

Calendar No. 259

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. J. RES. 59

Expressing the sense of Congress on the precipitous withdrawal of United States Armed Forces from Syria and Afghanistan, and Turkey's unprovoked incursion into Syria.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 22, 2019

Mr. McCONNELL (for himself, Mr. BURR, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. RISCH, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. ISAKSON, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Ms. MCSALLY, Mr. BLUNT, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. WICKER, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. SULLIVAN, Ms. ERNST, Mrs. FISCHER, and Mr. ROBERTS) introduced the following joint resolution; which was read the first time

OCTOBER 23, 2019

Read the second time and placed on the calendar

JOINT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress on the precipitous withdrawal of United States Armed Forces from Syria and Afghanistan, and Turkey's unprovoked incursion into Syria.

Whereas the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham, better known by its acronym ISIS, flourished in the chaos unleashed by the civil war in Syria and at one point controlled extensive territory in Iraq and Syria;

Whereas ISIS murdered thousands of innocent civilians, including Americans, and sought to ethnically cleanse the territory it controlled of religious minorities;

Whereas the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which is composed of Kurdish and Arab fighters, remains an essential United States partner in the successful campaign to destroy ISIS' so-called "caliphate";

Whereas, backed by the United States and United States allies, the Syrian Democratic Forces liberated millions of Syrians from ISIS' terrorist regime, and sustained approximately 11,000 casualties in the fight;

Whereas ISIS, al Qaeda, and their affiliates have proven resilient and have regrouped when the United States and its partners have withdrawn from the fight against them;

Whereas Turkey's unprovoked incursion into northeastern Syria, which began on October 9, 2019, has displaced more than 166,000 civilians, according to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, and dozens of civilians have been killed on both sides;

Whereas, as a result of Turkey's incursion into northeastern Syria and the withdrawal of United States Armed Forces, the Syrian Democratic Forces have turned to Russia and the brutal Assad regime for support, while more than a hundred ISIS-affiliated detainees have escaped from detention facilities; and

Whereas the Assad regime is responsible for murdering at least 500,000 civilians and displacing at least 12,000,000 Syrians, or roughly half the country's population at the time that the civil war began in 2011, and the regime's return to northeastern Syria through its new partnership with the Syrian Democratic Forces will allow the regime

to extend its murderous campaign and again subjugate the Kurdish, Sunni Arab, and religious minorities of northeastern Syria: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives*
 2 *of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
 3 That Congress—

4 (1) condemns in the strongest terms the Gov-
 5 ernment of Turkey’s escalating hostilities against
 6 Kurdish partners of the United States in Syria,
 7 while recognizing the Government of Turkey’s legiti-
 8 mate humanitarian, economic, and security concerns
 9 emanating from the conflict in Syria;

10 (2) calls upon the United States Government to
 11 pressure the Government of Turkey, including
 12 through sanctions, to act with restraint, provide ac-
 13 countability for human rights abuses conducted by
 14 militias acting in support of Turkish military oper-
 15 ations, and curtail its hostilities against United
 16 States partner forces in Syria;

17 (3) reiterates United States opposition to the
 18 forced repatriation of refugees from third countries
 19 into Syria, and calls upon all refugee returns to be
 20 safe, dignified, and voluntary;

21 (4) urges the President to rescind his invitation
 22 to the White House to Turkish President Recep
 23 Tayyip Erdogan until a more enduring cease-fire has

1 been established between Turkish and Kurdish
2 forces in northeastern Syria;

3 (5) calls upon the United States Government to
4 continue supporting liberated Syrian Kurdish and
5 Arab communities in northeast Syria through hu-
6 manitarian support, including those displaced or oth-
7 erwise affected by ongoing violence in Syria, and
8 calls upon other nations to increase support to sta-
9 bilization efforts in northeastern Syria;

10 (6) strongly opposes any abandonment of our
11 Kurdish and Arab partners in Syria;

12 (7) calls for a halt to the withdrawal of United
13 States Armed Forces from Syria where practical,
14 and calls for the continued use of air power to target
15 ISIS and provide protection of ethnic and religious
16 minorities in northeastern Syria;

17 (8) expresses support for a continued United
18 States military presence in Iraq, along with efforts
19 to help Iraqi forces control their border, protect
20 their sovereignty, and counter ISIS;

21 (9) recognizes the continuing threat to United
22 States and United States allies posed by al Qaeda
23 and ISIS, which maintain an ability to operate in
24 Syria and Afghanistan;

1 (10) warns that a precipitous withdrawal of
2 United States forces from the ongoing fight against
3 these groups, without effective, countervailing efforts
4 to secure gains in Syria and Afghanistan, could
5 allow terrorists to regroup, destabilize critical re-
6 gions, and create vacuums that could be filled by
7 Iran or Russia, to the detriment of United States in-
8 terests and those of our allies;

9 (11) recognizes that an unbroken chain of Ira-
10 nian-controlled territory across Syria poses a signifi-
11 cant threat to Israel;

12 (12) reiterates support for international diplo-
13 matic efforts to facilitate peaceful, negotiated resolu-
14 tions to the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Afghani-
15 stan on terms that respect the rights of innocent ci-
16 vilians and deny safe havens to terrorists;

17 (13) encourages close collaboration between the
18 executive branch and the legislative branch to ensure
19 continuing strong, bipartisan support for United
20 States military operations in Syria and Afghanistan;
21 and

22 (14) calls upon the President to certify whether
23 conditions have been met for the enduring defeat of
24 al Qaeda and ISIS before initiating any further sig-

- 1 nificant withdrawal of United States forces from the
- 2 region.

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