

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

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

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. WICKER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

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:

8 (1) Russia invaded the Crimea region of
9 Ukraine in February 2014, continues to occupy and
10 control that region, and has exercised control over

1 part of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine since
2 April 2014 through non-state armed groups and ille-
3 gal entities it has established, instigated, com-
4 manded, and supported, including with military and
5 intelligence personnel on the ground from Russia,
6 such as the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Repub-
7 lic and the Luhansk People's Republic.

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

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

1 dalism, fines, and banning peaceful religious groups,
2 and targeted groups have included Muslim Crimean
3 Tatars, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly
4 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patri-
5 archate, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church,
6 Protestant Christians, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

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

22 (5) The International Religious Freedom Act of
23 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401 et seq.) requires the Presi-
24 dent to—

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

7 (B) to take 15 actions, or commensurate
8 actions in substitution, following the designa-
9 tion of a country as a country of particular con-
10 cern for religious freedom; and

11 (C) designate a foreign country on a “Spe-
12 cial Watch List” when its government has en-
13 gaged in or tolerated severe violations of reli-
14 gious freedom in that country over the previous
15 12 months.

16 (6) On November 28, 2018, the Secretary of
17 State designated Russia on the “Special Watch
18 List”.

19 (7) The National Security Strategy of the
20 United States issued in 2017, 2015, 2006, 2002,
21 2000, 1999, 1998, and 1997 committed the United
22 States to promoting international religious freedom
23 to advance the security, economic, and other na-
24 tional interests of the United States.

1 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

2 It is the policy of the United States to consider—

3 (1) any alien who, while serving as an official
4 of the Government of Russia, was responsible for or
5 directly or indirectly carried out particularly severe
6 violations of religious freedom in the territory of
7 Ukraine that Russia occupies and controls, or con-
8 trols through non-state armed groups it commands,
9 and

10 (2) the spouse and children, if any, of such
11 alien,

12 to have committed particularly severe violations of reli-
13 gious freedom for purposes of applying section
14 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8
15 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to any such alien and
16 spouse and children of such alien.

17 **SEC. 4. DESIGNATION OF RUSSIA AS A COUNTRY OF PAR-**
18 **TICULAR CONCERN FOR RELIGIOUS FREE-**
19 **DOM.**

20 For purposes of making a determination of whether
21 to designate Russia as a country of particular concern for
22 religious freedom under section 402 of the International
23 Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6442), the
24 President shall consider any particularly severe violation
25 of religious freedom in the territory of Ukraine that Rus-
26 sia occupies and exercises controls, or controls through

1 non-state armed groups it commands, during the period
2 of time that is the basis for the determination and des-
3 ignation, to be a particularly severe violation of religious
4 freedom that the Government of Russia has engaged in
5 or tolerated.