Suspend the Rules and Pass the Bill, H.R. 5408, with an Amendment

(The amendment strikes all after the enacting clause and inserts a new text)

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5408

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 12, 2019

Mr. Wilson of South Carolina (for himself, Mr. Cleaver, Mr. Meadows, Ms. Moore, Mr. Bilirakis, Ms. Eshoo, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Harris, Mr. Veasey, Mr. Quigley, Mr. Lipinski, and Ms. Kap-Tur) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, 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”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Russia invaded the Crimea region of Ukraine in February 2014, continues to occupy and control that region, and has exercised control over part of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine since April 2014 through non-state armed groups and illegal entities it has established, instigated, commanded, and supported, including with military and intelligence personnel on the ground from Russia.

(2) International humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions, to which Russia is a signatory, requires Russia to respect and protect the religious freedom of the inhabitants of the territory it occupies or controls, including through organized non-state armed groups and illegal entities it commands and supports, and holds Russia responsible for violations of religious freedom in this territory.

(3) According to the Department of State’s International Religious Freedom Reports, and other reporting, violations of religious freedom in the Crimea region of Ukraine since Russia invaded and occupied the territory have included abduction, detention and imprisonment, torture, forced psychiatric hospitalizations, fines, restrictions on missionary activities, confiscations of property, including churches
and meeting halls, expulsions and obstructions to re-entry, denying registration of religious groups, vandalism, fines, and banning peaceful religious groups, and targeted groups have included Muslim Crimean Tatars, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Protestant Christians, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

(4) According to the Department of State’s International Religious Freedom Reports, violations of religious freedom in the part of the Donbas region of Ukraine controlled by armed groups commanded by Russia have included detention and imprisonment, torture, confiscation of property, including churches and meeting halls, physical assaults and threats of violence, vandalism, fines, restrictions on missionary activities, religious services, ceremonies, gatherings, and literature, and banning of peaceful religious groups, and targeted groups have included the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, formerly the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Protestant Christians, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

(5) The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, as amended by the Frank R. Wolf Inter-
national Religious Freedom Act, requires the President to—

(A) designate a foreign country as a country of particular concern for religious freedom when its government has engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom in that country over the previous 12 months;

(B) take one or more of the actions described in paragraphs (9) through (15) of section 405(a) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6445(a)), or commensurate actions in substitution, not later than 90 days, or 180 days in case of a delay under paragraph (3), after the date of the designation of a country as a country of particular concern for religious freedom; and

(C) designate a foreign country on a “Special Watch List” when its government has engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom in that country over the previous 12 months.

(6) On December 18, 2019, the Secretary of State re-designated Russia for the “Special Watch List”.


SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to consider any alien who, while serving as an official of the Government of Russia, was responsible for or directly carried out particularly severe violations of religious freedom in the sovereign territory of Ukraine that Russia illegally occupies or controls, including through non-state armed groups and illegal entities it commands and supports, to have committed particularly severe violations of religious freedom for purposes of applying section 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to any such alien.

SEC. 4. DESIGNATION OF RUSSIA AS A COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

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