



H.Res. 1402 – Supporting a transition to democracy through free, fair, credible, peaceful, and transparent elections in Bangladesh

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 1402 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Joseph Crowley (D-NY) on July 31, 2008. The resolution was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was never considered.

H.Res. 1402 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 23, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 1402 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Expresses its strong support to the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh so it will be able to address economic and political challenges, and urges all stakeholders to play a constructive and forward looking role to strengthen such a process;
- Appreciates the decision of the caretaker Government of Bangladesh to hold free, fair, credible, peaceful, and transparent elections by the third week of December 2008;
- Welcomes the decision of the Government of Bangladesh to hold dialogue with all political parties and other civil society organizations to create a congenial atmosphere for holding elections and to ensure participation of all political parties in that process;
- Urges all political parties to participate in the elections so that democratic governance can be maintained, which could continue fight against corruption and institutional and policy reforms;
- Calls on the Government of Bangladesh to lift the state of emergency and remove other restrictions on political activity to allow free and fair elections to occur;
- Urges the caretaker Government of Bangladesh to complete a transparent voter registration process that will facilitate the enrollment of the maximum number of eligible voters to protect the voting rights of all eligible voters regardless of religious affiliations or ethnic background, to use all practical technical means of ensuring the security of the ballot, to prevent violence before and after elections, and to permit and facilitate international and domestic nongovernmental monitoring of the entire electoral process;
- Urges the caretaker Government of Bangladesh to invite foreign nationals to observe and monitor the December 2008 elections;
- Urges the Government of Bangladesh to ensure the due process and equal treatment under the rule of law for all suspects, witnesses, and detainees;
- Notes the initiatives of the caretaker Government of Bangladesh to eradicate corruption from all levels of government and society through institutional and policy reforms;
- Expresses concern at the reported abuse of human rights and urges the Government of Bangladesh to ensure human rights, freedom of speech, assembly, and association;
- Urges the caretaker Government of Bangladesh to protect the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, particularly Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Ahmadis, and non-Muslim tribal peoples;
- Urges the President to work toward the return of democracy to Bangladesh as a high priority of United States foreign policy and affirm the willingness of the United States to provide assistance;
- Urges the President to use the voice and vote of the United States in multilateral organizations to strengthen the rule of law and democracy in Bangladesh; and
- Urges the President to consider, upon completion of an internationally-accepted free and fair election, extending generous economic support to Bangladesh as an incentive.

BACKGROUND



LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

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Bangladesh, a predominately Muslim country of 154 million people in South Asia, became an independent state in 1971. In October 2006, power in Bangladesh was handed to a caretaker government, as established by the Constitution, in preparation for a January 2007 election. The caretaker government, however, imposed a national state of emergency and suspended fundamental civil rights following widespread violence.

It has been reported that the caretaker Government of Bangladesh has arrested about 18,000 individuals since May 2008. Media access in Bangladesh has also been severely restricted by the government. The government has announced that elections will be held during December 2008. The tenuous situation in Bangladesh has recently been exacerbated by spiking food prices. Food prices in Bangladesh have doubled over the course of the past year.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that XXXXXXXX.

STAFF CONTACT

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