

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 805

Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the murder of James Wright Foley and calling for the moral courage to prioritize the return of Americans held captive abroad and take all necessary efforts to deter international hostage taking and arbitrary detention.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUGUST 1, 2024

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

Committee discharged; considered, amended, and agreed to with an amended preamble

RESOLUTION

Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the murder of James Wright Foley and calling for the moral courage to prioritize the return of Americans held captive abroad and take all necessary efforts to deter international hostage taking and arbitrary detention.

Whereas James W. Foley was an American freelance journalist, an author, teacher and humanitarian from New Hampshire;

Whereas James dedicated his career to robust, independent, and compassionate journalism that took him to war zones and classrooms alike;

Whereas, upon his return after being detained for six weeks in Libya, James said, “for some reason I have physical courage, but, that’s nothing compared to moral courage. If I don’t have the moral courage to challenge authority, to write about things that might have reprisals on my career, if I don’t have that moral courage, we don’t have journalism”;

Whereas, on November 22, 2012, James was kidnapped while reporting on the conflict in northern Syria;

Whereas, on August 19, 2014, James Wright Foley was publicly beheaded by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), his death then used as propaganda against the United States of America;

Whereas, on September 4, 2014, the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation was established to inspire the moral courage needed to secure the freedom of Americans taken captive abroad, prevent future hostage-taking, and promote journalist safety;

Whereas the Foley Foundation participated in the National Counter Terrorism Center task force, ordered by President Barack Obama to evaluate United States hostage policy and engagement with families of those held captive;

Whereas, on June 24, 2015, President Obama issued Presidential Policy Directive 30, which committed to “achieving the safe and rapid recovery of U.S. nationals taken hostage outside the United States” and established the current United States hostage enterprise, which includes the Hostage Response Group (HRG) at the National Security Council, the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA), and the Hostage Recovery Fusion

Cell (HRFC) that together pursue recovery strategies, support returned hostages and families of current hostages, and coordinate the use of diplomatic, law enforcement, intelligence, and military capabilities to resolve international hostage-takings;

Whereas the Foley Foundation has worked since 2014, in collaboration with the United States Government’s hostage enterprise and families of United States nationals taken hostage abroad by terrorists or criminals and those wrongfully detained by nation states to help reunite families;

Whereas, in 2019, after negotiating the release of a United States citizen wrongfully detained in Iran, President Trump reiterated that “the highest priority of the United States is the safety and well-being of its citizens. Freeing Americans held captive is of vital importance to my Administration, and we will continue to work hard to bring home all our citizens wrongfully held captive overseas,” and in 2023, upon negotiating the release of five Americans held in Iran, President Biden said that “reuniting wrongfully detained Americans with their loved ones has been a priority for my Administration since day one”;

Whereas, since 2019, the Foley Foundation has annually published research in the “Bringing Americans Home” report, which evaluates the experiences of American families with a loved one held captive abroad, returned hostages and detainees, and government and nongovernment experts;

Whereas, in December 2020, Congress passed, and President Trump reaffirmed the United States commitment to bringing home American citizens by signing into law the Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking

Accountability Act (22 U.S.C. 1741 et seq.) to prioritize and provide assistance to Americans wrongfully detained abroad and to their family members;

Whereas, in September 2021, Alexandra Kotey pleaded guilty to eight counts of kidnapping, torture, and accessory to murder of four Americans, including James Wright Foley, Kayla Jean Mueller, Steven Joel Sotloff, and Peter Edward Kassig;

Whereas, on August 19, 2022, the Department of Justice convicted former British jihadist, El Shafee ElSheik in Federal Court in the Eastern District of Virginia for the kidnapping, torture, and murder of Americans Sotloff, Kassig, Mueller, and Foley, as well as three British citizens;

Whereas, under Democratic and Republican presidents, the United States has successfully freed more than 120 Americans from unjust captivity abroad;

Whereas President Joe Biden's July 2022 Executive Order 14078 (relating to bolstering efforts to bring hostages and wrongfully detained United States nationals home) declared that hostage taking and the wrongful detention of United States nationals constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States; and

Whereas the targeting of United States nationals for use as political pawns by nation states is a grave threat to the security of United States nationals traveling abroad, seeks to hold the United State Government hostage, and strains international stability: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

1 (1) stands with all those who have been taken
2 hostage or wrongfully detained, those who have been
3 released, and the families and friends who fight for
4 their freedom;

5 (2) prioritizes the return of all innocent United
6 States nationals targeted for kidnapping or wrongful
7 detention abroad and will continue to take all nec-
8 essary steps to secure the release of Americans and
9 deter our adversaries from using Americans as tools
10 for their geopolitical ambitions;

11 (3) acknowledges the need to continue working
12 with allies and partners to develop a coordinated ap-
13 proach to deter and prevent international hostage-
14 taking;

15 (4) condemns the practice of targeting and
16 wrongfully detaining Americans in order to threaten
17 American sovereignty and interfere with United
18 States foreign policy;

19 (5) supports efforts to ensure that the United
20 States Government hostage enterprise is properly
21 resourced and authorized to address the evolving dy-
22 namic of hostage-taking and wrongful detention, in-
23 cluding through the Hostage Response Group at the
24 National Security Council, the Hostage Recovery
25 Fusion Cell, the Special Presidential Envoy for Hos-

1 tage Affairs, and supporting departments and agen-
2 cies to speed the safe return of United States na-
3 tionals held hostage abroad and deter future hos-
4 tage-taking;

5 (6) commends the personnel, past and present,
6 of the hostage enterprise who have endeavored to
7 faithfully execute the mission of recovering Ameri-
8 cans unjustly held captive abroad; and

9 (7) recognizes August 19, 2014, as a solemn re-
10 membrance of this national security threat and the
11 United States Government's sacred obligation to
12 protect United States nationals abroad from being
13 taken captive unjustly.

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