

A CHAMPION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

SENATOR MCCAIN SPENT HIS CAREER FIGHTING TO DEFEND THE FREEDOM, DIGNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD.

A Voice for the Oppressed

Serving as Chairman of the International Republican Institute for 15 years, Senator McCain worked to support democratic societies that are open, responsible, accountable and resilient. He traveled overseas frequently and had established relations with heads of state, opposition leaders, military leaders, and political activists the world over. From Burma to Belarus, Ukraine to Iran, he was a tireless champion of the oppressed.

Normalizing America's Relationship with Vietnam

As a veteran of the Vietnam War, Senator McCain led many historic efforts in Congress to help both the United States and the people of Vietnam heal in the aftermath of the conflict. In 1987, Senator McCain sponsored the [Amerasian Homecoming Act](#) to help children of Vietnamese women and American men born during the Vietnam War who were routinely abandoned or abused immigrate to the United States and reunite with their families. Senator McCain introduced a number of other bills to grant unmarried adult children of Vietnamese internees refugee status under the Orderly Departure Program.

In the early 1990's, Senator McCain and then-Senator John Kerry – both veterans of the Vietnam War – worked together on the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs to deliver the fullest and most significant accounting of POWs and MIAs in history. The committee found no compelling evidence that Americans had been held after the war, and its report exposed fraudulent advocacy groups that had raised false hopes among the families of the missing. The committee's work helped make it possible for President Clinton to [normalize relations with Vietnam](#), a decision McCain had long urged and readily defended.

Burma

Senator McCain was a vocal advocate for freedom in Burma and spent years advocating for the release of human rights activist Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been imprisoned for 15 years. Throughout her imprisonment, Senator McCain shined a spotlight on the military junta's human rights abuses and supported legislative efforts to target the regime through the [JADE](#)

[Act of 2008](#). Following the Burmese military's ethnic cleansing campaign in the Rakhine State in 2017, Senator McCain introduced the [Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act](#) to impose targeted sanctions and travel restrictions on senior Burmese military officials responsible for human rights atrocities against the Rohingya people. He also introduced resolutions [condemning human rights abuses](#) against the Rohingya community, and supporting the [safe and voluntary return](#) of refugees to their homes.

Cambodia

Following the signing of the 1991 Paris Peace Accords marking the official end of the Cambodian-Vietnamese War, Senator McCain fought to expand ties with the government of Cambodia and provide \$160 million in [democracy assistance](#) and investment to the country. He also introduced a bill to make the human rights provisions of the Trade Act of 1974 applicable to Cambodia and extend preferential trade status to the country. However, following the 1999 coup by Hun Sen, he pushed for a [strong response](#) by the Clinton Administration and advocated reducing American aid until Hun Sen handed off power to a democratically-elected government. Since that time, he has worked closely with Sam Rainsy, the head of the opposition party in Cambodia, to [support rule of law and human rights](#) in Cambodia.

As the Hun Sen regime has cracked down on human rights and opposition activists in the run up to the 2018 elections, Senator McCain introduced a [resolution](#) supporting the 1991 Paris Peace Accord initiatives and called for [targeted sanctions](#) on senior members of the Hun Sen regime who are responsible for human rights violations.

Yugoslavia

In 1995, Senators McCain and Bob Dole cosponsored a [resolution](#) in the Senate to support the deployment of American troops to Bosnia after the signing of the Dayton Agreement, which put an end to the Bosnian War. The resolution, which passed in an eleventh hour vote, ensured that the United States would lead an international effort to arm and train the Bosnian Muslims and provide U.S. forces to bolster the Dayton Agreement.

A few years later, when the Yugoslav army led an offensive in Kosovo, Senator McCain was instrumental in assuring U.S. support to the NATO mission in the former Yugoslavia. He first introduced a [joint resolution](#) on the deployment of the United States Armed Forces to the Kosovo region in Yugoslavia in 1999. Although this resolution was voted down, it was the start of an important debate on the use of necessary force in the former Yugoslavia. Ultimately, the Senate [voted in favor](#) of supporting air strikes against Yugoslavia. Senator McCain's impassioned floor speech was a deciding factor in leading his colleagues to vote in support of the measure. In 2017, Senator McCain was awarded the [Order of Freedom](#) in Kosovo for his efforts to secure the country's independence.

Georgia

Immediately following Russia's invasion of South Ossetia in 2008, Senator McCain wrote a pivotal op-ed in the [Wall Street Journal](#) titled, "We Are All Georgians." In the op-ed, Senator McCain defended Georgia's territorial integrity and called for a robust international response including an international peacekeeping force. He organized a [congressional delegation](#) to Tbilisi to support the efforts of then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and to focus international attention on the issue.

Senator McCain was also a leading advocate of [Georgia's accession to NATO and the European Union](#). He routinely pushed for a [Membership Action Plan \(MAP\)](#) for Georgia, and included provisions in the NDAA for Georgia's train-and-equip program.

Ukraine

Senator McCain was a tireless advocate for freedom and democracy in Ukraine. In 2004, he championed a [resolution](#) urging the Government of Ukraine to ensure a free and fair election and to respect human rights in the country. He also supported a number of measures in the foreign operations bill to provide democracy and governance assistance to Ukraine. Moreover, he pushed for Ukraine's membership in [NATO](#), writing to the Secretary General on behalf of Ukraine's Membership Action Plan (MAP).

Senator McCain strongly supported the democracy movement in Ukraine and spoke at the [Euromaidan](#) in Kyiv in late 2013. After returning to Washington, he worked with leadership of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on legislation to support Ukraine's fledgling government. He was an original cosponsor of the [Ukraine Freedom and Support Act of 2014](#), and helped ensure its successful passage in the Senate. After Russia initiated hostilities in eastern Ukraine, Senator McCain championed [legislation](#) urging the administration to provide defensive lethal assistance and training to help the Ukrainian Armed Forces defend themselves against Russian aggression.

Iran

Senator McCain has a long history of fighting for the human rights of disenfranchised Iranian citizens across the world and implementing policies to rein-in hostile regimes. In 1992, Senator McCain coauthored the [Iran-Iraq Arms Non-Proliferation Act](#), which would have prohibited the transmission of weapons and technology to Iran and Iraq. Although this bill did not pass, it served as a bellwether for future legislative efforts related to Iran.

During the 2009 Iranian presidential election, in response to the regime's brutal repression of Iran's democratic movement, Senator McCain championed a [resolution](#) urging the Government of Iran to ensure free and fair elections and to respect human rights in the country. He urged the Obama administration to support pro-democracy activists during the

Green Revolution, and later championed [legislation](#) supporting freedom of the press and freedom of speech for the Iranian people.

In 2015, Senator McCain led passage of [legislation](#) securing protections for the Iranian dissidents living in Camp Liberty, Iraq, including provisions in the [FY16NDAA](#) that facilitated their safe resettlement in Albania. He also pushed for robust sanctions against the Iranian regime for its nuclear activities and human rights abuses. He has coupled this advocacy with legislative efforts to deter Iran's malign influence in the Middle East and pushed for a comprehensive strategy for the entire region.

Libya

Senator McCain was a strong supporter of freedom and democracy for the Libyan people. He worked with then-Senator John Kerry on a [resolution](#) authorizing limited use of military force in support of the NATO mission in Libya. He also traveled to Benghazi to meet with pro-democracy leaders in late 2011, sending a strong message of support to the Libyan people. After Ghaddafi's fall, he pushed the administration to provide [robust support](#) for a train-and-assist program for a new Libyan army and supported rule of law programs in support of Libya's democratic transition.

Syria

Senator McCain was one of the most vocal advocates for freedom and human rights for the Syrian people. During the 2011 Arab Spring, Senator McCain called for Bashar al-Assad to [step down](#) and expressed support for the Syrian democratic opposition. Senator McCain urged greater U.S. engagement in Syria and introduced legislation authorizing a [train-and-equip program](#) for the Syrian democratic forces. He introduced a [resolution](#) condemning the government of Syria for crimes against humanity, and advocated for a no-fly zone and other defensive measures to protect the Syrian people from the Assad regime's violence.

Under Senator McCain's leadership, the Senate Armed Services Committee included a [provision](#) in the FY14NDAA that authorized a train-and-equip program for the Syrian opposition. He also supported [legislation](#) to create an investigative body to document the regime's crimes against humanity and introduced resolutions calling for the protection of civilians in Syria.

Russia

Senator McCain was an ardent critic of Vladimir Putin's anti-democratic actions and human rights abuses in Russia, and worked to hold him accountable. He was one of the first lawmakers to call for the [ejection](#) of the Russian government from the Group of Eight (G-8) until it ended its crackdown on freedom. He later cosponsored a Senate [resolution](#) declaring

that the Russian government's wrongful imprisonment of Mikhail Khodorkovsky was based on trumped up, politically motivated charges.

Following the Khodorkovsky case, American businessman Bill Browder asked Senator McCain to publicize the case of Sergei Magnitsky, a tax accountant who had died in a Moscow prison after investigating a \$230 million fraud involving Russian tax officials. Senator McCain joined forces with Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) to champion the [Russia and Moldova Jackson-Vanik Repeal and Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012](#), legislation allowing the administration to impose sanctions on Russian individuals involved in corruption and human rights abuses. Senators McCain and Cardin later led the passage of the [Global Magnitsky Human Rights Act](#), which allows the U.S. to sanction foreign government officials implicated in human rights abuses and corruption anywhere in the world.

Following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, invasion of Ukraine and aggressive actions toward its neighbors in Europe, Senator McCain championed a provision in the FY16NDAA creating the [European Deterrence Initiative](#), which authorized \$6.5 billion in defense funding to counter Russian aggression. He also championed a provision in the FY18NDAA creating the [Global Engagement Center](#), a State Department agency devoted to countering propaganda and information campaigns.

Senator McCain led the response to Russia's attack on the 2016 presidential election by coauthoring [legislation](#) imposing comprehensive sanctions on the Russian government, financial institutions, and others engaged in cyber warfare, corruption and human rights abuses.