



OREGON'S SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Transnational Repression Policy Act

Background:

Transnational repression (TNR) against individuals who live outside their country of origin stifles dissent and violates international human rights and the laws of host countries. Authoritarian governments increasingly rely on TNR to strengthen their control over emigrant and diaspora communities, especially as their control at home pushes dissidents abroad. In 2021 alone, Freedom House recorded 85 incidents of direct, physical TNR, which does not include acts undertaken through the growing arsenal of digital TNR tools and tactics. Most acts occur through the cooperation of, or cooperation with, authorities in the host country—this means that authoritarian governments are increasingly cooperating amongst each other, but also preventing democratic countries from serving as a physical haven for those fleeing repression.

Summary:

This bill 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, U.S. policy would combat TNR 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 FY2022 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.
- Establish a dedicated tip line for transnational repression reporting with the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice, which would also do outreach to communities at risk.
- 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.