

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 496

To oppose violations of religious freedom in Ukraine by Russia and armed groups commanded by Russia.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 28, 2021

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina (for himself, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. COHEN, Mr. HUDSON, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Ms. ESHOO, and Mr. HARRIS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committees on the Judiciary, and the Budget, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To oppose violations of religious freedom in Ukraine by Russia and armed groups commanded by Russia.

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

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Ukraine Religious
5 Freedom Support Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1 (1) Russia invaded, illegally occupied, and at-
2 tempted to annex the Crimea region of Ukraine in
3 February 2014, continues to occupy and control that
4 region, and has exercised control over part of the
5 Donbas region of eastern Ukraine since April 2014
6 through non-state armed groups and illegal entities
7 it has established, instigated, commanded, and sup-
8 ported, including with military and intelligence per-
9 sonnel on the ground from Russia.

10 (2) International humanitarian law, including
11 the Geneva Conventions, to which Russia is a signa-
12 tory, requires Russia to respect and protect the reli-
13 gious freedom of the inhabitants of the territory it
14 occupies or controls, including through organized
15 non-state armed groups and illegal entities it com-
16 mands and supports, and holds Russia responsible
17 for violations of religious freedom in this territory.

18 (3) According to the Department of State's
19 International Religious Freedom Reports, and other
20 reporting, violations of religious freedom in the Cri-
21 mea region of Ukraine since Russia invaded and oc-
22 cupied the territory have included abduction, deten-
23 tion and imprisonment, torture, forced psychiatric
24 hospitalizations, fines, restrictions on missionary ac-
25 tivities, confiscations of property, including churches

1 and meeting halls, expulsions and obstructions to re-
2 entry, denying registration of religious groups, van-
3 dalism, fines, and banning peaceful religious groups,
4 and targeted groups have included Muslim Crimean
5 Tatars, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly
6 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patri-
7 archate, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church,
8 Protestant Christians, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

9 (4) According to the Department of State's
10 International Religious Freedom Reports, violations
11 of religious freedom in the part of the Donbas region
12 of Ukraine controlled by armed groups commanded
13 by Russia have included detention and imprison-
14 ment, torture, confiscation of property, including
15 churches and meeting halls, physical assaults and
16 threats of violence, vandalism, fines, restrictions on
17 missionary activities, religious services, ceremonies,
18 gatherings, and literature, and banning of peaceful
19 religious groups, and targeted groups have included
20 the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly the
21 Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate, the
22 Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Protestant Chris-
23 tians, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

24 (5) The International Religious Freedom Act of
25 1998, as amended by the Frank R. Wolf Inter-

1 national Religious Freedom Act, requires the Presi-
2 dent to—

3 (A) designate a foreign country as a coun-
4 try of particular concern for religious freedom
5 when its government has engaged in or toler-
6 ated particularly severe violations of religious
7 freedom in that country over the previous 12
8 months;

9 (B) take one or more of the actions de-
10 scribed in paragraphs (9) through (15) of sec-
11 tion 405(a) of the International Religious Free-
12 dom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6445(a)), or com-
13 mensurate actions in substitution, not later
14 than 90 days, or 180 days in case of a delay
15 under paragraph (3), after the date of the des-
16 ignation of a country as a country of particular
17 concern for religious freedom; and

18 (C) designate a foreign country on a “Spe-
19 cial Watch List” when its government has en-
20 gaged in or tolerated severe violations of reli-
21 gious freedom in that country over the previous
22 12 months.

23 (6) The Secretary of State designated Russia
24 for the “Special Watch List” on November 28,
25 2018, and redesignated Russia for the “Special

1 Watch List” on December 18, 2019, and December
2 2, 2020.

3 (7) The National Security Strategy of the
4 United States issued in 2017, 2015, 2006, 2002,
5 2000, 1999, 1998, and 1997, committed the United
6 States to promoting international religious freedom
7 to advance the security, economic, and other na-
8 tional interests of the United States.

9 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

10 It is the policy of the United States—

11 (1) to never recognize the illegal, attempted an-
12 nexation of Crimea by the Government of the Russia
13 or the separation of any portion of Ukrainian terri-
14 tory through the use of military force; and

15 (2) to consider any alien who, while serving as
16 an official of the Government of Russia, was respon-
17 sible for or directly carried out particularly severe
18 violations of religious freedom in the sovereign terri-
19 tory of Ukraine that Russia illegally occupies or con-
20 trols, including through non-state armed groups and
21 illegal entities it commands and supports, to have
22 committed particularly severe violations of religious
23 freedom for purposes of applying section
24 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality

1 Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to any
2 such alien.

3 **SEC. 4. DESIGNATION OF RUSSIA AS A COUNTRY OF PAR-**
4 **TICULAR CONCERN FOR RELIGIOUS FREE-**
5 **DOM.**

6 For purposes of making a determination of whether
7 to designate Russia as a country of particular concern for
8 religious freedom under section 402 of the International
9 Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6442), the
10 President shall consider any particularly severe violation
11 of religious freedom in the territory of Ukraine that Rus-
12 sia occupies or controls, including controls through non-
13 state armed groups and illegal entities it commands and
14 supports, during the period of time that is the basis for
15 the determination and designation, to be a particularly se-
16 vere violation of religious freedom that the Government
17 of Russia has engaged in or tolerated.

18 **SEC. 5. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.**

19 The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of
20 complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010,
21 shall be determined by reference to the latest statement
22 titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this
23 Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record
24 by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, pro-

- 1 vided that such statement has been submitted prior to the
- 2 vote on passage.

