

104TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 95

Expressing the sense of the Congress concerning freedom of the press in
Russia.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 4, 1995

Mr. LANTOS (for himself and Mr. GILMAN) submitted the following concurrent
resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress concerning freedom
of the press in Russia.

Whereas the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union has brought new and unique opportunities for democratic political change and market-oriented economic reform in Russia;

Whereas the commitment to the spirit of these democratic reforms and to the full implementation of these reforms has been tentative and inconclusive thus far;

Whereas one of the fundamental tenets of democracy and one of the most important means of assuring the continuation of democratic government is an independent and free press, which can exist only in an environment that is free of state control of the media and the absence of any form

of state censorship or official coercion of any kind and is protected by the rule of law;

Whereas freedom of the press and freedom of expression in Russia today is being threatened by elements within the Russian Government, particularly since the dramatic reporting of the war in Chechnya;

Whereas there have been reports in the Russian press, including the official press, of efforts to establish a government committee that could impose censorship on the press in Russia;

Whereas there have been persistent reports regarding the possible issuance of government decrees that would undermine or compromise the independence of privately owned television stations and other media enterprises which have provided factual reporting on the war in Chechnya or which have editorialized against Russian military action in Chechnya;

Whereas there has been recent evidence of government involvement in actions against independent television outlets and those who use or finance such businesses, including a widely reported search by unidentified government security forces of the office of the Most Group, which owns NTV and other media outlets, and, furthermore, allegations of the involvement of presidential security forces in that search have never been denied;

Whereas the latest effort to intimidate the press involves the launching of a criminal investigation by the Prosecutor General against the largest private television network, NTV, threatening action against the producers of a political satire program in which puppets are used to caricature prominent Russian official and personalities;

Whereas the suspicious murder on March 1 of popular television journalist Vladimir Listeyev, executive director of Russian Public Television, remains unsolved;

Whereas the assassination of investigative journalist Dmitri Kholodov of Moskovsky Komsomolets, who was killed by a package bomb while he was in the final stages of an investigation into corruption in the military, also remains unsolved after nearly one year;

Whereas journalists in Russia, including both foreign and domestic journalists, have faced harassment, risked arrest, had equipment confiscated, been beaten and even murdered as a result of their efforts to report objectively regarding events in Chechnya; and

Whereas a free and independent information media is essential to the conduct of free, open, fair, and democratic elections which are scheduled later this year in Russia: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*

2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of the Congress that—

3 (1) a free press is vital to the development and
4 consolidation of democracy in Russia;

5 (2) freedom of the press and freedom of expres-
6 sion must be safeguarded against those forces which
7 would suppress or censor these fundamental demo-
8 cratic rights;

9 (3) to protect freedom of the press and freedom
10 of expression, the right and opportunity of independ-
11 ent entrepreneurs to establish, operate, and main-

1 tain independent media outlets must be protected
2 and safeguarded;

3 (4) Russian Government leaders, including the
4 President, the Prime Minister, and Members of the
5 Russian Duma, should fully support freedom of the
6 press and the right of free expression in Russia; and

7 (5) the President and the Secretary of State are
8 requested to convey to appropriate Russian Govern-
9 ment officials, including the President, the Prime
10 Minister, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, this
11 expression of the views of the Congress.

○