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CONDEMNING THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN FOR ITS STATE-SPONSORED PERSECUTION OF ITS BAHA'I MINORITY AND ITS CONTINUED VIOLATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS; AND CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN TO FULFILL THEIR PROMISES OF ASSISTANCE IN THIS CASE OF ROBERT LEVINSON, ONE OF THE LONGEST HELD UNITED STATES CIVILIANS IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY

MARKUP

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

H. Res. 109 and H. Res. 435

JUNE 19, 2014

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THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2014

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:45 a.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The subcommittee will come to order. We meet today pursuant to notice the markup of two bipartisan measures related to Iran. As your offices were previously notified, it is the intent of the Chair to consider the following items en bloc which members have before them: House Resolution 109, Condemning the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of the Baha'i minority; House Resolution 435, Calling on the Government of Iran to fulfill promises of assistance in the case of Robert Levinson; and Ros-Lehtinen Amendment 49 in the nature of a substitute to House Resolution 435, which was provided to your office yesterday. Without objection, these items are considered as read and will be considered en bloc.

[The information referred to follows:]

IV

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 109

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 12, 2013

Mr. GRIMM (for himself and Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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RESOLUTION

Condemning the Government of Iran for its 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, 1994, 1996, 2000, 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 2012 Report stated, "The Baha'i community has long been subject to particularly severe religious freedom violations in Iran. Baha'is, who number at least

300,000, are viewed as 'heretics' by Iranian authorities and may face repression on the grounds of apostasy.";

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2012 Report stated, "Since 1979, Iranian government authorities have killed more than 200 Baha'i leaders in Iran and dismissed more than 10,000 from government and university jobs.";

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2012 Report stated, "Baha'is may not establish places of worship, schools, or any independent religious associations in Iran.";

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2012 Report stated, "Baha'is are barred from the military and denied government jobs and pensions as well as the right to inherit property. Their marriages and divorces also are not recognized, and they have difficulty obtaining death certificates. Baha'i cemeteries, holy places, and community properties are often seized or desecrated, and many important religious sites have been destroyed.";

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2012 Report stated, "The Baha'i community faces severe economic pressure, including denials of jobs in both the public and private sectors and of business licenses. Iranian authorities often pressure employers of Baha'is to dismiss them from employment in the private sector.";

Whereas the Department of State 2011 International Religious Freedom Report stated, "The government prohibits Baha'is from teaching and practicing their faith and sub-

jects them to many forms of discrimination that followers of other religions do not face.";

Whereas the Department of State 2011 International Religious Freedom Report stated, "According to law, Baha'i blood is considered 'mobah', meaning it can be spilled with impunity.";

Whereas the Department of State 2011 International Religious Freedom Report stated that "members of religious minorities, with the exception of Baha'is, can serve in lower ranks of government employment", and "Baha'is are barred from all leadership positions in the government and military";

Whereas the Department of State 2011 International Religious Freedom Report stated, "Baha'is suffered frequent government harassment and persecution, and their property rights generally were disregarded. The government raided Baha'i homes and businesses and confiscated large amounts of private and commercial property, as well as religious materials belonging to Baha'is.";

Whereas the Department of State 2011 International Religious Freedom Report stated, "Baha'is also are required to register with the police";

Whereas the Department of State 2011 International Religious Freedom Report stated that "[p]ublic and private universities continued to deny admittance to and expelled Baha'i students" and "[d]uring the year, at least 30 Baha'is were barred or expelled from universities on political or religious grounds";

Whereas the Department of State 2011 International Religious Freedom Report stated, "Baha'is are regularly denied compensation for injury or criminal victimization.";

Whereas, on March 6, 2012, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a report (A/HRC/19/66), which stated that "the Special Rapporteur continues to be alarmed by communications that demonstrate the systemic and systematic persecution of members of unrecognized religious communities, particularly the Baha'i community, in violation of international conventions" and expressed concern regarding "an intensive defamation campaign meant to incite discrimination and hate against Baha'is";

Whereas, on May 23, 2012, the United Nations Secretary-General issued a report, which stated that "the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief . . . pointed out that the Islamic Republic of Iran had a policy of systematic persecution of persons belonging to the Baha'i faith, excluding them from the application of freedom of religion or belief by simply denying that their faith had the status of a religion";

Whereas, on August 22, 2012, the United Nations Secretary-General issued a report, which stated, "The international community continues to express concerns about the very serious discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities in law and in practice, in particular the Baha'i community. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed alarm about the systemic and systematic persecution of members of the Baha'i community, including severe socioeconomic pressure and arrests and detention. He also deplored the Government's tolerance of an intensive defamation campaign aimed at inciting discrimination and hate against Baha'is.";

Whereas, on September 13, 2012, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a report (A/67/369), which stated, "Reports and interviews submitted to the Special Rapporteur also continue to portray a disturbing trend with regard to religious freedom in the country. Members of both recognized and unrecognized religions have reported various levels of intimidation, arrest, detention and interrogation that focus on their religious beliefs.", and stated, "At the time of drafting the report, 105 members of the Baha'i community were reported to be in detention.";

Whereas, on November 27, 2012, the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a draft resolution (A/C.3/67/L.51), which noted, "[I]ncreased persecution and human rights violations against persons belonging to unrecognized religious minorities, particularly members of the Baha'i faith and their defenders, including escalating attacks, an increase in the number of arrests and detentions, the restriction of access to higher education on the basis of religion, the sentencing of twelve Baha'is associated with Baha'i educational institutions to lengthy prison terms, the continued denial of access to employment in the public sector, additional restrictions on participation in the private sector, and the de facto criminalization of membership in the Baha'i faith.";

Whereas, on December 20, 2012, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/67/182), which called upon the government of Iran "[t]o eliminate discrimination against, and exclusion of . . . members of the Baha'i Faith, regarding access to higher education, and

to eliminate the criminalization of efforts to provide higher education to Baha'i youth denied access to Iranian universities," 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, on February 28, 2013, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a report (A/HRC/22/56), which stated, "110 Bahai's are currently detained in Iran for exercising their faith, including two women, Mrs. Zohreh Nikayin and Mrs. Taraneh Torabi, who are reportedly nursing infants in prison";

Whereas, in March and May of 2008, intelligence officials of the Government of Iran in Mashhad and Tehran arrested and imprisoned Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, and Mr. Vahid Tizfahm, the seven members of the ad hoc leadership group for the Baha'i community in Iran;

Whereas, in August 2010, the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced the seven Baha'i leaders to 20-year prison terms on charges of "spying for Israel, insulting religious sanctities, propaganda against the regime and spreading corruption on earth";

Whereas the lawyer for these seven leaders, Mrs. Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Laureate, was denied meaningful or timely access to the prisoners and their files, and her successors as defense counsel were provided extremely limited access;

Whereas these seven Baha'i leaders were targeted solely on the basis of their religion;

Whereas, beginning in May 2011, Government of Iran officials in four cities conducted sweeping raids on the homes of dozens of individuals associated with the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) and arrested and detained several educators associated with BIHE;

Whereas, in October 2011, the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced seven of these BIHE instructors and administrators, Mr. Vahid Mahmoudi, Mr. Kamran Mortezaie, Mr. Mahmoud Badavam, Ms. Nooshin Khadem, Mr. Farhad Sedghi, Mr. Riaz Sobhani, and Mr. Ramin Zibaie, to prison terms for the crime of "membership of the deviant sect of Baha'ism, with the goal of taking action against the security of the country, in order to further the aims of the deviant sect and those of organizations outside the country";

Whereas six of these educators remain imprisoned, with Mr. Mortezaie serving a 5-year prison term and Mr. Badavam, Ms. Khadem, Mr. Sedghi, Mr. Sobhani, and Mr. Zibaie serving 4-year prison terms;

Whereas, since October 2011, four other BIHE educators, Ms. Faran Hessami, Mr. Kamran Rahimian, Mr. Kayvan Rahimian, and Mr. Shahin Negari have been sentenced to 4-year prison terms, which they are now serving;

Whereas the efforts of the Government of Iran to collect information on individual Baha'is have recently intensified as evidenced by a letter, dated November 5, 2011, from the Director of the Department of Education in the county of Shahriar in the province of Tehran, instructing the directors of schools in his jurisdiction to "subtly and in

a confidential manner'' collect information on Baha'i students;

Whereas the Baha'i community continues to undergo intense economic and social pressure, including an ongoing campaign in the town of Semnan, where the Government of Iran has harassed and detained Baha'is, closed 17 Baha'i owned businesses in the last three years, and imprisoned several members of the community, including three mothers along with their infants;

Whereas ordinary Iranian citizens who belong to the Baha'i faith are disproportionately targeted, interrogated, and detained under the pretext of national security;

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

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) condemns the Government of Iran for its
3 state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority
4 and its continued violation of the International Cov-
5 enants on Human Rights;

(2) calls on the Government of Iran to immediately release the seven imprisoned leaders, the ten imprisoned 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 all 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.

○

IV

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 435

Calling on the government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, one of the longest held United States civilians in our Nation's history.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 10, 2013

Mr. DEUTCH (for himself and Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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RESOLUTION

Calling on the government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, one of the longest held United States civilians in our Nation's history.

Whereas United States citizen Robert Levinson is a retired agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a resident of Coral Springs, Florida, the husband of Christine Levinson, and father of their 7 children;

Whereas Robert Levinson traveled from Dubai to Kish Island, Iran, on March 8, 2007;

Whereas, after traveling to Kish Island and checking into the Hotel Maryam, Robert Levinson disappeared on March 9, 2007;

Whereas, in December 2007, Robert Levinson's wife, Christine, traveled to Kish Island to retrace Mr. Levinson's steps and met with officials of the Government of Iran who pledged to help in the investigation;

Whereas, for more than 6 years, the United States Government has continually pressed the Government of Iran to provide any information on the whereabouts of Robert Levinson and to help ensure his prompt and safe return to his family;

Whereas officials of the Government of Iran promised their continued assistance to the relatives of Robert Levinson during the visit of the family to the Islamic Republic of Iran in December 2007;

Whereas, in November 2010, the Levinson family received a video of Mr. Levinson in captivity, representing the first proof of life since his disappearance and providing some initial indications that he was being held somewhere in southwest Asia;

Whereas, in April 2011, the Levinson family received a series of pictures of Mr. Levinson, which provided further indications that he was being held somewhere in southwest Asia;

Whereas Secretary John Kerry stated on August 28, 2013, "The United States respectfully asks the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to work cooperatively with us in our efforts to help U.S. citizen Robert Levinson.";

Whereas, on September 28, 2013, during the first direct phone conversation between the leaders of the United States and Iran since 1979, President Barack Obama raised the case of Robert Levinson to President of Iran

Hassan Rouhani and urged the President of Iran to help locate Mr. Levinson and reunite him with his family;

Whereas November 26, 2013, marked the 2,455th day since Mr. Levinson's disappearance, making him one of the longest held United States civilians in our Nation's history; and

Whereas the FBI has announced a $1,000,000 reward for information leading to Mr. Levinson's safe return: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes that Robert Levinson is one of the longest held United States civilians in our Nation's history;

(2) notes recent pledges by newly appointed officials of the Government of Iran to provide their Government's assistance in the case of Robert Levinson;

(3) urges the Government of Iran, as a humanitarian gesture, to intensify its cooperation on the case of Robert Levinson and to immediately share the results of its investigation into the disappearance of Robert Levinson with the United States Government;

(4) urges the President and the allies of the United States to continue to raise with officials of the Government of Iran the case of Robert Levinson at every opportunity, notwithstanding other serious

1 disagreements the United States Government has
2 had with the Government of Iran on a broad array
3 of issues, including human rights, the nuclear pro-
4 gram of Iran, the Middle East peace process, re-
5 gional stability, and international terrorism; and
6 (5) expresses sympathy to the family of Robert
7 Levinson for their anguish and expresses hope that
8 their ordeal can be brought to an end in the near
9 future.

○

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE TO H.RES. 435 OFFERED BY MS. ROS-LEHTINEN OF FLORIDA

Strike the preamble and insert the following:

Whereas United States citizen Robert Levinson is a retired agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a resident of Coral Springs, Florida, the husband of Christine Levinson, and father of their 7 children;

Whereas Robert Levinson traveled from Dubai to Kish Island, Iran, on March 8, 2007;

Whereas after traveling to Kish Island and checking into the Hotel Maryam, Robert Levinson disappeared on March 9, 2007;

Whereas in December 2007, Robert Levinson's wife, Christine, traveled to Kish Island to retrace Mr. Levinson's steps and met with officials of the Government of Iran who pledged to help in the investigation;

Whereas for more than 7 years, the United States Government has continually pressed the Government of Iran to provide any information on the whereabouts of Robert Levinson and to help ensure his prompt and safe return to his family;

Whereas officials of the Government of Iran promised their continued assistance to the relatives of Robert Levinson during the visit of the family to the Islamic Republic of Iran in December 2007;

Whereas in November 2010, the Levinson family received a video of Mr. Levinson in captivity, representing the first proof of life since his disappearance and providing some initial indications that he was being held somewhere in southwest Asia;

Whereas in April 2011, the Levinson family received a series of pictures of Mr. Levinson, which provided further indications that he was being held somewhere in southwest Asia;

Whereas Secretary John Kerry stated on August 28, 2013, "The United States respectfully asks the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to work cooperatively with us in our efforts to help U.S. citizen Robert Levinson.";

Whereas on September 28, 2013, during the first direct phone conversation between the leaders of the United States and Iran since 1979, President Barack Obama raised the case of Robert Levinson to Hassan Rouhani and urged him to help locate Mr. Levinson and reunite him with his family;

Whereas November 26, 2013, marked the 2,455th day since Mr. Levinson's disappearance, making him one of the longest held United States civilians in our Nation's history; and

Whereas the FBI has announced a $1,000,000 reward for information leading to Mr. Levinson's safe return: Now, therefore, be it

Strike all after the resolving clause and insert the following:

That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes that Robert Levinson is one of the longest held United States civilians in our Nation's history;

(2) notes renewed pledges by officials of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to provide their assistance in the case of Robert Levinson;

(3) urges the Government of Iran, as a humanitarian gesture, to intensify its cooperation on the case of Robert Levinson and to immediately share the results of its investigation into the disappearance of Robert Levinson with the United States Government;

(4) urges the President and the allies of the United States to continue to raise with officials of the Government of Iran the case of Robert Levinson at every opportunity; and

(5) expresses compassion to the family of Robert Levinson for their anguish and expresses hope that their ordeal can be brought to a positive resolution in the near future.

Amend the title so as to read: "A resolution urging the Government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, one of the longest held United States civilians in our Nation's history.".

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. After the ranking member and I speak on these measures, I would be glad to recognize any other member seeking recognition. Without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements for the record on today's business.

I would now like to recognize myself. I am pleased to call up these two bipartisan measures today, both of which I strongly support. The Baha'i community is the largest single non-Muslim minority community in Iran, yet since the 1979 revolution, they have faced unrelenting and unforgiving persecution by the Islamic regime. Members of the Baha'i are constantly being detained, harassed, beaten, and thrown in jail, simply because they do not adhere to the brand of Shia Islam that the regime espouses.

As the latest of the report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom States, as of February of this year there were at least 135 imprisoned members of the Baha'i community in Iran, double the number of those detained in 2011. In April, I adopted Rozita Vaseghi, a prisoner of conscience in Iran, whose case had been highlighted by Amnesty International and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Rozita is a member of the Baha'i community who is serving a 10-year sentence because of her faith. Rozita is suffering at the hands of this regime which targets people for what they believe and is one of hundreds of other cases that prove that under Rouhani, Iranians seeking to exercise their basic freedoms and assert their human dignity are no better off.

I believe this resolution is important in highlighting the abysmal state of human rights in Iran, even as our administration engages its officials on nuclear negotiations. I urge my colleagues to support this measure. I also urge them to be a voice for other prisoners of conscience in Iran, many of whom have been languishing in Iranian prisoners for far too long and have suffered the brutality of this regime.

The administration can no longer ignore the plight of those suffering in Iran and it must act now.

It must also take immediate action to bring U.S. citizen Robert Levinson home. On March 9, 2007, Robert Levinson disappeared on the Iranian island of Kish in the Persian Gulf. On November 26, 2013, Robert marked his 2,455th day in captivity, making him one of the longest-held Americans in our history.

Mr. Levinson and his family—I am pleased to see his son here with us today, welcome, sir—and his family calls South Florida their home and they are constituents of my good friend and our subcommittee's ranking member, Ted Deutch. Ted has been working tirelessly to bring Mr. Levinson home.

Thank you, Dan Levinson, the son, the oldest son, for being with us today. And thank you so much for the support that you give to all of us and we to you. Our thoughts and prayers and with you and your family.

Ted has been a relentless advocate for the release of Robert for many years and working hard to get answers on what has happened and to press the administration to do more to help facilitate his release, return him home to his family, Robert's wife, Christine, and their seven children. The Levinson family has been living this hellish nightmare over Robert's fate for over 7 years now. We de-

mand his immediate unconditional return. There should be no kowtowing, no equivocation.

We have heard the stories of abuse and torment that Pastor Saeed Abedini faces and we have seen the sham trial of Amir Hekmati, a U.S. Marine. We have tools in our disposal that can force their release, yet the administration is too worried about upsetting the Iranian regime as it continues to pursue this bad and weak nuclear agreement. This nuclear agreement does not exist in a vacuum. We must ratchet up the pressure and bring Robert home to his family. We must bring Pastor Saeed home to his family and we must bring Amir Hekmati home to his family.

I am now very pleased to yield to the ranking member, Mr. Deutch, for his opening remarks.

Mr. DEUTCH. Madam Chairman, thank you for holding today's markup on these two very important resolutions. I am proud to offer my strong support to both. I want to thank you for co-introducing with me and for your continued tireless support of House Resolution 435, urging the Government of Iran to fulfill its promise to assist in the disappearance of my constituent, Robert Levinson.

Robert Levinson disappeared from Kish Island, Iran, on March 9, 2007. He is now the longest held American hostage. The Levinson family has endured 2,659 days without their father. Bob and his wife Christina have been married for 40 years. They have four daughters and three sons. Bob's eldest son, Dan, is here with us today.

Dan, your family has shown unimaginable strength in the face of this tremendous hardship and please know this Congress stands with you.

Since his disappearance, Bob has missed 60 family birthdays, and the birth of three new grandchildren. He has missed the big things, weddings, anniversaries, graduations, promotions, but he has also missed hundreds of quiet Sunday nights at home with his family. Bob Levinson is now 66 years old. He spent 30 years as a dedicated FBI agent, retiring in 1998. He chose to devote his career, his time away from his family, to the country that he loved so much. In 2010, the Levinson family received its first proof of life video in which Bob appeared alarmingly frail. The family again received a set of photos showing Bob in an orange jumpsuit in 2011. The Government of Iran has repeatedly indicated their willingness to assist in Bob's case. Now we are sitting across the table from Iran. We have the opportunity to raise Bob's case, to press Bob's case in every single meeting.

I know our negotiating team is committed to doing so and I would urge them to tell the Iranians that if they want to send a signal of good faith as to why we should hold out any hope of trust for them, this is how they can do it, help us bring Bob Levinson and the two other detained Americans home.

The Levinson family keeps a Facebook page and every single day they share memories of their father. This past Sunday, Father's Day, the family shared this post along with a picture of Bob in a t-shirt from his children that read "One in a Million Dad." "This is a difficult post to write," it said. "It has been 2,655 days and now the eighth Father's Day that we have been apart from the greatest man and father that we have ever known. It is tough for us today,

but tougher on our dad. There is nothing in the world more important about Levinson than his family. We hope that today and every day that you hug your father with all of your might. Hug until he makes you let go. Hold on to that memory as all of us Levinson children would have given anything, anything to be able to embrace our dad again. We want to wish all the fathers out there, Happy Fathers Day. We pray with all of our being that our one in a million dad will be brought home to us just as soon as humanly possible."

Madam Chairman, passing this resolution today sends a message to the Iranians that this Congress has not and we will not forget about Bob. I ask my colleagues to support this bipartisan resolution to help bring Bob Levinson back to his family. Thank you and I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Deutch. That was a very poignant, beautiful statement. Thank you for sharing that with us.

And to show what a tireless advocate he is on behalf of human rights everywhere and how important these resolutions are, I am so pleased to yield whatever time you need to consume to the chairman of our committee, Mr. Royce of California.

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Chair, thank you very much. I want to thank you and I want to thank Ted Deutch. I join Mr. Deutch in that sentiment. Bob Levinson, when you think about it, Mr. Deutch, our longest held American hostage anywhere on the planet. And I think all of us, the reason we are here today is because of our concern not only about his plight, but what this tells us about the regime.

And for those of us who have known some of the Baha'i, those of the Baha'i faith, that peaceful faith, I know that you will mark up a resolution on that subject in a minute, Madam Chair. And to think about the fact that those who teach the Baha'i faith are taken out and summarily executed for that act today and that hundreds have been executed in Iran for the act of teaching the Baha'i faith, I think it is very, very important that we move these resolutions. And it is important that we reflect on the fact that the way you treat your own people might be a harbinger, might tell us something about the way you are likely to treat your neighbors and that is why I did want to say that the Iranian regime continues to involve itself in these serious human rights abuses, even as we sit here today on a very large scale. We will hear from one political prisoner here today in Iran.

At least 750 people have been executed without due process in the past year. This is under President Rouhani. It is no wonder that Iran continues to stiff arm the U.N.'s Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran. And I know that some thought that the election of President Rouhani might be a turning point. I would hope it would be, but I think we should remember that this is a man who called on the regimes of the Basij Militia to crush mercilessly and monumentally—those are his words—crush mercilessly and monumentally the student protesters. More than a dozen students were killed in the protests in 1999. More than 1,000 were arrested and several hundred were tortured. We should be speaking out against these abuses. For one, it is our moral responsibility to show

Iranians that we are concerned about what happens to them, as human beings.

Unfortunately, I fear that the Obama administration's engagement with Iran has signaled to them that we are focused on its nuclear program alone, no matter how many innocent men or women are being beaten or tortured or raped or killed for expressing their hope for change in Iran.

Of course, Iran's nuclear program is a paramount national security concern, but a focus on the Iranian regime's militant character is just as critical to U.S. security interests. How the regime treats its people is a pretty good indicator of how it is going to treat its neighbors. Let us imagine that Iran and the P5+1 come to an agreement next month. Are we comfortable leaving this regime with much of the critical nuclear infrastructure in place? How could this regime which holds the noose in one hand be trusted to hold the keys to a nuclear bomb in the other? There is a reason that we are more comfortable when such dangerous technologies are in the hands of democratic nations, not hostile ones.

And to be fair, the Bush administration, too, pushed human rights aside in its nuclear negotiations with North Korea. Members here on this committee who served with me for awhile will remember my criticism of the Bush administration at that time for that failure. But this failure to speak out against a regime's abuses, whether it is in Tehran or Pyongyang, fails to grasp the concept that promoting human rights, promoting democracy in Iran and improving our national security, in fact, go hand in hand. And that is why I again want to thank you, Madam Chair, for holding this hearing today and thank Mr. Deutch as well.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much for coming to the markup, Mr. Chairman. We appreciate it.

We have two more members who will be recognized for the markup before we segue to the hearing and I apologize that it is running a little bit late, but we are thrilled that Mr. Connolly and Mr. Chabot will make statements on in the markup.

Mr. Connolly is recognized.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairman and thank you for holding this markup and the subsequent hearing. I also want to commend you and Ted Deutch for your leadership on the case of Robert Levinson, as the chairman said just now, the longest held American in American history. And I thought Mr. Deutch's eloquent statement really kind of encapsulates the set of issues here. We cannot forget Mr. Levinson and his family and I hope that the words particularly of Mr. Deutch bring some comfort to his family and can lead to some action by the Iranian Government.

I believe that the Baha'i resolution we have today has more at stake than just—not that that is limited—the Baha'i issue. It is about tolerance. It is about the American value of tolerance and acceptance and diversity and the right of people to practice their faith, their religion irrespective of the dominant culture. We don't always practice what we preach. There was an ugly incident the other day documented by columnist Dana Milbank at one of our think tanks that showed an element of intolerance we should be ashamed of. Because if we are going to lecture others and we

should, we need to make sure we are following our own prescription.

The distinguished chairman, whom I respect enormously, chided the Obama administration for perhaps a mixed message that maybe we were sending a signal that all we cared about in the relationship with Iran was the nuclear issue. And if his words were meant as a caution or a reminder, I join him. But if they were meant as a rebuke and a judgment that that, in fact, is what has happened, I must demur. The United States can handle more than one message at a time with every relationship it has in the world. The Iranians know full well we have a broad spectrum of issues with them, the nuclear one being obviously important, existentially for Israel and for that part of the world and ultimately for us. But by no means should the Iranians take any comfort in the fact that our interest is limited to that issue. That is not true. Today's resolution gives evidence of that fact. But we can't be afraid to sit down at the table after 35 years of isolation and be engaged. In fact, if we mean what we say today about this Baha'i resolution, non-engagement is precisely the best way to make sure this is feckless and has no effect.

Engagement means we have some standing. We have some leverage on behalf of the Baha'is and others who are persecuted in a nontolerant, internal society in Iran. So I am delighted to join in support of both resolutions and I would hope that our hearing will help further illuminate the values and the potential pitfalls of that engagement. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Connolly. And I am now pleased to recognize Mr. Chabot, subcommittee chairman of Asia and the Pacific.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I want to associate myself with your remarks and also those of Chairman Royce and the ranking member, Mr. Deutch. The Iranian regime continues to persecute those of the Baha'i faith, charging, imprisoning, abusing, and murdering individuals on trumped up charges including alleged propaganda against the state.

Human Rights Watch says, "These transparently political charges make it painfully clear that authorities have targeted the Baha'is not for any crime, but because of their religious beliefs." The Baha'i faith is truly a religion of peace. There is a Baha'i church on Montana Avenue in Cincinnati about ½ mile from my home. And hopefully, adoption of this resolution will increase awareness of on-going major human rights abuses in Iran. And I thank you for pushing this, Madam Chair. I urge support for the resolution and I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much. Hearing no further requests for recognition the question occurs on adopting the items under consideration en bloc. All those in favor say aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

All those opposed, no. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. The en bloc amendment items are approved. Without objection, the items in the en bloc will be reported favorably to the full committee and House Resolution 435 will be reported in the form of a single amendment in the nature of a substitute. The staff is directed to make any technical and conforming changes. I want to

thank all of our members and staff for the assistance and cooperation that went into today's markup. The subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:12 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

June 12, 2014

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN meeting of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Thursday, June 19, 2014

TIME: 9:45 a.m.

MARKUP OF: H. Res. 109, Condemning the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

H. Res. 435, Calling on the government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, one of the longest held United States civilians in our Nation's history.

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** *06/19/14* **Room** *2172*

Starting Time *9:45 a.m.* **Ending Time** *10:12 a.m.*

Recesses [*0*] (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Royce, Chairman 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. 109 - Condemning the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights
H. Res. 435 - Calling on the government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, one of the longest held United States civilians in our Nation's history

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Reps. Royce, Ros-Lehtinen, Chabot, Deutch, and Connolly

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

None

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

SFR - Rep. Connolly

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

Ros-Lehtinen 49, amending H. Res. 435.

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 *10:12 a.m.*

Subcommittee Staff Director

06/19/2014 Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee Markup Summary

The Chair obtained unanimous consent to consider the following items (previously provided to Members) *en bloc*:

1. H. Res. 109 (Grimm), "Condemning the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights";

2. H. Res. 435 (Deutch), "Calling on the government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, one of the longest held United States civilians in our Nation's history"; and

    a. Ros-Lehtinen 49, an amendment in the nature of a substitute, amending H. Res. 435.

The *en bloc* items were agreed to by voice vote, and the measures, as amended, were ordered favorably reported to the House by unanimous consent.

The Subcommittee adjourned.

Statement for the Record
Submitted by the Honorable Gerald E. Connolly

Madam Chairman,

I thank you and Ranking Member Deutch for holding this markup in advance of today's hearing on continued human rights abuses in Iran. These resolutions further underscore the need for the United States and its partners to remain vigilant on this issue in all discussions with Iranian leaders. While the P5+1 has made some progress in negotiating the Joint Action Plan with respect to freezing and scaling back Iran's nuclear program, we must be mindful about balancing the carrot-and-stick provisions of that approach with the real need for Iran to also show progress on respecting the basic human rights of its residents.

The first resolution, H.Res. 109, enumerates the continued persecution of the Baha'i community despite President Rouhani's pledge to improve civil liberties for religious minorities. The new Citizens' Rights Charter drafted by the Iranian government last fall purports to provide new protections for minorities, but only for those that are "recognized" by the government. Despite being the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iran, the Baha'is are still viewed as heretics and thus excluded from any protections. In the past year, the number of Baha'i imprisoned because of their faith has increased. According to the 2014 report from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), at least 135 Baha'i were being held in Iranian prisons. That is nearly twice the number from 2011. And charges have yet to be filed in last year's killing of a local Baha'i leader, the first such case in many years. Sadly, it's not just the Baha'i community experiencing this reprehensible persecution. We're now a year removed from President Rouhani's election, which was heralded as a new beginning of moderation for Iran, yet the Iranian regime's "rhetoric and actions continue to create a threatening atmosphere for nearly all members of non-Shia religious groups," according to the USCIRF.

With respect to H.Res. 435, I think it is appropriate for the committee to express its support for engaging Iran on the offer from President Rouhani and others in his government to assist with the search for Robert Levinson. Secretary of State Kerry continues to raise this in his various discussions with the Iranian regime, and, of course, President Obama raised Mr. Levinson's case in his historic call with President Rouhani last fall -- the first direct talks between American and Iranian leaders since 1979. If Iran truly desires to cast aside its self-inflicted isolation and rejoin the international community, working with the U.S. on this case, as well as the human right conditions outlined in the other resolution on today's agenda, would be a welcome start. It has been more than seven years since Mr. Levinson was last seen, and he is the longest held American hostage in our nation's history. My sympathies go out to Mr. Levinson's family -- and I understand his oldest son is with is today -- and I hope passage of this resolution will offer some comfort in knowing we continue to stand with you in this search and demanding his safe return home.

With that Madam Chairman, I will yield back.

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