

CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN TO FULFILL THEIR
PROMISES OF ASSISTANCE IN THIS CASE OF
ROBERT LEVINSON, THE LONGEST HELD UNITED STATES
CIVILIAN IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY

MARKUP

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

H. Res. 148

—————
FEBRUARY 11, 2016
—————

Serial No. 114-142

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**CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN TO FULFILL
THEIR PROMISES OF ASSISTANCE IN THIS CASE OF
ROBERT LEVINSON, THE LONGEST HELD UNITED
STATES CIVILIAN IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2015

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:45 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The subcommittee will come to order.

We meet today pursuant to notice to mark up the ranking member's bipartisan resolution aimed at securing the return of Robert Levinson, the longest-held United States hostage in our Nation's history.

And so as your offices were previously notified, it is the intent of the Chair to consider the following items en bloc which members have before them—House Resolution 148, calling on the Government of Iran to fulfill its repeated promises of assistance in the case of Robert Levinson, and Ros-Lehtinen-Deutch Amendment 31 in the nature of a substitute to House Resolution 435.

[The information referred to follows:]

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 148

Calling on the Government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, the longest held United States civilian in our Nation's history.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 10, 2015

Mr. DEUTCH (for himself, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and Mr. DIAZ-BALART) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Calling on the Government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, the longest held United States civilian in our Nation's history.

Whereas United States citizen Robert Levinson is a retired agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a resident of Coral Springs, Florida, the husband of Christine Levinson, and father of their 7 children;

Whereas Robert Levinson traveled from Dubai, UAE, to Kish Island, Iran, on March 8, 2007;

Whereas, after traveling to Kish Island and checking into the Hotel Maryam, Robert Levinson disappeared on March 9, 2007;

Whereas, in December 2007, Robert Levinson's wife, Christine, traveled to Kish Island to retrace Mr. Levinson's steps and met with officials of the Government of Iran who pledged to help in the investigation;

Whereas, for more than 8 years, the United States Government has continually pressed the Government of Iran to provide any information on the whereabouts of Robert Levinson and to help ensure his prompt and safe return to his family;

Whereas officials of the Government of Iran promised their continued assistance to the relatives of Robert Levinson during the visit of the family to the Islamic Republic of Iran in December 2007;

Whereas, in November 2010, the Levinson family received a video of Mr. Levinson in captivity, representing the first proof of life since his disappearance and providing some initial indications that he was being held somewhere in southwest Asia;

Whereas, in April 2011, the Levinson family received a series of pictures of Mr. Levinson, which provided further indications that he was being held somewhere in southwest Asia;

Whereas Secretary John Kerry stated on August 28, 2013, "The United States respectfully asks the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to work cooperatively with us in our efforts to help U.S. citizen Robert Levinson.";

Whereas, on September 28, 2013, during the first direct phone conversation between the leaders of the United States and Iran since 1979, President Barack Obama raised the case of Robert Levinson to President of Iran

Hassan Rouhani and urged the President of Iran to help locate Mr. Levinson and reunite him with his family;

Whereas, on August 29, 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry again stated that the United States “respectfully request the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran work cooperatively with us to find Mr. Levinson and bring him home.”;

Whereas the United States is currently engaged in regular, direct negotiations with the Government of Iran over its nuclear program;

Whereas March 9, 2015, marks the 2,922nd day since Mr. Levinson’s disappearance, and he is now the longest held United States civilian in our Nation’s history; and

Whereas the FBI has announced a \$5,000,000 reward for information leading to Mr. Levinson’s safe return: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House—

2 (1) recognizes that Robert Levinson is the long-
3 est held United States civilian in our Nation’s his-
4 tory;

5 (2) notes the pledges by current officials of the
6 Government of Iran to provide their Government’s
7 assistance in the case of Robert Levinson;

8 (3) urges the Government of Iran, as a humani-
9 tarian gesture, to intensify its cooperation on the
10 case of Robert Levinson and to immediately share
11 the results of its investigation into the disappearance

1 of Robert Levinson with the United States Govern-
2 ment;

3 (4) urges the President and the allies of the
4 United States to continue to raise with officials of
5 the Government of Iran the case of Robert Levinson
6 at every opportunity, notwithstanding serious dis-
7 agreements the United States Government has with
8 the Government of Iran on a broad array of issues,
9 including human rights, the nuclear program of
10 Iran, the Middle East peace process, regional sta-
11 bility, and international terrorism; and

12 (5) expresses sympathy to the family of Robert
13 Levinson for their anguish and expresses hope that
14 their ordeal can be brought to an end in the near
15 future.

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H. RES. 148
OFFERED BY MS. ROS-LEHTINEN OF FLORIDA
AND MR. DEUTCH OF FLORIDA**

Strike the preamble and insert the following:

Whereas United States citizen Robert Levinson is a retired agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), a resident of Coral Springs, Florida, the husband of Christine Levinson, and father of their 7 children;

Whereas Robert Levinson traveled from Dubai, UAE, to Kish Island, Iran, on March 8, 2007;

Whereas after traveling to Kish Island and checking into the Hotel Maryam, Robert Levinson disappeared on March 9, 2007;

Whereas, in December 2007, Robert Levinson's wife, Christine, traveled to Kish Island to retrace Mr. Levinson's steps and met with officials of the Government of Iran who pledged to help in the investigation;

Whereas, for more than 8 years, the United States Government has continually pressed the Government of Iran to provide any information on the whereabouts of Robert Levinson and to help ensure his prompt and safe return to his family;

Whereas officials of the Government of Iran promised their continued assistance to the relatives of Robert Levinson during the visit of the family to the Islamic Republic of Iran in December 2007;

Whereas, in November 2010, the Levinson family received a video of Mr. Levinson in captivity, representing the first proof of life since his disappearance and providing some initial indications that he was being held somewhere in southwest Asia;

Whereas, in April 2011, the Levinson family received a series of pictures of Mr. Levinson, which provided further indications that he was being held somewhere in southwest Asia;

Whereas Secretary John Kerry stated on August 28, 2013, “The United States respectfully asks the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to work cooperatively with us in our efforts to help U.S. citizen Robert Levinson.”;

Whereas, on September 28, 2013, during the first direct phone conversation between the heads of the Government of the United States and Iran since 1979, President Barack Obama raised the case of Robert Levinson to President of Iran Hassan Rouhani and urged the President of Iran to help locate Mr. Levinson and reunite him with his family;

Whereas, on August 29, 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry again stated that the United States “respectfully request the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran work cooperatively with us to find Mr. Levinson and bring him home.”;

Whereas on July 14, 2015, the Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany concluded 20 months of negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program;

Whereas, on January 16, 2016, the Government of Iran released five United States citizens detained in Iran, Jason

Rezaian of California, Saeed Abedini of Idaho, Amir Mirzaei Hekmati of Michigan, Matthew Trevithick of Massachusetts, and Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari;

Whereas, on January 17, 2016, President Obama stated “even as we rejoice in the safe return of others, we will never forget about Bob”, referring to Robert Levinson, and that “each and every day but especially today our hearts are with the Levinson family and we will never rest until their family is whole again.”;

Whereas, on January 19, 2016, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest stated that the United States Government had “secured a commitment from the Iranians to use the channel that has now been opened to secure the release of those individuals that we know were being held by Iran. . .to try and gather information about Mr. Levinson’s possible whereabouts”;

Whereas, on November 26, 2013, Robert Levinson became the longest held United States hostage in our Nation’s history; and

Whereas the FBI has announced a \$5,000,000 reward for information leading to Mr. Levinson’s safe return: Now, therefore, be it

Strike all after the resolving clause and insert the following:

That the House of Representatives—

- 1 (1) recognizes that Robert Levinson is the long-
- 2 est held United States hostage in our Nation’s his-
- 3 tory;

1 (2) notes the repeated pledges by and renewed
2 commitment of officials of the Government of Iran
3 to provide their Government's assistance in the case
4 of Robert Levinson;

5 (3) urges the Government of Iran, as a humani-
6 tarian gesture, to act on its promises to assist in the
7 case of Robert Levinson and to immediately provide
8 to the United States Government all available infor-
9 mation from all entities of the Government of Iran
10 regarding the disappearance of Robert Levinson;

11 (4) urges the President and the allies of the
12 United States to continue to raise with officials of
13 the Government of Iran the case of Robert Levinson
14 at every opportunity, notwithstanding ongoing and
15 serious disagreements the United States Government
16 has with the Government of Iran on a broad array
17 of issues, including Iran's ballistic missile program,
18 sponsorship of international terrorism, and human
19 rights abuses; and

20 (5) expresses sympathy to the family of Robert
21 Levinson for their anguish and expresses hope that
22 their ordeal can be brought to an end in the near
23 future.

Amend the title so as to read: "A resolution calling
on the Government of Iran to follow through on repeated
promises of assistance in the case of Robert Levinson,

the longest held United States hostage in our Nation's history.”



Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Without objection, these items are considered as read and will be considered en bloc. After I make some opening remarks and the ranking member speaks, we will be glad to recognize any other members seeking recognition, and without objection all members may have 5 days to submit statements for the record on today's business.

The Chair recognizes herself. First, I would like to welcome Christine, Robert Levinson's wife, and their son, Dan, in the audience as well.

I wish I could say that it is a pleasure to see you today but, unfortunately, seeing you here at this markup means that it is another two birthdays and another two anniversaries that you have missed with Bob for 3,261 days your family has had to cope with not knowing where he is or even how he is.

But just know that we will not give up the fight to bring Bob home to you and all of his loved ones and friends and we will continue to demand that Iran honor its commitment and we will continue to press the administration to help bring Bob home.

We will continue to raise this issue ourselves, which is why I am pleased to join the leader in this cause, Ted Deutch, in introducing this resolution here before us today yet again.

As South Florida residents, you couldn't have asked for a better and more determined representative for your cause than Ted Deutch.

I have seen how important Bob is to Ted. His number-one goal is reuniting him with you, the members of his family. I can only say that we all support Ted in his efforts.

We will continue to work with Mr. Deutch in his fight for your family, and because it is an issue that is so dear to Ted I want to yield the balance of my time to give Ted the opportunity to speak as long as he wants.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I want to—I would like to begin by thanking for your vigorous commitment to bringing awareness to Bob Levinson's case and always pushing for Bob's return.

I want to thank the many members of the subcommittee who have co-sponsored this resolution. I would also like to welcome Christine and Dan to our markup today.

Last month, we received word that our Government negotiated for the release of four Americans in prison in Iran. It was welcome news.

These are Americans who were wrongfully held and the move brought comfort to the families, corrected an injustice and made

very clear that the United States does not forget about its own people.

Over the years, I have worked closely with Congressman Kildee, Congressman Huffman and Congressman Labrador to continue to raise Bob's case as well as those of Amir Hekmati, Saeed Abedini and Jason Rezaian.

And I am so pleased that each of their constituents has returned home to the United States to be with their family and their friends.

Their nightmares are over. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the Levinsons. For Bob, now the longest-held civilian hostage in our history, and for his family, this nightmare continues.

March 9th will mark 9 years since Bob disappeared on Iran's Kish Island. That's 9 years of birthdays with his seven children, anniversaries with his wife, Christine, weddings, the births of three of his four grandchildren and many other important milestones that should have been—should have been joyous occasions for the Levinsons that should have been celebrated together as a family and should have created happy memories that one carries with them for their entire life.

Today, it is an honor to have Bob's wife, Christine, and his eldest son, Dan, here. This is a family who for 9 years has never given up and has worked tirelessly to bring their husband and father home.

Your family deserves to feel the same elation and relief as the families of those other Americans who were released and rest assured we will not give up until Bob is returned.

Bob dedicated his life to serving this country, spending 28 years with the FBI and earlier with the DEA. Bob loves this country dearly and now this country must come through for Bob.

There have been moments of optimism over the years. The Levinson family has received proof of life in the form of pictures and video.

We know that throughout the course of nuclear negotiations with Iran, Secretary Kerry, Under Secretary Sherman and others raised Bob's case at every single meeting.

But that is not enough. Whatever information Iran has about Bob needs to be provided now so that Bob can be brought home.

The resolution before us today calls on Iran to follow through on its repeated promises of assisting the United States in locating Bob.

I am proud to introduce this resolution with my colleague and good friend, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, as well as our fellow Floridians, Congressman Diaz Balart and Congressman Wasserman Shultz.

The resolution recognizes that despite our many disagreements with Iran, our Government and those of our partners and allies must continue to press Iran for information about Bob at every opportunity.

Both President Obama and Secretary Kerry have repeatedly expressed their commitment to securing Bob's release. After the release of the other Americans, President Obama stated on national television that, and I quote,

“Iran has agreed to deepen our coordination as we work to locate Robert Levinson, missing from Iran for more than 8 years.

Even as we rejoice in the safe return for others we will never forget about Bob. Each and every day and especially today, our hearts are with the Levinson family. We will not rest until their family is whole again.”

Today, Iran seeks to be part of the international community. But let us make no mistake, a country that sponsors terrorism, that threatens to wipe other countries off the map and that holds innocent Americans hostage will not be welcomed into the community of responsible nations.

For anyone who is watching this markup online, for anyone in the audience, I encourage you to tweet about Bob Levinson, using the hashtag #whataboutbob.

We have got to keep talking about this case. We have got to raise the level of awareness and we must encourage our Government and the governments of our allies and anyone who can be helpful to continue to work tirelessly to find Bob and to bring him home.

Christine and Dan, please know that the United States Congress stands with you. We will not forget about Bob. And I thank my colleagues for the support of this very important resolution today, and I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Deutch.

As always, when you speak about this case you do it in such an eloquent manner. Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us.

Mr. Chabot is recognized.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to commend you for bringing this important timely legislation before the subcommittee today and I admire your dedication and Mr. Deutch’s dedication in particular and other members of this committee who have displayed basically being relentless about bringing to light what happened and where Robert Levinson is and to bring him home to his family who, as you have mentioned, is here today.

And as has been mentioned, Mr. Levinson is now the longest-held U.S. civilian in American history and Iranian officials must live up to their commitments to work through the case and release the results of the investigation into Mr. Levinson’s disappearance to the United States.

While I recognize that U.S. officials have repeatedly called for the safe return of Mr. Levinson and requested Iranian assistance to help a fellow American citizen, the administration and our allies must do more.

So I join with both Chair Ros-Lehtinen and Mr. Deutch in urging the President and our allies to continue pressing Iran on the case of Robert Levinson at every opportunity, despite our many unresolved differences.

I urge my colleagues to support the legislation and I yield back my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Chabot.

Mr. Connolly is recognized.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Let me, first of all, express my deep concern to the Levinson family who are here today and to thank my colleague, Mr. Deutch es-

pecially, and you, Madam Chairman, for keeping this issue at the forefront of our relationship, evolving as it is, with Iran.

It is never okay for a U.S. citizen to be detained without charge, without explanation. Mr. Levinson is the longest-held American civilian in our Nation's history.

Accountability is important. So if Iran wants to take its place in the family of nations, if it wants to end its own self-inflicted isolation, it must account for Bob Levinson.

Thank you both for your leadership.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. Zeldin.

Mr. ZELDIN. I thank the chairwoman and ranking member for your leadership to try to not only get more information on Mr. Levinson but to hopefully eventually be able to bring him home.

I had the pleasure of speaking with the family of Mr. Levinson before the start of today's markup and it is clear that they are as determined as ever to get answers to questions left long overdue.

Just last week, Congressman Mike Pompeo, Frank LoBiondo and I went to the Iranian interests section here in Washington, DC, to file visa applications.

We sent a letter to the Ayatollah. Part of that request is to get more information on Mr. Levinson's whereabouts. Hopefully, we'll have a positive response and I just want to be part of working with the chairwoman and the ranking member to hopefully bring Mr. Levinson home.

I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Zeldin.

Mr. Meadows.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I want to not only voice my support but certainly redouble our efforts to continue to keep this particular issue that you and our good friend, Mr. Deutch, continues to raise on a regular basis.

Fundamentally, that if we allow the American people to believe that we are going to tolerate a regime that not only has unbelievable humanitarian atrocities that continue to get leveled on an almost daily basis but that we are going to tolerate it as an American people, it sends the wrong message.

And so I just want to thank you for your leadership, thank Mr. Deutch for his continued involvement on behalf of his constituency and we will all of us join together in a bipartisan way to support this effort.

Yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, sir.

Does any other member seek recognition on this measure?

Hearing no further requests for recognition, the question occurs on adopting the items under consideration en bloc.

All those in favor say aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

All opposed say no. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it and the en bloc items are approved.

Without objection, House Resolution 148 as amended will be reported to the full committee in the form of a single amendment in the nature of a substitute and staff is directed to make any technical and conforming changes.

I want to thank all of the members and staff for their assistance and cooperation that went in today's important markup and we will move on to regular order of our subcommittee.

And I want to—we want to once again thank the Levinson family for appearing before us. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 2:09 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman**

February 4, 2016

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN meeting of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

DATE: February 11, 2016

TIME: 1:45 p.m.

MARKUP OF: H. Res. 148, Calling on the government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, the longest held United States civilian in our Nation's history.

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON the Middle East and North Africa MARKUP

Day Thursday Date 2/11/16 Room 2172

Starting Time 1:45 p.m. Ending Time 2:09 p.m.

Recesses 0 (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session

Executive (closed) Session

Televised

Electronically Recorded (taped)

Stenographic Record

BILLS FOR MARKUP: (Include bill number(s) and title(s) of legislation.)

H. Res. 148, Calling on the government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, the longest held United States civilian in our nation's history.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Reps. Ros-Lehtinen, Chabot, Deutch, Clawson, Cicilline, Grayson, Frankel and Boyle.

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

None

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE MARKUP: (Attach copies of legislation and amendments.)

Refer H. Res. 148 to the full Committee.

RECORDED VOTES TAKEN (FOR MARKUP): (Attach final vote tally sheet listing each member.)

| <u>Subject</u> | <u>Yeas</u> | <u>Nays</u> | <u>Present</u> | <u>Not Voting</u> |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------|
|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------|

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or
TIME ADJOURNED 2:09 p.m.


Subcommittee Staff Director

**2/11/16 Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Markup Summary**

The Chair obtained unanimous consent to consider the following items (previously provided to Members) *en bloc*:

1. H. Res. 148 (Deutsch), "Calling on the government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance in this case of Robert Levinson, the longest held United States civilian in our Nation's history."

- a. Ros-Lehtinen 31, an amendment in the nature of a substitute to H. Res. 277;

The items considered *en bloc* were agreed to by voice vote, and the measures, as amended, were ordered favorably reported to the Full Committee by unanimous consent.

The Subcommittee adjourned.