



117TH 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 (for himself and Mrs. SHAHEEN) 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, illegally occupied, and at-
9 tempted to annex the Crimea region of Ukraine in
10 February 2014, continues to occupy and control that

1 region, and has exercised control over part of the
2 Donbas region of eastern Ukraine since April 2014
3 through non-state armed groups and illegal entities
4 it has established, instigated, commanded, and sup-
5 ported, including with military and intelligence per-
6 sonnel on the ground from Russia.

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 (6) The Secretary of State designated Russia
22 for the “Special Watch List” on November 28,
23 2018, and redesignated Russia for the “Special
24 Watch List” on December 18, 2019, and December
25 2, 2020.

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

7 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

8 It is the policy of the United States—

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

13 (2) to consider any alien who, while serving as
14 an official of the Government of Russia, was respon-
15 sible for or directly carried out particularly severe
16 violations of religious freedom in the sovereign terri-
17 tory of Ukraine that Russia illegally occupies or con-
18 trols, including through non-state armed groups and
19 illegal entities it commands and supports, to have
20 committed particularly severe violations of religious
21 freedom for purposes of applying section
22 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality
23 Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to any
24 such alien.

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

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

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

17 The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of
18 complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010,
19 shall be determined by reference to the latest statement
20 titled "Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation" for this
21 Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record
22 by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, pro-
23 vided that such statement has been submitted prior to the
24 vote on passage.