

107TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 128

Expressing the sense of the Congress that the continued participation of the Russian Federation in the Group of Eight must be conditioned on the Russian Federation's voluntary acceptance of and adherence to the norms and standards of democracy.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 8, 2001

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

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that the continued participation of the Russian Federation in the Group of Eight must be conditioned on the Russian Federation's voluntary acceptance of and adherence to the norms and standards of democracy.

Whereas in 1991 and subsequent years the leaders of the Group of Seven ("G-7"), the forum of the heads of state or heads of government of the major democracies of the world which meet annually in a summit meeting, invited the Russian Federation to a post-summit dialog, and in 1998 the leaders of the Group of Seven formally invited the Russian Federation to participate in an annual gathering that thereafter became known as the Group of

Eight (“G-8”), although the Group of Seven have continued to hold informal summit meetings and ministerial meetings that do not include the Russian Federation;

Whereas the invitation to President Yeltsin of the Russian Federation to participate in these annual summits was in recognition of his commitment to democratization and economic liberalization, despite the fact that the Russian Federation’s economy has been weak and its commitment to democratic principles has been uncertain;

Whereas those countries which are members of the Group of Seven are pluralistic democratic societies with democratic political institutions and practices and they have committed themselves to the observance of universally recognized standards of human rights, respect for individual liberties, and democratic political practices;

Whereas free news media are fundamental to the functioning of a democratic society and essential for the protection of individual liberties and such freedoms can exist only in an environment that is free of state control of the news media, that is free of any form of state censorship or official coercion of any kind, and that is protected and guaranteed by the rule of law;

Whereas the Russian Federation has engaged in a series of government actions that are hostile and destructive of privately owned independently operated media enterprises, particularly those news outlets that have been critical of government policies and government actions;

Whereas on Saturday, April 14, 2001, the Russian Federation gas monopoly Gazprom, which is partially state-owned, staged a forceful pre-dawn takeover of the Russian Federation’s only independently operated television

station NTV, replacing its Board of Directors and installing government management of television operations;

Whereas on Tuesday, April 17, 2001, the daily newspaper *Sevodnya*, one of Moscow's independent newspapers, was abruptly closed and the news magazine *Itogi*, which is published in partnership with *Newsweek*, may also be forced to close in the near future;

Whereas the tax authorities of the Russian Federation, have begun to harass TNT, a small cable station that has been allowing the journalists ousted from the NTV station to air their newscasts on its channel since the takeover by Gazprom; and

Whereas the continued participation of the Russian Federation in the Group of Eight must be conditioned on the Russian Federation's acceptance of and adherence to the norms and standards of democracy: Now, therefore, be it

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

3 (1) the participation of the Russian Federation
4 in the Group of Eight must be suspended until the
5 Russian Federation demonstrates its commitment to
6 the existence of a free, unfettered, and independent
7 media and the free exchange of ideas and views, in-
8 cluding opportunities for private ownership of media
9 enterprises, the right of people to receive news with-
10 out government interference and harassment, and
11 the freedom of journalists to publish opinions and

1 news reports without fear of censorship or punish-
2 ment;

3 (2) such participation should also be condi-
4 tioned on the Russian Federation's adherence to
5 other norms and standards of democracy,
6 including—

7 (A) the freedom of all religious groups
8 freely to practice their faith in the Russian
9 Federation, without government interference on
10 the rights and the peaceful activities of such re-
11 ligious organizations;

12 (B) equal treatment and respect for the
13 human rights and the right to own private
14 property of all citizens of the Russian Federa-
15 tion;

16 (C) initiation of genuine negotiations for a
17 just and peaceful resolution of the conflict in
18 Chechnya, including a full investigation of the
19 conflict and bringing to justice those individ-
20 uals, civilian or military, who in a court of law
21 are found to be guilty of criminal violations of
22 human rights;

23 (D) respect for the rule of law and im-
24 provement of civil and legal institutions to im-
25 plement and defend these rights; and

1 (E) reform of the judicial system to pre-
2 vent the arbitrary detention of citizens and pro-
3 vide for a speedy trial and equal access to the
4 judicial system; and

5 (3) the President and the Secretary of State
6 should take all necessary steps to suspend the par-
7 ticipation of the Russian Federation in the G-8 until
8 the Government of the Russian Federation dem-
9 onstrates that it adheres to the norms and standards
10 described in paragraphs (1) and (2), in particular
11 the existence of a free and unfettered press, and are
12 requested to convey to appropriate officials of the
13 Government of the Russian Federation, including
14 the President, the Prime Minister, and the Minister
15 of Foreign Affairs, this expression of the views of
16 the Congress.

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