

H. Res. 458

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

December 14, 2005.

Whereas on December 2, 1980, four United States churchwomen, Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel, and Cleveland Lay Mission Team Member Jean Donovan, were violated and executed by members of the National Guard of El Salvador;

Whereas in 1980 Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford were working in the parish of the Church of San Juan Bautista in Chalatenango, El Salvador, providing food, transportation, and other assistance to refugees and Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Cleveland Lay Mission Team Member Jean Donovan were working in the parish of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in La Libertad, El Salvador, providing assistance and support to refugees and other victims of violence;

Whereas these four United States churchwomen dedicated their lives to working with the poor of El Salvador, especially women and children left homeless, displaced and destitute by the Salvadoran war;

Whereas these four United States churchwomen joined the more than 70,000 civilians who were murdered during the course of the Salvadoran war;

Whereas on May 23 and May 24, 1984, five members of the National Guard of El Salvador—Subsergeant Luis Antonio Colindres Aleman, Daniel Canales Ramirez, Carlos Joaquin Contreras Palacios, Francisco Orlando Contreras Recinos, and Jose Roberto Moreno Canjura—were found guilty by the Salvadoran courts of the executions of the churchwomen and were sentenced to thirty years in prison, marking the first case in the history of El Salvador where a member of the Salvadoran Armed Forces was convicted of murder by a Salvadoran judge;

Whereas the United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador was established under the terms of the historic January 1992 Peace Accords that ended El Salvador's twelve years of war and was charged to investigate and report to the Salvadoran people on human rights crimes committed by all sides during the course of the war;

Whereas in March 1993 the United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador found that the execution of the four United States churchwomen was planned and that Subsergeant Luis Antonio Colindres Aleman carried out orders from a superior to execute them, and that then Colonel Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova, then Director-General of the National Guard and his cousin Lieutenant Colonel Oscar Edgardo Casanova Vejar, then Commander of the Zacatecoluca military detachment where the murders were committed, and other military personnel knew that members of the National Guard had committed the murders pursuant to orders of a superior and that the subsequent cover-up of the facts adversely affected the judicial investigation into the murders of the four United States churchwomen;

Whereas the United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador determined that General Jose Guillermo Garcia, then Minister of Defense, made no serious effort to conduct a thorough investigation of responsibility for the murders of the churchwomen;

Whereas the families of the four United States churchwomen continue their efforts to determine the full truth surrounding the murders of their loved ones, appreciate the cooperation of United States Government agencies in disclosing and providing documents relevant to the churchwomen's murders, and pursue requests to release to the family members the few remaining undisclosed documents and reports pertaining to this case;

Whereas the families of the four United States churchwomen appreciate the ability of those harmed by violence to bring suit against Salvadoran military officers in United States courts under the Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991 (28 U.S.C. 1350 note);

Whereas the lives of these four United States churchwomen have, for the past 25 years, served as inspiration and continue to inspire Salvadorans, Americans, and people throughout the world to answer the call to service and to pursue lives dedicated to addressing the needs and aspirations of the poor, the vulnerable, and the disadvantaged, especially among women and children;

Whereas the lives of the four United States churchwomen have also inspired numerous books, plays, films, music, religious, and cultural events;

Whereas schools, libraries, research centers, spiritual centers, health clinics, women's and children's programs in the United States and in El Salvador have been named after

or dedicated to Sisters Maura Clarke, Ita Ford and Dorothy Kazel and lay missionary Jean Donovan;

Whereas the Maryknoll Sisters, headquartered in Ossining, New York, the Ursuline Sisters, headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, numerous Religious Task Forces in the United States, and the Salvadoran and international religious communities based in El Salvador annually commemorate the lives and martyrdom of the four United States churchwomen;

Whereas the historic January 1992 Peace Accords allowed the Government and the people of El Salvador to achieve significant progress in creating and strengthening democratic political, economic, and social institutions; and

Whereas December 2, 2005, marks the 25th anniversary of the deaths of these four spiritual, courageous, and generous United States churchwomen: Now, therefore, be it *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) remembers and commemorates the lives and work of Sisters Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, and Dorothy Kazel and lay missionary Jean Donovan;

(2) extends sympathy and support for the families, friends, and religious communities of the four United States churchwomen;

(3) continues to find inspiration in the lives and work of these four United States churchwomen;

(4) calls upon the people of the United States and religious congregations to participate in local, national, and international events commemorating the 25th anni-

versary of the martyrdom of the four United States churchwomen;

(5) recognizes that while progress has been made during the post-war period, the work begun by the four United States churchwomen remains unfinished and social and economic hardships persist among many sectors of Salvadoran society; and

(6) calls upon the President, the Secretary of State, the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, and the heads of other United States Government departments and agencies to continue to support and collaborate with the Government of El Salvador and with private sector, nongovernmental, and religious organizations in their efforts to reduce poverty and hunger and to promote educational opportunity, health care, and social equity for the people of El Salvador.

Attest:

Clerk.