

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, this bill is bipartisan and passed out of our committee unanimously last month.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I also urge the passage of H.R. 1339, the Precision Agriculture Satellite Connectivity Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1339.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1630

DEMANDING THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA IMMEDIATELY RELEASE MARK SWIDAN

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H. Res. 90) demanding that the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Communist Party of China immediately release Mark Swidan, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H. RES. 90

Whereas Mark Swidan is being unjustly and arbitrarily detained by the Government of the People's Republic of China, according to the United States Government and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Working Group on Arbitrary Detention;

Whereas, Mark Swidan is a United States citizen from Luling, Texas, and is a resident of Houston, Texas;

Whereas, on November 13, 2012, Mark Swidan was abducted by officers of the Public Security Bureau while on a business trip to the People's Republic of China, and on December 21, 2012, Swidan was formally arrested following an indictment issued by the Public Prosecutions Office of the People's Procuratorate of Jiangmen City alleging that Swidan was part of a criminal conspiracy with 11 other individuals to manufacture and traffic drugs;

Whereas, on April 30, 2019, a PRC court sentenced Swidan to death, which he has appealed;

Whereas PRC security officials repeatedly attempted to coerce Swidan into signing a confession, but Swidan refused to sign a confession pleaded not guilty;

Whereas, according to evidence evaluated by the UNHRC Working Group on Arbitrary Detention—

(1) no drugs were found on Swidan or in his hotel room;

(2) the prosecution did not produce any forensic evidence of the alleged offenses;

(3) records in Swidan's passport indicate he was not in the People's Republic of China during the time of the offenses; and

(4) the 11 other individuals indicted in relation to the alleged conspiracy could not identify Swidan;

Whereas PRC officials have maliciously and systematically denied Swidan's mother Katherine Swidan, a resident of Texas, and other members of his family the ability to contact him;

Whereas the PRC have denied and continue to deny United States diplomats full consular access to Swidan, in violation of international norms;

Whereas Swidan's detention has been and continues to be inhumane, and includes exposure to extreme weather conditions, sleep deprivation, and physical and psychological abuse;

Whereas Swidan's health has precipitously deteriorated and PRC security officials continue to deny independent or competent medical care and evaluation to Swidan;

Whereas humanitarian organizations of the United States, including the Dui Hua Foundation, which helped put this case before the Working Group, and the Global Liberty Alliance, which has asked the Sister Cities programs to sever relationships with Jiangmen until Swidan is released, have sought to highlight the injustice and conditions of Swidan's detention;

Whereas the UNHRC Working Group on Arbitrary Detention—

(1) found that Swidan is being held in violation of customary international law;

(2) emphasized the nonconformity by the PRC with international norms, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and

(3) stressed that "the appropriate remedy would be to release Swidan immediately and accord him an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations, in accordance with international law": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) demands that the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party immediately release Mark Swidan;

(2) condemns the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party for refusing to provide Swidan with—

(A) regular communication with his family;

(B) access to United States diplomats; and

(C) independent and competent medical care and evaluation; and

(3) calls on the United States Government to deepen and prioritize efforts to secure the release of Swidan, including by—

(A) urging PRC counterparts at every level of engagement to release Swidan; and

(B) using the voice and vote of United States diplomats in international forums to highlight Swidan's case.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Ms. MANNING) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, Mark Swidan is an American, a Texan, and has been a hostage of the Chinese Communist Party for more than a decade. We stand together to demand his release and an end to his torture by CCP officials.

In 2012, Mark was wrongfully detained in China for a crime he clearly did not commit. The U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has found that it was impossible for him to have committed any of the crimes he is charged with. In fact, Mr. Speaker, he was not even in China at the time the CCP says that these false crimes were committed.

Since his abduction in 2012, Mark has been grossly abused in Chinese custody. He has been held for more than a decade in temporary detention facilities intended for brief custody. He remains caged in a small, crowded cell that is freezing in the winter and sweltering in the summer. The toilet is a hole in the ground; the lights are never turned off; and he has no regular access to sunlight, a bed, or hot water.

Chinese officials have denied him proper medical care. Guards have broken his hands several times, and he has suffered a dislocated knee. Mark has lost almost 100 pounds. He suffers from tooth and gum disease, and his mouth bleeds every day. Mark has only been allowed to speak with his family a handful of times. His ordeal has taken a terrible toll on his physical and mental health.

Just last week, the People's Republic of China denied Mark's appeal and upheld the death penalty with a 2-year suspended death sentence. Threatening an American citizen with death for a crime that he could not have possibly committed is a brazen human rights violation and a disgusting example of CCP's hostage diplomacy.

Protecting Americans abroad is a priority mission of the State Department, yet State has failed to secure Mark's release or hold the CCP accountable for its gross violation of his basic human rights. Instead, the Biden administration continues to prioritize engagement with the PRC over all else, even the safety of American citizens.

This bipartisan resolution before us today unanimously passed the Foreign Affairs Committee in February. It condemns the CCP for their violation of international law and demands the immediate release of Mr. Swidan. Furthermore, it urges the Biden administration to hold the CCP accountable for its blatant violation of human rights and international law.

I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CLOUD), my good friend, for introducing this resolution which deserves our unanimous support.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MANNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution before us today. It is

not just timely; it is urgently important.

Earlier this month, a court in the People's Republic of China denied an appeal by U.S. national Mark Swidan, who has been wrongly detained in China, and upheld his death penalty with a 2-year suspended death sentence.

The PRC has detained Mark since his arrest for drug-related crimes in 2012, even though he was not convicted until 2019. He has been arbitrarily detained for more than 10 years and has been denied regular communication with his family, regular access to United States' consular officials, and has not had access to competent medical care and treatment.

Swidan's detention conditions have included exposure to extreme weather conditions, sleep deprivation, and physical and psychological abuse, leading tragically to Mark's attempting to take his own life.

This is, simply put, a travesty of justice. Mr. Speaker, no concrete evidence has been provided to justify the charges against Mr. Swidan. In 2020, a United Nations body confirmed what we already knew, that Mr. Swidan has been arbitrarily detained in violation of international law, and we call for his swift release.

Mr. Speaker, this body needs to come together today to stand up for Mr. Swidan and make clear to Beijing that his inhumane treatment is unacceptable.

H. Res. 90 is a bipartisan measure led by Representative CLOUD that passed out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee unanimously. It condemns the PRC for its mistreatment of Mark and calls for his immediate release. It also asks the Biden administration to redouble its efforts to highlight the case of Mr. Swidan internationally and to help secure his release through diplomacy.

Though the court has provided Mr. Swidan with a 2-year reprieve on his death sentence, we cannot afford to wait that long to correct the injustice he has suffered. By passing this resolution today, the House makes clear to the People's Republic of China that it should release Mark Swidan immediately.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this timely resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CLOUD), the author of this bill.

Mr. CLOUD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for his support in getting Mark Swidan back to his home and to his family. I also thank the ranking member for her support, as well.

Mark Swidan is a native Texan from Luling who is currently being detained in China on fabricated drug charges and faces an impending death sentence.

Mark was arrested on November 13, 2012, while on a trip to China to pro-

cure furnishings for his home and business. Chinese authorities burst into his hotel room while he was on the phone with his family and, without showing any warrant, arrested him and confiscated his photography equipment, wallet, tablet, passport, and identity card.

They originally told him he was being held as a witness, but that rapidly changed. Mark was accused of being involved in the manufacturing and trafficking of drugs, leading to Chinese officials trying to coerce him into signing a false confession.

Mark maintained his innocence and his integrity and has rejected their attempts to this day. Nonetheless, Mark has been imprisoned in China for over 10 years, despite the fact that no drugs were ever found on Swidan or in his hotel room, and the prosecution did not produce any evidence tying him to the drugs. The 11 other individuals indicted on the same charges could not identify Mark, and records in Mark's passport show that he was not even in China during the time of the alleged offense.

As a result, Mark hasn't slept in the dark for over 10 years and is exposed to extreme heat in the summer and freezing cold in the winter. His hands have been broken a number of times. Mark faces abuse by his captors and has been denied an independent medical examination despite his deteriorating health in the detentionment facility.

A few weeks ago, China upheld Mark Swidan's death sentence. It is my hope that this resolution will signal to China that this death sentence should not be enforced, and that Mark should be sent home.

Additionally, this resolution calls on the administration to use all the tools at their disposal to secure Mark Swidan's release.

The People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party have a history of capturing innocent people and using them as political pawns. This needs to stop. Unfortunately for them, though, Mark has defiantly refused to be coerced as he waits on us to secure his release.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all my colleagues in Congress to support this resolution and for our State Department to redouble their efforts and use every means available to bring Mark Swidan home.

Ms. MANNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, the American people send us to Washington to represent them, to advance the national interest, and most importantly, to keep them safe. When the life and dignity of any American is challenged or undermined, it is our duty as lawmakers to speak out and take action.

That is why it is vital that this body condemn the People's Republic of China for its unjust and arbitrary detention and inhumane treatment of American citizen Mark Swidan. That is

why it is vital that this body demand that Mr. Swidan be swiftly released and returned to the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me and support this important resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, if we are seen as a weak nation, we will be treated as such. Appeasement only invites aggression. The U.S. must not tolerate these brazen acts of hostage diplomacy. I wish that Mark Swidan could somehow hear us in this Chamber today to know that he is not forgotten. However, I know that his tireless advocate, his mother, Katherine, is listening; and I know that his CCP captors and abusers are listening, too.

Our unified bipartisan message to them is simple: Free Mark Swidan now.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 90, calling for the immediate release of U.S. Citizen Mark Swidan, whose wrongful and arbitrary detention by the Chinese Communist authorities, without ever having had a chance at a fair trial, is unconscionable.

Just two weeks ago, the PRC Jiangmen Intermediate Court denied Mr. Swidan's appeal. He remains on death row, with a two-year suspended death sentence.

Moreover, I and my colleagues are very concerned at the condition in which Mr. Swidan is being held. He is being denied needed medical care and is cut off from receiving mail from loved ones in a timely manner.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has expressed "grave concern" over the severity of Mr. Swidan's sentence, and has catalogued the step-by-step denial of justice that has accompanied Mr. Swidan's arbitrary detention: "it is evident that Mr. Swidan has been unable to defend himself properly, as he has been subjected to a detention of extraordinary length, to ill-treatment and to coercion with the purpose of extracting a confession and as he has received ineffective legal assistance."

The Working Group has therefore called for the only just resolution of this case: "release Mr. Swidan immediately and accord him an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations."

We also must redouble our efforts to release of US citizens Kai Li and David Lin, who are wrongful detainees, as well as Chinese nationals who are imprisoned because of their connection to the United States, such as Ekpar Asat, who was jailed because he participated in the State Department's International Visitor's Leadership Program, and Gulshan Abbas, who was interned because of her sister Rushan's intrepid reporting at Radio Free Asia, and her testimony before Congress and elsewhere.

At the end of the day these individuals are hostages held by a hostile regime. Their freedom must be prioritized and raised in all our State Department's interactions with PRC officials.

Please join me in supporting this resolution, and in calling for Mark Swidan's immediate release.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H. Res. 90, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

ENCOURAGING THE EXPANSION AND STRENGTHENING OF THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS TO URGE OTHER NATIONS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND ENSURE THAT EXISTING AGREEMENTS REAP TANGIBLE SECURITY AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR THE CITIZENS OF THOSE COUNTRIES AND ALL PEOPLES IN THE REGION

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H. Res. 311) encouraging the expansion and strengthening of the Abraham Accords to urge other nations to normalize relations with Israel and ensure that existing agreements reap tangible security and economic benefits for the citizens of those countries and all peoples in the region.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H. RES. 311

Whereas May 14, 2023, marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel;

Whereas, on May 14, 1948, the United States officially recognized Israel as a State;

Whereas Israel has been designated by the United States Government as a major non-NATO ally;

Whereas, in 2014, Congress designated Israel as a “major strategic partner”;

Whereas the United States and Israel have a close and robust bilateral relationship marked by strong people-to-people ties and close cooperation on a wide range of issues including defense, diplomacy, energy, cybersecurity, agriculture, science, and space;

Whereas the United States and Israel have signed three 10-year memoranda of understanding, in which the United States committed to provide \$26,700,000,000 between fiscal year 1999 and fiscal year 2008, \$30,000,000,000 between fiscal year 2009 and fiscal year 2018, and \$38,000,000,000 between fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2028;

Whereas Congress has appropriated amounts in accordance with such memoranda of understanding, reflecting the two countries’ shared priorities in the region;

Whereas, in late 2020 and early 2021, Israel reached agreements, known collectively as the Abraham Accords, to improve or normalize its relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan; and

Whereas these agreements build upon the decades-long leadership of the United States and other governments in supporting efforts to broker peace treaties between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Jordan: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) encourages the United States and Israel to continue to deepen and expand bilateral cooperation across the full spectrum of economic, security, and civilian issues;

(2) encourages the expansion and strengthening of the Abraham Accords to urge other nations to normalize relations with Israel and ensure that existing agreements reap tangible security and economic benefits for the citizens of those countries and all peoples in the region;

(3) expresses continued support for security assistance to Israel as outlined in the United States-Israel Memorandum of Understanding to ensure that Israel can defend itself by itself; and

(4) supports Israel’s robust involvement as an active member of the community of nations to benefit Israel and the United States as partners who share common values and a commitment to democracy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. MANNING) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this week we are marking an incredible milestone, 75 years since the establishment of the State of Israel.

Since the day Israel was founded, it faced numerous existential threats, and yet today, Israel is a thriving democracy with a robust economy and one of the world’s most capable militaries. Most importantly, the United States and Israel have stood shoulder to shoulder together since day one.

Over seven-and-a-half decades, we have worked as friends and partners, and we will continue to work together to overcome shared challenges and reach new triumphs.

The United States has long supported Israel’s right and ability to defend herself against threats. Our long-term commitment to Israel’s security includes the \$3.3 billion per year in foreign military financing assistance and support for defense technology development. One of the great successes of this support is the Iron Dome air defense system.

□ 1645

In May of 2021 when Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad launched more than 4,000 rockets toward Israel, it was the Iron Dome that shot those weapons out of the sky, greatly limiting the number of casualties in this terrifying conflict.

After this escalation, Congress voted overwhelmingly to resupply the Iron

Dome to help Israel keep its citizens safe.

The United States will always stand with Israel in its fight against terrorism. Our close partner is also vital to combating the global threat posed by Iran’s nuclear program, ballistic missile arsenal, armed UAV attacks, as well as Iran’s support for international terrorism, hostage-taking, and human rights abuses.

Simply put, a nuclear Iran is unacceptable, both for the United States, our ally Israel, and for the world.

We are also in full agreement that the IRGC is a foreign terrorist organization, and this designation should remain in place.

We are seeing Iran’s malign influence spread well beyond the Middle East. Iran is orchestrating terror plots against Americans on U.S. soil.

Iran continues to supply Russia with lethal drones and other forms of support for its war of aggression in Ukraine.

Moreover, Iran is deepening its cooperation with Communist China who continues to threaten the global balance of power through their malign activities around the globe and hostility toward Taiwan.

Responding to Iran’s global threat and its unholy alliance with Russia and China will be a generational challenge, but the United States and Israel are prepared to respond.

It is clear that others have taken note of how much the United States and Israel accomplish when we work together.

That is why in 2020, President Trump and his team succeeded in brokering the first normalization agreements between Israel and its neighbors in over 25 years.

The Abraham Accords are transformational for the Middle East. I was proud to be at the White House for the signing ceremony of these historic agreements. Now the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco join Egypt and Jordan in having full diplomatic relations with Israel.

The accords open the door to important cooperation, including to address the shared threat posed by Iran that is making the Middle East and North Africa safer and more prosperous.

These countries are working together on free trade, energy, water, and, of course, defense cooperation, like the Middle East Air Defense Alliance, now that Israel is a part of Central Command.

This is a generational shift in the Middle East and one that promotes peace and prosperity in the region. That is why we need to invest in the positive progress of growing and deepening the Abraham Accords as this resolution outlines.

We need to put our diplomatic might into trying to achieve the kinds of big breakthroughs that created the Abraham Accords almost 3 years ago.

I was pleased to see Oman and Saudi Arabia begin allowing overflights of