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Expressing the Sense of the Congress with respect to human rights in Central Asia.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 17, 2002

Mr. MCCAIN introduced the following joint resolution; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

JOINT RESOLUTION

Expressing the Sense of the Congress with respect to human rights in Central Asia.

Whereas the Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan provided the United States with important assistance in the war in Afghanistan, from military basing and over-flight rights to the facilitation of humanitarian relief;

Whereas America's victory over the Taliban in turn provided important benefits to the Central Asian nations, removing a regime that threatened their security, and significantly weakening the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a terrorist organization that had previously staged armed raids from Afghanistan into the region;

Whereas, the United States has consistently urged the nations of Central Asia to open their political systems and

economies and to respect human rights, both before and since the attacks of September 11, 2001;

Whereas Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are members of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, both of which confer a range of human rights obligations on their members;

Whereas according to the State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, the government of Kazakhstan harasses and monitors independent media and human rights activists, restricts freedom of association and opposition political activity, and allows security forces to commit extrajudicial executions, torture, and arbitrary detention with impunity;

Whereas according to the State Department, the government of the Kyrgyz Republic engages in arbitrary arrest and detention, restricts the activities of political opposition figures, religious organizations deemed “extremist,” human rights activists, and nongovernmental organizations, and discriminates against ethnic minorities;

Whereas according to the State Department, the government of Tajikistan remains authoritarian, curtailing freedoms of speech, assembly, and association, with security forces committing extrajudicial executions, kidnappings, disappearances, and torture;

Whereas according to the State Department, Turkmenistan is a Soviet-style one-party state centered around the glorification of its president, which engages in serious human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest and detention, severe restrictions of personal privacy, repression of polit-

ical opposition, and restrictions on freedom of speech and nongovernmental activity;

Whereas according to the State Department, the government of Uzbekistan continues to commit serious human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest, detention and torture in custody, particularly of Muslims who practice their religion outside state controls, the severe restriction of freedom of speech, the press, religion, independent political activity and nongovernmental organizations, and detains over 7,000 people for political or religious reasons;

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has expressed concern about religious persecution in the region, recommending that Turkmenistan be named a Country of Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, and that Uzbekistan be placed on a special “Watch List”;

Whereas, by continuing to suppress human rights and to deny citizens peaceful, democratic means of expressing their convictions, the nations of Central Asia risk fueling popular support for violent and extremist movements, thus undermining the goals of the war on terrorism;

Whereas President Bush has made the defense of “human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women and private property and free speech and equal justice and religious tolerance” strategic goals of United States foreign policy in the Islamic world, arguing that “a truly strong nation will permit legal avenues of dissent for all groups that pursue their aspirations without violence”; and

Whereas the Congress has expressed its desire to see deeper reform in Central Asia in past resolutions and legislation,

most recently conditioning assistance to Uzbekistan on its progress in meeting human rights and democracy commitments to the United States: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate and the House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 That it is the Sense of the Congress that:

4 (1) the governments of Kazakhstan,
5 Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and
6 Uzbekistan should accelerate democratic reforms
7 and fulfill their human rights obligations including,
8 where appropriate, by—

9 (A) releasing from prison all those jailed
10 for peaceful political activism or the non- vio-
11 lent expression of their political or religious be-
12 liefs;

13 (B) fully investigating any credible allega-
14 tions of torture and prosecuting those respon-
15 sible;

16 (C) permitting the free and unfettered
17 functioning of independent media outlets, inde-
18 pendent political parties, and non-governmental
19 organizations, whether officially registered or
20 not;

21 (D) permitting the free exercise of reli-
22 gious beliefs and ceasing the persecution of

1 members of religious groups and denominations
2 not registered with the state;

3 (E) holding free, competitive, and fair elec-
4 tions;

5 (F) making publicly available documenta-
6 tion of their revenues and punishing those en-
7 gaged in official corruption;

8 (2) the President of the United States, the Sec-
9 retary of State, and the Secretary of Defense
10 should—

11 (A) continue to raise at the highest levels
12 with the governments of the nations of Central
13 Asia specific cases of political and religious per-
14 secution, and urge greater respect for human
15 rights and democratic freedoms at every diplo-
16 matic opportunity;

17 (B) take progress in meeting the goals out-
18 lined in paragraph (1) into account when deter-
19 mining the level and frequency of United States
20 diplomatic engagement with the governments of
21 the Central Asian nations, the allocation of
22 United States assistance, and the nature of
23 United States military engagement with the
24 countries of the region;

1 (C) ensure that the provisions of the For-
2 eign Operations Appropriations Act are fully
3 implemented to ensure that no United States
4 assistance benefits security forces in Central
5 Asia implicated in violations of human rights;

6 (D) follow the recommendations of the
7 United States Commission on International Re-
8 ligious Freedom by designating Turkmenistan a
9 Country of Particular Concern under the Inter-
10 national Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and by
11 making clear that Uzbekistan risks designation
12 if conditions there do not improve;

13 (E) work with the Government of
14 Kazakhstan to create a political climate free of
15 intimidation and harassment, including releas-
16 ing political prisoners and permitting the return
17 of political exiles, most notably Akezan
18 Kazegeldin, and to reduce official corruption,
19 including by urging the Government of
20 Kazakhstan to cooperate with the ongoing
21 United States Department of Justice investiga-
22 tion;

23 (F) support through United States assist-
24 ance programs those individuals, non-govern-
25 mental organizations, and media outlets in Cen-

1 tral Asia working to build more open societies,
2 to support the victims of human rights abuses,
3 and to expose official corruption; and

4 (3) increased levels of United States assistance
5 to the governments of the Central Asian nations
6 made possible by their cooperation in the war in Af-
7 ghanistan can be sustained only if there is substan-
8 tial and continuing progress towards meeting the
9 goals outlined in paragraph (1).

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