

in me every day for the 40 years since I left.

It was 1985, and my Head Start teacher was a woman by the name of Ms. Carrie Hilbert. I remember getting ready to graduate Head Start and trying on these royal-blue graduation gowns and graduation caps. For 2 weeks, Ms. Hilbert painstakingly prepared us for Head Start graduation. Our graduation song in 1985, she worked to make sure that we—little, squirmy 5- and 6-year-olds—were going to be able to sing this song and perform for our parents and our loved ones, and she did it masterfully.

Mr. President, in 1985, the lyrics Ms. Hilbert taught me were the lyrics to “We Are the World,” written by the great Lionel Richie, Michael Jackson, and Quincy Jones, whom we lost just earlier this year. I remember having to practice that song day after day for probably about 2 weeks, not knowing then that all throughout that graduation rehearsal, seeds were being planted—seeds sang by Stevie Wonder and Lionel Richie:

There comes a time when we must heed a certain call, when the world must come together as one.

Seeds. Seeds from Tina Turner and Billy Joel:

We’re all a part of God’s great big family, and the truth, you know love is all we need.

Seeds sang and planted by the unlikely duo of Willie Nelson and Al Jarreau, who planted the seeds that “as God has shown us by turning stone to bread, and so we all must lend a helping hand.”

One of the most powerful seeds that really stuck with me were those offered by Michael Jackson, Huey Lewis, and Cyndi Lauper:

When you’re down and out and there seems no hope at all, but if you just believe, there’s no way we can fall. Let’s realize . . . that a change can only come when we stand together as one.

Young leaders, colleagues, Mr. President, I believe it was those 2 weeks of repetition and practice that planted the seeds of possibility and hope, seeds of determination and courage. It was learning the lyrics to that song at 5 years old that inspired a generation full of patriots who believed in the power of this country to do good in the world and for each other, because when we choose to do hard things together—the people of this Nation, all of its elected leaders, our community advocates; when we see each other’s humanity; when we see our neighbors as essential to the future we want for our children; when we understand that our differences are our greatest assets, it is then—then—when we truly are doing and being the best country in the world.

So my final prayer as a Member of this august body is that we realize that, as policymakers, we are generations’ Head Start teachers. Every single day, we can plant seeds that will grow in the hearts and minds of young leaders, and we get to decide the seeds

we plant. Will we plant seeds that help them understand and imagine what is possible for an America filled with people of different walks, different faiths, different bank accounts, different languages? Will we plant seeds to help them realize and see what is possible not just for the United States but for the world? And, as was taught to me in that old church building, we will reap what we sow.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

TRIBUTE TO LAPHONZA R. BUTLER

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I will wait for my colleague to receive her hugs of gratitude, and I have a few words I would like to say.

Mr. President, I wanted to just take a moment to add my thanks and congratulations to our colleague Senator LAPHONZA BUTLER.

You know, I look around this Chamber, and this is a Chamber that is filled with people who were once lawyers or Members of Congress, Governors or Lieutenant Governors—all incredibly fine and honorable professions—but there are not that many people in this room who came here because they were organizers. This is something that Senator BUTLER and I talked about when she first came to the Senate.

Now, organizers are different because we understand that the power of accomplishing important things comes certainly from our leadership and the work that we do, but fundamentally it comes from the people we work with every single day, the folks that are out there on the ground, living the lives and doing the work. If you understand that your power to do good work comes from those people, then you approach everything, every problem, from a different perspective.

I know this is where Senator BUTLER comes from as an organizer at SCIU and in her life, and I want to pay tribute to that because I think that kind of approach to problem-solving is something we can all learn from.

I have watched you in the short time you have been in the Senate—only 14 months, which, in the life of many Senators, is barely a blink of an eye—and I watched you figure out how to organize in this Chamber for the good of the people you represent.

I noticed, Senator BUTLER, as you were preparing to give your opening remarks, that Senator ROGER WICKER from Mississippi came up and gave you a big hug. This is our Senator who was born in Magnolia, MS. And I saw you start your building of a relationship with him on one of your very first days in the elevator when I was standing with you. That, I think, is a message and a lesson for all of us; that as you leave to go on to whatever you do next—and we can’t wait to see what you do next—we should all keep in mind the power of those relationships and building power to actually make a difference—make a difference in this world.

The last thing I want to say, as we say farewell to you—only in this Chamber but not in our lives—is that your constant reminding us and using your platform to lift up the voices, as you say, of “now leaders”—we have a tendency sometimes—those of us who are 50, 60, 70, 80—to talk about the next generation of leaders and that “Your time will come, and we will need you.”

You always speak of our young leaders in the present tense because they are the leaders that we need now.

So as I think about your service here in the Senate and the work that you have done, those are the two lessons that I will carry forward in my work in this Chamber. I offer this with much gratitude for your leadership both here in this Chamber, the work that you have done before, and the work I know you will continue to do. Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 3 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

**CONDEMNING THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN'S STATE-SPONSORED PERSECUTION OF THE BAHA'I MINORITY AND ITS CONTINUED VIOLATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration and the Senate proceed to S. Res. 74.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 74) condemning the Government of Iran's State-sponsored persecution of the Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, for more than 40 years, this body has been passing resolutions condemning the Iranian Government's persecution of the Baha'is.

This nightmare is not going away. In fact, the government of Iran has only intensified its ruthless agenda against the Baha'is.

Over the last 16 months, attacks against women and violent home raids have increased, hate speech has spread, and scores of Baha'is remain behind bars on arbitrary, trumped up charges.

Furthermore, Baha'is face ongoing employment and educational discrimination, as well as intrusive surveillance and invasive monitoring. The Baha'is are even denied the right to bury their dead, and when they do, their cemeteries are often vandalized or destroyed. Men, women, and children

bear the brunt of the Iranian Government's fear mongering day in and day out, with no end in sight.

It is crucial for the Senate to pass my resolution today and strongly condemn the repressive Iranian Government. The Iranian Government's long history of harassing, dehumanizing, and persecuting the Baha'i community in all forms is only getting longer and worse.

The Wyden family knows firsthand about authoritarian regimes targeting and persecuting individuals on the basis of religion. This issue is personal to me.

I have been promised for years that this resolution would receive consideration through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but the committee hasn't taken up this important issue.

My resolution, which has strong bipartisan support, condemns the government of Iran's state-sanctioned persecution of the Baha'i community and its continued violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights.

My resolution further calls on the Iranian Government to release all people detained or imprisoned solely on account of their religion, end their campaign of hate against the Baha'is, and reverse policies that deny Baha'is and other religious minorities equal opportunities, freedoms, and rights under law.

My resolution also calls on the Biden administration to condemn these human rights violations, push for the release of religious prisoners, and use its authorities to impose sanctions against those responsible for these deplorable human rights abuses. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this crucial resolution to hold Iran's government accountable for its heinous repression of religious minorities.

Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Hearing no further debate, the question is on adoption of the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 74) was agreed to.

Mr. WYDEN. I ask unanimous consent that the Wyden substitute amendment at the desk to the preamble be agreed to; that the preamble, as amended, be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The amendment (No. 3312) to the preamble in the nature of a substitute was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the preamble)

Strike the preamble and insert the following:

Whereas, in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, and 2022, Congress declared that it deplored the religious persecution by the Government of Iran of the Baha'i community and would hold the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all Iranian nationals, including members of the Baha'i faith;

Whereas, since 1979, Iranian authorities have killed or executed more than 200 Baha'i

leaders and more than 10,000 Baha'is have been dismissed from government and university jobs;

Whereas June 18, 2023, marked the 40th anniversary of the execution of 10 Baha'i women by the Government of Iran, each witnessing the hanging of those hanged before her in a final failed attempt to induce abandonment of their faith after over 6 months of imprisonment and violent abuse, with the youngest only 17 years old;

Whereas, on December 19, 2023, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/C.3/78/L.41) calling on Iran to carry out wide-ranging reforms and expressing serious concerns for its escalating human rights abuses, including—

(1) "severe limitations and increasing restrictions on the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief";

(2) "restrictions on the establishment of places of worship, undue restrictions on burials carried out in accordance with religious tenets, attacks against places of worship and burial";

(3) "increased harassment, intimidation, persecution, arbitrary arrest, and detention of, and incitement to hatred that leads to violence against, persons belonging to recognized and unrecognized religious minorities, including Christians (particularly converts from Islam), Gonabadi Dervishes, Jews, Sufi Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Yarsanis, Zoroastrians, and in particular, Baha'is";

(4) "denial of and restrictions on access to education, including for members of the Baha'i faith"; and

(5) "particular" persecution of members of the Baha'i community "who have been subjected to a continued increase in persecution, including attacks, harassment and targeting. . . on account of their faith and have been reportedly subjected to mass arrests and lengthy prison sentences, as well as the arrest of prominent members and increased confiscation and destruction of property";

Whereas, in the 2024 Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom issued in May 2024, it is reported that in 2023—

(1) the Government of Iran "conducted individual and mass arrests of Baha'is across Iran taking them to undisclosed locations and imposing excessively long prison sentences";

(2) "security officials beat and brutalized Baha'is during raids and searches of private homes";

(3) "security forces arrested scores of Baha'is in cities including Hamadan, Mehrshahr, Yazd, Karaj, Alborz, and Tehran";

(4) the "government has targeted Baha'i women in particular" and that "[a]pproximately two-thirds of Iranian Baha'i prisoners are women";

(5) authorities "targeted Baha'i cemeteries in Arak, Alborz, and Golestan"; and

(6) local "municipalities seized and confiscated Baha'i land, restricted Baha'i access to burial grounds, and declared intentions to sell Baha'i-owned property exclusively to Muslims";

Whereas the Iran section of the Department of State's 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom issued in May 2023 provides, in part—

(1) "[I]n July and August, security forces in cities across the country conducted multiple raids of Baha'i homes, confiscated property deemed 'illegitimate wealth', and arrested Baha'is in their homes or workplaces on unsubstantiated charges including 'causing intellectual and ideological insecurity in Muslim society.'";

(2) "Authorities reportedly continued to deny members of unrecognized religious minority groups access to education and gov-

ernment employment unless they declared themselves as belonging to one of the country's recognized religions on their application forms. UN experts reported universities rejected more than 90 Baha'i students between January and August."; and

(3) "Government officials and government-affiliated organizations continued to disseminate anti-Baha'i and antisemitic messages using traditional and social media.";

Whereas, in response to a surge in persecution in June and July 2022, involving the subjection of over 100 Baha'is to arrests, arraignments, sentencing, and raids on their homes and businesses across Iran, including the sentencing in June of 26 individuals in the city of Shiraz to a combined total of 85 years in prison, the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom issued a statement on August 2, 2022, indicating that "[a]mid a continued rise in arrests, sentences, and imprisonments, the U.S. urges Iran to halt its ongoing oppression of the Baha'i community and honor its international obligations to respect the right of all Iranians to freedom of religion or belief";

Whereas, on November 21, 2022, Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi, 2 former members of the informal 7-person leadership group of the Baha'is of Iran, who each served 10-year sentences from 2008 to 2018, and have been detained since July 31, 2022, in Evin prison, were sentenced to 10 years in prison each after a summary trial lasting 1 hour;

Whereas, on December 11, 2022, the Baha'i International Community organization stated that "Dr. Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel laureate and defence lawyer for Mahvash and Fariba during their first trial, said in 2008 that 'not a shred of evidence' was offered to prove the national security charges or other allegations. Nor was any new evidence forthcoming at this latest trial";

Whereas, on January 12, 2024, the Baha'i International Community organization reported increasing incidents of persecution accompanied by intensified violence perpetrated against the Baha'i community by the Government of Iran, for example—

(1) "since the beginning of October [2023] more than 200 incidents of persecution, including over 50 arrests and imprisonments, have occurred in various cities such as Shiraz, Yazd, Isfahan, Hamadan, and Karaj";

(2) government agents have perpetrated "increasingly violent home raids, disproportionately affecting women and the elderly, and have even resulted in hospitalizations and traumatic separations of mothers from their children. Notably, over two-thirds of those arrested and detained have been women, predominantly in their twenties and thirties, highlighting the escalation of attacks against women in recent months."; and

(3) government agents have instigated a "conspicuous rise in hate speech, where Baha'is have been accused of being behind the September 2022 protests, promoting permissiveness, being against Islam and Shiism, being spies for Israel and the West, and being part of a political movement that seeks to undermine the state";

Whereas Iran is a member of the United Nations and a signatory to both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, among other international human rights treaties, without reservation;

Whereas section 105 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8514) authorizes the President to impose sanctions on individuals who are "responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses against citizens of

Iran or their family members on or after June 12, 2009"; and

Whereas the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (Public Law 112-158) amends and expands the authorities established under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-195) to sanction Iranian human rights abusers: Now, therefore, be it

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, as amended, reads as follows:

S. RES. 74

Whereas, in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, and 2022, Congress declared that it deplored the religious persecution by the Government of Iran of the Baha'i community and would hold the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all Iranian nationals, including members of the Baha'i faith;

Whereas, since 1979, Iranian authorities have killed or executed more than 200 Baha'i leaders and more than 10,000 Baha'is have been dismissed from government and university jobs;

Whereas June 18, 2023, marked the 40th anniversary of the execution of 10 Baha'i women by the Government of Iran, each witnessing the hanging of those hanged before her in a final failed attempt to induce abandonment of their faith after over 6 months of imprisonment and violent abuse, with the youngest only 17 years old;

Whereas, on December 19, 2023, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/C.3/78/L.41) calling on Iran to carry out wide-ranging reforms and expressing serious concerns for its escalating human rights abuses, including—

(1) "severe limitations and increasing restrictions on the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief";

(2) "restrictions on the establishment of places of worship, undue restrictions on burials carried out in accordance with religious tenets, attacks against places of worship and burial";

(3) "increased harassment, intimidation, persecution, arbitrary arrest, and detention of, and incitement to hatred that leads to violence against, persons belonging to recognized and unrecognized religious minorities, including Christians (particularly converts from Islam), Gonabadi Dervishes, Jews, Sufi Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Yarsanis, Zoroastrians, and in particular, Baha'is";

(4) "denial of and restrictions on access to education, including for members of the Baha'i faith"; and

(5) "particular" persecution of members of the Baha'i community "who have been subjected to a continued increase in persecution, including attacks, harassment and targeting . . . on account of their faith and have been reportedly subjected to mass arrests and lengthy prison sentences, as well as the arrest of prominent members and increased confiscation and destruction of property";

Whereas, in the 2024 Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom issued in May 2024, it is reported that in 2023—

(1) the Government of Iran "conducted individual and mass arrests of Baha'is across Iran taking them to undisclosed locations and imposing excessively long prison sentences";

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Mehrshahr, Yazd, Karaj, Alborz, and Tehran";

(4) the "government has targeted Baha'i women in particular" and that "[a]pproximately two-thirds of Iranian Baha'i prisoners are women";

(5) authorities "targeted Baha'i cemeteries in Arak, Alborz, and Golestan"; and

(6) local "municipalities seized and confiscated Baha'i land, restricted Baha'i access to burial grounds, and declared intentions to sell Baha'i-owned property exclusively to Muslims.";

Whereas the Iran section of the Department of State's 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom issued in May 2023 provides, in part—

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(2) "Authorities reportedly continued to deny members of unrecognized religious minority groups access to education and government employment unless they declared themselves as belonging to one of the country's recognized religions on their application forms. UN experts reported universities rejected more than 90 Baha'i students between January and August."; and

(3) "Government officials and government-affiliated organizations continued to disseminate anti-Baha'i and antisemitic messages using traditional and social media.";

Whereas, in response to a surge in persecution in June and July 2022, involving the subjection of over 100 Baha'is to arrests, arraignments, sentencing, and raids on their homes and businesses across Iran, including the sentencing in June of 26 individuals in the city of Shiraz to a combined total of 85 years in prison, the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom issued a statement on August 2, 2022, indicating that "[a]mid a continued rise in arrests, sentences, and imprisonments, the U.S. urges Iran to halt its ongoing oppression of the Baha'i community and honor its international obligations to respect the right of all Iranians to freedom of religion or belief";

Whereas, on November 21, 2022, Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi, 2 former members of the informal 7-person leadership group of the Baha'is of Iran, who each served 10-year sentences from 2008 to 2018, and have been detained since July 31, 2022, in Evin prison, were sentenced to 10 years in prison each after a summary trial lasting 1 hour;

Whereas, on December 11, 2022, the Baha'i International Community organization stated that "Dr. Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel laureate and defence lawyer for Mahvash and Fariba during their first trial, said in 2008 that 'not a shred of evidence' was offered to prove the national security charges or other allegations. Nor was any new evidence forthcoming at this latest trial";

Whereas, on January 12, 2024, the Baha'i International Community organization reported increasing incidents of persecution accompanied by intensified violence perpetrated against the Baha'i community by the Government of Iran, for example—

(1) "since the beginning of October [2023] more than 200 incidents of persecution, including over 50 arrests and imprisonments, have occurred in various cities such as Shiraz, Yazd, Isfahan, Hamadan, and Karaj";

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their children. Notably, over two-thirds of those arrested and detained have been women, predominantly in their twenties and thirties, highlighting the escalation of attacks against women in recent months.";

and  
(3) government agents have instigated a "conspicuous rise in hate speech, where Baha'is have been accused of being behind the September 2022 protests, promoting permissiveness, being against Islam and Shiism, being spies for Israel and the West, and being part of a political movement that seeks to undermine the state";

Whereas Iran is a member of the United Nations and a signatory to both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, among other international human rights treaties, without reservation;

Whereas section 105 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8514) authorizes the President to impose sanctions on individuals who are "responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses against citizens of Iran or their family members on or after June 12, 2009"; and

Whereas the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (Public Law 112-158) amends and expands the authorities established under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-195) to sanction Iranian human rights abusers: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of the Baha'i minority in Iran and the continued violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

(2) calls on the Government of Iran—

(A) to immediately release the imprisoned or detained Baha'is and all other prisoners held solely on account of their religion;

(B) to end its state-sponsored campaign of hate propaganda against the Baha'is; and

(C) to reverse state-imposed policies denying Baha'is and members of other religious minorities equal opportunities to higher education, earning a livelihood, due process under the law, and the free exercise of religious practices;

(3) calls on the President and the Secretary of State, in cooperation with responsible nations, to immediately condemn the Government of Iran's continued violation of human rights, and demand the immediate release of prisoners held solely on account of their religion; and

(4) urges the President and the Secretary of State to utilize available authorities to impose sanctions on officials of the Government of Iran and other individuals directly responsible for serious human rights abuses, including abuses against the Baha'i community of Iran.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 846, Keli Marie Neary, of Pennsylvania, to be United