

the world stage with news in 2008 that Russia had invaded and occupied regions within its territory. Since that time, Russia has continued to illegally occupy the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Today, Georgia stands on the front lines of Russian aggression, along with Ukraine, and it is imperative that the United States assist Georgia in its effort to stand up against Russia—to address the humanitarian concerns in those areas, to fight against Russian disinformation, and to keep moving Georgia towards its goal of a strong and sovereign democracy.

I am proud that we are here today to continue to support the development of democratic values as well as the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia.

□ 1715

Georgia is a strong partner and friend to the United States, and I am proud that we are showing our support by moving this legislation forward today. I urge my colleagues to support the Georgia Support Act.

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

In closing, again, I want to thank Mr. CONNOLLY for his great work on this. I want to thank the chairman for bringing it to the floor and for his friendship and for the committees in this Congress that have steadfast support for our Georgian allies.

This was mentioned earlier, and it is worth re-noting, Georgia pound for pound has the strongest commitment to NATO and Afghanistan, and they are not even full NATO members. So that tells you the kind of people they are. They are a key strategic and democratic partner in a tumultuous region, and increased U.S. support is a significant step toward countering the global threat posed by Russia every day.

This bill passed in the 115th Congress in a bipartisan margin overwhelmingly, so I urge my colleagues to support this legislation yet again.

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing. This is a good, strong, bipartisan bill to support Georgia as it fends off Russian aggression. I thank my Foreign Affairs Committee colleagues, Mr. CONNOLLY and Mr. KINZINGER, for their work on this measure.

If you look back at history when the Soviet Union existed, Georgia was part of the Soviet Union and really felt the yoke of Russian aggression on their necks. When the Soviet Union broke up and Russia tried to influence all the surrounding countries, Georgia resisted with good cause, because Georgia does not want to be part of a country that makes them subservient.

So it really to me is so important for the United States to support Georgia. It is in a difficult neighborhood, right near Russia. It faces constant threats

every day. As I and my colleagues have said, Russia is now occupying a large part of their territory, and it really should not be left to stand.

Personally, I have said this many times, I think that the West made a mistake back in 2008 when Georgia tried to become part of NATO and was turned down. I believe that both Georgia and Ukraine should be part of NATO. I think that is very important. And I think that is part of the reason why we see such Russian aggression in both Ukraine and Georgia.

So I hope all Members will join us in supporting the passage of this bill. The people of Georgia need to know that the United States Congress stands with them against Putin's aggression.

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 New York (Mr. ENGEL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 598, 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.

CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF WRONGDOING OR TO RELEASE UNITED STATES CITIZEN PAUL WHELAN

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 552) calling on the Government of the Russian Federation to provide evidence of wrongdoing or to release United States citizen Paul Whelan.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 552

Whereas United States citizen Paul Whelan is a resident of Novi, Michigan, and a United States Marine Corps veteran;

Whereas Paul Whelan traveled to Moscow for the wedding of a personal friend on December 22, 2018;

Whereas Russia's Federal Security Service arrested Paul Whelan at the Metropol Hotel in Moscow on December 28, 2018, and charged him with espionage;

Whereas Paul Whelan was imprisoned in Lefortovo Prison and continues to be held there more than eight months after his arrest;

Whereas the Federal Security Service has not provided any evidence of supposed wrongdoing;

Whereas a Moscow court has extended Paul Whelan's pre-trial detention multiple times without publicly presenting justification or evidence of wrongdoing;

Whereas officials from the United States Embassy in Moscow have routinely had their topics of discussion with Paul Whelan severely limited by the Federal Security Service;

Whereas even Paul Whelan's Federal Security Service-appointed lawyer, Vladimir

Zherebenkov, said on May 24, 2019, "[The Federal Security Service] always roll[s] out what they have, but in this case, we've seen nothing concrete against Whelan in five months. That means there is nothing.";

Whereas the United States Ambassador to Russia, Jon Huntsman, responded on April 12, 2019, to a question about the detention of Paul Whelan, "If the Russians have evidence, they should bring it forward. We have seen nothing. If there was a case, I think the evidence would have been brought forward by now."; and

Whereas Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on May 14, 2019, and urged him to ensure United States citizens are not unjustly held abroad: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) urges the Government of the Russian Federation to present credible evidence on the allegations against Paul Whelan or immediately release him from detention;

(2) urges the Government of the Russian Federation to provide unrestricted consular access to Paul Whelan while he remains in detention;

(3) urges the Government of the Russian Federation to ensure Paul Whelan is afforded due process and universally recognized human rights;

(4) encourages the President and the Secretary of State to continue to press the Government of the Russian Federation at every opportunity and urge the Russian Government to guarantee a fair and transparent judicial process without undue delay in accordance with its international legal obligation; and

(5) expresses sympathy to the family of Paul Whelan and expresses hope that their ordeal can soon be brought to an end.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 552.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, as we stand here on the House floor, an American citizen is being wrongfully held in a Russian prison without trial, without any evidence of his supposed crime, denied his rights, suffering, deprived of the medical attention he so desperately needs.

This is how Vladimir Putin is treating Paul Whelan, a U.S. citizen who has been unjustly imprisoned in Russia for almost a year. There has been no evidence offered to show that Mr. Whelan has done anything wrong or anything to deserve this horrific imprisonment with no end in sight.

Paul's family in Michigan wants to see him returned home safely, and Congress must stand with them and demand justice.

H. Res. 552 sends a strong message from Congress. It calls on Russia to either offer up some legitimate evidence

that justifies why they have Mr. Whelan in prison or immediately release him and let him come home to his family in the United States.

We can't accept this current situation to go on any longer with Mr. Whelan languishing in his cell with no understanding of why he is being subjected to this horror.

Sadly, this injustice is what life is like in Putin's Russia. There is no independent judicial process. There are no rights for defendants. There is abuse, mistreatment, corruption. It is critical that we all keep this in mind. That is why it is so important for the United States to stand strong in condemning Putin and upholding our commitment to the rule of law.

I want to thank Ms. STEVENS for her hard work in offering this measure. As Mr. Whelan's congressional representative, she has been tirelessly pushing for Paul's release as has the entire Michigan delegation.

This is a good bipartisan measure I am pleased to support. I urge all Members to do the same.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 552, which calls on the government of the Russian Federation to release Paul Whelan, an American citizen, from their custody or provide compelling evidence of his alleged wrongdoing.

On December 28, 2018, Paul Whelan traveled to Moscow to attend a friend's wedding when he was arrested on allegations of spying. Over the past 10 months, Mr. Whelan has maintained his innocence as he awaits trial, which is expected to start in January of 2020.

Mr. Whelan suffers from a chronically painful medical condition, which requires surgery. Unfortunately, this surgery was scheduled for shortly after his return from Moscow in January of 2019. Over the past 10 months, Mr. Whelan has been living in pain as he has declined to have the surgery in Russia.

This bipartisan, bicameral resolution calls for the Russian Federation to immediately release Paul Whelan from his unwarranted detainment. Further, it calls for due process and unrestricted access to consular services for Mr. Whelan.

I am proud to cosponsor this resolution, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STEVENS), the author of this important resolution.

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. By bringing up my resolution today, H. Res. 552, we are making clear to the Russian Government and President Putin that Congress will not tolerate the indefinite detention of a U.S. citizen without evidence.

For nearly 10 months, my constituent, Paul Whelan of Novi, Michigan, has been held in a Moscow prison without adequate due process. Paul was detained last December and continues to be held in a horrifying prison.

We have repeatedly asked the Russian Government to provide Paul with a fair and transparent judicial process, to no avail. The State Department has been unwavering in their work on Paul's behalf, especially Ambassador Huntsman.

The Russian Government has not provided timely updates about Paul's case. They have not let him select his own attorney. And they have not provided unrestricted consular access. Next week will be Paul's fourth pretrial detention hearing. Enough is enough.

After many months in prison, Paul's health is deteriorating. Paul's family is wondering. Everyone is in the dark, but most especially Paul. It is long past time that we bring Paul home to his family and get him the medical care he needs.

This bipartisan resolution calls on the Russian Government to provide evidence of his wrongdoing or else release Paul immediately. This is our sense of Congress. It must be our sense of Congress, for we stand up for Americans abroad.

I thank my friend, Mr. WALBERG, for joining me and for the Michigan delegation. And I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass this timely resolution.

Mr. KINZINGER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG).

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 552 and call on the Russian Government to provide evidence of wrongdoing or to release United States citizen Paul Whelan.

I thank my colleague Congresswoman HALEY STEVENS for her untiring work on this important issue. Paul Whelan is a veteran. He is a Michigan resident, who has been held in Russian captivity for nearly 10 months without charges. And I repeat, he has been held in Russian captivity for nearly 10 months without charges.

Throughout his entire time, Paul has not been given due process. He has had multiple pretrial hearings in which his detainment has repeatedly been extended without the production of any new or credible evidence. While in captivity he has been in need of serious medical attention, and his health has deteriorated. It is unacceptable for an American citizen to be detained for any length of time without charges and without proper medical care.

Paul's entire family, including his parents who live in my district in Manchester, Michigan, are deeply concerned about his health and safety, as they should be. I met with members of the Whelan family on many occasions, and they have been pillars of strength, but also have endured much agony.

We stand united today saying this is not a partisan issue. It is an American issue.

As Republicans and Democrats we are committed to raising awareness about Paul's case and advocating for his freedom. And we stand to send a strong and powerful message today by passing this resolution. I encourage my colleagues to stand together and pass this resolution and tell Russia it is wrong as to what they are doing.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. KEATING), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, Energy, and the Environment.

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

Nearly 10 months ago on December 28, 2018, the Government of the Russian Federation arrested U.S. citizen Paul Whelan. In those 10 months, the Russian Government has refused to provide any evidence to substantiate the espionage charges against Paul.

Instead, in those 10 months, the Russian Government has subjected Paul to physical and psychological pressure. In those 10 months, the Russian Government has repeatedly prevented Paul from speaking freely with the U.S. embassy or with his family; rights that are afforded to Russian prisoners here in the U.S.

In those 10 months, the Russian Government has denied Paul's request to be examined or treated by a private physician. And I say, Russian Government. I say government, because I believe the Russian people, particularly those that are speaking up and demonstrating for an open and democratic government there, they would be standing with us today.

□ 1730

For 10 months, the Russian Government has refused to respond to the concerns of the Governments of the United States, U.K., Canada, and Ireland.

For 10 months, Paul's continued detention has caused indescribable pain and torment not only for Paul but for his parents, his two brothers, and his sisters.

Ten months of injustice is 10 months too long.

In our committee, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, we look for areas of common ground to work with Russia, but actions like this, depriving a U.S. citizen of the most basic rights, makes that all the more difficult.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Paul, on behalf of his family, I hope all Members will join me in supporting H. Res. 552 and calling on the Government of Russia to allow a fair and transparent judicial process without delay, facilitate Paul's medical care, and allow for unrestricted visits with the U.S. Embassy.

Mr. Speaker, above all, I hope Members will all join with me in calling on the Government of Russia to release Paul and send him back home to his family.

Mr. KINZINGER. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman has no further speakers, I am prepared to close.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers.

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

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I thank Mr. Whelan's family for continuing to fight for his release and for bringing this matter to our attention.

He is a pawn. Russia quite clearly has a terrible track record of taking care of people, whether it is bombing hospitals in Syria intentionally or whether it is just abusing people in other parts of the world—Venezuela—or imprisoning Americans. It is obviously their track record.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my Democratic and Republican colleagues to support this resolution. I thank the chairman for bringing it up, the family for fighting, and everybody who spoke.

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank Representative STEVENS for her hard work on this measure.

Paul Whelan, an American citizen, as my colleagues have mentioned, has endured mistreatment in a Russian prison without the Russian Government offering up any evidence that he has done anything wrong.

H. Res. 552 calls on the Russian Government to either provide some evidence of wrongdoing to explain Mr. Whelan's imprisonment or release Mr. Whelan immediately so he can come home to the United States and receive the proper medical treatment he so urgently needs. He and his family have suffered enough as part of Putin's political games.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their strong support for this resolution. It is a good measure. I urge all Members to support it.

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 New York (Mr. ENGEL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 552.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING THE EXECUTION-STYLE MURDERS OF UNITED STATES CITIZENS YLLI, AGRON, AND MEHMET BYTYQI IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA IN JULY 1999

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the con-

current resolution (H. Con. Res. 32) expressing the sense of Congress regarding the execution-style murders of United States citizens Ylli, Agron, and Mehmet Bytyqi in the Republic of Serbia in July 1999.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 32

Whereas brothers Ylli, Agron, and Mehmet Bytyqi were citizens of the United States, born in Chicago, Illinois, to ethnic Albanian parents from what is today the Republic of Kosovo, and who subsequently lived in Hampton Bays, New York;

Whereas the three Bytyqi brothers responded to the brutality of the conflict associated with Kosovo's separation from the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of which Serbia was a constituent republic by joining the so-called "Atlantic Brigade" of the Kosovo Liberation Army in April 1999;

Whereas a Military-Technical Agreement between the Government of Yugoslavia and the North Atlantic Council came into effect on June 10, 1999, leading to a cessation of hostilities;

Whereas the Bytyqi brothers were arrested on June 23, 1999, by Serbian police within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia when the brothers accidentally crossed what was then an unmarked administrative border while escorting an ethnic Romani family who had been neighbors to safety outside Kosovo;

Whereas the Bytyqi brothers were jailed for 15 days for illegal entry into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in Prokuplje, Serbia, until a judge ordered their release on July 8, 1999;

Whereas instead of being released, the Bytyqi brothers were taken by a special operations unit of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs to a training facility near Petrovo Selo, Serbia, where all three were executed;

Whereas at the time of their murders, Ylli was 25, Agron was 23, and Mehmet was 21 years of age;

Whereas Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic was removed from office on October 5, 2000, following massive demonstrations protesting his refusal to acknowledge and accept election results the month before;

Whereas in the following years, the political leadership of Serbia has worked to strengthen democratic institutions, to develop stronger adherence to the rule of law, and to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia evolved into a State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, which itself dissolved when both republics proclaimed their respective independence in June 2006;

Whereas the United States Embassy in Belgrade, Serbia, was informed on July 17, 2001, that the bodies of Ylli, Agron, and Mehmet Bytyqi were found with their hands bound and gunshot wounds to the back of their heads, buried atop an earlier mass grave of approximately 70 bodies of murdered civilians from Kosovo;

Whereas Serbian authorities subsequently investigated but never charged those individuals who were part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs chain of command related to this crime, including former Minister of Internal Affairs Vlajko Stojiljkovic, Assistant Minister and Chief of the Public Security Department Vlastimir Djordjevic, and special operations training camp commander Goran "Guri" Radosavljevic;

Whereas Vlajko Stojiljkovic died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in April 2002 prior to being transferred to the custody of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia where he had been charged with crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war during the Kosovo conflict;

Whereas Vlastimir Djordjevic was arrested and transferred to the custody of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in June 2007, and sentenced in February 2011 to 27 years imprisonment (later reduced to 18 years) for crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war committed during the Kosovo conflict;

Whereas Goran "Guri" Radosavljevic is reported to reside in Serbia, working as director of a security consulting firm in Belgrade, and is a prominent member of the governing political party;

Whereas the Secretary of State designated Goran Radosavljevic of Serbia under section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2018 as ineligible for entry into the United States due to his involvement in gross violations of human rights;

Whereas two Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs officers, Sretan Popovic and Milos Stojanovic, were charged in 2006 for crimes associated with their involvement in the detention and transport of the Bytyqi brothers from Prokuplje to Petrovo Selo, but acquitted in May 2012 with an appeals court confirming the verdict in March 2013;

Whereas the Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic promised several high ranking United States officials to deliver justice in the cases of the deaths of Ylli, Agron, and Mehmet Bytyqi;

Whereas no individual has ever been found guilty for the murders of Ylli, Agron, and Mehmet Bytyqi or of any other crimes associated with their deaths; and

Whereas no individual is currently facing criminal charges regarding the murder of the Bytyqi brothers despite many promises by Serbian officials to resolve the case: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that—

(1) those individuals responsible for the murders in July 1999 of United States citizens Ylli, Agron, and Mehmet Bytyqi in Serbia should be brought to justice;

(2) it is reprehensible that no individual has ever been found guilty for executing the Bytyqi brothers, or of any other crimes associated with their deaths, and that no individual is even facing charges for these horrible crimes;

(3) the Government of Serbia and its relevant ministries and offices, including the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor's Office, should make it a priority to investigate and prosecute as soon as possible those current or former officials believed to be responsible for their deaths, directly or indirectly;

(4) the United States should devote sufficient resources fully to assist and properly to monitor efforts by the Government of Serbia and its relevant ministries and offices to investigate and prosecute as soon as possible those individuals believed to be responsible for their deaths, directly or indirectly; and

(5) progress in resolving this case, or the lack thereof, should remain a significant factor determining the further development of relations between the United States and the Republic of Serbia.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from