I urge my fellow Americans to keep the men and women of our Armed Forces in their thoughts and prayers as they fight to make America and the world safer.

LIBERTY WILL PREVAIL

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, last night President George W. Bush spoke with vision and courage and in keeping with the highest ideals of this Nation and its storied history. It is clear that the long nightmare of the Iraqi people is about to come to an end. Diplomacy may have failed, but liberty will prevail.

Saddam Hussein was offered disarmament and peace. He has chosen exile or war.

As our troops labor in encampments across the Middle East, let us, in every form of prayer and petition, labor in prayer on behalf of them, their families, our leaders, and innocent civilians in harm's way in the difficult days that lie ahead.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken after 6:00 p.m. today.

CONDEMNING THE PUNISHMENT OF EXECUTION BY STONING AS A GROSS VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 26) condemning the punishment of execution by stoning as a gross violation of human rights, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 26

Whereas death by stoning continues to be imposed as a form of punishment in several countries, as documented by the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices of the United States Department of State;

Whereas the brutal sentence of death by stoning is applied to women who have been accused of adultery, some of whom are coerced into prostitution, or even raped;

Whereas execution by stoning is an exceptionally cruel form of punishment that violates internationally accepted standards of human rights, including those set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

Whereas women around the world continue to be disproportionately targeted for discriminatory, inhuman, and cruel punishments by governments who refuse to protect the rights of all their citizens equally;

Whereas in some places stoning has also been invoked as punishment for ''blasphemy'', thereby suppressing religious freedom and diversity and stifling political dissent;

Whereas, in July 2002, Amnesty International referred to execution by stoning as ''a method specifically designed to increase the victim's suffering'';

Whereas, in 2002, the European Union, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the Australian Government, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, the President of Mexico, the Congress of the Deputies of Spain, and other world leaders each condemned stoning and called for clemency for individuals sentenced to stoning; and

Whereas, in 2002 there were acquittals or dismissals of sentences to death by stoning: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) condemns the practice of execution by stoning, and calls upon the international community to recognize this practice as a gross violation of human rights;

(2) requests that the President formally communicate this resolution to governments imposing this cruel punishment and urge the suspension of sentences of death by stoning; and

(3) requests that the President direct the Secretary of State to work with the international community toward the repeal of stoning laws and adherence to international standards of human rights.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE).

□ 1415

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Con. Res. 26.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution condemning the punishment of execution by stoning as a gross violation of human rights. I am a proud cosponsor of this resolution, and I commend the gentlewoman from Minnesota (Ms. MCCOLLUM) for her work on this issue. As chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, I am pleased that the House is taking this action.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubt that stoning is a gross violation of human rights. When someone is put to death by stoning, they are guaranteed a slow, painful, cruel death. Stones are carefully chosen so they are large enough to cause maximum pain, but not so large as to kill the condemned immediately.

Stoning brings out the worst in human nature. It may surprise many that this barbaric practice has entered the 21st century, but it has. Sharia law governs family law in a wide range of countries. It is only applied to criminal offenses in a handful of states.

In Nigeria, 12 of the country's 36 states put Sharia criminal law into effect in recent years, displacing Nigeria's secular laws.

The case of Amina Lawal, a young woman sentenced to death by stoning for adultery, has brought international attention to Sharia-mandated stoning. Her case is pending. We all hope she is spared this brutal treatment.

This resolution rightfully condemns the practice of stoning and calls upon the President and Secretary of State to work with their counterparts toward the repeal of stoning laws and adherence to international standards of human rights.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution.

First I would like to congratulate my good friend and colleague, the gentlewoman from Minnesota (Ms. MCCOLLUM), the principal author of this important resolution, for bringing it to our attention. She is a valued member of our committee, and I want to thank her personally for this important initiative.

Mr. Speaker, it is a sad commentary on the 21st century that we have seen the resurgence under Islamic Sharia religious law of the practice of execution by stoning, where an individual is buried up to his or her neck in sand, and witnesses are invited to throw stones until that person is dead, while shouting, ''God is great.'' It is the ultimate oxymoron on the face of this planet that as a human being is buried up to her neck in sand and is pelted with stones, the phrase can be heard ''God is great.''

The stones in this vile practice are carefully chosen so that they are large enough to cause horrendous pain, but not so large as to kill the condemned individual immediately. Victims of stoning are guaranteed a slow, torture-filled death. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, their children are forced to watch.

This past year, the world was horrified as mothers were tried, convicted and subjected to this horrible death sentence. The fact that these women have been given the recourse to court appeals does not make the punishment any more acceptable. Execution by stoning violates all international standards of human rights and decency.

We must let the world know, Mr. Speaker, that civilized nations and the United States in particular reject with disgust and horror this form of punishment. I urge all of my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 26.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, as the condemned, as I think the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) pointed out so well and it bears repeating, prepare for their execution by stoning, they begin to pray, asking for the inner strength to endure with faith and fortitude what awaits them. They are wrapped head to foot in white shrouds and buried up to their waist, and then the stoning begins. The victims are guaranteed a very difficult and horrific death. In many cases kids have to watch this agonizing death.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this heinous practice is not limited to Iran, but is employed in so many other countries as well. Under the extremist interpretation of Sharia law, pregnancy alone is considered sufficient evidence to condemn a woman for adultery. Women in these countries who have been raped and want the state to prosecute their case must have no less than four Muslim men testify that they witnessed the assault. Absent these witnesses, these male witnesses, the rape victim has no case. If she cannot prove the rape allegation, she runs the high risk of being charged with adultery, as we all know an offense that is punishable by stoning.

Although this heinous practice is disproportionately used against the female population of these countries, it is also used against men and also used to suppress political dissent and the activities of religious minorities.

H. Con. Res. 26 is a resolution which reflects the full extent of the problem. As such, it calls on the United States and the international community to condemn the practice of execution by stoning as a gross violation of human rights and urges U.S. officials to work with their global counterparts toward the repeal of all stoning laws.

Mr. Speaker, stoning sentences have been commuted in the last year due to the United States' and international pressure. Lives have been saved because we spoke out against this abhorrent practice, a method which, according to Amnesty International, is specifically designed to increase the victim's suffering.

Today we have the ability, I would respectfully submit, to save more lives by rendering our strong support for this resolution. This measure can help deter the application of extreme Sharia law and execution by stoning in emerging nations, such as Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote for H. Con. Res. 26.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Minnesota (Ms. MCCOLLUM), the author of this resolution.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to support House Concurrent Resolution 26, a resolution that I introduced to condemn the punishment of execution by stoning as a gross violation of human rights.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Committee on International Relations for their support and thank my colleagues who have cosponsored this measure.

This issue was first brought to my attention over 1 year ago when I learned of a woman named Safiya Hussaini, who had been sense sentenced to death by stoning in Nigeria solely based on the evidence she was divorced and pregnant. Safiya was convicted of adultery, sentenced to be buried in a pit and pelted with stones until dead.

The authorities ignored her claims that she had been raped. The father of the baby was acquitted of all charges, as the law requires the testimony from four male witnesses to prove him guilty of the same crime, a virtually impossible task.

The international outcry helped save Safiya's life. Her sentence was overturned on a technicality. However, on the day that Safiya was set free, it emerged that another young Nigerian mother had been sentenced to death by stoning, Amina Lawal. She has also been convicted of adultery; her crime, giving birth to a child more than 9 months after divorcing her former husband. Unless Amina's sentence is overturned, she will be stoned to death in a public square as soon as her baby is weaned, about this time next year.

At her trial, Amina had no legal representation. She did not receive an adequate explanation of the charges against her. Frightened and unaware of the consequences of her response, Amina confessed. However, not much of a confession was needed, as her newborn daughter was proof enough to find her guilty of adultery. The man Amina identified as the father of her child denied the charges, and he was set free.

On the day that Amina's case was last heard on appeal, dozens of people crammed into the small village courtroom to observe the proceedings. Amina sat alone on a bench as her daughter slumbered against her back. When the judge announced that Amina would be stoned to death, observers shouted their approval, while Amina clutched her baby and wept.

A court will hear Amina's next appeal on March 25, but it may be a matter of hours or months until they issue a decision. Until then Amina must wait. She is hopeful that her life will be spared, but worries about what might happen to her daughter. If the court determines stoning her to death is justified, it will happen.

Tragically, Amina is only one of a number of individuals who are at risk of being executed by stoning. Laws authorizing this punishment remain on the books in a number of other countries. Until these laws are repealed, many more people could face this inhumane punishment. Women remain particularly at risk for receiving this sentence due to double standards that exist in these laws.

This resolution is important because it will send a message to the most remote corners of the globe that the sentence of stoning, particularly when used as a tool of gender persecution to control women and girls, is far beneath any minimum standard of human rights recognized by this House, by the people of the United States and by the world community.

At the same time this resolution is not intended to be disrespectful to any nation, religion or culture. But I do believe so strongly that the most basic rights of every woman, man and child on this planet must be respected, protected and defended. It is this belief of fundamental human rights that compels me to speak out and encourage my colleagues to join me in the effort to extinguish this brutal punishment from the face of the Earth.

I do not know the women who have been sentenced to death by stoning. I will likely never visit their villages in Africa or the Middle East, but I will stand with them as my sisters, as my fellow citizens of the world. I will work to defend their rights, the most basic human rights we all deserve to enjoy.

Safiya and Amina are just two women in a distant land, far away from us here and far away from my constituents in Minnesota. Nevertheless, these women are targets for abuse and violence, and wherever women are targets for abuse and violence or death simply because they are women, I have an obligation to speak up, speak out and to fight for their rights, because they are my rights and your rights, too.

My home in the State of Minnesota has a strong tradition of defending basic human rights, from former Congressman Don Fraser to the late Senator Paul Wellstone and his wife Sheila. Minnesota also is proud to be the home for the Center for the Victims of Torture, the American Refugee Committee and the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights. I am proud to stand here today to continue this tradition.

It is high time that the United States join the many nations who have condemned the inhumane punishment of stoning. I am pleased that House leadership has brought this resolution to the floor for its consideration, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this measure, to send a clear and a powerful message to every nation that stoning is an extraordinarily cruel form of punishment, and it must end today.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have no additional requests for time, but before yielding back my time, I want to join my colleague from Minnesota in paying tribute to the people of Minnesota for their extraordinary commitment to human rights and to their commitment to protecting victims of torture.

I also want to make an observation concerning the absurdity of the current composition of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, where

countries serve where the practice of stoning women to death is legal and practiced. This is just one more example of the absurdity of many of these international organizations, pretending to be something totally different from what they are.

□ 1430

Stoning women to death and serving on the International Commission for Human Rights are incompatible activities, and it is high time we focus on bringing some reality to international organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me just echo the words of the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), the ranking member of the Committee on International Relations. It is indeed ironic that Sudan, a country that uses stoning, should serve on the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations. It is even more ironic that Libya should be the current chairman of that committee.

Mr. Speaker, in 1999, along with Colin Powell, I had the opportunity and the privilege of coleading an election-monitoring team to Nigeria for its first democratic elections there in over a decade. After years of military rule, we observed a fair and free election; to wit, firsthand those exercising the simple virtues of democracy was truly inspiring. Along with other election monitors, I came away with great hope for Nigeria's future.

Unfortunately, in the last 3 years, Sharia criminal law has swept through the northern half of Nigeria. The chief prosecutor of a Katsina state in northern Nigeria has even called Sharia law a ''dividend of democracy.''

Mr. Speaker, since that election, 10,000 Nigerians have died in religiously inspired rioting across that country. Nigeria seems to be on the verge of being torn apart along Muslim-Christian lines. Besides being barbaric and being a gross abuse of human rights, stoning is fueling this religious divide, undermining Nigeria's democratic prospects. Stoning is not a ''dividend'' of any type of democracy that I know many Nigerians are struggling to establish.

Nigeria is but one country of concern for us. It was only after September 11 that the American public began to learn about the brutal living conditions for women under the Taliban, including being subject to public stonings. Afghanistan remains a fragile state. Many parts of Afghanistan are struggling with the questions of how to govern. This resolution is our message that stoning should have no role in today's Afghanistan, or anywhere else in today's age.

It is important for this body to bring attention to this abysmal practice. This resolution deserves strong support of all Members here.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 26 to condemn execution by stoning as a gross violation of human rights. I want to commend my colleague, Congresswoman BETTY MCCOLLUM for raising awareness of this issue by introducing this resolution. I oppose the death penalty in any instance, and I certainly oppose the cruelty of death by stoning.

Execution by stoning is particularly cruel and discriminatory in that it is often used to punish women for adultery, even in cases where women are victims of coerced prostitution or rape. Women around the world, as well as in the United States, continue to experience horrendous acts of physical and sexual violence against them. It is absolutely unacceptable that some governments would then sanction death as a punishment for being a victim of such violence. Unfortunately, this continues to be the case in some countries.

The United States has a moral obligation to speak out against violence, intolerance, hate, and discrimination throughout the world. Without clear, strong condemnation and action from the United States and all people of conscience, these violations of fundamental human rights will continue to occur.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and to take a stand against all human rights abuses.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 26.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

NICARAGUA PROPERTY DISPUTE SETTLEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 868) to amend section 527 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995 to require that certain claims for expropriation by the Government of Nicaragua meet certain requirements for purposes of the prohibition on foreign assistance to that government.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 868

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Nicaragua Property Dispute Settlement Act of 2003''.

SEC. 2. CERTAIN CLAIMS FOR EXPROPRIATION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF NICARAGUA.

Section 527 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995 (22 U.S.C. 2370a) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(i) CERTAIN CLAIMS FOR EXPROPRIATION BY GOVERNMENT OF NICARAGUA.—(1) Any action of the types set forth in subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) of subsection (a)(1) that was taken by the Government of Nicaragua during the period beginning on January 1, 1956, and ending on January 9, 2002, shall not be considered in implementing the prohibition under subsection (a) unless the action has been presented in accordance with the procedure set forth in paragraph (2)

''(2) An action shall be deemed presented for purposes of paragraph (1) if it is—

''(A) in writing; and

''(B) received by the Department of State on or before 120 days after the date specified in paragraph (3) at—

''(i) the headquarters of the Department of State in Washington, D.C.; or

''(ii) the Embassy of the United States of America to Nicaragua.

''(3) The date to which paragraph (2) refers is a date after the enactment of this subsection that is specified by the Secretary of State, in the Secretary's discretion, in a notice published in the Federal Register.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BALLENGER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BALLENGER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, section 527 of the ''Foreign Relations Authorization Act, fiscal years 1994 and 1995,'' sanctions or stops certain U.S. bilateral assistance and U.S. support for assistance from International Financial Institutions for a government of a country that has confiscated a U.S. citizen's property. Nicaragua sadly falls amongst these rules of section 527, but has received Presidential waivers of the sanctions every year since the legislation was enacted.

American citizens have had nearly 12 years to come forward to file property claims with the American embassy. This bill amends section 527 to afford American citizens a reasonable opportunity to file a claim with the American embassy in Managua.

Any American citizen who has not yet filed a property claim with the American embassy will have 120 days after the notice is published in the Federal Register to do so. Any claims already on file or that are filed within the 120-day period can continue to be considered by the State Department in making its annual determination as to whether to apply the waiver or the sanctions authorized under section 527.

This bill would not, however, prevent American citizens from filing property