

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4179

To provide the United States Government with additional tools to deter state and non-state actors from wrongfully detaining United States nationals for political leverage, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 26, 2025

Mr. HILL of Arkansas (for himself, Mr. KEAN, Mr. LAWLER, Mr. MOSKOWITZ, and Mr. GOTTHEIMER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To provide the United States Government with additional tools to deter state and non-state actors from wrongfully detaining United States nationals for political leverage, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Countering Wrongful
5 Detention Act of 2025”.

1 **SEC. 2. DESIGNATION OF A FOREIGN COUNTRY AS A STATE**
2 **SPONSOR OF UNLAWFUL OR WRONGFUL DE-**
3 **TENTION.**

4 The Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-
5 Taking Accountability Act (22 U.S.C. 1741 et seq.) is
6 amended by inserting after section 306 the following:

7 **“SEC. 306A. DESIGNATION OF A FOREIGN COUNTRY AS A**
8 **STATE SPONSOR OF UNLAWFUL OR WRONG-**
9 **FUL DETENTION.**

10 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the notice require-
11 ment of subsection (d)(1)(A), the Secretary of State, in
12 consultation with the heads of other relevant Federal
13 agencies, may designate a foreign country that has pro-
14 vided support for or directly engaged in the unlawful or
15 wrongful detention of a United States national as a State
16 Sponsor of Unlawful or Wrongful Detention based on any
17 of the following criteria:

18 “(1) The unlawful or wrongful detention of a
19 United States national occurs in the foreign country.

20 “(2) The government of the foreign country or
21 a nonstate actor in the foreign country has failed to
22 release an unlawfully or wrongfully detained United
23 States national within 30 days of being notified by
24 the Department of State of such unlawfully or
25 wrongfully detained national.

1 “(3) Actions taken by the government of the
2 foreign country indicate that the government is re-
3 sponsible for, complicit in, or materially supports the
4 unlawful or wrongful detention of a United States
5 national, including by acting as described in para-
6 graph (2) after having been notified by the Depart-
7 ment of State.

8 “(4) The actions of a state or nonstate actor in
9 the foreign country, including any previous action
10 relating to unlawful or wrongful detention or hostage
11 taking of a United States national, pose a risk to
12 the safety and security of United States nationals
13 abroad sufficient to warrant designation of the for-
14 eign country as a State Sponsor of Unlawful or
15 Wrongful Detention, as determined by the Secretary.

16 “(b) TERMINATION OF DESIGNATION.—

17 “(1) TERMINATION BY THE SECRETARY OF
18 STATE.—The Secretary of State may terminate the
19 designation of a foreign country under subsection
20 (a) if the Secretary certifies to Congress that it is
21 in the national interest to terminate such designa-
22 tion and that the foreign country—

23 “(A) has released the United States na-
24 tionals unlawfully or wrongfully detained within
25 the territory of the foreign country;

1 “(B) has demonstrated changes in policies
2 with respect to unlawful or wrongful detention
3 and hostage taking; or

4 “(C) has provided assurances that the gov-
5 ernment of the foreign country will not engage
6 or be complicit in or support acts described in
7 subsection (a).

8 “(2) TERMINATION UNLESS APPROVAL BY CON-
9 GRESS.—The designation of a foreign country under
10 subsection (a) shall terminate on the date that is 6
11 months after such designation unless a joint resolu-
12 tion of approval with respect to the designation is
13 enacted into law.

14 “(c) PROHIBITION ON SUBSEQUENT DESIGNATIONS
15 IF DESIGNATION NOT APPROVED; EXCEPTION.—

16 “(1) IN GENERAL.—If a joint resolution of ap-
17 proval is not enacted into law with respect to a des-
18 ignation of a foreign country under subsection (a)
19 before the expiration of the 6-month period de-
20 scribed in subsection (b)(2), the Secretary of State
21 may not designate the foreign country under sub-
22 section (a) during the 6-month period beginning on
23 the date of the expiration of the 6-month period de-
24 scribed in subsection (b)(2).

1 “(2) EXCEPTION.—A foreign country with re-
2 spect to which a designation under subsection (a)
3 has terminated by reason of the application of sub-
4 section (b)(2) may be re-designated as a State Spon-
5 sor of Unlawful or Wrongful Detention for purposes
6 of subsection (a) if a joint resolution providing for
7 such designation is enacted into law.

8 “(d) BRIEFING AND REPORTS TO CONGRESS; PUBLI-
9 CATION.—

10 “(1) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—

11 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 7 days
12 after making a designation of a foreign country
13 as a State Sponsor of Unlawful or Wrongful
14 Detention under subsection (a), the Secretary
15 of State shall submit to the appropriate con-
16 gressional committees a report that notifies the
17 committees of the proposed designation.

18 “(B) ELEMENTS.—In each report sub-
19 mitted under subparagraph (A) with respect to
20 the designation of a foreign country as a State
21 Sponsor of Unlawful or Wrongful Detention,
22 the Secretary shall include—

23 “(i) the justification for the designa-
24 tion; and

1 “(ii) a description of any action taken
2 by the United States Government, includ-
3 ing the Secretary of State or the head of
4 any other relevant Federal agency, to deter
5 the unlawful or wrongful detention of for-
6 eign nationals in the country.

7 “(2) INITIAL BRIEFING REQUIRED.—Not later
8 than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this
9 section, the Secretary shall brief the appropriate
10 congressional committees on the following:

11 “(A) Whether any of the following coun-
12 tries should be designated as a State Sponsor
13 of Unlawful or Wrongful Detention under sub-
14 section (a):

15 “(i) Afghanistan.

16 “(ii) Eritrea.

17 “(iii) The Islamic Republic of Iran.

18 “(iv) Nicaragua.

19 “(v) The Russian Federation.

20 “(vi) The Syrian Arab Republic.

21 “(vii) Venezuela under the regime of
22 Nicolás Maduro.

23 “(viii) The Republic of Belarus.

24 “(ix) The People’s Republic of China.

1 “(B) The steps taken by the Secretary to
2 deter the unlawful and wrongful detention of
3 United States nationals and to respond to such
4 detentions, including—

5 “(i) any engagement with private sec-
6 tor companies to optimize the distribution
7 of travel advisories; and

8 “(ii) any engagement with private
9 companies responsible for promoting travel
10 to foreign countries engaged in the unlaw-
11 ful or wrongful detention of United States
12 nationals.

13 “(C) An assessment of a possible expan-
14 sion of chapter 97 of title 28, United States
15 Code (commonly known as the ‘Foreign Sov-
16 ereign Immunities Act of 1976’) to include an
17 exception from asset seizure immunity for State
18 Sponsors of Unlawful or Wrongful Detention.

19 “(D) The progress made in multilateral
20 fora, including the United Nations and other
21 international organizations, to address the un-
22 lawful and wrongful detention of United States
23 nationals, in addition to nationals of partners
24 and allies of the United States in foreign coun-
25 tries.

1 “(3) ANNUAL BRIEFING.—Not later than one
2 year after the date of the enactment of this section,
3 and annually thereafter for 5 years, the Assistant
4 Secretary of State for Consular Affairs and the Spe-
5 cial Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, or des-
6 ignees thereof, shall provide a briefing to the appro-
7 priate congressional committees on the countries
8 listed under paragraph (2)(A) and actions taken by
9 the Secretary of State to deter the wrongful deten-
10 tion of United States nationals, including any steps
11 taken in accordance with paragraph (2)(B).

12 “(4) TESTIMONY.—The Special Presidential
13 Envoy for Hostage Affairs shall testify before the
14 appropriate congressional committees not less than
15 once each Congress on activities to deter wrongful
16 detention.

17 “(5) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall make
18 available on a publicly accessible website of the De-
19 partment of State, and regularly update, a list of
20 foreign countries designated as State Sponsors of
21 Unlawful or Wrongful Detention under subsection
22 (a).

23 “(6) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS
24 DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ‘appropriate
25 congressional committees’ means—

1 “(A) the Committee on Foreign Affairs
2 and the Committee on Appropriations of the
3 House of Representatives; and

4 “(B) the Committee on Foreign Relations
5 and the Committee on Appropriations of the
6 Senate.

7 “(e) REVIEW AND DETERMINATION OF AVAILABLE
8 RESPONSES TO STATE SPONSORS OF UNLAWFUL OR
9 WRONGFUL DETENTION.—Upon designation of a foreign
10 country as a State Sponsor of Unlawful or Wrongful De-
11 tention under subsection (a), the Secretary of State, in
12 consultation with the heads of other relevant Federal
13 agencies, shall conduct a comprehensive review and make
14 a determination of the use of existing authorities to re-
15 spond to and deter the unlawful or wrongful detention of
16 United States nationals in the foreign country, includ-
17 ing—

18 “(1) inadmissibilities available under the Inter-
19 national Emergency Economic Powers Act (50
20 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.);

21 “(2) visa restrictions available under section
22 7031(e) of the Department of State, Foreign Oper-
23 ations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act,
24 2024 (division F of Public Law 118–47; 8 U.S.C.
25 1182 note) or any other provision of Federal law;

1 “(3) sanctions available under the Immigration
2 and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.);

3 “(4) restrictions on assistance provided to the
4 government of the country under the Foreign Assist-
5 ance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.) or any
6 other provision of Federal law;

7 “(5) restrictions on the export of certain goods
8 to the country under the Arms Export Control Act
9 (22 U.S.C. 2751 et seq.), the Export Control Re-
10 form Act of 2018 (50 U.S.C. 4801 et seq.), or any
11 other Federal law; and

12 “(6) designating the country as a country
13 whose government has repeatedly provided support
14 for acts of international terrorism pursuant to—

15 “(A) section 1754(c)(1)(A)(i) of the Ex-
16 port Control Reform Act of 2018 (50 U.S.C.
17 4813(c)(1)(A)(i));

18 “(B) section 620A of the Foreign Assist-
19 ance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2371);

20 “(C) section 40(d) of the Arms Export
21 Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2780(d)); or

22 “(D) any other provision of law.

23 “(f) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this sec-
24 tion shall be construed to imply that every United States
25 national detained in a country designated as a State Spon-

1 sor of Unlawful or Wrongful Detention under subsection
2 (a) should be or is determined to be wrongfully detained
3 under the Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hos-
4 tage-Taking Accountability Act.”.

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