

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 3420

To establish a Special Envoy for Humanitarian Aid Workers, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 10, 2025

Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself, Mr. MERKLEY, and Mr. SANDERS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To establish a Special Envoy for Humanitarian Aid Workers, 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 “Commitment to Aid
5 Workers Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. SPECIAL ENVOY FOR HUMANITARIAN AID WORK-** 7 **ERS.**

8 Section 1 of the State Department Basic Authorities
9 Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2651a) is amended by adding at
10 the end the following:

1 “(p) SPECIAL ENVOY FOR HUMANITARIAN AID
2 WORKERS.—

3 “(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

4 “(A) AID WORKER.—The term ‘aid worker’
5 means an individual who provides humanitarian
6 assistance to people in need outside the United
7 States.

8 “(B) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COM-
9 MITTEES.—The term ‘appropriate congressional
10 committees’ means—

11 “(i) the Committee on Appropriations
12 of the Senate;

13 “(ii) the Committee on Foreign Rela-
14 tions of the Senate;

15 “(iii) the Committee on Appropria-
16 tions of the House of Representatives; and

17 “(iv) the Committee on Foreign Af-
18 fairs of the House of Representatives.

19 “(2) ESTABLISHMENT.—There shall be a Spe-
20 cial Envoy for Humanitarian Aid Workers (referred
21 to in this subsection as the ‘Special Envoy’), who
22 shall—

23 “(A) be appointed by the President; and

24 “(B) report to the Secretary of State.

1 “(3) RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR.—

2 The Special Envoy shall have the rank and status of
3 ambassador.

4 “(4) DUTIES.—The Special Envoy shall be re-
5 sponsible for—

6 “(A) inquiring into the death, fatal injury,
7 or detention of any aid worker in the course of
8 providing assistance as part of a humanitarian
9 mission supported by the United States;

10 “(B) advocating for the robust coordina-
11 tion and deconfliction between humanitarian
12 missions supported by the United States, inter-
13 national bodies, and relevant foreign security
14 forces;

15 “(C) advocating for foreign countries to
16 adopt best practices, including security for aid
17 workers, to enable nongovernmental organiza-
18 tions to freely deliver humanitarian aid and as-
19 sistance;

20 “(D) developing and advocating, in con-
21 sultation with the Secretary of State, best prac-
22 tices for foreign countries to work with humani-
23 tarian nongovernmental organizations and civil
24 society organizations; and

1 “(E) advocating for any other matter that
2 supports the efforts of nongovernmental organi-
3 zations to provide humanitarian assistance
4 without the interference of the security of a for-
5 eign country.

6 “(5) ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not
7 later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of
8 this subsection, and annually thereafter, the Special
9 Envoy shall submit a report to the appropriate con-
10 gressional committees regarding the working envi-
11 ronment of the conflict areas in which aid workers
12 operate to provide humanitarian assistance as part
13 of a humanitarian mission supported by the United
14 States, including—

15 “(A) any security challenges that non-
16 governmental organizations face in providing
17 United States humanitarian assistance;

18 “(B) the effectiveness of the United Na-
19 tions Office for the Coordination of Humani-
20 tarian Affairs in deconflicting between non-
21 governmental organizations providing humani-
22 tarian assistance and parties to conflict;

23 “(C) how much humanitarian assistance
24 the United States has distributed during the
25 preceding 1-year period; and

1 “(D) any policy recommendations.

2 “(6) REPORT ON UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR
 3 THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS.—
 4 Not later than 1 year after the date of the enact-
 5 ment of this subsection, the Special Envoy, in con-
 6 sultation with the Secretary of State, shall submit a
 7 report to the appropriate congressional committees
 8 regarding the effectiveness of the efforts of the
 9 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Hu-
 10 manitarian Affairs with respect to coordination and
 11 deconfliction between humanitarian nongovernmental
 12 organizations and foreign countries as part of a hu-
 13 manitarian response supported by the United
 14 States.”.

15 **SEC. 3. INVESTIGATIONS INTO ANY KILLING OR FATAL IN-**
 16 **JURY OF HUMANITARIAN AID WORKERS.**

17 Chapter 1 of part III of the Foreign Assistance Act
 18 of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2351 et seq.) is amended by adding
 19 at the end the following:

20 **“SEC. 620N. PROHIBITION ON ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES**
 21 **THAT UNLAWFULLY KILL OR FATALLY IN-**
 22 **JURE HUMANITARIAN AID WORKERS.**

23 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

24 “(1) ACTIVE HUMANITARIAN AID MISSION.—

25 The term ‘active humanitarian aid mission’ means

1 an ongoing, organized effort outside the United
2 States through which United States humanitarian
3 assistance is being delivered or administered by the
4 international community, individual countries, or
5 international organizations—

6 “(A) to prevent and control nonpolitical
7 and nonmilitary crises; and

8 “(B) to mitigate the effects of such crises.

9 “(2) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
10 TEES.—The term ‘appropriate congressional com-
11 mittees’ means—

12 “(A) the Committee on Appropriations of
13 the Senate;

14 “(B) the Committee on Foreign Relations
15 of the Senate;

16 “(C) the Committee on Appropriations of
17 the House of Representatives; and

18 “(D) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of
19 the House of Representatives.

20 “(3) HUMANITARIAN AID WORKER.—The term
21 ‘humanitarian aid worker’ means an individual who
22 is participating in an active humanitarian aid mis-
23 sion to provide assistance and resources to people in
24 need.

1 “(4) UNLAWFUL KILLING.—The term ‘unlawful
 2 killing’ means the use of lethal force by a govern-
 3 ment or its agents that—

4 “(A) if in a state of armed conflict, is in-
 5 consistent with the requirements of inter-
 6 national humanitarian law that are enshrined
 7 as principles in the Department of Defense Law
 8 of War Manual; or

9 “(B) if outside of a state of armed conflict,
 10 would constitute murder or manslaughter (as
 11 such terms are defined in sections 1111 and
 12 1112 of title 18, United States Code).

13 “(b) PROHIBITION ON ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES
 14 THAT UNLAWFULLY KILL OR FATALLY INJURE HUMANI-
 15 TARIAN AID WORKERS.—

16 “(1) IN GENERAL.—No security assistance (as
 17 defined in section 502B(d)(2)) and no defense arti-
 18 cle or defense service subject to the requirements
 19 under section 36 of the Arms Export Control Act
 20 (22 U.S.C. 2776) may be furnished to any foreign
 21 country if the Secretary of State certifies to the ap-
 22 propriate congressional committees that such foreign
 23 country has unlawfully killed or fatally injured hu-
 24 manitarian aid workers or refused reasonable re-
 25 quests to furnish relevant information to the Sec-

1 retary of the United States, unless the Secretary
2 also certifies to the appropriate congressional com-
3 mittees that, in the determination of the Secretary,
4 such foreign country—

5 “(A) has taken sufficient action to inves-
6 tigate previous violations, adopt corrective ac-
7 tions, take effective steps to bring the respon-
8 sible members of the security force unit to jus-
9 tice, and coordinate active humanitarian aid
10 missions; and

11 “(B) will enable humanitarian aid workers
12 to participate in such missions without being
13 unlawfully killed or fatally injured.

14 “(2) APPLICABILITY.—A certification described
15 in paragraph (1) shall be submitted not later than
16 15 days before such certification takes effect.

17 “(c) AID WORKER INDEPENDENT INQUIRY
18 GROUP.—

19 “(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 60 days
20 after the appointment of the Special Envoy for Hu-
21 manitarian Aid Workers pursuant to section
22 1(b)(2)(A) of the State Department Basic Authori-
23 ties Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2651a(b)(2)(A)) (re-
24 ferred to in this subsection as the ‘Special Envoy’),
25 the President shall establish the Aid Worker Inde-

pendent Inquiry Group (referred to in this section as the ‘Group’) to assess and analyze the death or detention of any individual participating in an active humanitarian aid mission after the date of the enactment of this section.

“(2) MEMBERSHIP.—The Group shall be led by the Special Envoy and consist of such number of representatives as the Special Envoy may determine appropriate from—

“(A) the Department of Justice;

“(B) the Department of State, including—

“(i) relevant embassies;

“(ii) the Office of Foreign Assistance;

and

“(iii) relevant offices under the Undersecretary for Political Affairs;

“(C) the Federal Bureau of Investigation;

“(D) the Office of the Director of National Intelligence; and

“(E) any other Federal department or agency the Special Envoy determines appropriate.

“(3) INCIDENT REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 90 days after a death or detention described in paragraph (1) (or not later than 45 days

1 after such death or detention if the victim is a
2 United States citizen), the Special Envoy, in coordi-
3 nation with the Group, shall submit a report to Con-
4 gress that includes—

5 “(A) the cause of such death or detention;

6 “(B) with respect to a death—

7 “(i) a description of the events leading
8 up to such death;

9 “(ii) if the military of a foreign coun-
10 try is responsible for causing the death of
11 any such aid worker;

12 “(iii) an assessment of the cir-
13 cumstances surrounding such death, in-
14 cluding the information available to and in-
15 tentions of the unit of such military in-
16 volved;

17 “(iv) information on the source of
18 such death, including the type of munitions
19 used in connection with such death, if any;

20 “(v) whether it is more likely than not
21 that any defense article used was trans-
22 ferred from the United States or pur-
23 chased by the perpetrator from United
24 States assistance; and

1 “(vi) any other detail that the Special
2 Envoy determines relevant to the cir-
3 cumstances of the death;

4 “(C) with respect to a detention, informa-
5 tion on the grounds for such detention, includ-
6 ing any criminal charges and evidence against
7 the detainee;

8 “(D) an assessment of the degree of co-
9 operation with the investigation of the death or
10 detention by the relevant foreign country, in-
11 cluding whether such country has furnished all
12 requested information; and

13 “(E) a final assessment as to whether such
14 death or detention was consistent with the laws
15 of the international community, of the host
16 country, and the Department of Defense Law
17 of War Manual.”.

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