

Statement for the Record – Congressman Brendan F. Boyle
HFAC Member Day Hearing

Chairman Engel and Ranking Member McCaul,

Thank you for holding today's Member Day hearing to hear from members that do not serve on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. I value the time I served on this committee in the 114th and 115th Congress and remain committed to working on issues I pushed for as a member of this committee.

Today, I'd like to focus on Syria. Chairman Engel, you have been a relentless supporter of the Syrian people. To further support them, I believe the committee should condemn the attacks carried out by the Russian government and the Assad regime on hospitals and medical personnel. Since 2011, Physicians for Human Rights systematically documented the ongoing assault on health care facilities and personnel. They found 530 attacks on hospitals carried out by the Assad regime and Russian forces and 914 medical workers killed. These numbers should alarm all of us. These are not accidental attacks. They are deliberate targets in order to further harm and intimidate the local populace.

These attacks are still ongoing today. In August, the United Nations Secretary General opened an investigation into the hospital bombings. Syrian health workers said they believed that a United Nations-sponsored list intended for deconfliction, so hospitals would not be attacked, was later used by the Russian government and Assad as a target list. From the end of April to mid-September, 54 hospitals and clinics in Syrian opposition territory were attacked, according to the United Nations human rights office. At least seven had tried to protect themselves by adding their location to the deconfliction list. In October, the *New York Times* completed an investigation with specific and clear evidence proving the Russian Air Force purposely bombed these hospitals. Last month, it was reported that the Russian government is actively working to stymie any efforts by the United Nations to publicize the findings of their investigation. As if the situation can't get any worse, Physicians for Human Rights released a report earlier this month documenting how the Assad regime has successfully made medical assistance to his enemies a crime, through a "counterterrorism" law. These workers are subject to arrest, detention and torture.

As the United Nations investigation advances, U.S. leadership is sorely needed. These atrocities cannot become a norm in conflicts. Therefore, I urge this committee to markup my resolution, H.Res.395 – condemning the senseless attacks on hospitals and medical personnel in Syria. This bipartisan resolution was introduced with a member of this committee and fellow co-chair of the Friends of a Free, Stable and Democratic Syria Caucus, Congressman Adam Kinzinger.

It is important that these blatant violations of international law cease and those committing them are held accountable. Moving this legislation forward would send a clear message to Assad and Putin that the international community is watching, and we will hold them accountable for the intentional targeting of vulnerable civilians and those helping the sick and wounded.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. I look forward to working with you all on this.