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CONDEMNING THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN'S STATE-SPONSORED PERSECUTION OF ITS BAHA'I MINORITY AND ITS CONTINUED VIOLATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

MARKUP

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

H. Res. 220

SEPTEMBER 15, 2016

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CONDEMNING THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN'S STATE-SPONSORED PERSECUTION OF ITS BAHA'I MINORITY AND ITS CONTINUED VIOLATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2016

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m., in room 2255, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. The subcommittee will come to order. Pursuant to notice, we meet today to mark up House Resolution 220, Condemning the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights. As your offices were notified earlier this week, we are going to consider it en bloc with a minor amendment that we had circulated updating some of the figures in the resolution. And so without objection, the following items provided to your offices earlier this week will be considered en bloc and are considered as read: House Resolution 220, Condemning the Government of Iran's State-Sponsored Persecution of Its Baha'i Minority, and Ros-Lehtinen amendment 57.

[The information referred to follows:]

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 220

Condemning the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 23, 2015

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself, Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. DOLD, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. CHABOT, and Mr. ENGEL) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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RESOLUTION

Condemning the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

Whereas, in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, and 2013, Congress declared that it deplored the religious persecution by the Government of Iran of the Baha'i community and would hold the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all Iranian nationals, including members of the Baha'i Faith;

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2014 Report stated, "The Baha'i community, the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iran, long has been subject to particularly severe religious free-

dom violations. The government views Baha'is, who number at least 300,000, as 'heretics' and consequently they face repression on the grounds of apostasy.";

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2014 Report stated that "[s]ince 1979, authorities have killed or executed more than 200 Baha'i leaders, and more than 10,000 have been dismissed from government and university jobs" and "[m]ore than 700 Baha'is have been arbitrarily arrested since 2005";

Whereas the Department of State 2013 International Religious Freedom Report stated that the Government of Iran "prohibits Baha'is from teaching and practicing their faith and subjects them to many forms of discrimination not faced by members of other religious groups" and "since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, formally denies Baha'i students access to higher education";

Whereas the Department of State 2013 International Religious Freedom Report stated, "The government requires Baha'is to register with the police," and "The government raided Baha'i homes and businesses and confiscated large amounts of private and commercial property, as well as religious materials.";

Whereas the Department of State 2013 International Religious Freedom Report stated, "Baha'is are regularly denied compensation for injury or criminal victimization and the right to inherit property.";

Whereas, on August 27, 2014, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a report (A/69/356), which stated, "The human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran remains of concern. Numerous issues

flagged by the General Assembly, the United Nations human rights mechanisms and the Secretary-General persist, and in some cases appear to have worsened, some recent overtures made by the Administration and the parliament notwithstanding.";

Whereas, on December 18, 2014, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/69/190), which "[e]xpresse[d] deep concern" over "[c]ontinued discrimination, persecution and human rights violations against persons belonging to unrecognized religious minorities, particularly members of the Baha'i [F]aith . . . and the effective criminalization of membership in the Baha'i [F]aith," and called upon the Government of Iran to "emancipate the Baha'i community . . . and to accord all Baha'is, including those imprisoned because of their beliefs, the due process of law and the rights that they are constitutionally guaranteed";

Whereas, since May of 2008, the Government of Iran has imprisoned the seven members of the former ad hoc leadership group of the Baha'i community in Iran, known as the Yaran-i-Iran, or "friends of Iran"—Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, and Mr. Vahid Tizfahm—and these individuals are serving 20-year prison terms, the longest sentences given to any current prisoner of conscience in Iran, on charges including "spying for Israel, insulting religious sanctities, propaganda against the regime and spreading corruption on earth";

Whereas, beginning in May 2011, officials of the Government of Iran in 4 cities conducted sweeping raids on the homes of dozens of individuals associated with the Baha'i Insti-

tute for Higher Education (BIHE) and arrested and detained several educators associated with BIHE, and 12 BIHE educators are now serving 4- or 5-year prison terms;

Whereas scores of Baha'i cemeteries have been attacked, and, in April 2014, Revolutionary Guards began excavating a Baha'i cemetery in Shiraz, which is the site of 950 graves;

Whereas the Baha'i International Community reported that there has been a recent surge in anti-Baha'i hate propaganda in Iranian state-sponsored media outlets, noting that, in 2010 and 2011, approximately 22 anti-Baha'i articles were appearing every month, and, in 2014, the number of anti-Baha'i articles rose to approximately 401 per month—18 times the previous level;

Whereas there are currently 100 Baha'is in prison in Iran;

Whereas the Government of Iran is party to the International Covenants on Human Rights and is in violation of its obligations under the Covenants; and

Whereas the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–195) authorizes the President and the Secretary of State to impose sanctions on individuals ''responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses against citizens of Iran or their family members on or after June 12, 2009'': Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its

continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights;

(2) calls on the Government of Iran to immediately release the 7 imprisoned Baha'i leaders, the 12 imprisoned Baha'i educators, and all other prisoners held solely on account of their religion;

(3) calls on the President and Secretary of State, in cooperation with responsible nations, to immediately condemn the Government of Iran's continued violation of human rights and demand the immediate release of prisoners held solely on account of their religion; and

(4) urges the President and Secretary of State to utilize available authorities, including the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010, to impose sanctions on officials of the Government of Iran and other individuals directly responsible for serious human rights abuses, including abuses against the Baha'i community of Iran.

○

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 220

OFFERED BY MS. ROS-LEHTINEN OF FLORIDA

In the 10th clause of the preamble, strike "12" and insert "8".

In the 13th clause of the preamble, strike "100" and insert "60".

Page 5, line 5, strike "12" and insert "8".

☒

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements and materials for the record. I now recognize myself to speak.

First, I want to thank my good friend, my Florida colleague, Ranking Member Deutch, our full committee Ranking Member Eliot Engel for joining me in introducing this resolution and I would also like to thank Chairman Royce and his staff for working closely with us to make this markup happen.

With all the focus being on Iran's nuclear program and the JCPOA, many people often lose sight of the regime's horrendous human rights record, and while we must continue to shine a light on the dangers of Iran's nuclear program, its ballistic missile program, its support for terror, and its continued provocations against the United States and our ally, the democratic Jewish State of Israel, we cannot turn a blind eye to the suffering of the Iranian people under the Supreme Leader, and the so-called moderate Rouhani, and we must not turn a blind eye to the suffering of the ethnic and religious minorities in Iran, like the Baha'i.

With over 300,000 adherents, the Baha'i minority in Iran is the largest non-Muslim religious minority in that country, but because of their faith, they are forced to endure terrible persecution and repression by the Iranian regime. Baha'i school children are constantly harassed and pressured to recant their beliefs, and adult Baha'i adherents are barred from public sector employment, and private sector employers are pressured to not hire them.

The Iranian regime will not recognize Baha'i marriages, and worse, Baha'i cemeteries and holy places are constantly attacked and destroyed. Members of this religious minority are routinely subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention, their homes are frequently raided and their property is being confiscated. Hundreds of Baha'i have been killed by the Iranian regime since the 1979 revo-

lution. Scores have been executed and thousands more have been imprisoned.

Currently, there are 60 Baha'is in prison, including the seven leaders of the Baha'i community in Iran who are serving 20-year sentences, the longest of any prisoner of conscience in Iran.

House Resolution 220 shines a light on this dire situation, and puts the Iranian regime on notice that the world is watching its violations of religious freedom and human rights, and will not stand idly by in the face of this brutal repression.

This resolution calls on the Iranian regime to release the imprisoned Baha'is and all other religious prisoners. It urges the President and Secretary of State to condemn the Iranian regime's continued violation of human rights, and this resolution urges the President and the Secretary of State to impose sanctions on individual Iranian officials directly responsible for human rights violations in Iran.

The administration has the tools available to it, and it has the evidence of wrongdoing by Iranian regime officials. It is time to use those tools that Congress has given it to hold these officials accountable for their human rights abuses. I urge my colleagues to support this measure. I now turn to my good friend and Florida colleague, the ranking member, for his remarks.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chairman, thanks for holding today's markup. I would like to thank the other members who introduced this legislation along with us, Representatives Engel, Chabot, Schakowsky, and Dold. The resolution before us condemns the government of Iran's systemic, state-sponsored persecution of the Baha'i faith.

The treatment that Baha'i receive in their own country is deplorable. It deserves to be condemned by all responsible nations. Now, the discussion in this committee over Iran's human rights abuses is unfortunately nothing new. This is a regime that brutally represses political opposition, it violates due process, executes minors, detains foreign nationals, and essentially violates the most basic rights of it citizens daily by using technology to restrict the communication and access to information.

The Baha'i community has been severely targeted. Baha'i have been banned from practicing their faith. Baha'i have been denied jobs. They have had their homes raided and property confiscated, and they have had their leaders arrested and imprisoned. Since 1979, more than 200 Baha'i leaders have been executed.

Currently, seven Baha'i leaders are serving up the longest sentences handed down to any prisoners of conscience in Iran, having been convicted of crimes such as, and I quote, "spying for Israel, insulting religious sanctities, propaganda against the regime, and spreading corruption on earth."

Madam Chairman, 15 times before, this Congress has condemned the persecution of the Baha'i. We now have new channels for engagement with Iran, and when U.S. officials meet with their Iranian counterparts, human rights must be on the agenda every time. I have been proud to partner with the chairman in past efforts to impose new sanctions against Iranian officials for human rights abuses. Those sanctions are still on the books. They did not

disappear when the nuclear deal was signed, and the administration has stated it is committed to enforcing them.

The resolution before us today puts this Congress on record once again. We will stand up for the rights of religious minorities, and we will never be silent when it comes to calling out those who commit human rights abuses. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution in support of the Baha'i community, and I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Well said. Thank you, Mr. Deutch. I would now like to recognize other members for their statements. Mr. Chabot of Ohio.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for your leadership on this very important issue condemning the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of the Baha'i minority in that country.

Iran's persecution of its Baha'i minority is sponsored by the state, and it is in violation of international law, the International Covenants on Human Rights. Since the revolution in 1979, at least 200 Baha'i religious leaders have been executed by the state; 10,000 have been dismissed from their jobs; 700 have been arrested for no reason at all since 2005. The Baha'i are required to register with the police, their homes are raided, their businesses and property are confiscated, their children are denied the right to an education, their cemeteries are desecrated. It goes on and on.

Why does all this happen? Because the Islamic Republic of Iran sees the Baha'i as heretics who deserve to be persecuted. It is absolutely outrageous. The Islamic Republic of Iran is in violation of its international legal commitments, the International Covenants on Human Rights. The resolution before us this morning condemns Iran's persecution of the Baha'i and calls upon the Iranian Government to release seven imprisoned Baha'i leaders and 12 educators.

This resolution calls on the President and Secretary of State to work with our allies to condemn Iran's treatment of its Baha'i minority and its deplorable human rights record. Finally, it urges the President and Secretary of State to utilize the comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 to sanction Iran for its mistreatment of its Baha'i community and its other violations of human rights under international law.

Once again, I thank you, Madam Chair, and the other members of the committee who support this measure, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Chabot.

Mr. Cicilline of Rhode Island.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Madam Chairman and Ranking Member Deutch, for holding this markup today. I commend you both for introducing this important resolution condemning the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights, and I am proud to have joined as a cosponsor.

I am pleased that this subcommittee has come together, as it so often does, in the spirit of bipartisanship, to pass legislation that deals with important issues. As we are all well aware, the Government of Iran continues to engage in widespread human rights abuses.

On March 2016, reported the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, found that Iran is in violation of its international human rights obligations by continuing practices that criminalize the exercise of fundamental human rights.

Iran's ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority communities face persistent discrimination and persecution. The Government of Iran systematically discriminates against religious and ethnic minorities, including Baha'is, Christians, Jews, Sufis, Zoroastrians, Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Turkmen, and Osiris, and Muslims deemed as divergent from state ideology, among others. Baha'is are the country's largest non-Muslim religious minority.

Since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, systemic persecution of Baha'is has been a matter of government policy. The Iranian Government's attacks on Baha'is have been on the increase, and since 2005, more than 860 Baha'is have been arrested, including all seven members of a former leadership group serving the Baha'i community of Iran.

Other types of persecution inflicted on the Baha'i community in Iran include economic and educational discrimination, strict limits on the right to assemble and worship, and the dissemination of anti-Baha'i propaganda in the government-led news media. Attacks on Baha'i to Baha'i-owned properties go unprosecuted and unpunished, creating a sense of impunity for attackers.

Aside from anti-Baha'i persecution, Iran's other human rights violations run the gamut. The Guardian Counsel of Iran disqualified thousands of candidates from running in the 2016 parliamentary elections, and the 88-member assembly of experts and continues to tightly control all election activities.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, as of December 2015, Iran held at least 50 journalists, bloggers, and social media activists in detention. Iran carries out the second highest number of executions of any country in the world after China, and according to the Human Rights Watch, more than 800 individuals were reportedly executed in 2015, most for drug-related charges.

Widespread immunity remains in place for police and security forces that commit human rights violations. The penal code criminalizes all sexual relations outside of marriage, and individuals can be put to death for consensual same-sex conduct. Women remain significantly underrepresented in politics and government, and are denied equal rights in divorce, child custody, and inheritance.

The Government of Iran provides no protection to women and children forced into sex trafficking, and officials have been complicit in sex trafficking frequently.

We must continue to expose blatant violations of human rights around the world. I therefore strongly support this important resolution which condemns Iran for its systemic, state-sponsored human rights abuses and urge all of my colleagues to do the same. And with that, I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Cicilline. We will turn now to Mr. Grayson of Florida.

Mr. GRAYSON. I have no statement on this. Thank you very much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. Hearing no further requests for recognition, the Chair now moves that the subcommittee favorably report the items considered en bloc to the full committee. All those in favor, say aye.

All opposed, no.

In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, the motion is approved, and House Resolution 220 is reported favorably to the full committee as amended.

I want to thank all of the members and the staff for the assistance and cooperation that went into today's markup. Thank you so much. And with that, the subcommittee stands adjourned. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

[Whereupon, at 9:47 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Record

SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman

September 12, 2016

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held in Room 2255 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Thursday, September 15, 2016

TIME: 9:30 a.m.

MARKUP OF: H. Res. 220, Condemning the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *The Middle East and North Africa* MARKUP

Day *Thursday* **Date** *September 15, 2016* **Room** *2255*

Starting Time *9:35 am* **Ending Time** *9:47 am*

Recesses [ ] (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [ ]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [ ]

Electronically Recorded (taped) [ ]
Stenographic Record [ ]

BILLS FOR MARKUP: *(Include bill number(s) and title(s) of legislation.)*

H. Res. 220

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Reps. Chabot, Zeldin, Yoho
Ranking Member Deutch, Reps. Ciciline, Grayson

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE MARKUP: *(Attach copies of legislation and amendments.)*

H. Res. 220, as amended, was ordered favorably reported to the Full Committee

RECORDED VOTES TAKEN (FOR MARKUP): *(Attach final vote tally sheet listing each member.)*

Subject	Yeas	Nays	Present	Not Voting

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *9:35 am*

Antonella Donadas
Subcommittee Staff Associate

9/15/16 Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee Markup Summary

The Chair called the markup to order and obtained unanimous consent to consider the following measure and amendment (previously provided to Members of the Subcommittee) en bloc:

1) H. Res. 220 (Ros-Lehtinen), Condemning the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

    a. Ros-Lehtinen 57, an amendment to H. Res. 220.

By voice vote, the items considered en bloc were agreed to and H. Res. 220, as amended, was ordered favorably reported to the Full Committee.

The Subcommittee adjourned.

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