

BUSINESS MEETING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2016

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, 10:00 a.m., in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Corker [presiding], Flake, Gardner, Perdue, Isakson, Barrasso, Cardin, Menendez, Coons, Murphy, and Markey.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

The CHAIRMAN. The business meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order, and as people come in, we will hold votes. But I think that it will probably be best for Ben and I to go ahead and make our opening comments, as I know we both have to be down to the floor at 10:30 to begin handling the North Korea legislation.

So on the agenda today we have three resolutions. First, we will consider S. Res. 330. I want to personally congratulate the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet for winning the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize. It is an honor that is well earned and rightfully deserved. Their courage, perseverance, and success over the last five years have culminated in this great honor.

More importantly, however, their work has done immeasurable good in Tunisia, a country that has chosen democracy and has become a beacon of light in a region wrought with conflict, bloodshed, and oppression. I hope that Tunisia continues to focus on the follow-through that is so crucial for continued, lasting success for the country, for its people, and for the region. With S. Res 330, it is our hope that Congress will add its voice to those congratulating the Quartet and reaffirming the United States' support for Tunisia as it fulfills its people's desire to become a more stable, free, and prosperous country.

Thank you, Senators Coons, Cardin, Kaine, and Perdue, for their work on this resolution.

We will also consider S. Res. 361, a resolution urging robust funding for humanitarian relief in Syria with an amendment. I want to thank Senator Cardin as usual for working with me on this resolution. This resolution calls on countries to make and fulfill their pledges for humanitarian relief in and around Syria.

The Syrian conflict has killed hundreds of thousands of people and engulfed the region in a humanitarian catastrophe on a mas-

sive scale. The victims of this horrendous civil war desperately need help. I am proud to say the United States remains the largest single donor to such efforts, and we are up to date in fulfilling our pledges.

But more is needed. It is a hopeful sign that the donor conference in the United Kingdom last Thursday generated \$10 billion in pledges. Those pledges, however, need to be converted into actual contributions. Only 43 percent of the \$2.9 billion pledged to the UN's 2015 appeal was funded. With this resolution, we hope to add our voice to those calling on strong donor support for the pledges made at the most recent conference in London.

And lastly, we will consider S. Res. 99 calling upon Iran to fulfill its promises of assistance in the case of the disappearance of U.S. citizen, Robert Levinson. To the Levinson family—Bob's wife, Christine, son, Dan, and his sister-in-law, Suzanne—our thoughts and prayers have and continue to be with you. Thank you so much for being here today. We appreciated the opportunity to talk to you earlier.

This is a topic, for what it is worth, a good deal of time was spent last night in a classified setting. We are sorry you have been through this harrowing experience, and I know it continues without a lot of information, and we are determined to do what we can to make sure that that changes. So thank you so much for being here. We sincerely appreciate you being here as I just mentioned. And I do not think we can fully appreciate what you have gone through personally over the last eight years.

I want to thank Senators Rubio and Nelson for their work on this resolution. It is a symbolic message that should continue to raise the awareness of this incredibly sad situation, and to remind each of us to push the U.S. Administration, the government of Iran—and the government of Iran to do everything they can to return Bob, his family, and his friends to his country.

The family stressed what a patriot he was as we met prior to coming out here. And I think all of us know that, and we need to do everything we can to get him back.

With that, I would like to recognize the distinguished ranking member for his comments, Senator Cardin.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator CARDIN. Well, Chairman Corker, first of all, thank you for arranging this business meeting to pass three very important resolutions from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I also acknowledge this is an important day on foreign policy. We are going to consider the North Korean Sanction Act on the floor of the Senate, and I expect it will pass overwhelmingly later this afternoon, which is a real credit to your leadership in engineering its consideration on the floor, but also this committee's bipartisan work to produce a product that is worthy of strong support in the United States Senate.

And then we will have a very important hearing following this on Central Africa, a region of the world that has been in conflict for way too long with tragic consequences for its population. So we have a very busy day.

In regards to the three resolutions that are under consideration, thank you for acknowledging the Levinson family that is here. Congressman Deutch, it is nice to have you also with us today and the work that you did in the House to position our action in regards to Robert Levinson.

Let me make it clear. We will use every avenue available to us to get a full accounting and release of Robert Levinson. I can assure you of that. And this resolution, as the Chairman said before we came in here, is an important step, but just a step. We intend to do a lot more than just the action on this resolution, so we thank you very much. He is the longest-held United States civilian in our Nation's history, so we will very much be working to deal with this issue.

Let me also acknowledge, as you did, Senator Nelson's and Rubio's work in regards to the Levinson resolution. In regards to S. Res 361, the resolution on Syria, I want to thank you for your help in putting together this resolution. The humanitarian crisis in Syria is incredible. Obviously our initial efforts have been to resolve the conflict in Syria and have a government that represents all the people without President Assad. And then we can concentrate on the threat of ISIL, and not only contain, but destroy ISIL. That is our objective.

In the meantime, there is this refugee dislocation, the largest flow in the world. It is a huge humanitarian crisis, including to the countries directly bordering Syria, like Jordan, our strategic ally.. There are many other countries impacted like Lebanon and Turkey, and we know there's also a refugee flow into Greece and other parts of Europe . These large refugee flows are having an impact on the stability of all these regions.

So it is important that this humanitarian crisis be dealt with globally. As you pointed out, the United States has been the leader. It is has been the leader in the dollars that we put up—\$5.1 billion to date—as well as convening the international community, and this resolution furthers that objective.

And then lastly, S. Res. 330, congratulating the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet for winning the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize. The resolution, I think, is self-explanatory, but Tunisia is a country that is beset by turmoil. We know that. It is a rough area, and yet they have demonstrated that when elected officials work with civil societies, you can get things done. And I think that is a model for that region, and I think this resolution is very appropriate.

So on all three of these resolutions, they are very important business, and I hope we can get a quorum and pass them.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. We need about a two-minute filibuster here. Would anyone like to make comments? Go ahead. I think Senator Murphy might have—

Senator MURPHY. I thank you very much—I only have two minutes. I just want to thank those who are bringing the Syria resolution, in particular, before us today. The gist of it is a call to the international community to step up to the plate and fulfill obligations that they have, and for those that have—who have not made a big enough commitment, to make it bigger. But I also hope that the pressure is still on us here in this Congress to support increased humanitarian aid for the region.

I think most all of us have been to some of those camps. We have heard the stories of the World Food Program perpetually running out of money, such that last fall they had to cut off food aid for those individuals not living in the camps, those individuals and families who are living in cities and communities on the streets, places like Lebanon and Jordan.

And, of course, we know what happens when they do not get basic nourishment and sustenance. They get it from somewhere else. They often sign up with the very groups that we are fighting because that is the only offer they get in order to feed their family or put a paycheck into their pocket in order to put a roof over their children's heads.

And so, I agree that the international community certainly has to do more. There are many of our very good friends in that neighborhood who have not stepped up and made commitments anywhere close to what the United States had made. But there is going to be more required of us as well, and I know this committee has committed to doing our part as we move forward as this crisis continues to unfold.

Thanks for putting this resolution before us today, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you for the comments. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, I just want to thank both of you for the bipartisan way in which you continue to move us forward. I am glad to be a co-sponsor and supporter of all three resolutions.

I would like to thank my friend, Congressman Deutch, for his advocacy to Dan Levinson, and Christine Levinson, and to Suzanne Halpin. I have raised the issue of Robert Levinson both in classified settings and in public settings with members of the Administration. I think this resolution is an appropriate and bipartisan way for us to continue to press the Iranians to keep their commitment. And his long and painful absence from us I think is something that we just wanted—all of us wanted you to know that we share your concerns about his safe return, and about Iran continuing to be a regime that we cannot trust, and that we need to press to keep their commitments.

I will simply join Senator Murphy in saying that our support for those who are suffering through the horrific ongoing civil war in Syria is something, I think, has motivated all the members of this committee. And last, the Tunisian Quartet and their heroic efforts to bring some semblance of stability and democracy to Tunisia were worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize. And it is my hope that all of us will support those in Tunisia willing to make the tough political and economic reforms necessary to secure progress in Tunisia.

Thank you for moving all three of these resolutions today.

The CHAIRMAN. Any additional comments?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. If not, we will move to the business at hand.

The first order of business today on the agenda will be S. Res. 330, congratulations—congratulating the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet for winning the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize. I know Sen-

ator Cardin has made comments. Anyone else wish to speak? [No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Seeing none, is there a motion to approve the resolutions?

Senator CARDIN. So moved.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there a second?

Senator FLAKE. Second.

The CHAIRMAN. So moved and seconded.

The question is on the motion to approve S. Res. 330.

All those in favor, say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

The CHAIRMAN. Opposed?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. With that, the ayes have it. The resolution is approved.

Next we have—next we will move to S. Res. 361, urging robust funding for humanitarian relief for Syria. I know Senator Cardin has spoken to this. Anyone else?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Seeing none, I would entertain a motion to consider the Corker amendment by voice vote.

Senator CARDIN. So moved.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there a second?

Senator FLAKE. Second.

The CHAIRMAN. So moved and then seconded.

The question is on the motion to approve the Corker amendment.

All those in favor, say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

The CHAIRMAN. Opposed?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. With that, the ayes have it. The amendment is agreed to.

Are there further amendments?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Seeing none, is there a motion to approve the resolution, as amended?

Senator CARDIN. So moved.

The CHAIRMAN. Seconded.

Senator FLAKE. Second.

The CHAIRMAN. So moved and seconded.

The question is on the motion to approve S. Res. 361, as amended.

All those in favor, say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

The CHAIRMAN. Opposed?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. With that, the ayes have it. The resolution is amended and agreed to.

Next, we will consider S. Res. 99, calling on the government of Iran to fulfill its promises of assistance in the case of Robert Levinson, the longest-held United States civilian in our Nation's history. Anyone like to speak to this resolution?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. If there is no further discussion on this resolution, I would entertain a motion to approve all three Rubio amendments by voice vote en bloc.

Senator CARDIN. So moved.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there a second?

Senator FLAKE. Second.

The CHAIRMAN. So moved and seconded.

The question is on the motion to approve all three amendments en bloc.

All those in favor, say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

The CHAIRMAN. Opposed?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. With that, the ayes have it, and the amendments are agreed to.

Are there further amendments?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Hearing none, is there a motion to approve the resolution, as amended?

Senator CARDIN. So moved.

Senator FLAKE. Second.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there a second?

Senator FLAKE. Second.

The CHAIRMAN. So moved and seconded.

The question is on the motion to approve S. Res. 99, as amended.

All those in favor, say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

The CHAIRMAN. Opposed?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. With that, the ayes have it, and the resolution, as amended, is agreed to. And that completes the committee's business.

Congressman Deutch, thank you for being here. I know you all criticize the Senate a great deal, as you should. I want you to know this is probably the quickest business meeting we have had. We did it in your honor.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for being here to support this.

With that, I ask unanimous consent that staff be authorized to make technical and conforming changes. Without objection, so ordered.

And with that, the business meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:15 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]