



OREGON'S SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Transnational Repression Policy Act

Background:

Transnational repression against individuals who live outside their country of origin is a human rights violation that seeks to stifle dissent. Authoritarian governments increasingly rely on transnational repression to strengthen their control over emigrant and diaspora communities, especially as their control at home pushes dissidents abroad. It can take both physical and virtual forms, from physical assaults and unlawful renditions and detentions to targeted online surveillance and public slander and libel.

Summary:

This bill, co-sponsored by Senators Rubio, Cardin, and Hagerty, would establish U.S. policy to hold foreign governments and individuals accountable when they stalk, intimidate, or assault people within the United States and United States citizens in foreign countries. Additionally, the bill would elevate transnational repression as a key foreign policy priority of the U.S. by prioritizing diplomacy that aligns with democratic principles and respect for human rights, both domestically and internationally. This bill builds upon the Khashoggi Ban and the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, which urges INTERPOL to ensure authoritarian regimes do not misuse the agency's resources to target dissidents and journalists.

Specifically the bill would:

- Include a transnational repression-specific section within the State Department's Annual Human Rights Report.
- Require the Secretary of State along with other relevant heads of Federal departments and agencies to present a report to Congress on a U.S. strategy to address transnational repression and enhance international awareness of it.
- Require the Departments of State and Justice to work with civil society and the private sector on training for U.S. diplomatic personnel and domestic federal employees, respectively, on identifying and understanding transnational repression.
 - Authorize funding for each Fiscal Year from 2024 to 2027 to develop curriculum for diplomatic personnel and domestic federal employees, respectively.
- Instruct the intelligence community to identify perpetrators of transnational repression and their tools, and share relevant information with like-minded partners.
- Dedicate resources to ensure a tip line for victims and witnesses of transnational repression is tailored to meet the needs of at-risk communities and to identify specific tactics
- Require the President submit a list to Congress of foreign individuals who should have sanctions imposed on them because they, knowingly and unknowingly, directly engaged in transnational repression.