

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

with senior officials of the United States Government, the Syrian government, the United Nations, and many others;

Whereas the Tices have traveled to the Middle East multiple times, most recently in December 2018, seeking Austin's safe release, and Debra Tice spent four months living in Damascus, Syria, for the same purpose;

Whereas the Tices have partnered with Reporters Without Borders to launch campaigns with nearly 270 newspapers and media organizations, highlighting Austin's case in their publications and on their websites;

Whereas institutions and organizations, including Georgetown University, Georgetown Law Center, the National Press Club, the Committee to Protect Journalists, McClatchy, and the Washington Post, have collaborated to raise and maintain public awareness of Austin's detention;

Whereas, on November 18, 2018, then-United States Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, Robert O'Brien, said that the United States Government believes Austin Tice is alive;

Whereas at a press briefing on March 19, 2020, President Trump expressed concern for Austin and called on the Syrian government to release him;

Whereas Majd Kamalmaz is a 62-year old Syrian-American psychotherapist, father of four, and resident of Texas;

Whereas Majd is a well-known mental-health professional with experience in disaster relief and post-traumatic care;

Whereas in February 2017 Majd traveled to Syria to visit an elderly family member and aid civilians traumatized by the Syrian civil war;

Whereas on February 16, 2017 Majd's family received word that he had been detained at a checkpoint on his way to Ghouta, outside of Damascus, Syria;

Whereas since February 2017 Majd's family has not heard from him;

Whereas the Syrian government has never publicly acknowledged detaining Majd;

Whereas Majd's family and the Syrian-American community have advocated tirelessly for his immediate release;

Whereas in July 2020, United States Ambassador and Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Roger Carstens publicly stated, "The U.S. Government is in frequent contact with the Kamalmaz family to provide support and information" and that "Bringing home Majd, along with all U.S. citizens held hostage or wrongfully detained abroad, has the attention of the highest levels in the U.S. government.;" and

Whereas, as described in the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 (22 U.S.C. 8791 note), Congress calls on the regime of Bashar al-Assad to release all political prisoners forcibly held within its prison system and to allow access to the same facilities for investigations by appropriate international human rights organizations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its ongoing concern regarding the capture of Austin Tice in August 2012 and Majd Kamalmaz in February 2017, and their continuing detention;

(2) encourages the Department of State, the intelligence community, and the inter-agency Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell to jointly continue investigations and to pursue all possible information regarding Austin and Majd's detention;

(3) encourages the Department of State and the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs to engage the Syrian government to facilitate Austin and Majd's safe release and return;

(4) encourages the Department of State to work with foreign governments known to

have diplomatic influence with the Syrian government; and

(5) requests that the Department of State and the intelligence community continue to work with and inform Congress and the families of Austin Tice and Majd Kamalmaz to the extent possible regarding efforts to secure their safe release and return from detention in Syria.

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.

□ 1630

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. 17.

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, in August 2012, American journalist and Marine veteran Austin Tice was abducted while reporting on the ongoing conflict in Syria. Eight years later, Tice continues to be held captive, his family and friends unaware of his condition and whereabouts.

Five years later, another American citizen, Texas resident and psychotherapist Majd Kamalmaz, was detained without cause in northern Syria while visiting an elderly family member and aiding civilians traumatized by the civil war. Kamalmaz has been imprisoned by the Assad regime in Syria ever since without access to the outside world.

The Tice and Kamalmaz families have worked tirelessly to secure the immediate release of their loved ones. Still, Austin and Majd continue to suffer inside Syria. H. Res. 17 encourages the Department of State, the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, and other U.S. Government entities to work jointly to facilitate Tice and Kamalmaz' safe release and return.

This legislation does not legitimize the Assad regime. I would never do that. For years and years, I have called them out on all of their human rights violations. It is a brutal regime, murdering men, women, and children in the hundreds of thousands.

So, this doesn't legitimize the Assad regime, nor does it legitimize the deplorable tactic of hostage-taking. In fact, it does the opposite.

Passing this resolution is a recognition that our country stands with Austin Tice and Majd Kamalmaz and those like them who have been victims of the Assad regime.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman AL GREEN for introducing this important legislation. I want to also recognize, once again, our committee's rank-

ing member, MICHAEL McCaul, for his leadership on this issue. I am proud to support this measure, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

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

PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 1, 2020.

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

DEAR CHAIRMAN ENGEL: I write concerning H. Res. 17, a resolution that expresses concern regarding the 2012 capture and detention in Syria of Austin Tice—a U.S. Citizen, journalist, and veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps; and encourages the Executive Branch to take further actions aimed at bringing about Mr. Tice's immediate and safe return. Certain provisions in the resolution fall within the jurisdiction of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI), as set forth in Rule X of the House of Representatives for the 116th Congress.

In the interest of permitting your committee to proceed expeditiously to floor consideration of this important bill, I am willing to waive this committee's right to sequential referral. By waiving consideration of H. Res. 17, HPSCI does not waive any future jurisdictional claim over the subjects contained in the bill which fall within HPSCI's Rule X jurisdiction. I also ask that our exchange of letters be included in the Congressional Record during consideration of the measure on the House floor.

I continue to be grateful for our committees' longstanding cooperation, both regarding this matter and others. And I continue to strongly support this and other efforts to secure Mr. Tice's immediate and safe return to the United States.

Sincerely,

ADAM B. SCHIFF,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, November 23, 2020.

Hon. ADAM B. SCHIFF,
House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SCHIFF: I am writing to you concerning H. Res. 17, expressing concern over the detention of Austin Tice, and for other purposes. I appreciate your willingness to work cooperatively on this legislation.

I acknowledge that provisions of the bill fall within the jurisdiction of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence under House Rule X, and that your Committee will forgo action on H. Res. 17 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 House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence 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.

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

Mr. Speaker, 3,034 days. That is how long Austin Tice, a former U.S. marine and freelance journalist, has been held captive in Syria. It is far past time that he be returned home to his family in Houston.

Austin has dedicated his life to his country and to serving others. After serving 10 years in the United States Marine Corps, Austin decided to enroll in law school. He wanted to continue helping those who needed help the most. While he was attending Georgetown Law, just down the street from here, he couldn't stop thinking about what he had seen and the people he had met on his tours in the Middle East.

So, before beginning his final year of law school, Austin decided to return to the Middle East. Only this time, it would be to report on the atrocities happening in Syria.

The Assad regime's brutal attacks on its own people were horrifying to hear about. They were even using chemical weapons on their own people.

Unfortunately, there weren't enough reporters on the ground in Syria to verify their crimes or tell the world about the suffering of the Syrian people. So, Austin did what he has always done. He stepped up to the plate and filled a much-needed void in a very dangerous place in order to help those who could not help themselves.

But then, on August 14, 2012, as he was preparing to return home, Austin was captured at a checkpoint in Damascus. Now, more than 8 years later, he is still being held in Syria. Austin is now entering his ninth year of captivity. In just a matter of months, he will turn 40 years old.

Mr. Speaker, that is nine birthdays that he will have missed back home, nine Thanksgiving dinners without his family. Later this month, it will be nine Christmases that his family has had to endure without him.

I have met Austin's parents many times, and it is very tragic and emotional. Each time, I see the pain in their eyes as they describe their tireless efforts to bring him home. That is a pain that only parents can truly understand.

It is up to us here in this Chamber to show the Tice family that we will not tolerate this for another year. Austin deserves to have his life back, and his family deserves to have him back.

Mr. Speaker, with this resolution, we once again urge the administration to continue working to bring Austin home. The State Department should use all the tools at its disposal to ensure his safe and immediate return.

Congress will not rest, and I will not rest, and my colleague, Congressman GREEN, will not rest until Austin and the other American hostages detained abroad have been safely reunited with their families.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear friend and colleague, Congressman AL GREEN, for his introduction of this bill. The Tice family are his constituents. He has stood by them day in and day out

over the past years. He and I, working together with other Members in this Chamber, will bring Austin home, finally.

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN), the author of this important resolution.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairperson of the committee, Mr. ENGEL, and the ranking member of the committee, Mr. McCaul, for supporting this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I am on a mission of mercy. I have been on a mission of mercy for 8 years because it has been more than 8 years now that Austin Tice has been detained in Syria. Eight years it has been. That is also how long this family has been grieving.

I, too, know the Tice family. I have met with them multiple times and talked with them multiple times today, in fact.

I am grateful to many people who have made it possible for this resolution to come to the floor, so I think it important that I immediately thank them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Speaker PELOSI because I talked to her personally about the Tice situation. I thank Majority Leader HOYER; I had a conversation with him. I want to thank Congressman HILL for his steadfast resolve to not only help Austin but to help Dr. Kamalmaz, his constituent.

Again, Chairman ENGEL has been stellar, superb, and supreme in allowing this to come to the floor. Mr. McCaul has been a great partner. He has demonstrated the kind of bipartisanship that the public expects from us on issues such as these. Of course, I thank the 41 cosponsors of this legislation.

Finally, I thank the Tice family for having the courage, the strength, the intestinal fortitude to stay with it. Never one time have they given up on the belief that their son, their eldest son, can be returned home to them.

Who was Austin Tice? Well, he loved his country. He loved his country. He went to the Marines. He was a Marine captain, a veteran Marine captain. He is such. He played by the rules. At 16 years of age, he was in college. He received his undergraduate degree from Georgetown University School of Foreign Services. He played by the rules.

He went on to get an opportunity to help others. He believed in helping other people. This is why he went to Syria.

He went to those places where few of us would dare to go, and he went because he wanted the world to know what is happening in these distant places. And while he was there, he went missing. A month after he was not heard from, a 43-second video emerged with the title "Austin Tice is Alive."

We know that he is alive. We want him back alive. We are asking all who can be of service to do so.

The President has weighed in. He has sent the Tice family a message indicating that he is going to work hard to bring Austin home.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution today is another step in the direction of bringing Austin Tice home. He is a great American. He has played by the rules. He is the kind of son that any one of us would want to have and the kind of son that Debra and Marc Tice are blessed to have. But their blessing should not end with having a son; their blessing should end with having their son with them.

Again, I thank all who have played a role in getting this resolution to the floor.

Mr. McCaul. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL), whose constituent is Majd Kamalmaz.

Mr. HILL of Arkansas. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, Mr. McCaul, for the time and take a moment to salute and provide tribute to Congressman ELIOT ENGEL for his extraordinary service as chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. His wise counsel will be missed in this House.

Mr. Speaker, let me thank, too, my good friend on the House Financial Services Committee, a colleague and collaborator on many good things, my friend, Congressman AL GREEN from Houston, for his service and leadership on this important matter.

Austin Bennett Tice, an international correspondent in Syria and a Marine veteran who we have heard about today, has been missing since 2012. And my constituent, Dr. Majd Kamalmaz, a noted child therapist who was in Syria attending the funeral of a relative, has been missing since 2017.

These families deserve certainty and recovery of their loved ones, Mr. Speaker. Both Mr. Tice and Dr. Kamalmaz have called on American and international leaders to bring home their loved ones.

It is our duty to do whatever we can to ensure that these and all other Americans held abroad are returned safely and as soon as possible.

I am grateful for the leadership of President Trump and now National Security Advisor and former Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs Robert O'Brien for their steadfast determination to bring American citizens home.

Our work will not be complete until all Americans are reunited with their families and their loved ones.

We ask for God's blessings on this House floor for those held in captivity and for their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I vote in favor, and I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this important legislation. Let's pull together in this House to bring home our American hostages.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN), the author of this important resolution.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on an issue such as this, no one should

be left behind who has played a role in helping with this cause. We have mentioned that it is bipartisan, but it is also bicameral.

Senators CRUZ and CORNYN have played a role in helping us to get this message to the world. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank them, the 41 Members who signed on, and all others who signed on to a letter that we sent to the President.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to say these words of gratitude and thanks.

Mr. McCaul. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS).

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, the story of Austin Tice's disappearance and presumed imprisonment is tragic and frustrating.

I met with Austin's loving parents, Marc and Debra, last year in my office, where they told me about the heart-breaking details of his abduction in 2012 at a checkpoint near Damascus on his way to Beirut.

Hearing about Austin, I knew I had to do what I could to try and help, just like these other Members who have spoken earlier. So, with the Tices sitting in my office, I called upon the help of my Syrian-American friend and constituent, Paul Jallo. I put Mr. Jallo on speakerphone as we brainstormed with Marc and Debra as to how we could navigate the treachery of this situation on the ground in Syria.

□ 1645

Paul vowed to enlist the assistance of his family and friends living in Damascus to try and garner critical information as to Austin's current location and the identity of his captors. I cannot thank and commend Paul enough for his continued efforts to help the Tices in this ongoing endeavor to determine the status of Austin's well-being.

We are frustrated, Mr. Speaker, that we still can't confirm with any degree of certainty Austin's captors, though we believe that Syrian President al-Assad's government has within its power and influence to see to Austin's release, despite denials of detaining him.

This is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. Austin was not a combatant, not a threat to al-Assad's regime, and yet he had to endure the terrible fate of imprisonment without acknowledgment. Austin, who proudly served our country as an officer in the United States Marine Corps, deserves better, and his parents, Marc and Deborah Tice, who have tirelessly fought for answers, deserve better.

Today we are going to send a message to the Syrian Government that the United States of America has not forgotten about Austin Tice and that we will not give up on him.

Today we are here, and we are going to stand up and fight for someone who put himself in the face of danger to make sure that we always knew the

truth of what went on in Syria and continues to go on.

Please join me in supporting this resolution and sending a powerful message.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman ELIOT ENGEL, Representatives GREEN, BILIRAKIS, FRENCH HILL, and so many of my other colleagues on both sides of the aisle for supporting this important measure.

Austin Tice dedicated his life to service. From his time in the Marine Corps to his reporting on the brutal civil war and humanitarian crisis in Syria, he lived to improve the lives of others.

Think about it: Austin went to Syria to document some of the most brutal crimes against humanity so the world would see it, to expose what Assad has done to his own people to the world, and the price he had to pay for that is to be put into a Syrian prison.

It is far past time that we repay Austin for his service, not only to our country, but to the world to expose these war crimes, to expose what was happening over there, and the courage he had to go over there to photograph. By bringing him home to his friends and his family, that is the way we pay him back. We have to use every tool at our disposal within the United States Government to bring him home to his family.

Again, I want to thank all those involved, and in particular, Congressman GREEN, who represents the family, whom we have talked to extensively.

This is one of those measures that is really an emotional one from the heart because we are talking about the life of a patriot who is trapped in a very bad prison in Syria overseas and cannot get out, and it has been 8 years—8 years, for God's sake, Mr. Speaker. It is time to bring Austin home.

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

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

Today's resolution calls for the immediate release of American citizens Austin Tice and Majd Kamalmaz, who have been unjustly held in Syria. It is time the Assad regime heeds our calls and works with the U.S. Government to secure their return home.

I have been a critic of the Assad regime in all the years I have been in Congress, which is 32 years. The Assad regime has been brutal with its own people, has murdered so many of its own people, and I know that Mr. McCaul will remember not so long ago, on the Foreign Affairs Committee, someone smuggled in a bunch of photographs that were taken in Syrian prisons. They were horrific and reminded one of the 1930s and 1940s with the genocide in Europe.

It is time the Assad regime heeds our calls and works with the U.S. Govern-

ment to secure the prisoners' release home. The immediate release of American citizens Austin Tice and Majd Kamalmaz is very important to us.

As you have heard, they have been unjustly held in Syria, and we are not going to let it go. We are not going to stop until they are released. It is the right thing to do, and it is the only thing that we can do.

I again thank Congressman GREEN for introducing this bipartisan resolution. I thank Mr. McCaul for working with us on this.

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a co-sponsor, a mother, and a senior member of the House Judiciary Committee, I rise in strong support of this bipartisan resolution, H. Res. 17, "Expressing Concern Over the Detention of Austin Tice, and for other purposes."

In May of 2012, the summer before Austin's final year at Georgetown Law School, he chose to go to Syria as a freelance journalist to cover the country's civil war.

Austin felt compelled to tell the story of the horrific and ongoing conflict there as well as its impact on the people of Syria.

On August 14, 2012, Austin departed from the town of Daraya, a suburb of Damascus, to travel to Lebanon, but shortly after leaving, he was detained at a Syrian check point.

Five weeks later, a 43-second video emerged online with the title, "Austin Tice is Alive", showing Austin being held by a group of unidentified men with assault rifles, but there was no other message that accompanied the video.

Even still today, no group has claimed responsibility for his capture nor have there been any demands in exchange for his release.

Austin Tice was not a combatant.

He was simply a young man doing his job, yet he has, without a doubt, had to suffer unimaginable ordeals and face the dangers of conflict, hostile governments, and rapacious bandits while reporting on the Syrian civil war.

My heart goes out to Austin's parents, Debra and Marc Tice, as well as the rest of his family and loved ones for the pain and uncertainty that they have had to endure for over eight years.

Eight years.

Mr. Speaker, that is over 2,920 days that Austin's mother has had to go without hearing his voice, holding his hand, or seeing his face.

Austin was born and raised in my hometown, Houston, Texas.

He is the oldest of seven siblings, a former U.S. Marine, and his lifelong dream was to become an international correspondent for NPR.

It is no secret that the risk of arrest, abduction, or death make journalism extremely dangerous and difficult in Syria.

In fact, according to Reporters Without Borders, Syria is ranked 174th out of 180 countries in the 2020 World Press Freedom Index.

In 2020 alone, Reporters Without Borders has documented the killings of 40 journalists and 3 media assistants as well as the imprisonment of 260 journalists, 122 citizen journalists, and 12 media assistants in Syria.

Last year, I joined 122 Members of the House of Representatives and over 50 Senators in a bipartisan letter to the President, demanding that his Administration act to facilitate Austin's release from Syria.

With that letter and this resolution, I am once again calling on the Department of State, the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, and other U.S. government entities to engage with Syria for the purpose of securing Austin's safe release.

From serving in Afghanistan and Iraq as a Marine to working as a journalist dedicated to delivering vital news to the American people, Austin Tice spent his life giving back and showing up for this country.

Now we need to do the same for him and bring him home.

I am honored to be a leader on this resolution, and I wish to thank my colleague and good friend from Texas, Representative AL GREEN, for his leadership on this resolution.

I urge all Members on both sides of the aisle to join me in voting for H. Res. 17, "Expressing Concern over the Detention of Austin Tice, and for other purposes."

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. 17, 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.

The title of the resolution was amended so as to read: "A resolution expressing concern over the detention of Austin Tice and Majd Kamalmaz, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

**CALLING FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE OF TREVOR REED**

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1115) calling for the immediate release of Trevor Reed, a United States citizen who was unjustly sentenced to 9 years in a Russian prison, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1115

Whereas United States citizen Trevor Reed is a resident of Granbury, Texas, and a United States Marine Corps veteran;

Whereas Trevor Reed traveled to Moscow to visit his girlfriend on May 16, 2019;

Whereas Moscow's Police Service detained Trevor Reed on August 16, 2019;

Whereas Trevor Reed was accused of grabbing the arm of the police officer driving the vehicle and elbowing another officer while en route to the police station, causing the vehicle to swerve and therefore endangering the lives of the police officers;

Whereas the United States Embassy in Moscow has filed numerous diplomatic complaints with the Russian Foreign Ministry regarding Trevor Reed being denied consular access, communications, medical treatment, family visitations, and other violations of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations;

Whereas Trevor Reed's defense team presented video evidence from traffic camera footage to the courts that disproves the police officers' statements of supposed endangerment and wrongdoing;

Whereas Trevor Reed's defense team was denied access to additional video evidence from the police vehicle and police station that had the potential to prove his innocence;

Whereas the police officers claimed emotional and physical damages, but did not sustain any visible injury, or claim any time missed from work;

Whereas the Constitutional Supreme Court of the Russian Federation and the Second Court of Cassation of General Jurisdiction concurred that Russian procedural law was violated in the way that Trevor Reed's bail was revoked;

Whereas the United States Embassy in Moscow has filed complaints with the Russian Foreign Ministry regarding denial of communications with Trevor Reed;

Whereas during the trial, the defense counsel presented 59 minutes of traffic camera video that showed the police car—

(1) did not change direction or leave its lane;

(2) did not swerve; and

(3) did not stop or slow down;

Whereas, on July 30, 2020, Golovinsky District Court Judge Arnout read a verdict that dismissed all defense evidence, witnesses, and government experts and included information from the investigator's case files that were not discussed or read into the court files;

Whereas the judge sentenced Trevor Reed to 9 years in prison camp and was ordered to pay 100,000 rubles to each police officer for moral and physical injuries;

Whereas Trevor Reed had already been detained in Russia for 1 year at the time of the judge's verdict; and

Whereas, the United States Ambassador to Russia, John Sullivan, upon Trevor's sentencing, stated that the prosecution's case and the evidence presented against Mr. Reed were "so preposterous that they provoked laughter in the courtroom", the conviction and sentence were "ridiculous", and "justice was not even considered": Now, therefore, be it—

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses support for Trevor Reed, Paul Whelan, and all prisoners unjustly imprisoned in the Russian Federation;

(2) condemns the practice of politically motivated imprisonment in the Russian Federation, which violates the commitments of the Russian Federation to international obligations with respect to human rights and the rule of law;

(3) urges the United States Government, in all its interactions with the Government of the Russian Federation, to raise the case of Trevor Reed and to press for his release;

(4) calls on the Government of the Russian Federation to immediately release Trevor Reed and all other prisoners arrested for political motivations;

(5) urges the Government of the Russian Federation to provide unrestricted consular access to Trevor Reed while he remains in detention as required under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations;

(6) calls on the Government of the Russian Federation—

(A) to provide Trevor Reed any necessary medical treatment and personal protective equipment;

(B) to notify the United States Embassy in Moscow of any medical problems or complaints that arise during his detention; and

(C) to provide the United States Embassy in Moscow with full access to all of Trevor Reed's medical records;

(7) urges the Government of the Russian Federation to respect Trevor Reed's universally recognized human rights; and

(8) expresses support to the family of Trevor Reed and commitment to bringing Trevor Reed home.

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 have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 1115.

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. 1115, calling for the immediate release of Trevor Reed.

I would like to thank my colleague, Mr. CONAWAY, for introducing this bipartisan resolution.

In 2019, U.S. citizen and former Marine Trevor Reed traveled to Russia. While on his trip, Moscow's Police Service detained and held Reed for over a year. On July 30, 2020, Reed was convicted of trumped-up assault charges and sentenced to 9 years in a Russian prison camp.

During his sham of a trial, Mr. Speaker, traffic camera footage disproved the charges, and even the Russian judge laughed at the prosecution's absurd attempts to provide evidence. Despite this, Trevor Reed's defense team was denied access to additional video footage from the police vehicle and station that could have provided further proof of his innocence.

While it is no surprise that Putin and his cronies didn't conduct a fair trial, it is appalling that Trevor is being held without medical treatment during a global pandemic and being denied consular access and communication with his family.

H. Res. 1115 not only calls for the immediate release of Trevor, but expresses support for all unjustly detained prisoners in Russia and urges U.S. officials to raise Trevor's case during all interactions with the Russian Government. The resolution also demands that Russia provide the regular consular access and proper medical care afforded to Trevor through the Vienna Convention.

Again, I thank Mr. CONAWAY for his commitment to bringing Trevor, a fellow Texan, home.

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, Trevor Reed is a 29-year-old Texas resident and former United States Marine who served his country with distinction. He was an Eagle Scout and a Texas Rangers fan, a dedicated son and brother.