

(2) condemns the activities of Russian national Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his affiliated entities that pose a threat to the democratic values, democratic institutions, and security of the United States and its allies and partners;

(3) urges countries and entities engaging with Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his affiliated entities in business or advisory capacities to cease these engagements;

(4) supports the additional designations made by the Department of the Treasury on September 23, 2020, and by the European Union on October 15, 2020, and calls on the United States Government and the European Union to continue to target the ability of Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his affiliated entities to conduct operations globally and to interfere in the democratic processes of the United States and its allies and partners; and

(5) calls for close coordination between the United States Government and the governments of United States allies and partners to ensure that sanctions regimes against Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his affiliated entities are enforced and coordinated.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

□ 1615

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 996.

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, I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for joining me to introduce this measure condemning one of the principal architects of Russian aggression around the world. Yevgeniy Prigozhin is one of Vladimir Putin's key cronies, with a long history of working against American interests on behalf of the Russian Government. His Internet Research Agency disinformation campaigns have worked to sow division and undermine democratic elections right here at home and also among our allies.

Yevgeniy Prigozhin is also the leader of the Wagner Group, a Russian mercenary organization, that has spread deadly conflict across the globe, engaging in violent and subversive operations in Ukraine, Syria, Libya, and sub-Saharan Africa. He has directed human rights violations in Syria, undermined U.S. operations in the Middle East, and played a key role in invading and destabilizing Ukraine.

We must hold Prigozhin accountable and take action to stop his nefarious activities. This resolution condemns Prigozhin and his Kremlin partners, expresses strong support for the U.S. and European Union sanctions on him, which were announced this fall, and

calls for the imposition of additional targeted sanctions.

As Putin and his henchmen, like Prigozhin, continue their attacks on democracies across the world, Congress must send a strong, unified message that we will not tolerate their destabilizing actions and that we are ready to hold them accountable. Passing this resolution does just that.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this measure, urge all my colleagues to do the same, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, Yevgeniy Prigozhin is one of the most destructive operators within Vladimir Putin's corrupt regime. The destabilizing activity that he has directed and financed can be felt throughout the world.

Mr. Prigozhin bankrolls the Russian Wagner Group, whose mercenaries have fanned the deadly flames of conflicts, propped up dictatorships, committed gruesome human rights abuses, all at the Kremlin's direction.

In Ukraine, the Wagner Group supported Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the pro-Russian separatists in the country's east. They have provided military support to the murderous Bashar al-Assad regime, and they even led an assault against U.S. troops in Syria in 2018.

In Libya, Russia has jeopardized efforts to bring peace to the country by supporting Haftar, as well as by sending advanced Russian aircraft and thousands of mercenaries from the Wagner Group into the country.

The Wagner Group is also actively meddling in the domestic politics of numerous African countries. There, they hope to expand Russian influence on the continent while also exploiting Africa's natural resources for their own profit.

The United States is not immune from the threat posed by the Wagner Group. Mr. Prigozhin financed the Internet Research Agency, a Russian troll farm that has attempted to interfere in the United States elections and sow discord among the American people.

Let me be clear. Mr. Prigozhin is a direct threat to the United States. We cannot allow this behavior to go unchecked. The United States has responded forcefully, sanctioning him, the Wagner Group, the Internet Research Agency, and many more of Mr. Prigozhin's front companies and affiliates.

In October, I was glad to see the EU join the United States in sanctioning Mr. Prigozhin as well.

However, we must keep up the pressure. That is why I support the resolution before us today. It condemns Mr. Prigozhin's corrupt activity, and it sends a direct message to the Kremlin that the United States Congress will continue to hold Mr. Prigozhin accountable for his efforts to further the Putin regime's malign agenda. It also

exposes the truth about the Kremlin's ridiculous claim that Mr. Prigozhin and the Wagner Group operate independently.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this resolution's passage, and 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, Yevgeniy Prigozhin is an enemy of democracy and an adversary of the U.S. and our allies.

From sowing discord and division through disinformation campaigns to stoking violent conflicts around the world, Prigozhin is a dangerous Putin crony.

This bipartisan measure condemns Prigozhin's nefarious activities and demonstrates Congress' support for continued cooperation between the United States and our European allies to hold him and his Kremlin partners accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting its passage, 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. ENGEL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 996, 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.

CONDEMNING POLITICALLY MOTIVATED IMPRISONMENT AND CALLING FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 958) condemning the practice of politically motivated imprisonment and calling for the immediate release of political prisoners in the Russian Federation and urging action by the United States Government to impose sanctions with respect to persons responsible for that form of human rights abuse, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 958

Whereas the right to liberty and security of a person and the protection from arbitrary imprisonment are among the principal human rights guaranteed by Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 23 of the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights;

Whereas the Russian Federation, as member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe, is bound by international commitments with regard to human rights and the rule of law;

Whereas, on October 3, 2012, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 1900 (2012) which defined anyone whose “detention has been imposed in violation of one of the fundamental guarantees set out in the European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocols” and “is the result of proceedings which were clearly unfair and . . . appears to be connected with political motives of the authorities” as a political prisoner;

Whereas based on the criteria of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Resolution 1900 (2012), the Memorial Human Rights Center, a Russian nongovernmental organization, estimates that there are currently more than 300 political prisoners in the Russian Federation, a six-fold increase since 2015;

Whereas the Memorial Human Rights Center list of Russian political prisoners includes journalists, civil society activists, human rights advocates, participants of peaceful organizations, and Ukrainian citizens from illegally annexed Crimea;

Whereas the Russian Federation’s longest-detained political prisoner, Alexey Pichugin, has been incarcerated since June 19, 2003, in violation of two rulings by the European Court of Human Rights and the opinion by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention;

Whereas investigative journalist and former editor of the independent newspaper *Noviye Kolyosa*, Igor Rudnikov was held in pretrial detention from November 1, 2017, until June 17, 2019, on alleged extortion charges, which were later dropped by the court;

Whereas Igor Rudnikov’s detention and charges were criticized by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and Reporters without Borders, calling them “clearly trumped-up” and “an act of political revenge”, respectively;

Whereas opposition activist Konstantin Kotov was sentenced to 1.5 years imprisonment on April 20, 2020, for participating in peaceful demonstrations, in a ruling Amnesty International has described as “a profound injustice”;

Whereas Anastasia Shevchenko, an activist in the Open Russia movement, has been held under house arrest since January 23, 2019, on the charge of belonging to an “undesirable” organization and has been designated by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience;

Whereas Yuri Dmitriev, a leader of Memorial Society’s branch in the Republic of Karelia region of the Russian Federation who has worked to document mass burial sites from Stalin-era executions, has been held in detention since June 23, 2018, on charges of child pornography that Human Rights Watch has described as “bogus” and part of an ongoing “smear campaign”, and was sentenced to 13 years in prison on September 29, 2020;

Whereas Dennis Christensen, a Jehovah’s Witness and a Danish citizen, was sentenced to 6 years’ imprisonment on February 6, 2019, in a decision condemned by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom as part of the broader pattern of the Russian Government “engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom”;

Whereas, on February 10, 2020, 7 activists from Russia’s Penza Oblast were sentenced to terms of 6 to 18 years for alleged membership in a terrorist group following a detention marked by torture, ill-treatment to extract confessions, and periods held incommunicado;

Whereas Human Rights Watch described the case as an example of the Russian authorities “abusing counterterrorism laws to

silence critics and deny fundamental human rights”;

Whereas, on August 6, 2020, a court in Moscow sentenced seven activists to between four years suspended and seven years in prison for participating in an alleged extremist organization, “The New Greatness”, after an investigation marked by the use of provocateurs, torture, ill-treatment, and forced confessions, in what the Memorial Human Rights Center and the Moscow Helsinki Group have described as a “politically motivated case” aimed at “suppressing the freedom of expression”;

Whereas, on June 18, 2019, the Department of State affirmed that “the United States is deeply concerned by the growing number of individuals . . . identified by credible human rights organizations as political and religious prisoners held by the Government of the Russian Federation” and called on the Government of the Russian Federation “to release all those identified as political or religious prisoners immediately and cease its use of the legal system to suppress dissent and peaceful religious practice”;

Whereas, on January 28, 2020, 43 parliamentarians from 16 European countries introduced a Resolution in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to appoint a rapporteur “to examine the growing crisis with politically motivated imprisonments in the Russian Federation”;

Whereas, on June 29, 2020, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe’s Legal Affairs Committee appointed Icelandic lawmaker Thorhildur Sunna Aevarsdottir to serve as the rapporteur on political prisoners in Russia: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns the practice of politically motivated imprisonment in the Russian Federation that violates the country’s international obligations on human rights and the rule of law and expresses its solidarity with all those unjustly imprisoned in the Russian Federation;

(2) calls on the Government of the Russian Federation to immediately release individuals designated by the Memorial Human Rights Center as political prisoners under the criteria of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Resolution 1900 (2012), including Alexey Pichugin, Konstantin Kotov, Anastasia Shevchenko, Yuri Dmitriev, and Dennis Christensen;

(3) urges the United States Government, in all its interactions with the Government of the Russian Federation, to raise individual cases of Russian political prisoners and advocate for their release; and

(4) calls on the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury to use their authority under the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012 (title IV of Public Law 112–208), the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (subtitle F of title XII of Public Law 114–328), and other applicable United States statutory authorities to designate officials of the Government of the Russian Federation who are responsible for human rights abuses in the form of politically motivated imprisonment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) 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 may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and in-

clude extraneous material on H. Res. 958.

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, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 958, which condemns politically motivated imprisonment by the Russian Government and calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners in Russia.

According to the Memorial Human Rights Center, there are more than 300 political prisoners in Russia today. These prisoners are human rights advocates, journalists, Ukrainians from Crimea, and American citizens like Paul Whelan and Trevor Reed.

It has been common practice for the Kremlin to target opposition figures as an act of political revenge. Russian authorities regularly abuse counterterrorism laws and Interpol’s Red Notice system to silence critics and deny them fundamental human rights.

We must not only condemn these abuses, but we must increase the economic and political cost for Russian officials who engage in unjust imprisonments and political retaliation.

This resolution calls on the Departments of State and Treasury to use the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012 and the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act to pursue Russia officials who are responsible for or complicit in politically motivated imprisonment. I remember in 2012, we all worked together to put this very important law on the books.

No one deserves to be used as a political pawn by Vladimir Putin. It is critical that Congress strongly condemns and takes action against Russia’s wrongful imprisonments.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have said many times that Vladimir Putin is not our friend. Under his command, the Russian Government has invaded Georgia, started a war with Ukraine, assisted Bashar al-Assad’s murderous campaign in Syria, and meddled in our elections.

But he is not just a threat to international security. Vladimir Putin is an enemy of democracy. We know this by his brutal actions that he has taken against his own people.

Over the last 20 years, under Putin’s control, Moscow has chipped away at the few political freedoms once enjoyed in Russia. Media outlets have been shut down; political parties have been attacked; opposition figures have been assassinated; and activists have been thrown in jail.

This is not the future that so many in Russia had hoped for when the Iron Curtain was lifted. Now, hundreds of

political prisoners occupy cells in Russian jails. They aren't there because they are bad people. They aren't there because they are real criminals. They are there because Vladimir Putin is afraid of them. He doesn't want them to challenge his authority. He doesn't want them to have a voice.

Today, we have a chance to provide a voice for the people Putin has tried to silence. This resolution condemns the practice of jailing individuals for political purposes and calls for the release of all political prisoners in Russia. It also urges the administration to impose sanctions on Russian officials who are complicit in human rights abuses.

Once again, I want to thank my good friend, Chairman ENGEL, for introducing this bill. He has been a great champion for victims of tyranny his entire career. I am grateful for all of his hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, and 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.

Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank my friend, the ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. MCCAUL. It has been a pleasure working closely with him on so many pieces of legislation. I know that the work will continue, and we will continue to keep in touch and make sure that we go the right way in trying to stop these human rights abuses all over the world.

The number of political prisoners in Russia has increased by sixfold since the year 2015. This is what we have come to expect from Vladimir Putin's Russia: Blatant disregard for human rights and rule of law.

The United States must stand firm against Russia's practice of politically motivated imprisonment and impose sanctions against anyone responsible for these human rights abuses. It is really important that the U.S. Congress stand up and do this. It is really important that we do it, regardless of political party.

It is really important to send Putin a message that we are not going to sit idly by and allow him to do his bad work. He has interfered with our elections. He has tried again. He succeeded some of the time; he didn't succeed in other times. But we want him to stay away, and we want the people of Russia to have a government where they can feel free, not one where they feel the boot on their neck all the time.

We need to stand firm against Russia's practice of politically motivated imprisonment and impose sanctions against anyone, even Putin, responsible for these human rights abuses.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to support H. Res. 958, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Tom Lantos Commission for Human Rights and a former member of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I rise in strong support of this bipar-

tisan resolution, H. Res. 958, "Condemning the practice of politically motivated imprisonment and calling for the immediate release of political prisoners in the Russian Federation and urging action by the United States Government to impose sanctions with respect to persons responsible for that form of human rights abuse."

For years, Russia's human rights record has continued to deteriorate, with the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly consistently restricted, both by law and in practice.

Most often, the people who are courageous enough to attempt exercising their most basic human rights, including freedom of the press and freedom of speech, face reprisals, ranging from harassment to police ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest, heavy fines, and, in some cases, criminal prosecution and imprisonment.

Among the Kremlin's political prisoners are journalists, opposition activists, peaceful protesters, adherents of "prohibited" religious groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as members of "undesirable" political organizations like Open Russia, an organization that has done a lot to support victims of human rights violations in Russia.

In fact, several human rights defenders and NGOs have been targeted within Russia under the laws on "foreign agents" and "undesirable organizations".

Mr. Speaker, this resolution seeks to do three things:

Condemn the practice of politically motivated imprisonment by the Russian government, particularly under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin;

Call for the immediate release of those designated as political prisoners in the Russian Federation; and

Urge the current Administration to impose sanctions on those responsible for these human rights abuses using the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act, the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, or other authorities.

By passing this resolution today, we are sending a bipartisan message to the Russian Government that we see the violations of human rights that are occurring, and we will not stand idly by while people who are fighting for progress are tortured and ill-treated.

Furthermore, counter-terrorism provisions are widely used to target dissent across the country and in Crimea, and torture tactics remain pervasive, as does impunity for its perpetrators.

Last year, due to the growing disconnect between the authorities and general public, there was an increase in street protests, ranging from political to economic to social and even to environmental issues.

In July and August of 2019, more than 2,600 people were arrested during protests in Moscow, which had remained peaceful until the police and National Guard officers forcibly intervened.

According to Amnesty International, there were numerous reports of arbitrary arrest, use of excessive, as well as indiscriminate force and ill-treatment of protesters by the officers, but none of these cases were known to have been investigated.

As a fierce defender of human rights and the world's oldest democracy, the United States has a duty to the world to speak up in the face of injustice and when violations of

international commitments, including the incarceration of political prisoners, occur.

It is our responsibility as Members of Congress to pass this resolution today in order to urge the Russian Federation to release its political prisoners and respect the basic human rights of its citizens.

I urge all Members on both sides of the aisle to join me in voting for H. Res. 958, "Condemning the practice of politically motivated imprisonment and calling for the immediate release of political prisoners in the Russian Federation and urging action by the United States Government to impose sanctions with respect to persons responsible for that form of human rights abuse."

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. 958, 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.

EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER DETENTION OF AUSTIN TICE

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 17) expressing concern over the detention of Austin Tice, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 17

Whereas Austin Tice is a 39-year-old veteran, having served in the Marine Corps as an infantry officer, a Georgetown law student, and a graduate of Georgetown University, from Houston, Texas;

Whereas Austin is an Eagle Scout, National Merit Scholarship finalist, and eldest of seven children;

Whereas Austin was a contributing freelance journalist to McClatchy Newspapers, the Washington Post and other media outlets, and a recipient of the 2012 George Polk Award for War Reporting;

Whereas, in May 2012, Austin crossed the Turkey-Syria border to report on the intensifying conflict in Syria;

Whereas, on August 11, 2012, Austin celebrated his 31st birthday in Darayaa, Syria;

Whereas, on August 14, 2012, Austin departed for Beirut, Lebanon, was detained at a checkpoint near Damascus, Syria, and contact with family, friends, and colleagues ceased;

Whereas, in late September 2012, a video clip appeared on YouTube showing Austin blindfolded and being prodded up a hillside by masked militants;

Whereas in the years since Austin's disappearance, no group has claimed responsibility for his capture;

Whereas the Syrian government has never acknowledged detaining Austin and has denied the same to Austin's parents;

Whereas officials of the United States believe Austin is alive and being held in Syria and that the Syrian government should assist in locating and returning Austin to his family;

Whereas Austin Tice's parents, Marc and Debra Tice, have been diligent in their efforts to find their son, repeatedly meeting