

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSJM 8014

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Relations

Brief Description: Requesting an investigation into the violent death of Aysenur Ezgi Eygi.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Saldaña, Orwall, Alvarado, Dhingra, Frame, Hasegawa, Lovelett, Nobles, Slatter, Stanford, Trudeau, Valdez and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 2/24/26, 2/25/26 [DP].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Joint Memorial

- Requests the United States to open a transparent, thorough, and independent investigation into the violent death of Aysenur Ezgi Eygi.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Mena, Chair; Stearns, Vice Chair; Waters, Ranking Minority Member; Doglio and Farivar.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chase.

Staff: Desiree Omli (786-7105).

Background:

Aysenur Ezgi Eygi, a recent graduate of the University of Washington, was killed on September 6, 2024, at age 26, reportedly by the Israel Defense Forces near the Palestinian village of Beita. Reports of her death indicate that Aysenur was participating in a

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demonstration against settlements in the occupied West Bank, organized weekly by the International Solidarity Movement, when she was found with a gunshot wound. According to the University of Washington, Aysenur was a student leader, raising her voice in solidarity with the people of Gaza. Her activism was said to be anchored in values informed by her education in University of Washington classrooms, namely the unqualified and universal human right to equality and dignity. As of one year after her death, media reports indicate that the United States has not independently led an investigation into her death.

Summary of Bill:

The memorial requests that the United States open a transparent, thorough, and independent investigation into the death of Aysenur Ezgi Eygi to ensure justice and accountability for her and all United States (US) citizens killed under the jurisdiction of a foreign government. Copies of the memorial must be immediately transmitted to the President of the United States, the US Secretary of State, the US Department of State, the US Department of Justice, the President of the US Senate, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, and to the members of Congress.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Upon enactment.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) On September 6, 2024, Aysenur was killed in Beita in West Gaza by a single bullet fired by an Israeli soldier that struck the left side of her head behind her ear. She was in the West Bank as a volunteer to stand with Palestinian farmers whose land was being illegally occupied and stolen. She was at a demonstration to peacefully protest the illegal occupation by Israeli settlers, and eye witnesses confirm that when Aysenur was shot she was at least 600 feet away from Israeli soldiers, standing peacefully as she had been for about 20 minutes with another volunteer. Despite this, the Israeli army claimed that they shot her by accident and they continue to deny eyewitness accounts and obfuscate the truth. Eyewitnesses are clear that her behavior was not threatening and that the shooting was completely unprovoked.

Aysenur is not just a headline or a political symbol; she was a wife, daughter, sister, aunt, and friend to many. She was a warm, kind, brave, smart, passionate, and devoted member of the Washington community. She believed deeply that every human life has dignity, and

that silence in the face of injustice is a form of complicity. She was grounded in her humanity and challenged injustice wherever she saw it, but now she is being denied justice and the dignity of due process. To travel abroad and advocate on behalf of others the way Aysenur did is one of the most selfless acts one could do. Aysenur embodied selflessness, peace, and justice until her final breath. Aysenur's family, friends, community, and the State of Washington deserve to know who took her life and why, and what is being done to hold her killer accountable. The request for an independent investigation into her killing is a simple and reasonable ask of a government that is supposed to protect its own people.

This is not the first time that Israel was not held accountable for harm that was done to Washingtonians. In 1967 the USS Liberty was bombed by the Israeli military, which killed two servicemen from this state, but Israel was not held accountable. In 2003 Rachel Corrie was killed by the Israeli military in Gaza. The Israeli Prime Minister at the time promised the American government a thorough, credible, and transparent investigation into her death. Instead, in 2004 Rachel Corrie's family was informed by the US government that the Israeli report did not reflect an investigation that was thorough, credible, or transparent and that the US government's request for a transparent investigation was repeatedly ignored by the Israeli government. Israeli human and legal rights organizations have strongly questioned the Israeli military's ability to investigate itself and have stated that there are no real, functioning, honest, or decent mechanisms to hold Israeli perpetrators accountable.

Since Aysenur's death, six other Americans have been killed in the West Bank region, including Nasrallah Abu Siyam, a 19-year-old from Philadelphia who was murdered days ago by Israeli settlers. There has yet to be any accountability for these killings. Washington should not legitimize this behavior and instead it should demonstrate that Washington State does not allow the unjust killing of its residents to go unanswered. States have both the right and the responsibility to demand accountability on behalf of their residents, especially when the federal government fails to do so. When Washingtonians travel to other countries, especially for humanitarian purposes, they should feel safe in knowing that they have the backing of the American government. Most Americans agree that when a US citizen is killed on foreign soil, an investigation should take place. Accountability is not partisan, it is American. Without accountability, there is no deterrence, and without deterrence, there will be more families who will lose their loved ones to extrajudicial killings.

(Opposed) This memorial is a waste of state legislative time. This is a matter for Congress, not the state Legislature. The Legislature has very limited time in a short legislative session and it should prioritize its time on issues that protect all Washingtonians. If the Legislature is going to advance joint memorials, it should instead condemn Hamas, Russia, and Iran for the terrorism and attacks by these countries on US citizens.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Hamid Ali; Brandon Elliott, Associated Students of the University of Washington; Nathan Tippmann, Geoduck Student Union; Hiro Hirano-Holcomb, Associated Students of the University of Washington Bothell; Heba Qatrani,

Associated Students of the University of Washington Tacoma; Michael Sims, Veterans for Peace; Ozden Bennett; Elisabetta Valenti; Cindy Corrie, Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice; Craig Corrie, Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice; Laila Saliba; Juliette Majid; Rae Levine; Aria Fani; Suzanne Downey; and Isaac Olson.

(Opposed) Joe Kunzler.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.