



## Legislation Text

**File #:** Res 1920-2001, **Version:** \*

Res. No. 1920

Resolution urging the United States Attorney General and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service to immediately implement H.R. 4681 and create a process through which those formerly Syrian Jews who escaped persecution under the Syrian dictatorship and came to the United States seeking freedom may apply for and obtain permanent residency status.

By Council Member DiBrienza, Berman, Nelson, Fisher, Eisland, Henry, Michels and Moskowitz; also Council Members Clarke, Leffler, O'Donovan and Quinn

Whereas, For decades the once thriving community of Jews in Syria had been held virtual hostage in its own country, persecuted, violated and denied any freedom of movement by Syria's harsh dictator; and

Whereas, The few thousand Jews that remained in Syria in the 1980's were subject to arrest on the mere suspicion of intention to leave the country, and even after this situation improved somewhat, could not travel abroad with their families; and

Whereas, In a good will gesture following the Persian Gulf War, then Syrian dictator, Hafez el Assad, agreed to loosen emigration restrictions on Jews and nearly all 4,000 Syrian Jews chose to seek freedom outside of Syria; and

Whereas, As a condition of their release, Assad insisted that the United States grant the Jews temporary visitor's visas and then grant them asylum upon their arrival in the United States instead of admitting them as refugees; and

Whereas, As a result of their asylum status, the approximately 2,000 Jews who escaped lives of persecution were met in the United States by a bureaucratic wall that to this day has made many of them unable to obtain lawful permanent residence status; and

Whereas, Without permanent residence status, these formerly persecuted Jews face continued uncertainty in their lives and an inability to obtain all the benefits associated with permanent residence status in the United States; and

Whereas, In October 2000, in an attempt to remedy this situation, Congress passed H.R. 4681, a bill that provided for the expedited change of status to permanent resident for those Jews who escaped Syrian persecution; and

Whereas, Pursuant to H.R. 4681, those Jews who escaped persecution in Syria may obtain permanent residency status on an expedited basis as long as they apply for such status within one year of the enactment of the law; and

Whereas, The Attorney General and the Immigration and Naturalization Service have yet to create an application process for those Jews covered under H.R. 4681; and

Whereas, Since the ability to apply for permanent status will expire under the law in October of this year, and since there are approximately 2,000 formerly persecuted Jews who still need to apply for permanent resident status, an application process for such status must be in place by July of this year so that all those covered under H.R. 4681 may apply; and

Whereas, Unless an application process is created and permanent residency status granted, these formerly persecuted Jews will continue to face uncertainty in their lives as well as an inability to obtain benefits such as certain educational scholarships and opportunities and the ability to travel freely outside of the United States, benefits only afforded permanent residents; and

Whereas, Furthermore, unless an application process is created and permanent residency status granted, many of these formerly persecuted Jews will remain limited in their opportunities to become productive members of society because many companies will only hire permanent residents or full United States citizens; and

Whereas, As a result, unless an application process is created and permanent residency status granted, the promise of freedom for these formerly persecuted Jews will remain unfulfilled and, ironically, their former persecutors will continue to exercise control over their lives and freedom; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges the United States Attorney General and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service to immediately implement H.R. 4681 and create a process through which those formerly Syrian Jews who escaped persecution under the Syrian dictatorship and came to the United States seeking freedom may apply for and obtain permanent residency status.

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