

In addition, it gives much needed support to the Belarusian media and to the IT sector.

By passing this bill today followed by, hopefully, swift approval in the Senate and signature into law by the President, we not only reiterate, but significantly expand our support and solidarity with the great people of Belarus. We need to pass this bill and I respectfully call on our Senate colleagues to pass it as well.

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, again, there being no further speakers, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, for over 3 months, we have watched, being inspired, as the Belarusian people have peacefully demanded that their voices be heard and that new, free, and fair elections be held.

As we have seen, women dressed in white and carrying flowers have formed miles-long solidarity chains to protest police violence. Employees at state-run companies have gone on strike, despite the threat of losing their jobs. University students have risked expulsion to join the protests. State TV anchors have walked off the set, no longer able to support the regime's propaganda campaign. Thousands of courageous pensioners have marched in opposition to the Belarusian dictator.

Today, led by the very talented and visionary Congressman CHRIS SMITH, we must stand and send a strong message to these brave men and women that they are not alone and that the American people stand with them.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, again, let me thank Mr. SMITH and other colleagues who have worked so hard on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote, and 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. ESPAILLAT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 8438, 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.

#### UKRAINE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM SUPPORT ACT

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5408) to oppose violations of religious freedom in Ukraine by Russia and armed groups commanded by Russia, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5408

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

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act".

#### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Russia invaded the Crimea region of Ukraine in February 2014, continues to occupy and control that region, and has exercised control over part of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine since April 2014 through non-state armed groups and illegal entities it has established, instigated, commanded, and supported, including with military and intelligence personnel on the ground from Russia.

(2) International humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions, to which Russia is a signatory, requires Russia to respect and protect the religious freedom of the inhabitants of the territory it occupies or controls, including through organized non-state armed groups and illegal entities it commands and supports, and holds Russia responsible for violations of religious freedom in this territory.

(3) According to the Department of State's International Religious Freedom Reports, and other reporting, violations of religious freedom in the Crimea region of Ukraine since Russia invaded and occupied the territory have included abduction, detention and imprisonment, torture, forced psychiatric hospitalizations, fines, restrictions on missionary activities, confiscations of property, including churches and meeting halls, expulsions and obstructions to reentry, denying registration of religious groups, vandalism, fines, and banning peaceful religious groups, and targeted groups have included Muslim Crimean Tatars, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Protestant Christians, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

(4) According to the Department of State's International Religious Freedom Reports, violations of religious freedom in the part of the Donbas region of Ukraine controlled by armed groups commanded by Russia have included detention and imprisonment, torture, confiscation of property, including churches and meeting halls, physical assaults and threats of violence, vandalism, fines, restrictions on missionary activities, religious services, ceremonies, gatherings, and literature, and banning of peaceful religious groups, and targeted groups have included the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Protestant Christians, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

(5) The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, as amended by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act, requires the President to—

(A) designate a foreign country as a country of particular concern for religious freedom when its government has engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom in that country over the previous 12 months;

(B) take one or more of the actions described in paragraphs (9) through (15) of section 405(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6445(a)), or commensurate actions in substitution, not later than 90 days, or 180 days in case of a delay under paragraph (3), after the date of the designation of a country as a country of particular concern for religious freedom; and

(C) designate a foreign country on a "Special Watch List" when its government has engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom in that country over the previous 12 months.

(6) On December 18, 2019, the Secretary of State re-designated Russia for the "Special Watch List".

(7) The National Security Strategy of the United States issued in 2017, 2015, 2006, 2002, 2000, 1999, 1998, and 1997, committed the United States to promoting international religious freedom to advance the security, economic, and other national interests of the United States.

#### SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to consider any alien who, while serving as an official of the Government of Russia, was responsible for or directly carried out particularly severe violations of religious freedom in the sovereign territory of Ukraine that Russia illegally occupies or controls, including through non-state armed groups and illegal entities it commands and supports, to have committed particularly severe violations of religious freedom for purposes of applying section 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to any such alien.

#### SEC. 4. DESIGNATION OF RUSSIA AS A COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

For purposes of making a determination of whether to designate Russia as a country of particular concern for religious freedom under section 402 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6442), the President shall consider any particularly severe violation of religious freedom in the territory of Ukraine that Russia occupies or controls, including controls through non-state armed groups and illegal entities it commands and supports, during the period of time that is the basis for the determination and designation, to be a particularly severe violation of religious freedom that the Government of Russia has engaged in or tolerated.

#### SEC. 5. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled "Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation" for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 5408.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to my friend from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) for bringing forward this bill that shines a light on the egregious violations of human rights and religious freedom at the hands of Russian-led forces in Ukraine's sovereign territory.

We have been saying it for years, but it always bears repeating: Crimea is Ukraine; the Donbas is Ukraine. Russia must be held accountable for the brutal violations of human rights and religious freedoms taking place under their attempted annexation of these areas.

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 provides a range of consequences for governments that persecute people on religious grounds. From public condemnation to trade sanctions, the administration has tools to push back on this sort of abuse.

This bill calls for Russia to be held accountable under the law for the violations of religious freedoms we are seeing in Ukraine.

The bill represents a smart approach to address a specific problem emanating from Russia. We should move it forward along with other efforts to push back on Putin's aggression.

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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
Washington, DC, November 11, 2020.

Hon. JERROLD NADLER,  
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,  
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN NADLER: I am writing to you concerning H.R. 5408, Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act. I appreciate your willingness to work cooperatively on this legislation.

I acknowledge that provisions of the bill fall within the jurisdiction of the House Committee on the Judiciary under House Rule X, and that your Committee will forgo action on H.R. 5408 to expedite floor consideration. I further acknowledge that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any future jurisdictional claim over the matters contained in the bill that fall within your jurisdiction. I will also support the appointment of Committee on the Judiciary conferees during any House-Senate conference convened on this legislation.

Lastly, I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the bill. Thank you again for your cooperation regarding the legislation. I look forward to continuing to work with you as the measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

ELIOT L. ENGEL,  
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,  
Washington, DC, November 17, 2020.

Hon. ELIOT ENGEL,  
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,  
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ENGEL: This is to advise you that the Committee on the Judiciary has now had an opportunity to review the provisions in R.R. 5408, the "Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act," that fall within our Rule X jurisdiction. I appreciate your consulting with us on those provisions. The Judiciary Committee has no objection to your including them in the bill for consideration on the House floor, and to expedite that consideration is willing to forgo action on R.R. 5408, with the understanding that we do not thereby waive any future jurisdictional claim over those provisions or their subject matters.

I the event a House-Senate conference on this or similar legislation is convened, the

Judiciary Committee reserves the right to request an appropriate number of conferees to address any concerns with these or similar provisions that may arise in conference.

Please place this letter into the Congressional Record during consideration of the measure on the House floor. Thank you for the cooperative spirit in which you have worked regarding this matter and others between our committees.

Sincerely,

JERROLD NADLER,  
Chairman.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of a bill which I am grateful to have introduced with my colleague, EMANUEL CLEAVER of Missouri, the Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act.

Russia's war in Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea have dragged on for nearly 7 years. The human toll is staggering. The fighting has killed as many as 10,000 soldiers as well as 3,000 innocent civilians.

Another casualty of Russian aggression in Ukraine has been the attack on religious freedom.

Russian occupation authorities in Crimea continue to persecute and intimidate the minority Christian, Muslim, and other religious groups, like the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Putin's puppets in Crimea have subjected them to kidnappings, torture, forced psychiatric examinations, and imprisonment. Recently, eight Muslim Crimean Tatars were sentenced to between 13 and 19 years in a Russian prison on the entirely baseless charge of terrorism.

Minority religious groups in the area of eastern Ukraine, controlled by pro-Putin proxies, have also been forced to flee in order to escape the oppressive conditions.

The religious persecution in Ukraine being committed at the hands of Putin authorities is self-destructive and must be stopped.

Throughout our history, the United States has worked tirelessly to advance religious freedom and protect religious minorities around the globe. This bill follows that strong tradition by accomplishing two things.

First, it brings international attention to the grave violations of religious freedom in the territory of Ukraine—where, again, people need to know, 13,000 people have been killed—that Putin illegally occupies or controls through illegal armed groups.

Second, it helps ensure that Vladimir Putin and his cronies are held accountable.

We cannot allow these grave violations to continue.

In closing, it is vital that the United States continues to be a leader in advancing international religious freedom around the world.

This bill not only brings international attention to the religious persecution being committed in the territory of Ukraine that Putin illegally occupies or controls through illegal

armed groups it commands, but also ensures Vladimir Putin and his thugs are held accountable.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Helsinki Commission, along with Congressman and Chairman ALCEE HASTINGS, I would also like to recognize the Helsinki Commission for long championing this issue. In particular, I would like to recognize Nathaniel Hurd of the Helsinki Commission staff for all of his work to ensure that we hold Putin to account for these egregious violations of religious liberty in Ukraine.

Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, Russia and Putin are responsible for illegal and destabilizing actions all around the world. We need a comprehensive strategy to put a stop to their aggression and impose tough consequences. It is going to take a lot of different tools, and this bill will give us one of them.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to vote "yes," and 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. ESPAILLAT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5408, 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.

□ 1545

#### AMENDING DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S REWARDS PROGRAM

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4802) to amend the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 to authorize rewards under the Department of State's rewards program relating to information regarding individuals or entities engaged in activities in contravention of United States or United Nations sanctions, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4802

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

#### SECTION 1. AMENDMENT TO DEPARTMENT OF STATE REWARDS PROGRAM.

Subsection (b) of section 36 of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2708) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (11), by striking "or" after the semicolon at the end;

(2) in paragraph (12), by striking the period at the end and inserting "; or"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(13) the identification or location of an individual or entity that—

"(A) knowingly, directly or indirectly, imports, exports, or reexports to, into, or from any country any goods, services, or technology controlled for export by the United