

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. _____

Recognizing the critical work of human rights defenders in promoting human rights, the rule of law, democracy, and good governance.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. COONS (for himself and Mr. TILLIS) submitted the following resolution;
which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the critical work of human rights defenders in promoting human rights, the rule of law, democracy, and good governance.

Whereas the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (referred to in this preamble as the “Declaration on Human Rights Defenders”)—

(1) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1998; and

(2) states that, “Everyone has the right . . . to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”;

Whereas the Department of State defines “human rights defenders” as “individuals, working alone or in groups, who non-violently advocate for the promotion and protection of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms”;

Whereas the Senate supports the right of human rights defenders all over the world to promote the fundamental freedoms enshrined in—

- (1) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted at Paris on December 10, 1948; and
- (2) human rights treaties;

Whereas human rights defenders protect the rights of vulnerable individuals and groups;

Whereas, according to Amnesty International, an estimated 3,500 human rights defenders have been murdered since the adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;

Whereas, in certain parts of the world, the work of human rights defenders is threatened through—

- (1) restrictions on—
 - (A) the press; and
 - (B) the freedoms of expression, assembly, and association;
- (2) smear campaigns;
- (3) arbitrary detentions;
- (4) laws restricting the funding and registration of human rights organizations;
- (5) physical attacks;
- (6) enforced disappearances;
- (7) impunity with respect to crimes committed against human rights defenders; and
- (8) abuses of—

- (A) antiterrorism legislation; and
- (B) states of emergency; and

Whereas, in the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016 of the Department of State, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson noted the commitment of the United States to “the human rights guaranteed to all individuals around the world”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) commends human rights defenders for their
3 critical work in promoting human rights, the rule of
4 law, democracy, and good governance;

5 (2) recognizes the rights of human rights de-
6 fenders to the freedoms of association, assembly,
7 and expression, including the rights of those individ-
8 uals to collect and publish data on government
9 abuses;

10 (3) condemns all threats to—

11 (A) human rights defenders; and

12 (B) the work of human rights defenders in
13 promoting universally recognized human rights;

14 (4) welcomes the imposition of sanctions by the
15 President, on December 21, 2017, and under the
16 Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act
17 (subtitle F of title XII of Public Law 114–328; 22
18 U.S.C. 2656 note), with respect to human rights
19 abusers and corrupt actors;

1 (5) encourages all countries to recognize their
2 duties under the Declaration on the Right and Re-
3 sponsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of
4 Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recog-
5 nized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,
6 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on
7 December 9, 1998, to “protect, promote and imple-
8 ment all human rights and fundamental freedoms”;
9 and
10 (6) calls on the President and Secretary of
11 State to maintain leadership by the United States in
12 promoting human rights.