



ADHRB Welcomes Congressional Override of JASTA Veto

29 September 2016 - Yesterday, Congress voted to override President Obama's veto of the [Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act](#) (JASTA). The JASTA bill would allow victims of terrorism to sue foreign governments for any complicity and support of terrorism in US courts. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate [overrode](#) the veto by a wide margin, with a vote of 348 - 77 in the House and 97 - 1 in the Senate. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) welcomes Congress' move to pass the JASTA bill and provide victims with further legal means of redress and accountability.

Congress overwhelmingly passed the JASTA legislation initially, despite Saudi officials' [threats](#) to sell billions of dollars' worth of US assets. However, on 23 September, President Obama formally [announced](#) that had vetoed the JASTA bill as it "would neither protect Americans from terrorist attacks nor improve the effectiveness of our response to such attacks." Senator John Cornyn [R-TX], who initially introduced the JASTA bill, [noted](#) that families of the "deadliest terrorist attack in American history" should have the opportunity hold "foreign sponsors of terrorism" accountable.

"ADHRB was quite disappointed with President Obama's decision to veto JASTA," said ADHRB's Executive Director Husain Abdulla. *"The legislation provides for a mechanism with which families of terrorism victims can hold the governments, like Saudi Arabia, accountable for its promotion of the extremist takfiri ideology."*

While ADHRB welcomes Congress' efforts to support legislation that could hold governments accountable for supporting terrorism, we are concerned that Congress' recent record on addressing rights abuses in countries like Saudi Arabia are inconsistent. Much of the debate around JASTA centered on accountability for victims of 9/11, in particular, the Saudi government's alleged role in the attacks. However, just last week, Congress rejected a resolution to block a \$1.15 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia. If Congress is concerned that Saudi Arabia is a state-sponsor of terrorism, as expressed during the public discussion around JASTA, then Congress must also take steps to end US military support of that government. Meanwhile, the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen has led to the [deaths](#) of more than 10,000 people and numerous accounts of war crimes.

Such widespread, bipartisan support for the JASTA bill in Congress shows the willingness of the American government to help families of 9/11 victims and other victims of terrorism find redress. ADHRB supports the US Congress in its efforts to provide mechanisms for victims so they can hold governments like Saudi Arabia accountable for human rights violations and supporting violent crimes. Additionally, ADHRB would urge the US Congress to continue examining Saudi complicity in crimes that it commits abroad and work to cease all arms sales to the country to further prevent human rights violations.