of interest of executive branch officials involved in the Teapot Dome scandal.

Whereas, President Donald Trump's executive order on the Review of designations under the Antiquities Act has directed the U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to review national monuments that presidents have designated or expanded since 1996.

Whereas, this review was praised by industry groups who could benefit financially from oil, gas and mining and condemned by environmental organizations concerned this review will scrap or scale back critical federal designation to protect tribal and historic lands.

Whereas, the American people are in the dark to knowing if this review was started to justify selling or leasing public lands to private corporations that could enrich the President or his business partners without reviewing the President's tax returns.

Whereas, it has been reported that federal prosecutors have issued grand jury subpoenas to associates of former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn seeking business records as part of the ongoing probe into Russian involvement in the 2016 election;

Whereas, according to his 2016 candidate filing with the Federal Election Commission, the President has 564 financial positions in companies located in the United States and around the world;

Whereas, against the advice of ethics attorneys and the Office of Government Ethics, the President has refused to divest his ownership stake in his businesses; and can still withdraw funds at any time from the trust of which he is the sole beneficiary;

Whereas, the Emoluments Clause was included in the U.S. Constitution for the express purpose of preventing federal officials from accepting any “present, Emolument, Office, or Title . . . from any King, Prince, or foreign state”;

Whereas, the most signed petition on the White House website calls for the release of the President's tax return information to verify compliance with the Emoluments Clause, with 1 million, 94 thousand signatures as of date of this resolution;

Whereas, the Chairmen of the Ways and Means Committee, Joint Committee on Taxation, and Senate Finance Committee have