



Congressional Update

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I. Legislation to Designate Muslim Brotherhood a Terrorist Organization Re-introduced

The issue of designating the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) has again been raised in Congress. On January 9, resolutions were introduced in the House and Senate to designate the MB a terrorist organization. Legislation was [introduced](#) in the 114th Congress but was not enacted before Congress adjourned.

Muslim Brotherhood Terrorist Designation Act of 2017 ([S68](#)). Introduced on January 9 by Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) along with cosponsors Senators Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), James Inhofe (R-Oklahoma), Pat Roberts (R-Kansas), and Ron Johnson (R-Wisconsin), the bill would designate the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization. The bill has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC).

House Version of the Muslim Brotherhood Terrorist Designation Act of 2017 ([HR377](#)). Introduced on January 9 by Representative Mario Díaz-Balart (R-Florida) and 31 Republican cosponsors, the bill is identical to the Senate version. The bill has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

The two bills would require the secretary of state to provide a report to twelve congressional committees within 60 days of the designation that:

- (1) indicates whether the MB meets the criteria for designation as a foreign terrorist organization under Section 219(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act; and,
- (2) includes a detailed justification as to which criteria have not been met, if the secretary of state determines that the MB does not meet the criteria referred to in paragraph (1) of the Act.

There is considerable pressure to pass these bills not only in Congress but from outside groups, including the Embassy of Egypt and its lobbyists in Washington, the Coptic Solidarity movement, and a number of right-wing organizations. President Trump supported the legislation during his presidential campaign and that support likely has encouraged Cruz and Díaz-Balart to reintroduce the bills.

Whether Trump continues to support the legislation is not entirely clear, but certainly his previous provocative statements on the MB have fueled anti-Muslim sentiments in Congress and would indicate support for the legislation. Moreover, the Carnegie Middle East Center has issued a [paper](#) which reports that "...President Trump reportedly is considering an executive order to instruct the secretary of state to undertake the process."

II. Ban on Muslim Refugees

Congressional Quarterly (CQ) has reported that President Trump is considering a draft presidential order that would impose a temporary ban on Muslims from coming to the United States. Christians would be allowed, but Muslim Syrian refugees would be prohibited. The draft order could require a four-month halt on the entry of any refugees. The eight-page draft order was leaked to CQ and reportedly is circulating on Capitol Hill. It is unsigned and therefore could be subject to change. Attempts by this writer to obtain a copy of the leaked report so far have been unsuccessful.

III. Trump to Deliver State of the Union Address

House Speaker Paul Ryan has invited President Donald Trump to address a joint session of Congress on **February 28**. The formal invitation is in keeping with a similar invitation given to former President Barack Obama in early 2009 by congressional leaders.

III. Other Legislation Introduced

1. Iran

Prohibiting Nuclear First Strike (S200). Introduced on January 24 by Senator Ed Markey (D-Massachusetts), the bill would prohibit the conduct of a first-use nuclear strike, absent a declaration of war by Congress. The bill has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC).

House Version: Prohibiting Nuclear First Strike (HR669). Introduced on January 24 by Representative Ted Lieu (D-California), Jim McGovern (D-Massachusetts), Yvette Clark (D-New York), Earl Blumenauer (D-Oregon), Raul Grijalva (D-Arizona), Mark Pocan (D-Wisconsin), Barbara Lee (D-California), and Peter Welch (D-Vermont), the bill would prohibit the conduct of a first-use nuclear strike, absent a declaration of war by Congress. The bill has been referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC).

(It seems many members of Congress do not trust President Trump to keep his finger off the nuclear button!)

More Sanctions on Iran (S227). Introduced on January 24 by Senators Marco Rubio (R-Florida), Todd Young (R-Indiana), and John Cornyn (R-Texas), the bill would impose non-nuclear sanctions with respect to Iran. The bill has been referred to the Senate Banking Committee.

2. Immigration

Amend the Immigration and Nationality Act (S211). Introduced on January 24 by Senators Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Richard Shelby (R-Alabama), the bill would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to permit the Governor of a state to reject the resettlement of a refugee in that state unless there is adequate assurance that the alien does not present a security risk. The bill has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

This bill would appear to be the first step in a number of resolutions and bills yet to be introduced to limit, or stop the resettlement of immigrants—i.e., Muslims—in the United States.

Penalty for Aliens Who Overstay Visas (HR643) Introduced on January 24 by Representative Lou Barletta (R-Pennsylvania), the bill would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to penalize aliens who overstay their visas. The bill has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee. This bill is yet another legislative method to limit immigration.

Revocation of Issued Passports (HR425). Introduced on January 10 by Representatives Ted Poe (R-Texas) and Bill Keating (D-Massachusetts), the bill would authorize the revocation or denial of passports to individuals affiliated with foreign terrorist organizations. The bill has been referred to the HFAC.

3. Crimes against Humanity

Iraq and Syria Genocide Emergency Relief and Accountability Act of 2017 (HR390). Introduced on January 10 by Representative Chris Smith (R-New Jersey), the bill would provide emergency relief to victims of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes in Iraq and Syria, and accountability for perpetrators of these crimes. The bill has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

IV. Nominations/Confirmations

Nikki Haley to be US Ambassador to the United Nations. On January 24 the Senate confirmed Nikki Haley to be US Ambassador to the United Nations by a vote of 96 to 4. Voting against the nomination were Senators Chris Coons (D-Delaware), Martin Heinrich (D-New Mexico), Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont), and Tom Udall (D-New Mexico).

Rex Tillerson to be Secretary of State. The full Senate is scheduled to vote on the nomination of Rex Tillerson on January 31.