

EXPRESSING THE GRAVE CONCERN OF CONGRESS REGARDING
THE CONTINUING GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS
AND CIVIL LIBERTIES OF THE SYRIAN AND LEBANESE PEOPLE
BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC;
AND EXPRESSING THE GRAVE CONCERN OF CONGRESS RE-
GARDING THE OCCUPATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON
BY THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

MARKUP

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND CENTRAL ASIA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

H. Con. Res. 18 and H. Con. Res. 32

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EXPRESSING THE GRAVE CONCERN OF CONGRESS REGARDING THE CONTINUING GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES OF THE SYRIAN AND LEBANESE PEOPLE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC; AND EXPRESSING THE GRAVE CONCERN OF CONGRESS REGARDING THE OCCUPATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON BY THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2005

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND CENTRAL ASIA,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 1:17 p.m., in room 2255, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Chair of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. We are convening to mark up the following resolutions, and I thank the wonderful Subcommittee Members. You guys are so patient with me. House Concurrent Resolution 18, Expressing the great concerns of Congress regarding the continuing gross violations of human rights and civil liberties of the Syrian and Lebanese people by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic; and House Concurrent Resolution 32, Expressing the grave concerns of Congress regarding the occupation of the Republic of Lebanon by the Syrian Arab Republic.

Since these two resolutions are interrelated, I will discuss both at this point and ask my colleagues to give their opening remarks on both items now as well prior to my calling them up formally for the markup.

[H. Con. Res. 18 and H. Con. Res. 32 follow:]

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 18

Expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the continuing gross violations of human rights and civil liberties of the Syrian and Lebanese people by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 6, 2005

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself and Mr. ENGEL) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the continuing gross violations of human rights and civil liberties of the Syrian and Lebanese people by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Whereas the Syrian Arab Republic is governed by an authoritarian regime which continues to commit serious human rights abuses, including the use of torture and arbitrary arrest and detention;

Whereas the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003 states that Syria "significantly restricts freedom of speech and of the press", that "freedom of assembly does not exist under the law", and that "the Government restricted freedom of association";

Whereas Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”;

Whereas Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.”;

Whereas Syria’s September 2001 press law permits the government to arbitrarily deny or revoke publishing licenses for vague reasons and compels media to submit all material to government censors;

Whereas Syrian authorities have arrested, or, in the case of foreigners, expelled journalists for writing critically about Syria’s policies;

Whereas Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have reported that the security forces of Syria are targeting emerging Syrian human rights organizations, as well as their attorneys, in an apparent attempt to intimidate those organizations;

Whereas on March 8, 2004, Syrian security forces arrested more than 30 human rights dissidents and civilians at a sit-in in front of the parliament;

Whereas a United States diplomat who was watching the peaceful demonstrations was also arrested and held for an hour in what the United States called an unacceptable violation of diplomatic practice and which the United States protested “in the strongest terms”;

Whereas Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “All are equal before the law and are enti-

tled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.”;

Whereas the criminal law of Syria provides for reduced sentences in cases of “honor” killings, and spousal rape is not illegal;

Whereas the infringement by Syria on human rights and civil liberties extends into the Lebanese Republic, which it continues to occupy in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions;

Whereas Human Rights Watch, in its 2003 World Report, stated that “political activists in Lebanon continued to demand the withdrawal of all Syrian forces from the country and organized demonstrations throughout the year, many of which the internal security forces dispersed forcibly”;

Whereas hundreds of Lebanese civilians are believed to have been killed or “disappeared” by Syrian occupation forces or its secret police;

Whereas hundreds of Kurdish civilians were injured or killed in clashes with the Syrian authorities that began on March 12, 2004, in Qamishli, a city in northeastern Syria and, according to Syrian Kurdish sources, security forces used live ammunition against unarmed civilians;

Whereas Syrian authorities are attempting to imprison Aktham Naisse, Syria’s leading human rights activist, who has been charged with spreading false information, forming an underground association with links to international human rights groups, and opposing the ruling Baath party;

Whereas in November 2004, upon his release from prison, Kamal Labwani, a 48-year-old physician in Syria, stated

that there are at least 400 political prisoners in Syria, 100 of whom have been jailed for at least 20 years;

Whereas Mr. Labwani urged “all defenders of freedom and human rights, whether individuals, associations, bodies or international, Arab, or local organizations to participate with us in this campaign to call for the immediate release of all political prisoners and detainees of opinion and conscience”;

Whereas in November 2004, Syrian journalist Louai Hussein was banned from writing by the Syrian Interior Ministry’s political security office;

Whereas the arrest in Germany in November 2004 of a Syrian embassy official for espionage and issuing threats against the Syrian opposition in Europe is being cited as an example of a campaign reportedly launched by Syrian dictator Bashar Assad, aimed at intimidating the regime’s opposition abroad; and

Whereas human rights and democracy groups in Syria have sponsored a petition urging greater freedoms and the release of all political prisoners, which has garnered more than 6,000 signatures: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring), That Congress—*

3 (1) condemns the consistent pattern of gross
4 violations of internationally recognized human rights
5 by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic;

6 (2) calls on the international community to
7 adopt a resolution at the upcoming session of the
8 United Nations Commission on Human Rights

1 which details the dismal human rights record of
2 Syria;

3 (3) expresses its support for the people of Syria
4 in their daily struggle for freedom, respect for
5 human rights and civil liberties, democratic self-gov-
6 ernance, and the establishment of the rule of law;

7 (4) encourages the President and the Secretary
8 of State to reach out to dissidents, human rights ac-
9 tivists, and the nonviolent democratic opposition in
10 Syria, and to assist them in their efforts; and

11 (5) urges the adoption and pursuit of these and
12 other policies to seek a democratic government in
13 Syria that will—

14 (A) bring freedom and democracy to the
15 people of Syria;

16 (B) cease the illegal occupation by Syria of
17 the Lebanese Republic;

18 (C) abandon support for terrorism by
19 Syria;

20 (D) not pursue research, development, ac-
21 quisition, production, transfer, or deployment of
22 biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons, will
23 provide credible assurances that such behavior
24 will not be undertaken in the future, and will
25 agree to allow United Nations and other inter-

7

6

1 national observers to verify such assurances;

2 and

3 (E) live in peace and security with the

4 international community.

○

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 32

Expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the occupation of the Republic of Lebanon by the Syrian Arab Republic.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 26, 2005

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself and Mr. ENGEL) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the occupation of the Republic of Lebanon by the Syrian Arab Republic.

Whereas the Syrian Arab Republic is the only country currently occupying another country that is a full member of the United Nations, in violation of all international laws and norms, including United Nations Security Council Resolutions 425, 426, 520, and 1559;

Whereas since its invasion of the Republic of Lebanon in 1976, the Syrian regime has implemented a systematic policy of occupation over Lebanon that has transformed the political, social, and economic character of Lebanon;

Whereas on July 20, 1976, President Hafez al-Assad of Syria stated that, “Syria and Lebanon were one state and one people . . .”;

Whereas the total Syrian occupation was complete on October 13, 1990, when the Syrian troops launched aerial and ground attacks and occupied the Lebanese presidential palace and the ministry of defense, ousting the constitutional government of Prime Minister Michel Aoun of Lebanon;

Whereas the Syrian regime appointed their own proxy government and president in occupied Lebanon and started a large-scale persecution operation against the Lebanese people by arresting, abducting, torturing, and killing opponents to the occupation;

Whereas, on May 22, 1991, following the occupation of Beirut, Lebanon, Syria concluded the Brotherhood Treaty for Coordination and Cooperation with Lebanon;

Whereas this treaty solidified the integration of the two countries in matters of security and intelligence, finance and trade, and industry and agriculture, by establishing the mechanism for Syrian command under the cover of “joint” decision-making;

Whereas the Syrian regime has continued to employ a wide range of policy means to transform Lebanon into a “client state” and a Syrian political satellite;

Whereas Syria clearly tampered with the Lebanese parliamentary elections of 1992, 1996, and 2000, amending electoral laws in all instances, which delineated voting districts and laid down intricate procedures for the elections, which were rigged in a way to guarantee results favorable to Syria;

Whereas Syrian-backed ad-hoc modifications to the Lebanese constitution extended the presidential tenure of the Lebanese president Elias Harawi by three years, allowed Emile Lahoud, commander of the Lebanese army, to become president, and extended Lahoud's term in contravention of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559;

Whereas Lebanese judicial institutions have been utilized and mobilized to impose Syrian control, including the routine issuance of death sentences in absentia against patriots and oppositionists;

Whereas Lebanese Broadcasting Law No. 382 of 1994 provided the legislative framework for controlling and restricting Lebanese radio and television;

Whereas the muzzle on the free flow of information and opinion in Lebanon is in sharp contrast to the legacy of journalism in that country;

Whereas Syria has reportedly widely utilized the practices of kidnapping and arresting Lebanese citizens, using torture against them, and causing their virtual disappearance;

Whereas Human Rights Watch reported that in November 1999 Syrian authorities in Damascus, Syria, offering no explanation whatsoever, returned the dead body of Lebanese citizen Adel Khalaf Ajouri, aged 52, who had "disappeared" in 1990;

Whereas within Lebanon itself, Syria reportedly operated detention facilities in Tripoli, Beirut, Shtaura in the Bekka Valley, and Anjar on the Lebanese-Syrian border;

Whereas "Syrian order" in Lebanon was institutionalized when Damascus led the process of disarming the Leba-

nese militias except for retaining Hezbollah as a terrorist force engaged against the State of Israel;

Whereas Lebanon, under the control of Syria, continues to serve as a major training center for terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command;

Whereas Lebanese Government officials have actively facilitated and contributed to the Syrian occupation and its activities, threatening regional and global security; and

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 calls for the “strict respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon”, the withdrawal from Lebanon of “all remaining foreign forces”, “the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias,” and “the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory”:
Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of Congress that—

3 (1) the Republic of Lebanon is a captive coun-
4 try;

5 (2) the occupation of Lebanon represents a
6 long-term threat to the security of the Middle East
7 and United States efforts to promote political and
8 economic liberalization in the region, and this issue
9 should be raised by the President and the Secretary

1 of State in all appropriate bilateral and multilateral
2 forums;

3 (3) the President should direct the United
4 States Permanent Representative to the United Na-
5 tions to present and secure support for a United Na-
6 tions Security Council Resolution classifying Leb-
7 anon as a “captive country” and calling for the im-
8 mediate release of all Lebanese detainees in Syria
9 and Lebanon;

10 (4) the President should freeze all assets in the
11 United States belonging to Lebanese Government of-
12 ficials who are found to support and aid the occupa-
13 tion of Lebanon by the Syrian Arab Republic;

14 (5) all countries should fully and immediately
15 implement United Nations Security Council Resolu-
16 tion 1559;

17 (6) it should be the policy of the United States
18 to—

19 (A) support independent human rights and
20 pro-democracy advocates in Lebanon; and

21 (B) seek the full restoration of sovereign
22 democratic rule in Lebanon; and

23 (7) the United States should provide assistance
24 through the Middle East Partnership Initiative and
25 the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative

1 for broadcasts and civil society efforts to assist indi-
2 viduals, organizations, and entities that support
3 Lebanese sovereignty and the promotion of democ-
4 racy in Lebanon.

○

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The two resolutions come amidst developments with respect to both countries that will have a profound impact on the current situation in the Middle East. These two measures seek to place the United States in a supportive role, one that sides with the people of Syria and Lebanon who are struggling to free themselves from the same oppressor, the terrorist regime in Damascus.

The first resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 18, addresses the gross violations of human rights committed by the Syrian regime. The regime not only supports and facilitates terrorist attacks against innocent civilians throughout the world, but also engages in a widespread campaign of terror against its own people.

According to the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* released by the Department of State on Monday of this week, the Government of Syria continues to commit numerous serious abuses and remains with a poor record on human rights. Any activity by human rights activists and organizations are stifled and activists are sentenced to lengthy prison terms, tortured, or forced into exile only to be harassed and intimidated in exile as well.

Domestic human rights groups cannot exist legally. According to the recent *World Report* by Human Rights Watch, the dictatorship of Syria strictly limits freedom of expression, association, and assembly, and treats ethnic minority Kurds as second-class citizens.

The Government has a long record of arbitrary arrests, systematic torture, and prolonged detention of suspects and grossly unfair trials. Women face discrimination and they have little means of redress when they become victims of rape or domestic violence.

However, Syria's deplorable human rights record is not limited to its immediate borders. The repressive apparatus also extends into neighboring Lebanon, which has been a captive nation for 25 years. Hundreds of free-thinking Lebanese civilians are believed to have been killed or "disappeared" by Syrian occupation forces throughout the years.

H. Con. Res. 32 designates Lebanon as a captive nation and supports the people of Lebanon in their struggle to restore their nation's sovereignty. For too long, Lebanon has been denied its independence by the regime in Damascus, a regime which has imposed its will upon the Lebanese people through electoral intimidation, political persecution, assassination of opposition leaders, and brutal military force.

Those who have observed the history of Lebanon see through Syria's facade and realize that the killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri is a clear attempt by Syria to intimidate the Lebanese opposition and those who publicly oppose the continued Syrian occupation of Lebanon.

This continued occupation is in contravention of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions, most recently UNSCR 1559, as well as United States laws such as the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, which I was proud to co-author with Congressman Eliot Engel.

The protests which have followed the Valentine's Day bombing in Beirut have been a cry for help, as well as an immediate demand from a united and diverse Lebanese opposition for Syria to with-

draw from Lebanon and for the Lebanese Government accomplices to resign.

As we saw on Monday of this week, the latter demand has begun to be fulfilled. The streets of Beirut have been filled for weeks with tens of thousands of Muslims, Druze, and Christians whose anger and grief over the brutal tactics of the Syrian occupiers and their Lebanese collaborators have galvanized them into action into a coordinated effort to reclaim Lebanon's sovereignty.

House Concurrent Resolution 32 calls for the President to instruct the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations to present and secure support for a Security Council resolution classifying Lebanon as a captive nation. It calls for the President, pursuant to existing law, to freeze all assets in the United States belonging to Lebanese Government officials who are found to be in support of and aiding Syria's occupation of Lebanon.

And finally, it calls for the United States' policy to include support for independent human rights and pro-democracy advocates in Lebanon and the full restoration of sovereign democratic rule in Lebanon.

More needs to be done to support and assist the Syrian and Lebanese people in their struggle to free themselves from the shackles of Syrian tyranny. House Concurrent Resolution 32, which designates Lebanon as a captive nation and House Concurrent Resolution 18, relating to the Syrian regime's deplorable record of oppression, both in Lebanon and at home, begins to address the issues that strike at the core of the Lebanese people's cry for help.

The resolutions are noncontroversial. The amendments in the nature of a substitute are minor edits and additions to update the resolution to reflect recent developments in both countries. And I want to thank my Ranking Member, Mr. Ackerman, for his input and cooperation for both of these items.

Accordingly we will consider them en bloc. And without objection, the two resolutions will be favorably reported to the Full Committee and the amendments which the Members have before them will be deemed adopted.

[The en bloc resolutions referred to follow:]

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H. CON. RES. 18
OFFERED BY MS. ROS-LEHTINEN**

Strike the preamble and insert the following:

Whereas the Syrian Arab Republic is governed by an authoritarian regime which continues to commit serious human rights abuses, including the use of torture and arbitrary arrest and detention;

Whereas the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004 states that Syria's "human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit numerous, serious abuses", the government "significantly restricts freedom of speech and of the press", "freedom of assembly does not exist under the law", and "the Government restricted freedom of association";

Whereas Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.";

Whereas Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.";

Whereas Syria's September 2001 press law permits the government to arbitrarily deny or revoke publishing licenses for vague reasons and compels media to submit all material to government censors;

Whereas Syrian authorities have arrested, or, in the case of foreigners, expelled journalists for writing critically about Syria's policies;

Whereas Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have reported that the security forces of Syria are targeting emerging Syrian human rights organizations, as well as their attorneys, in an apparent attempt to intimidate those organizations;

Whereas, on March 8, 2004, Syrian security forces arrested more than 30 human rights dissidents and civilians at a sit-in in front of the parliament;

Whereas a United States diplomat who was watching the peaceful demonstrations was also arrested and held for an hour in what the United States called an unacceptable violation of diplomatic practice and which the United States protested "in the strongest terms";

Whereas Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.";

Whereas the criminal law of Syria provides for reduced sentences in cases of "honor" killings, and spousal rape is not illegal;

Whereas the infringement by Syria on human rights and civil liberties extends into the Lebanese Republic, which it continues to occupy in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions;

Whereas hundreds of Lebanese civilians are believed to have been killed or "disappeared" by Syrian occupation forces or its secret police;

Whereas hundreds of Kurdish civilians were injured or killed in clashes with the Syrian authorities in March 2004 in Qamishli, a city in northeastern Syria, and Syrian security forces arrested and tortured Syrian Kurdish civilians from the town of Al-Malikiyah on January 9, 2005;

Whereas Syrian authorities continue their harassment of Aktham Naisse, Syria's leading human rights activist, President, and founding member of the Committees for the Defense of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria, and the 2005 winner of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, one of the most prestigious awards in the global human rights community, by charging him with spreading false information, forming an underground association with links to international human rights groups, and opposing the Baath Party;

Whereas, in November 2004, upon his release from prison, Kamal Labwani, a 48-year-old physician in Syria, stated that there are at least 400 political prisoners in Syria, 100 of whom have been jailed for at least 20 years;

Whereas Mr. Labwani urged "all defenders of freedom and human rights, whether individuals, associations, or bodies, or international, Arab, or local organizations to participate with us in this campaign to call for the immediate release of all political prisoners and detainees of opinion and conscience";

Whereas, in November 2004, Syrian journalist Louai Hussein was banned from writing by the Syrian Interior Ministry's political security office;

Whereas, in November 2004, the arrest in Germany of a Syrian embassy official for espionage and issuing threats

against the Syrian opposition in Europe is evidence of a campaign reportedly launched by Syrian dictator Bashar Assad, aimed at intimidating the regime's opposition abroad;

Whereas thousands of Syrian citizens, along with their families, children, and grandchildren, live outside their country in forced exile, solely because of their political views, or because of the views of members of their families; and

Whereas human rights and democracy groups in Syria have sponsored a petition urging greater freedoms and the release of all political prisoners: Now, therefore, be it

Strike the resolved clause and insert the following:

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That Congress—

3 (1) condemns the consistent pattern of gross
4 violations of internationally recognized human rights
5 by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic;

6 (2) calls on the international community to
7 adopt a resolution at the upcoming session of the
8 United Nations Commission on Human Rights
9 which details the dismal human rights record of
10 Syria;

11 (3) expresses its support for the people of Syria
12 in their daily struggle for freedom, respect for
13 human rights and civil liberties, democratic self-gov-
14 ernance, and the establishment of the rule of law;

1 (4) encourages the President and the Secretary
2 of State to reach out to dissidents, human rights ac-
3 tivists, and the nonviolent democratic opposition in
4 Syria, and to assist them in their efforts; and

5 (5) urges the adoption and pursuit of these and
6 other policies to seek a democratic government in
7 Syria that will—

8 (A) bring freedom and democracy to the
9 people of Syria;

10 (B) cease the illegal occupation by Syria of
11 the Lebanese Republic;

12 (C) abandon support for terrorism;

13 (D) not pursue research, development, ac-
14 quisition, production, transfer, or deployment of
15 biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons, will
16 provide credible assurances that such behavior
17 will not be undertaken in the future, and will
18 agree to allow United Nations and other inter-
19 national observers to verify such assurances;
20 and

21 (E) live in peace and security with the
22 international community.

Amend the title so as to read: “A Concurrent Reso-
lution Expressing the grave concern of Congress regard-
ing the continuing gross violations of human rights and

civil liberties of the Syrian and Lebanese people by the Government of Syrian Arab Republic.”.

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H. CON. RES. 32
OFFERED BY MS. ROS-LEHTINEN**

Strike the preamble and insert the following:

Whereas since its invasion of the Lebanese Republic in 1976, the regime of the Syrian Arab Republic has implemented a systematic policy of occupation over Lebanon that has transformed the political, social, and economic character of Lebanon;

Whereas on July 20, 1976, President Hafez al-Assad of Syria stated that “Syria and Lebanon were one state and one people”;

Whereas, on October 13, 1990, the Syrian occupation of Lebanon was complete, when Syrian troops launched aerial and ground attacks and occupied the Lebanese presidential palace and the Ministry of Defense, ousting the constitutional government of Prime Minister Michel Aoun of Lebanon;

Whereas the Syrian regime appointed their own proxy government and president in occupied Lebanon, and started a large-scale persecution operation against the Lebanese people by arresting, abducting, torturing, and killing opponents of the occupation;

Whereas, on May 22, 1991, following the occupation of Beirut, Lebanon, Syria concluded the Brotherhood Treaty for Coordination and Cooperation with Lebanon;

Whereas this treaty solidified the integration of the two countries in matters of security and intelligence, finance and trade, and industry and agriculture, by establishing the

mechanism for Syrian command under the cover of “joint” decisionmaking;

Whereas the Syrian regime has continued to employ a wide range of policy means to transform Lebanon into a “client state” and a Syrian political satellite;

Whereas Syria clearly tampered with the Lebanese parliamentary elections of 1992, 1996, and 2000, by amending electoral laws which delineated voting districts and laid down intricate procedures for the elections, which were rigged in a way to guarantee results favorable to Syria;

Whereas Syrian-backed ad-hoc modifications to the Lebanese constitution extended by three years the presidential tenure of Lebanese president Elias Harawi, allowed Emile Lahoud, commander of the Lebanese army, to become president, and extended Lahoud’s term in contravention of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559;

Whereas Lebanese judicial institutions have been utilized and mobilized to impose Syrian control, including the routine issuance of death sentences *in absentia* against expatriates and opposition leaders;

Whereas Lebanese Broadcasting Law No. 382 of 1994 provided the legislative framework for controlling and restricting Lebanese radio and television;

Whereas the restrictions on the free flow of information and opinion in Lebanon is in sharp contrast to the legacy of journalism in that country;

Whereas it is widely reported that Syria has utilized the practices of kidnapping and arresting Lebanese citizens, using torture against them, and causing their virtual disappearance;

Whereas Human Rights Watch reported that in November 1999 Syrian authorities in Damascus, Syria, offering no explanation whatsoever, returned to his family the dead body of Lebanese citizen Adel Khalaf Ajouri, aged 52, who had “disappeared” in 1990;

Whereas within Lebanon itself, Syria reportedly operated detention facilities in Tripoli, Beirut, Shtaura in the Bekka Valley, and Anjar on the Lebanese-Syrian border;

Whereas “Syrian order” in Lebanon was institutionalized when Damascus led the process of disarming the Lebanese militias, except for Hezbollah, which Syria retains as a terrorist proxy engaged against the State of Israel;

Whereas Lebanon, under the control of Syria, continues to serve as a major training center for terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command;

Whereas a number of Lebanese government officials have actively facilitated and contributed to the Syrian occupation and its activities, thereby threatening regional and global security;

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 calls for the “strict respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon”, the withdrawal from Lebanon of “all remaining foreign forces”, “the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias”, and “the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory”;

Whereas, on February 14, 2005, a bomb exploded in Beirut, Lebanon, killing at least 15 people, including Rafik Hariri, former Prime Minister of Lebanon, and wounding approximately 100 other innocent victims;

Whereas after the bombing, President George W. Bush stated during an address in Brussels that “Our shared commitment to democratic progress is being tested in Lebanon, a once-thriving country that now suffers under the influence of an oppressive neighbor”, called on Syria to “end its occupation of Lebanon”, and reiterated the provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559;

Whereas Lebanese opposition leaders gathered after Hariri was killed and issued a statement demanding Syrian troop withdrawal from Lebanon within the next three months, calling for the resignation of the current Lebanese cabinet, and declaring that “we will fight the current regime and demand our right for a neutral government that makes sure Lebanon steps forward from being a captive state to regaining its full independence and sovereignty”; and

Whereas the ongoing mass demonstrations by the Lebanese people resulted in the dramatic resignation of the Lebanese Cabinet on February 28, 2005: Now, therefore, be it

Strike the resolved clause and insert the following:

- 1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
- 2 *concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that—*
- 3 (1) the Lebanese Republic is a captive country;

1 (2) the occupation of Lebanon represents a
2 long-term threat to the security of the Middle East
3 and United States efforts to promote political and
4 economic liberalization in the region, and this issue
5 should be raised by the President and the Secretary
6 of State in all appropriate bilateral and multilateral
7 forums;

8 (3) the President should direct the United
9 States Permanent Representative to the United Na-
10 tions to present and secure support for a United Na-
11 tions Security Council Resolution classifying Leb-
12 anon as a captive country and calling for the imme-
13 diate release of all Lebanese detainees in Syria and
14 Lebanon;

15 (4) the President should freeze all assets in the
16 United States belonging to Lebanese government of-
17 ficials who are found to support and aid the occupa-
18 tion of Lebanon by the Syrian Arab Republic;

19 (5) all countries should fully and immediately
20 implement United Nations Security Council Resolu-
21 tion 1559;

22 (6) it should be the policy of the United States
23 to—

24 (A) support independent human rights and
25 pro-democracy advocates in Lebanon; and

1 (B) seek the full restoration of sovereign
2 democratic rule in Lebanon; and
3 (7) the United States should provide assistance
4 through the Middle East Partnership Initiative and
5 the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative
6 for broadcasts and civil society efforts to assist indi-
7 viduals, organizations, and entities that support
8 Lebanese sovereignty and the promotion of democ-
9 racy in Lebanon.

Amend the title so as to read: “A Concurrent Reso-
lution Expressing the grave concern of Congress regard-
ing the occupation of the Lebanese Republic by the Syr-
ian Arab Republic.”.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I would like to have the Members give their opening remarks at this time, starting with my good friend, the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Chair, thank you very much for scheduling today's markup of both of these very, very timely and appropriate resolutions. I want to thank both you and the gentleman from New York, Mr. Engel, for your work in introducing these resolutions.

Taken together, these resolutions send a clear message to Syria regarding what the Congress expects in terms of Syria's role in Lebanon and regarding the freedom of Syrians themselves.

Madam Chair, in the 2 weeks since former Prime Minister Hariri's assassination, a man who many of us in this room knew well, the world has watched as the Lebanese people have risen up and taken control of their own fate. By forcing the resignation of the pro-Syrian Government, the Lebanese people have demonstrated clearly that they will no longer labor under the yoke of Syrian oppression.

It is time, Madam Chair, for the Lebanese people to be free and for Syria to end its domination and exploitation of Lebanon. That means that Syria must immediately withdraw all of its forces from Lebanon, completely, and immediately. Moving a few thousand troops from Beirut to the Bekaa will not suffice. Syria must also withdraw all of its intelligence operatives.

Lebanese politics should no longer be distorted by the heavy hand of Syrian manipulation. The Parliamentary elections this summer must be free and fair, and the United States and the international community should do all that we can to ensure that they are.

Syria must also stop supporting Hezbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and all the other terrorist groups that call Damascus home. Just closing their offices won't work this time.

But it is not just in Lebanon where Syria has work to do. As the most recent State Department *Human Rights Report* points out, the Syrian Government continues to abuse its own citizens and restrict the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights. The list of Syria's human rights violations is long and speaks to the brutality of an authoritarian regime determined to do anything to stifle even modest dissent.

Madam Chairman, these resolutions before us today give the Congress an opportunity to speak clearly and loudly on events in Lebanon and on Syria's human rights abuses, and I congratulate you for introducing the resolutions with Mr. Engel and urge full support by the subcommittee.

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

Mr. Chabot, the Vice Chair of the Subcommittee.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chairman, I will be very brief. I appreciate your offering these resolutions. I also complement Mr. Ackerman for his involvement in making this happen.

It is long overdue time for Syria to get out of Lebanon. The people of Lebanon ought to pick their own leadership, just as is happening now in Iraq, just as has happened recently in Afghanistan, just as has happened recently in the Ukraine. The Palestinians are

now deciding on new leadership. And in Egypt, Mubarak just announced this week that there will be other candidates in that race.

Only time will tell how open and honest those elections are, but it is certainly a step in the right direction. And something is happening in that part of the world, and I think there is reason for the first time in a long time to be optimistic. And only time will tell what is in Lebanon but things seem to be looking up there as well.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Chabot. And speaking of Egypt, we are happy to have Mr. Schiff here because he has sponsored a resolution, very important, but on reform needed in Egypt and the recent arrest of individuals there that have actually caused Secretary Rice to call off her pending visit.

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam Chairman, I want to thank you for your work on the Egypt resolution and your work on the resolutions before us today.

I had a chance to visit Lebanon for the first time about 3 years ago, and I was really struck at the level of redevelopment that was already occurring in Beirut. I went there with an expectation of finding a very different Beirut than I found, where nightlife had already returned, where many of the business districts looked much like those out in California in some of the nicer parts of Beverly Hills.

The work that Mr. Hariri did was remarkable and his assassination is a terrible tragedy. It may be that in his death he is able to accomplish what he could not in his life, and that is the ejection of Syrian troops out of Lebanon. It was my impression then and it remains my impression now that Lebanon is incredibly well-poised to take off politically, economically, and otherwise if Syria takes its troops out of Lebanon, ends its interference in the internal politics of Lebanon, and there is some stability in the Middle East.

We see now very encouraging prospects of stability between Israel and the Palestinians. And with this movement to eject Syria from Lebanon, I think we have enormous potential for Lebanon's future, and I think it is incredibly encouraging to see those demonstrations taking place in Lebanon right now.

The death, the assassination, the killing of Mr. Hariri has done what nothing else has been able to achieve. It has brought together Sunnis and Christians and Druze, all united in the same goal, and that is getting Syria the heck out of Lebanon.

So I join you, Madam Chair, our Ranking Member, Mr. Ackerman, in supporting these resolutions. I think that time has come for Syria to get out, and I hope to join my colleagues in sending a message to those that are demonstrating in the streets that we are with them and we support them and we will continue the pressure until Syria gets out.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Schiff. Thank you so much. Mr. McCotter?

Mr. MCCOTTER. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am glad to be a part of this. What I am seeing on TV and what we are hearing about is similar to what we saw in the late 1980s and 1990s when freedom fought off the Communist yoke in Eastern Europe. As we harken back, I think it is important to realize that this is the start of a long process. There is going to have to be continued monitoring

and continued support from the United States and all of the nations who support freedom throughout the world.

And I think as Winston Churchill once said: "It is not the end, it is not the beginning of the end, but it is perhaps the end of the beginning." And as this process continues, we must realize that with the transformation change that is taking place across the Middle East and across the world, is that there must also be a transactional benefit linking the move to democracy with the concepts of security, with the concepts of prosperity, with the concept that somehow freedom is not an abstract idea but somehow it has tangible, palpable meaning to the improvement of their way of life and their standard of living, to the perpetuation of hope for themselves and their loved ones. This is a step in the right direction, and I am happy to support it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Chandler, happy to have you say a few words.

Mr. CHANDLER. Thank you, Madam Chair, Mr. Ranking Member. I am going to be very brief. You hear that often, but this time I think it really is true. We will see.

I want to also congratulate all of those involved in putting these resolutions together. I am happy to be a cosponsor of them. I think this is clearly the right thing to do and I am in great hope that the late former Prime Minister Hariri's death will not be in vain. Thank you and may we continue forward with this same approach.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. Boozman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Again I would echo what has been said and I appreciate the work on the issue and look forward to voting for it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much. Shelley Berkley, always a pleasure. Thank you, Shelley, for being here.

Ms. BERKLEY. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Ranking Member Ackerman, for doing this. Let me just say it is about time. I am sorry that it took an assassination to provoke action. I listened to some of our colleagues in the House talking about—urging patience and saying we are making headway with the Syrians and any number of Members of Congress will sit down with the Syrian President and emerge thinking that they have actually made headway with this man, which is an impossibility to do.

So while I loved what Mr. McCotter said about—and I reference all of his comments, but my fear is that the stability that we are beginning to see a possibility of, and a coming together between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and the possibility that we may finally bring peace to a very troubled region; if there is one country that I can point to that would be the fly in the ointment and is doing everything they can to undermine any potential for peace, any potential for stability, that would be Syria. And the sooner this Congress acts and makes our thoughts known to the Syrian Government, the better off everybody will be, particularly those in the region that are longing for peace.

And in conclusion I would also like to once again thank Mr. Engel, who was light-years ahead of the rest of us when it came to focusing on Syria and sharing with the rest of us the facts on the ground and the serious problem that this Syrian Government cre-

ated. And I thank you very much and I yield back all the rest of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Shelley, thank you.

Mr. Cardoza.

Mr. CARDOZA. Thank you, Madam Chair. It is an honor to be on this Subcommittee and to serve, and I associate myself with all the comments that have gone previously, particularly yours. I would just only add that it is like a bully in a schoolyard, that it is appropriate to expel them when they act up and this is exactly the right course of action to be taken.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Issa, do you have any opening remarks on the resolutions?

Mr. ISSA. Only that I will have some changes and amendments. I apologize I wasn't here for the unanimous consent.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. And now the visionary who saw the Syria problem before so many saw it. Thank you, Eliot Engel, for being with us and please, I love to recognize you for your remarks.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Madam Chair, for the compliments. You have been my partner all the way through on this and I thank you for your vision and for your partnership in this. I want to also thank Mr. Ackerman, who has always played a very important role as the Ranking Member on the Subcommittee, and I want to thank Shelley Berkley for her very kind words.

Several years ago when we were putting together a bill in Congress called ILSA, the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, I inquired as to why Syria was not in that bill and was told that there were delicate negotiations between the House and the Senate and if I attempted to put in an amendment it would disrupt the bill, and I was told to put in my own bill.

So we sat down and drafted the bill known as the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act. It was important that we include the Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act because Lebanon, for all intents and purposes, is an occupied and captive nation, the only Charter Member of the United Nations that is under occupation, and it has been a captive nation for more than two decades.

This resolution puts the Congress on record with the people of Lebanon as we witness their Cedar Revolution, very similar to the Orange Revolution that we saw in the Ukraine and very similar to the captive nations of Eastern Europe when they overthrew the yoke of oppression. It shows that people can rise up and make changes and if the United States Congress is solidly behind that, it does have impact and weight, and that is why it is important that we do this today.

I also want to point out that U.N. Resolution 1559 clearly calls and demands that Syria get out of Lebanon, and we did that resolution cosponsored in the United Nations Security Council with, of all countries, France. There is no difference of opinion between the United States and France in terms of the Syrian occupation of Lebanon.

And we could go on and on. This is an important resolution, again, because it puts us totally on record as supporting the removal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and calling Lebanon a captive

nation. So I thank you and I thank everyone on the Committee for supporting us, and I think that the work we do here with regard to Lebanon is very important. And one day, Madam Chair, we are going to, as some of my Lebanese-American friends have said to me, some day we are going to walk into a free Lebanon, a free Beirut with them, and all of us will know that we have made a collective difference in their lives.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. That sounds great, and maybe Eliot would be the Ambassador.

Mr. ENGEL. There are several who would like to exile me.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. As I stated previously, House Concurrent Resolution 32 and House Concurrent Resolution 18 will be reported favorably to the Full Committee, as amended, and the titles are amended.

And before adjournment, I just want to make some closing remarks, and echoing what my colleagues have said. Let today's markup serve to send a clear message to the Syrian regime that the United States Congress is watching to help ensure the safety and the welfare of the brave Lebanese demonstrators and all of the Lebanese people. Let it send a message to the Syrian regime and mainly to the Syrian people and to the Lebanese people that we stand with them. We are divorcing the Government from the people. We stand with the Lebanese and the Syrian people as they seek to reclaim their rights.

And in that vein, I will be introducing tomorrow the Lebanon and Syria Liberation Act to increase pressure on Syria and provide assistance to pro-democracy advocates in both nations, and I thank my wonderful Subcommittee Members for being here and for always participating. Thank you, my fellow Floridian, Congressman Mack.

And I wanted to announce to the Subcommittee that our former Member from Florida, Tillie Fowler, passed away this morning and we will have the funeral services for her at 1 o'clock. She had a brain hemorrhage at her Jacksonville home and her husband found her there, and she just passed away at 10:30. She was just with us 2 weeks ago.

The Subcommittee is adjourned on that sad note.

[Whereupon, at 1:40 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

