

P.L. 2025, Joint Resolution No. 22, *approved January 20, 2026*
Assembly Joint Resolution, No. 231

1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating March 9 of each year as U.S.
2 Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day in New Jersey.
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4 **WHEREAS**, The United States government recognizes March 9 as U.S.
5 Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day, in honor of Robert A.
6 Levinson; and
7 **WHEREAS**, Robert A. Levinson, a retired FBI special agent, was
8 abducted from Kish Island, Iran on March 9, 2007 and remains
9 missing as the longest-held U.S. hostage at 18 years; and
10 **WHEREAS**, The United States has a long history of citizens being
11 taken hostage or wrongfully detained, with one of the most
12 prominent events being the Iranian hostage crisis in which more
13 than 60 Americans were taken hostage on November 4, 1979 at the
14 Embassy of the United States in Tehran, with 52 of them being held
15 until January 20, 1981; and
16 **WHEREAS**, The seizing or detention of other notable Americans, such
17 as the journalist James Foley who was taken hostage and killed by
18 the Islamic State on August 19, 2014, has greatly impacted how the
19 U.S. government responds to the taking and wrongful detention of
20 American citizens; and
21 **WHEREAS**, Americans continue to be taken hostage or wrongfully
22 detained at increasing rates, with more citizens being taken hostage
23 or wrongfully detained from 2015 to 2025 than from 2005 to 2014;
24 and
25 **WHEREAS**, Since 2015, 18 Americans have died while in captivity
26 abroad; and
27 **WHEREAS**, In 2024, at least 54 Americans were held hostage or
28 wrongfully detained in 17 countries, with at least 17 Americans
29 being released from captivity throughout the year; and
30 **WHEREAS**, Of the remaining Americans being held hostage or
31 wrongfully detained in 2024, the average duration of detention was
32 5.9 years; and
33 **WHEREAS**, As of October 2025, at least 41 Americans are being held
34 hostage or are wrongfully detained in 13 countries; and
35 **WHEREAS**, The actual number of Americans unjustly held captive
36 abroad is likely much higher as not all cases are made public and
37 exact numbers are not provided due to national security concerns;
38 and
39 **WHEREAS**, Recent events have led to an increased number of
40 American hostages and wrongful detainees, including Hamas's
41 attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, with some of the hostages
42 recently returned home; and

1 **WHEREAS**, To honor Americans who have been taken hostage or
2 wrongfully detained, as well as to display the country's
3 commitment and prioritization of the deserved freedom of
4 American hostages or wrongful detainees, the United States
5 government flies the Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Flag pursuant
6 to federal law; and

7 **WHEREAS**, The Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Flag, championed by
8 the Bring Our Families Home Campaign, displays a central emblem
9 of three abstract profiles, a background containing two rows of tally
10 marks evoking chalk or scratches on a prison wall, and the words
11 "Bring Them Home" scrolled below; and

12 **WHEREAS**, The Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Flag should be flown
13 on March 9 to honor Robert A. Levinson and all past, present, and
14 future American hostages or wrongful detainees; on August 19 to
15 honor James Foley; on October 7 to honor the hostages taken by
16 Hamas; and on November 4 and January 20 to honor those taken
17 during the Iranian hostage crisis; and

18 **WHEREAS**, It is imperative for New Jersey to recognize and honor
19 Americans who were held hostage or wrongfully detained in the
20 past, who are currently being held hostage or wrongfully detained,
21 and any Americans who will be held hostage or wrongfully
22 detained in the future and to recognize their deserved freedom;
23 now, therefore,

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25 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
26 *State of New Jersey:*

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28 1. March 9 of each year is designated as U.S. Hostage and
29 Wrongful Detainee Day to honor Americans who were held hostage
30 or wrongfully detained in the past, who are currently being held
31 hostage or wrongfully detained, and any Americans who will be
32 held hostage or wrongfully detained in the future and to recognize
33 their deserved freedom.

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35 2. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually display the
36 Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Flag at the State Capitol building,
37 and to encourage other State and local government entities to also
38 display the flag at their respective buildings, on the following days:

39 a. March 9, U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day;
40 b. June 14, Flag Day;
41 c. July 4, Independence Day;
42 d. August 19, to honor James Foley;
43 e. October 7, to honor the hostages taken by Hamas on October
44 7, 2023;
45 f. November 4 and January 20, to honor those held hostage
46 during the Iranian hostage crisis from November 4, 1979 to January
47 20, 1981; and

1 g. on any day as proclaimed by the President of the United
2 States or Congress, pursuant to 36 U.S.C. s.904 or any other law or
3 proclamation.

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5 3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

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8 STATEMENT

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10 This joint resolution designates March 9 of each year as U.S.
11 Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day.

12 The United States government currently recognizes March 9 as
13 U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day, in honor of Robert A.
14 Levinson, a retired FBI special agent, who was abducted from Kish
15 Island, Iran on March 9, 2007. Robert A. Levinson remains missing
16 as the longest-held U.S. hostage at 18 years.

17 America has a marked history of citizens being taken hostage or
18 wrongfully detained, with one of the most prominent instances
19 being the Iranian hostage crisis in which more than 60 Americans
20 were taken hostage on November 4, 1979 at the Embassy of the
21 United States in Tehran, with 52 of them being held until January
22 20, 1981.

23 The seizing or detention of other notable Americans, such as the
24 journalist James Foley who was taken hostage and killed by the
25 Islamic State on August 19, 2014, has greatly impacted how the
26 U.S. government responds to the taking and wrongful detention of
27 American citizens.

28 Today, Americans continue to be taken hostage or wrongfully
29 detained at increasing rates, with more citizens being taken hostage
30 or wrongfully detained from 2015 to 2025 than from 2005 to 2014.
31 In 2024, at least 54 Americans were held hostage or wrongfully
32 detained in 17 countries, with at least 17 Americans being released
33 from captivity throughout the year. In 2025, at least 41 Americans
34 are being held hostage or are wrongfully detained in 13 countries.
35 However, the actual number of Americans unjustly held captive
36 abroad is likely much higher since not all cases are made public and
37 the U.S. government does not provide exact numbers due to
38 national security concerns. Recent events have led to an increased
39 number of American hostages and wrongful detainees, including
40 Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 which resulted in
41 hostages who have recently been returned home.

42 On U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day, the U.S.
43 government flies the Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Flag to honor
44 Americans who have been taken hostage or wrongfully detained, as
45 well as to display the country's commitment and prioritization of
46 the deserved freedom of American hostages or wrongful detainees.
47 It is imperative for New Jersey to do the same as a means to
48 recognize and honor the Americans who are being held hostage or

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1 wrongfully detained and their deserved freedom. This resolution
2 also requests the Governor to annually display the Hostage and
3 Wrongful Detainee Flag at the State Capitol building, and to
4 encourage other State and local government entities to also display
5 the flag at their respective buildings, on various dates.

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10 Designates March 9 of each year as U.S. Hostage and Wrongful
11 Detainee Day.