

106TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 286

Expressing the sense of Congress concerning the situation in Jericho.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 16, 2000

Mrs. MALONEY of New York (for herself, Mr. BOEHLERT, Mr. LANTOS, Mrs. MINK of Hawaii, Mr. RAHALL) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress concerning the situation
in Jericho.

Whereas on January 15, 2000, the Palestinian Authority seized the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia's Jericho Gardens Monastery in Jericho and forcibly evicted the Monastery's resident monks;

Whereas the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was established by exiled Russians in Europe and the United States after the Communist government confiscated all church property in 1918;

Whereas the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia was incorporated in the State of New York on April 30, 1952;

Whereas since 1920 the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia has administered all the Russian Orthodox properties in areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority;

Whereas since 1882 the property in Jericho has been in continuous and uninterrupted possession of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission (REM) in Jerusalem;

Whereas the REM has been under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia since 1920;

Whereas two United States citizen Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia nuns, Sister Maria and Sister Xenia, have been forced to live under harsh and onerous conditions on the Monestary property, and have been taunted and assaulted by Palestinian and Russian representatives occupying the Monastery;

Whereas Sister Maria and Sister Xenia have also been denied visitors, a change of clothes, the ability to meet with their confessors or to receive communion except through iron bars, to bathe, to cook a hot meal, and unrestricted access to the press;

Whereas this is the third illegal seizure of religious property of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, and its affiliate the Orthodox Palestine Society, in Jericho and Hebron by the Palestinian Authority;

Whereas the Palestinian Authority signed the Oslo Accord stating that it will respect and protect holy sites, provide free access to the holy sites, and respect and protect freedom of worship and practice on holy sites, but it has flagrantly failed to allow free access to the Jericho property to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and visitors to the Jericho holy site and has locked out Sisters Maria and Xenia and any other member of the Rus-

sian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia from worshipping in the Jericho property;

Whereas the Palestinian Authority committed to a Congressional staff delegation, the United States Consul General, and a representative from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia during a fact-finding trip to the Jericho Gardens Monastery on February 26, 2000, to treat the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia equally and fairly by allowing free access to the Jericho Gardens Monastery and by providing equal access to the Chapel on the property until a permanent resolution of this dispute could be resolved in accordance with the rule of law, but has blatantly violated this agreement; and

Whereas the Palestinian Authority has further violated their commitment to fair and equal treatment by forcefully refusing Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia members access to the Chapel on the property, by locking the gate to the compound, imprisoning Sister Maria on the property and not allowing her access to other members of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia or free access to the property, and by further restricting the area in which Sister Maria can venture on the property: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
 2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of Congress that—

3 (1) the United States should ensure the safety
 4 and well-being of the United States citizen Russian
 5 Orthodox Church Outside of Russia nun, Sister
 6 Maria, who has been living under harsh and onerous

1 conditions on the property of the Jericho Gardens
2 Monastery in Jericho;

3 (2) the United States should express to the Pal-
4 estinian Authority its grave concerns that property
5 disputes in Jericho and Hebron are being settled ar-
6 bitrarily by military fiat rather than in courts of
7 law;

8 (3) the resolution of this dispute must be re-
9 solved in accordance with the rule of law;

10 (4) the Palestinian Authority must act in a re-
11 sponsible manner in ensuring the rights of the
12 United States citizen nun, Sister Maria, and the
13 rights of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of
14 Russia, so that the dispute can be resolved in a fair
15 manner and in accordance with due process;

16 (5) the Jericho Gardens Monastery in Jericho,
17 as well as the other Russian Orthodox Church Out-
18 side of Russia property in Jericho and Hebron,
19 should be returned to the conditions before the ille-
20 gal seizures by the Palestinian Authority forthwith,
21 pending a resolution of this dispute in a court of law
22 following international standards of due process; and

23 (6) the United States consulate in Jerusalem is
24 to be commended for its immediate response and on-

1 going support for the two United States citizen nuns
2 in Jericho.

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