

Suspend the Rules And Pass the Bill, H. Res. 901, with Amendments

(The amendments consist of a new preamble and a complete new text)

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 901

Expressing support for democracy and human rights in Pakistan.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 30, 2023

Mr. McCORMICK (for himself and Mr. KILDEE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for democracy and human rights in Pakistan.

Whereas Pakistan is an important and valued partner of the United States;

Whereas, on December 10, 1948, Pakistan became one of the original signatories to, and supported the creation of, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR);

Whereas, on June 23, 2010, Pakistan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);

Whereas, following the end of the most recent period of military rule in 2008, Pakistan completed its first peaceful transition of power between civilian governments led by

different political parties in 2013, but the military continues to exert undue influence on the politics of the country;

Whereas, during previous elections, most recently in 2018, election monitors expressed concern about constraints on the freedom of expression and freedom of association and noted allegations of influence by the military-led establishment on the electoral process;

Whereas the Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices has often highlighted significant human rights issues in Pakistan across multiple years, including unlawful, arbitrary, and extrajudicial killings, forced disappearance and arbitrary detention by the state or its agents, the taking of political prisoners, serious restrictions on free expression and media, and substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association;

Whereas, on April 9, 2022, the National Assembly voted to remove Imran Khan as Prime Minister through a vote of no-confidence motion;

Whereas, on August 10, 2023, President Arif Alvi dissolved Pakistan's National Assembly on the advice of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to allow for new elections, although the Election Commission of Pakistan subsequently announced the postponement of elections until February 2024 to redraw constituencies of the National Assembly to reflect the 2023 Census;

Whereas, on September 1, 2023, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said the Government "was committed to safeguarding and upholding the rights of all its citizens", and that the Government "would provide con-

stitutional continuity till the next general elections are held in the country”;

Whereas, on February 8, 2024, millions of Pakistanis participated in Pakistan’s general election, with record numbers of women, youth, and members of religious and ethnic minority groups registered to vote;

Whereas Pakistan’s 2024 general election was marked by allegations by credible international and local observers of interference in the electoral process, including electoral violence, intimidation, arrest of political actors, restrictions to freedom of assembly, restrictions on freedom of expression, and restrictions on access to the internet and telecommunications;

Whereas, on February 9, 2024, the Department of State noted that it shared the assessment of observers that the election included “undue restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly”, condemned “electoral violence” as well as “restrictions on the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms”, and called for the full investigation of fraud or interference in Pakistan’s general elections;

Whereas the Constitution of Pakistan states that “the Federal Government shall have control and command of the Armed Forces”, and the oath taken by members of the Armed Forces swears they will “uphold the Constitution” and “not engage in any political activities”;

Whereas an essential safeguard of democracy is civilian command and control of apolitical military and security forces; and

Whereas democracy, development, rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) affirms its strong support for democracy in
3 Pakistan, including free and fair elections reflecting
4 the will of the people of Pakistan;

5 (2) calls on the President and the Secretary of
6 State to strengthen engagement with the Govern-
7 ment of Pakistan to ensure democracy, human
8 rights, and the rule of law are upheld;

9 (3) urges the Government of Pakistan to up-
10 hold democratic and electoral institutions, human
11 rights, and the rule of law, and respect the funda-
12 mental guarantees of due process, freedom of press,
13 freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech of the
14 people of Pakistan;

15 (4) condemns attempts to suppress the people
16 of Pakistan's participation in their democracy, in-
17 cluding through harassment, intimidation, violence,
18 arbitrary detention, restrictions on access to the
19 internet and telecommunications, or any violation of
20 their human, civil, or political rights;

21 (5) condemns any effort to subvert the political,
22 electoral, or judicial processes of Pakistan; and

1 (6) urges the full and independent investigation
2 of claims of interference or irregularities in Paki-
3 stan's February 2024 election.