

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTS RESOLUTION URGING IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF SIAMAK AND BAQUER NAMAZI AND OTHER AMERICAN CITIZEN HOSTAGES IN IRAN

Washington - Earlier this afternoon, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously adopted H.Res.317, which demanded Iran release all American citizen hostages and legal permanent residents illegally held in Iran. It also urged President Trump to make the release of these American hostages a top priority.

The resolution was co-sponsored by Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Nita Lowey, Ted Deutch and Ted Poe, and had a total of 37 co-sponsors. You can see Rep. Ros-Lehtinen's press release and Rep. Lowey's press release in reaction to the House's vote **below**. The photo below was taken just before the debate and vote.

In response to the adoption of the bill, Babak Namazi, the brother and son of Siamak and Baquer respectively said:

"It was very emotional for me to be in the House gallery and see American democracy at work, with the Congress speaking in one voice to urge the immediate release of my father and brother. Juxtaposed against the extraordinary cruelty with which the Iranian government has treated my family, I have also been blessed with a tremendous outpouring of support from so many people eager to help with my family's plight."



HOUSE UNANIMOUSLY PASSES ROS-LEHTINEN RESOLUTION DEMANDING IRAN'S UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS AND LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENTS

(Washington, DC) – U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, made the following statement on the House floor in support her resolution, H.Res. 317 - Calling for the unconditional release of United States citizens and legal permanent resident aliens being held for political purposes by the Government of Iran. Rep. Ros-Lehtinen was joined by U.S. Reps. Nita Lowey (D-NY), Ted Poe (R-FL) and Ted Deutch (R-FL) in authoring the resolution. The House passed H.Res. 317 unanimously by voice vote. Ros-Lehtinen's full statement (as prepared):

“Thank you, Chairman Royce, for helping bring House Resolution 317 to the floor today and for your tireless efforts to hold the Iranian regime accountable for all of its illicit activity, including the taking of American citizens and legal permanent residents as hostages. I also want to thank Ranking Member Engel, for his unwavering support. And of course, I want to thank Nita Lowey, Judge Poe and my South Florida colleague and friend, Ted Deutch, for joining me in authoring and introducing this resolution. This resolution is important for all of us, but for Ted, I know this is also very personal, as his constituent, Bob Levinson, continues to be held by Iran 10 years after his disappearance.

Mr. Speaker, just yesterday, Ted and I convened a hearing in our Middle East and North Africa subcommittee with some of the family members named in this resolution.

Doug Levinson – Bob's youngest child; Babak Namazi – son of Baquer and brother of Siamak; and, Omar Zakkah – son of Nizar. All three testified before our subcommittee. Their stories were moving and heartbreaking – each one, along with their families, forced to live in their own personal hell.

In Doug Levinson's case, Mr. Speaker, we saw photos, emails and even video of his father, who after more than 10 years, is this nation's longest held hostage in our history. We heard how Iran has repeatedly failed to live up to its promise to assist in Bob's case and help return him to his loved ones, including his 5 grandchildren Bob has yet to meet.

We heard Omar plead for his father's life, as Nizar is now one month into his 5th hunger strike – only this time, Nizar has vowed that there is no turning back. Nizar said he will continue with his hunger strike for himself and the others unjustly held by Iran, stating ‘it is liberty or death...there is no turning back.’ Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, being 19 years old and hearing your father say he is willing to die in Iran in the pursuit of truth and justice?

We also heard Babak distress over the health of his father and his brother. Mr. Namazi's father has lost more than 30 pounds in Iran's notorious prisons. He is 81 years old and suffers from a severe heart condition – he had to be hospitalized twice in the last few months. Babak fears that his father's physical and mental condition is rapidly deteriorating. And his brother, he fears, has given up hope because of the horrific conditions he is being held under – kept in isolation and mentally and physically abused. How horrifying and heartbreaking.

And though we heard the sorrow in their voices, Mr. Speaker, we also heard defiance and determination. Defiance to accept the Iranian regime's absurd claims against Bob, Baquer, Siamak and Nizar. Defiance to accept that their fates are sealed – that there is nothing more that can be done; And defiance to remain silent as their loved ones suffer under the terror regime in Tehran. And we saw their determination, as each of the witnesses before us yesterday vowed that their fight is not nearly over.

They remain determined that they can force the return of their loved ones. And they looked to us, Mr. Speaker, to use our positions as Members of the United States House of Representatives, to pressure the Iranian regime to release all American citizens and American legal permanent residents unconditionally. They looked to us to demand that Iran be held accountable for its tactic of taking our people hostage in order to exact financial or political concessions. They looked to us to stand up and decry this practice for what it is – morally, ethically and legally wrong.

That is why Nita, Ted and Judge Poe and I introduced this resolution before us today and that is why Ted and I convened our hearing yesterday. And that is why I urge my colleagues to stand in solidarity with us and demand that Iran release all American citizens and legal permanent residents it is holding for hostage immediately and unconditionally.

I hope our colleagues will stand with us, and I hope that this sends a strong message to Iran that this practice will not be tolerated. And I hope that this sends a strong message to our own administration that Congress is heavily invested in the fate of Americans being held by Iran, and we demand action to win their unconditional and immediate release.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back.”

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**HOUSE PASSES LOWEY, ROS-LEHTINEN RESOLUTION CALLING FOR RELEASE OF
AMERICAN PRISONERS IN IRAN**

Washington, DC – **Congresswoman Nita Lowey (D-NY17/Rockland-Westchester)**, Ranking Member on the House Appropriations Committee, issued the following statement today after the U.S. House of Representatives passed bipartisan resolution H.Res. 317, calling for the unconditional release of U.S. citizens and permanent residents held in Iran. Congresswoman Lowey introduced the resolution with Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL27), Ted Deutch (D-FL22), and Ted Poe (R-TX02):

“The passage of this resolution sends a strong message to the Government of Iran: heinous attempts to exact concessions by holding U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents on trumped up charges will not pay off,” **said Congresswoman Lowey**. “The lives of innocent people hang in the balance. I hope the Administration will heed the recommendations in this resolution and take meaningful action to secure the release of Siamak Namazi, Baquer Namazi, and any other United States citizen or legal permanent resident being held in Iran. Furthermore, the Administration must continue to push the Iranian government to fulfill their promises to locate and return Robert Levinson, who has been missing in Iran since 2007.”

Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is holding as political prisoners Siamak Namazi, Baquer Namazi, Karan Vafadari, and a fourth not publicly identified United States citizen as well as United States legal permanent residents Afarin Niasari and Nizar Zakka. Siamak Namazi, who has been held since October 15, 2015, and his 80-year-old father, Baquer Namazi, a former UNICEF official in deteriorating health, lived for a time in White Plains, New York, which is represented by Congresswoman Lowey.

Following the passage of the resolution, Congresswoman Lowey met with Babak Namazi, the brother and son of Siamak and Baquer, respectively. On Tuesday, Babak testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee about the circumstances surrounding his brother’s and father’s cases.

Specifically, H.Res. 317:

- Calls on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to release unconditionally Siamak Namazi, Baquer Namazi, Karan Vafadari, Afarin Niasari, Nizar Zakka, and any other United States citizen, legal permanent resident alien, or foreign national being held in Iran;

- Urges the President to make the release of United States citizens and legal permanent resident aliens held hostage by the Government of Iran the highest of priorities;

- Requests that the United States and its allies whose nationals have been detained consider establishing a multinational task force to secure the release of the detainees;
- Urges the Government of Iran to take meaningful steps towards fulfilling its repeated promises to assist in locating and returning Robert Levinson, including immediately providing all available information from all entities of the Government of Iran regarding the disappearance of Robert Levinson to the United States Government;
- Encourages the President to take meaningful action to secure the release of Siamak Namazi, Baquer Namazi, Karan Vafadari, Afarin Niasari, Nizar Zakka, and any other United States citizen, legal permanent resident alien, or foreign national being held in Iran if the Government of Iran does not release such United States citizens, legal permanent resident aliens, and foreign nationals; and
- Encourages the President to take meaningful action to secure the return of Robert Levinson if the Government of Iran does not locate and return him.

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