

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.

In 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

States because of the use of such goods, services, or technology in contravention of a United States or United Nations sanction; or

“(B) knowingly, directly or indirectly, provides training, advice, or other services or assistance, or engages in significant financial transactions, relating to any such goods, services, or technology in contravention of such sanction.”.

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 to include any extraneous material on H.R. 4802.

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 rise in support of this measure and want to thank the authors, Mr. WILSON and Mr. DEUTCH, for their hard work and leadership.

Since its establishment in 1984, the State Department’s Rewards for Justice Program has awarded more than \$150 million to those who help the United States Government bring terrorists and criminals to justice.

Over the years, we have expanded the scope of this effort, offering rewards related to a wider range of crimes and ensnaring more people who mean Americans harm. This legislation would add more and more tools to the toolbox.

This bill was inspired by a former Syrian diplomat and defector named Bassam Barabandi. As an employee of the Syrian Embassy here in Washington, D.C., he worked with antiregime activists to provide passports to critics of Bashar al-Assad, and for years after his defection, Barabandi supplied the United States Government with information on Syrian oligarchs close to the Assad regime. This includes information on Samer Foz, who was ultimately the target of American sanctions.

We want to incentivize more people like Mr. Barabandi to come forward with information that will ultimately enhance compliance with the U.S. and international sanctions, increase confidence in the rule of law, and bring to justice criminals and rogue regimes seeking to circumvent U.S. law.

This bill expands the Rewards for Justice Program by authorizing rewards for individuals who provide information on those who evade the United States’ and the United Nations’ sanctions.

This is a smart bill that builds on a successful program. I am pleased to support it, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of another bill I introduced with my friend and subcommittee colleague Chairman TED DEUTCH from Florida, H.R. 4802.

This bill will expand the Rewards for Justice Program at the State Department to authorize rewards for individuals coming forward with information on sanctions evasion practices.

The bill was inspired by Bassam Barabandi, a courageous Syrian patriot and former diplomat at the Syrian Embassy here in Washington who worked with the antiregime activists to provide passports to critics of the criminal Assad regime, promoting the best interests of the people of Syria.

For years after his defection, Barabandi lobbied the U.S. Government and provided detailed information on Syrian oligarchs close to Assad and their sanctions evasion practices, including information on Samer Foz, who was ultimately sanctioned by the Treasury last year. He has courageously authored “The Blacklist,” which fully documents those who repress the talented people of Syria.

Barabandi’s case highlighted the need to create a clearer mechanism to incentivize individuals to come forward with this kind of vital information. H.R. 4802 will do just that. It will ultimately enhance compliance with U.S. and international sanctions, increase confidence in the rule of law, and bring criminals and rogue regimes seeking to circumvent U.S. law to justice.

For sanctions to be successful, we must have the best information on their ability to hit their intended targets. We must pass many sanctions bills in this body, but it is far easier to pass a sanctions bill than it is to enforce it.

Expanding the Rewards for Justice Program will allow us to acquire information on illegal activity that supports the regimes of Iran, North Korea, and other rogue states from the grassroots. Better information equals better enforcement on behalf of the persecuted persons of those countries. Better enforcement equals better results.

We should pass this bill and help make sure that the sanctions policies are as effective as possible.

Mr. Speaker, there being no further speakers, again, I thank Bassam Barabandi for his courage as a patriot for the people of Syria in the face of the evil Assad regime. He is currently awaiting a decision from USCIS regarding his request for asylum in the United States, and I hope and pray that the Department of Homeland Security rewards this hero of democracy for the people of Syria for his bravery.

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

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, let me again thank Mr. WILSON and Mr. DEUTCH for bringing this bill forward. 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. 4802.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

TROPICAL FOREST AND CORAL REEF CONSERVATION REAUTORIZATION ACT OF 2020

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7954) to reauthorize the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act of 1998.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7954

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 “Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2020”.

SEC. 2. REAUTORIZATION.

Section 806(d) of the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 2431d(d)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

“(9) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2021.
“(10) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2022.
“(11) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2023.
“(12) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2024.
“(13) \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2025.”.

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 to include any extraneous material on H.R. 7954.

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 pleased to support this measure brought forward by my friend from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), to provide continued funding for the Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act, what we call the TFCA, for fiscal years 2021 through 2025.

The purpose of the TFCA is to offer developing countries the option to direct a portion of their debt payments to local forest and coral reef conservation activities instead of making those payments to the U.S. Government.

Since the TFCA was enacted in 1998, it made real differences in efforts to