

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 22

A JOINT RESOLUTION designating March 9 of each year as U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day in New Jersey.

WHEREAS, The United States government recognizes March 9 as U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day, in honor of Robert A. Levinson; and

WHEREAS, Robert A. Levinson, a retired FBI special agent, was abducted from Kish Island, Iran on March 9, 2007 and remains missing as the longest-held U.S. hostage at 18 years; and

WHEREAS, The United States has a long history of citizens being taken hostage or wrongfully detained, with one of the most prominent events being the Iranian hostage crisis in which more than 60 Americans were taken hostage on November 4, 1979 at the Embassy of the United States in Tehran, with 52 of them being held until January 20, 1981; and

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

WHEREAS, Americans continue to be taken hostage or wrongfully detained at increasing rates, with more citizens being taken hostage or wrongfully detained from 2015 to 2025 than from 2005 to 2014; and

WHEREAS, Since 2015, 18 Americans have died while in captivity abroad; and

WHEREAS, In 2024, at least 54 Americans were held hostage or wrongfully detained in 17 countries, with at least 17 Americans being released from captivity throughout the year; and

WHEREAS, Of the remaining Americans being held hostage or wrongfully detained in 2024, the average duration of detention was 5.9 years; and

WHEREAS, As of October 2025, at least 41 Americans are being held hostage or are wrongfully detained in 13 countries; and

WHEREAS, The actual number of Americans unjustly held captive abroad is likely much higher as not all cases are made public and exact numbers are not provided due to national security concerns; and

WHEREAS, Recent events have led to an increased number of American hostages and wrongful detainees, including Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, with some of the hostages recently returned home; and

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

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

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

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

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

C.36:2-504 U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day, March 9.

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

C.36:2-505 Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Flag raising.

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

- a. March 9, U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day;
- b. June 14, Flag Day;
- c. July 4, Independence Day;
- d. August 19, to honor James Foley;
- e. October 7, to honor the hostages taken by Hamas on October 7, 2023;
- f. November 4 and January 20, to honor those held hostage during the Iranian hostage crisis from November 4, 1979 to January 20, 1981; and
- g. on any day as proclaimed by the President of the United States or Congress, pursuant to 36 U.S.C. s.904 or any other law or proclamation.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 20, 2026.