

113TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

S. RES. 540

Recognizing September 15, 2014, as the International Day of Democracy, affirming the role of civil society as a cornerstone of democracy, and encouraging all governments to stand with civil society in the face of mounting restrictions on civil society organizations.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. McCAIN, Mr. RUBIO, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Mr. DURBIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

SEPTEMBER 18, 2014

Reported by Mr. MENENDEZ, without amendment

DECEMBER 3, 2014

Considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Recognizing September 15, 2014, as the International Day of Democracy, affirming the role of civil society as a cornerstone of democracy, and encouraging all governments to stand with civil society in the face of mounting restrictions on civil society organizations.

Whereas in 2007, September 15 of each year was established by the United Nations as the International Day of Democracy, a day set aside to review the state of democracy in the world;

Whereas democracy is a means of government that makes manifest the free exercise of certain inalienable rights, among them being the freedom of assembly, the freedom of association, the freedom of the press, and the freedom of speech;

Whereas democracy allows for participatory governance, mobilizing citizens to strive for their version of the good and instilling hope that the aspirations of the people may one day be realized;

Whereas an analysis of 84 independent studies shows that democracy has a favorable impact on the formation of human capital, the rate of inflation, the level of economic freedom, and the stability of political institutions;

Whereas democracy promotes tolerance and respect by recognizing the human dignity of all people and is necessary to the full realization of the values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Whereas the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines “civil society” as associations around which society voluntarily organizes itself and which represent a wide range of interests and ties, including community-based organizations, indigenous peoples’ organizations, and non-government organizations (NGOs);

Whereas a vibrant civil society is an essential element of democratic societies and plays a key role in providing transparency, ensuring the legitimacy of elections, advocating for marginalized groups, and making clear the will of the people;

Whereas, since 2012, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law has identified 69 new restrictive measures in

over 50 countries hindering the ability of civil society organizations (CSOs) to freely operate;

Whereas of the 98 countries for which data is available, research presented in a 2013 article for the *Journal of Democracy* explains that 12 prohibit and 39 restrict foreign funding of domestic NGOs;

Whereas in 2000, the Community of Democracies was founded “to bring together governments, civil society, and the private sector in the pursuit of a common goal: supporting democratic rules and strengthening democratic norms and institutions around the world”;

Whereas in 2011, the United States joined other like-minded governments to establish the “Lifeline: Embattled Civil Society Organizations Fund” to provide small grants to CSOs for immediate needs and to support short-term advocacy projects;

Whereas, through the Open Government Partnership, 63 countries have committed to protecting the ability of CSOs to operate in a manner that is consistent with the rights to freedom of expression, association, and opinion;

Whereas in September 2013, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, the United States launched a coordinated multilateral effort encouraging countries to stand with civil society and push back against growing restrictions on CSOs;

Whereas the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association stands on the front lines of civil society protection, documenting extensive global threats to civil society and strengthening international norms; and

Whereas the United States remains committed to its stand with civil society by developing new mechanisms to combat restrictions on civil society and bolster civil society's efforts to support democracy around the world: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) supports the goals and ideals of the Inter-
3 national Day of Democracy;

4 (2) recognizes the importance of civil society to
5 the healthy development of nations;

6 (3) celebrates the invaluable contributions civil
7 society has made to the creation, strength, and pres-
8 ervation of vibrant democracies and democratic insti-
9 tutions;

10 (4) reaffirms the commitment of the United
11 States to the protection, advancement, health, and
12 sustainability of democracy throughout the world;

13 (5) condemns the use of restrictions, coercion,
14 threats, or force to impede the activities of civil soci-
15 ety organizations;

16 (6) recognizes the important multilateral work
17 of the Community of Democracies, the “Lifeline:
18 Embattled Civil Society Organizations Fund”, the
19 Open Government Partnership, and the United Na-
20 tions Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom

1 of Peaceful Assembly and of Association to protect
2 global civil society;

3 (7) recognizes the important role diplomacy
4 plays in defending global civil society and creating
5 new openings for civic space;

6 (8) emphasizes the value of programs of the
7 United States Government in protecting civil society
8 and defending civic space, including the work by the
9 Senior Advisor for Civil Society and Emerging De-
10 mocracies and the Bureau of Democracy, Human
11 Rights, and Labor of the United States Department
12 of State, and the United States Agency for Inter-
13 national Development (USAID);

14 (9) calls on private sector partners and other
15 governments to develop new tools and leverage exist-
16 ing technologies to support the efforts of civil soci-
17 ety; and

18 (10) encourages the people of the United States
19 and the world to observe the International Day of
20 Democracy, September 15, 2014, with appropriate
21 programs and activities.

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