118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. ______

To enhance the consideration of human rights in arms exports.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. MEEKS introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on ______

A BILL

To enhance the consideration of human rights in arms exports.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
4 This Act may be cited as the “Safeguarding Human
5 Rights in Arms Exports Act of 2023” or the “SAFE-
6 GUARD Act of 2023”.

(Original Signature of Member)
SEC. 2. STATEMENT OF POLICY ON CONTROL OF DEFENSE EXPORTS AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

It is the policy of the United States that one of the purposes for controlling the export of defense articles and defense services to foreign countries is to prevent such exports from being used in violation of international humanitarian law or internationally recognized human rights, to require accountability for any such violations, and to ensure that the sale, export, or transfer of such articles and services serves to encourage governments of foreign countries to fully comply with international humanitarian law and observe internationally recognized human rights.

SEC. 3. PROHIBITION OF ARMS SALES TO COUNTRIES COMMITTING GENOCIDE OR WAR CRIMES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—No sale, export, or transfer of defense articles or defense services may occur to any country if the Secretary of State has credible information that the government of such country has committed or is committing genocide or violations of international humanitarian law after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) EXCEPTION.—The restriction under subsection (a) shall not apply if the Secretary of State certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that—

(1) the government has adequately punished the persons directly or indirectly responsible for such
acts through a credible, transparent, and effective 
judicial process;

(2) appropriate measures have been instituted 
to ensure that such acts will not recur; and

(3) other appropriate compensation or appro-
priate compensatory measures have been or are 
being provided to the persons harmed by such acts.

SEC. 4. MISUSE OF ARMS SALES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS 
ABUSES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall ensure that—

(1) the sale, export, or transfer of any defense 
article or defense service to a foreign country or 
international organization shall be pursuant to an 
agreement that the government of such country or 
such international organization will not use such ar-
ticle or service in the commission, or to enable the 
commission, of a violation of international humani-
tarian law or internationally recognized human 
rights;

(2) the United States Government has the legal 
right to require the return of any defense articles 
sold, exported, or transferred to a foreign country or 
international organization if the government of such 
country or such organization has used United 
States-origin defense articles in the commission, or
has enabled the commission, of a violation of interna-
tional humanitarian law or internationally recog-
nized human rights; and

(3) if defense articles are sold, exported, or
transferred to a foreign country in a manner in
which the intended end user has not been identified
at the unit level for human rights vetting, the agree-
ment for such sale, export, or transfer includes a list
of units ineligible to receive such articles, consistent
with applicable provisions of United States law.

(b) Eligibility for Defense Services or Arti-
cles.—

(1) Arms Export Control Act.—Section 3(a)
of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C.
2753(a)) is amended—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking “and
promote world peace” and inserting “, promote
world peace, and is unlikely to contribute to
human rights abuses”;

(B) in paragraph (3), by striking “; and”
and inserting a semicolon;

(C) by redesignating paragraph (4) as
paragraph (5); and

(D) by inserting after paragraph (3) the
following new paragraph:
“(4) the country or international organization has agreed not to use such article or service in the commission, or to enable the commission, of a violation of international humanitarian law or internationally recognized human rights; and”.

(2) FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1961.—Section 505 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2314(a)) is amended—

(A) in subsection (a)—

   (i) in paragraph (3), by striking “; and” and inserting a semicolon;

   (ii) by redesignating paragraph (4) as paragraph (5); and

   (iii) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following new paragraph:

   “(4) the country or international organization has agreed not to use such articles or service in the commission, or to enable the commission, of a violation of international humanitarian law or internationally recognized human rights; and”;

(B) in subsection (e), by striking “subsection (a)(1) or (a)(4)” both places it appears and inserting “subsection (a)(1) or (a)(5)”. 
(c) Authorized Purpose for Military Sales.—

Section 4 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2754) is amended—

(1) by inserting “legitimate” before “internal security”; and

(2) by inserting “, provided that such defense articles and defense services will not present a significant risk of being used to violate international humanitarian law or internationally recognized human rights” after “such friendly countries”.


(a) In General.—In considering the sale, export, or transfer of defense articles and defense services to foreign countries, the Secretary of State shall—

(1) also consider the extent to which the government of the foreign country protects human rights and supports democratic institutions, including an independent judiciary; and

(2) ensure that the views and expertise of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the Department of State in connection with any sale, export, or transfer are fully taken into account.

(b) Inspector General Oversight.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act,
and annually thereafter for four years, the Inspector General of the Department of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the implementation of the requirement under subsection (a) during the preceding year.

SEC. 6. ENHANCEMENT OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARMS EXPORTS.

(a) In General.—Any letter of offer to sell, or any application for a license to export or transfer, defense articles or defense services controlled for export shall be subject to the congressional review and disapproval requirements, regardless of monetary value, of section 36 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2776) if the Secretary of State has credible information, with respect to a country to which the defense articles or defense services are proposed to be sold, exported, or transferred, that—

(1) the government of such country on or after the date of enactment of this Act has been deposed by a coup d’etat or decree in which the military played a decisive role, and a democratically elected government has not taken office subsequent to the coup or decree; or

(2) a unit of the security forces of the government of such country—
(A) has violated international humanitarian law and has not been credibly investigated and subjected to a credible and transparent judicial process addressing such allegation; or

(B) has committed a gross violation of human rights, and has not been credibly investigated and subjected to a credible and transparent judicial process addressing such allegation, including, inter alia—

(i) torture or rape;

(ii) ethnic cleansing of civilians;

(iii) recruitment or use of child soldiers;

(iv) unjust or wrongful detention;

(v) the operation of, or effective control or direction over, secret detention facilities; or

(vi) extrajudicial killings, whether by military, police, or other security forces.

(b) INCLUSION OF INFORMATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT.—The Secretary of State shall also provide to the appropriate congressional committees the report described in section 502B(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act (22 U.S.C. 2304(c)) biannually for the period of time specified
in subsection (c) of this section regarding any country covered under subsection (a).

(c) DURATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—With respect to a letter of offer to sell or an application for a license to sell, export, or transfer described in subsection (a), the letter or application shall be subject to the requirements and procedures for congressional review and disapproval under section 36 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2776) for 2 years after the date on which the Secretary of State receives the information described in subsection (a).

(2) TERMINATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—With respect to such a letter or application, the enhanced congressional oversight under subsections (a) and paragraph (1) of this subsection shall terminate on the date on which the Secretary of State determines and so informs the appropriate congressional committees that—

(i) the credible information described in subsection (a)(2) is inaccurate; or

(ii) the activity has ceased, and the government of the applicable country has taken appropriate steps to ensure that
such activity does not recur, including ap-
propriate punishment for the person or
persons involved in such activity.

(B) INFORMATION SUPPORTING DETER-
MINATION.—The Secretary of State shall sub-
mit to the appropriate congressional committees
all information forming the basis for a deter-
mination under subparagraph (A). The deter-
mination shall, to the fullest extent possible, be
unclassified, but may include a classified annex.

(d) MODIFICATION OF PRIOR NOTIFICATION OF
SHIPMENT OF ARMS.—Section 36(i) of the Arms Export
Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2776(i)) is amended by striking
“subject to the requirements of subsection (b) at the joint
request of the Chairman and Ranking Member” and in-
serting “subject to the requirements of this section at the
request of the Chairman or Ranking Member”.

SEC. 7. LIMITATION ON SALES TO SECURITY FORCES IN-
VOLVED IN GROSS VIOLATION OF HUMAN
RIGHTS.

Section 620M(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of
1961 (23 U.S.C. 2378d(a)) is amended by striking “No
assistance” and all that follows through “Arms Export
Control Act” and inserting “No assistance, including the
sale of defense articles or defense services, shall be fur-
lished under this Act, the Arms Export Control Act, or any other provision of law controlling the export or transfer of such articles and services”.

SEC. 8. END USE MONITORING OF MISUSE OF ARMS IN HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.

(a) END USE MONITORING.—Section 40A(a)(2)(B) of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2785) is amended—

(1) in clause (i), by striking “; and” and inserting a semicolon;

(2) in clause (ii), by striking the period at the end and inserting “and;”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new clause:

“(iii) such articles and services are not being used to violate international humanitarian law or internationally recognized human rights.”.

(b) REPORT.—The Secretary shall report to the appropriate congressional committees on the measures that will be taken, including any additional resources needed, to conduct an effective end-use monitoring program to fulfill the requirement of clause (iii) of section 40A(a)(2)(B) of the Arms Export Control Act, as added by subsection (a)(3).
SEC. 9. HUMAN RIGHTS ELEMENTS IN AUXILIARY REPORTS.

Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2776(b)(1)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (O), by striking “; and” and inserting a semicolon;

(2) in subparagraph (P), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

“(Q) an assessment of the risk that such defense articles or defense services will be used in the commission of violations of international humanitarian law or internationally recognized human rights, and a description of any measures to be taken by the recipient government or by the United States to prevent and monitor any such use.”.

SEC. 10. REQUIREMENT FOR CERTAIN WEAPONS TO BE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS AND END USE MONITORING AS FOREIGN MILITARY SALES.

Beginning on the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the following defense articles may be sold, exported, or transferred only pursuant to section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2776(b)):
(1) Rockets, space launch vehicles, missiles, bombs (including equipment to enable precision guidance), torpedoes, depth charges, mines, and grenades.

(2) Armored combat ground vehicles, including ground vehicles and trailers that are armed or are specially designed to be used as a firing or launch platform to deliver munitions or otherwise destroy or incapacitate targets, excluding any unarmed ground vehicles, regardless of origin or designation, manufactured prior to 1956 and unmodified since 1955.

(3) Aircraft, whether manned, unmanned, remotely piloted, or optionally piloted, as follows:

(A) Bombers.

(B) Fighters, fighter/bombers, and fixed-wing attack aircraft.

(C) Turbofan- or turbojet-powered trainers used to train pilots for fighter, attack, or bomber aircraft.

(D) Attack helicopters.

(E) Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) specially designed to incorporate a defense article.

(F) Aircraft specially designed to incorporate a defense article for the purpose of per-
forming an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance function.

(G) Aircraft specially designed to incorporate a defense article for the purpose of performing an electronic warfare function, airborne warning and control aircraft, or aircraft specially designed to incorporate a defense article for the purpose of performing a command, control, and communications function.

SEC. 11. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(2) The terms “defense article” and “defense service” have the same meanings given the terms in section 47 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2794).