

open and accommodating to foreign scholars and people wishing to come to the United States to further their education and contribute to the great wealth of intellect in this country. I commend Ranking Member LANTOS for his efforts in this area.

The U.S. role in the world is critically important at a time in which we are confronting terrorism as well as the human challenges of extreme poverty and global pandemics like HIV. This re-authorization should provide an opportunity for the House to provide meaningful policy direction to the executive branch. Instead an all too familiar unilateral approach to foreign policy has reemerged by demanding the withholding of the United States' contribution to the U.N. If the intent is to create an expedited process to destroy the U.N. and diminish U.S. credibility in the world even beyond the extraordinary efforts of the Bush Administration, this bill has succeeded. I strongly oppose this abrasive, ineffective and counter-productive tactic.

NATIONAL HEALTH CENTER WEEK

HON. MIKE ROSS

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the week of August 7–13, 2005, as "National Health Center Week."

Community Health Centers, CHCs, are a critical component of our health care infrastructure. These centers provide vital care to some of the neediest and disadvantaged people who have few places to turn. In 2004, 105,907 patients were served by CHCs in Arkansas; with a total of 435,211 patient encounters. Of this amount 52,794, 49 percent, were uninsured; 58 percent served lived below 200 percent of the poverty level; 12.9 percent were Medicare patients; and 18.9 percent were Medicaid patients.

CHCs help in lowering health care costs in our country. In Arkansas, CHCs help save the State 30 percent, or \$3 million, in Medicaid savings due to reduced hospital admissions, reduced specialty care referrals, and fewer emergency room visits. In 2003, 1.2 million emergency room outpatient hospital visits were made by Arkansans. This resulted in approximately 115,607 visits that could have been treated in a CHC. That was \$75 million in unnecessary care costs that would have been saved if CHCs had been accessed for these services.

I am pleased to be a cosponsor of a House Resolution that recognizes the importance of the Medicaid reimbursement system in our Nation's CHCs. I call on my fellow colleagues to join together in a bipartisan effort to protect Medicaid funding in the fiscal year 2006 appropriations cycle for these entities, so that they can continue to serve our poor and uninsured populations, and continue to help bring savings to our health care system.

I commend the work and dedication of CHC staff and their substantial contribution to helping numerous needy Americans receive health care during the week of August 7–13, 2005.

WESTERN SAHARA

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, recently, Moroccan police and security forces have arrested and tortured peaceful protestors. For example, as recently as July 20th, reports indicate that Moroccan security forces abducted five human rights activists: Mohamed Elmoutaouikil, Noumria Brahim, Elhoucine Lidri, Larbi Massoud, and Gaoudi Fdaili. According to the reports, all five of these people suffered psychological torture for long hours, humiliation, and threats of rape. Unfortunately, this was all done due to their opinion concerning the status of Western Sahara.

After this incident, reports indicate that both Noumria Brahim and Lhoucine Lidri were subjected to further torture including being burned, handcuffed and blindfolded, and being brutally beaten. The Moroccan officials that perpetrated these horrendous acts of torture are reported to be the Wali of Security in El Ayun, Brahim Bensami, and the Urban Security Group Chief Officer, Ichi Abou Hassan, and Abdelhapi Rabii, a security officer. When these torturers were finished, they locked their victims in the Black Jail in El Ayun on July 23, 2005. Reports indicate they are still being held captive.

Such acts of violence and abuse against peaceful protestors and human rights activists have escalated in the last few weeks in Morocco. Other reports indicate that on July 21, 2005, a group of six Saharawi political prisoners who were arrested during a protest in El Ayun were presented to the court of appeal in El Ayun. The report reveals the group was tried in a show trial on June 23, 2005. They were sentenced to up to 5 years imprisonment—one of the victims of this injustice is human rights activist Bougarfa Abderrahmane. Mr. Abderrahmane is 53 years old and a father to 10 children. The others were sentenced to 3 years in prison (Hamma Achrih, Chyahou Brahim) and 2 years in prison (Mohamed Salem Essallami, Azlai Abdellah).

Sources say the Court of Appeal in El Ayun was firmly controlled by the Moroccan security forces while the trial was taking place. Some Saharawi citizens were forbidden to enter the court room. In addition, a French journalist, Agata André, from the newspaper *Charle Hebdo*, who came to El Ayun to attend the trial of these political prisoners was put in a separate room until the Saharawi political prisoners' trial was over. Furthermore, it is reported that the families of the five activists arrested were banned from bringing food to their relatives as well as from seeing them. No telephone contact with them is possible. Unfortunately, these reports of torture and injustice are commonplace for the Saharawi people who are denied equal rights under the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara.

On one of Secretary Condoleezza Rice's trips overseas, Secretary Rice delivered a strong message to the King of Morocco, Mohamed VI, concerning the lack of civil liberties in the kingdom of Morocco. The Spanish newspaper, *La Razon*, reported on June 30th that Ms. Rice expressed her concerns regarding the Moroccan regime's continuous violations of freedom of press and of expression.

Amidst recent reports of escalating repression by Morocco's intelligence and security services against dissenting voices, and the repression perpetrated against Saharawis, Ms. Rice is reportedly urged the King to bring and end to the repression and allow progressive voices to be heard.

Other countries have expressed similar concerns about Morocco's human rights record regarding the Saharawis. Earlier this month in Spain, Spanish news sources reported that a Spanish delegation, composed of parliamentarians and representatives of the civil society of Aragon, was not allowed by Moroccan authorities to visit the occupied capital of Western Sahara, El Aaiun. The delegation planned to investigate allegations of human rights abuses by Moroccan forces. One of the delegates was quoted as saying Morocco's denial of the visit was absolutely unacceptable.

Morocco has been occupying Western Sahara for decades. The United Nations Security Council has continued to uphold the right of Western Sahara to self-determination. On April 29th, 2004, the Security Council adopted Resolution No. 1541 which reaffirmed support for the Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara devised by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's Special Envoy, James Baker. Two years prior, the Security Council upheld the right to self-determination in a meeting to discuss the conflict over Western Sahara. In this 2002 meeting, the Security Council rejected other proposed options and clearly stated that the only viable resolution to this conflict must be based on the Saharawi people's right to self-determination.

There is a long history of international consensus that supports Western Sahara's right to self-determination. The International Court of Justice, issued on October 16, 1975 the following decision concerning the conflict over Western Sahara, "The Court's conclusion is that the materials and information presented to it do not establish any tie of territorial sovereignty between the territory of Western Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco or the Mauritanian entity. Thus the Court has not found legal ties of such a nature as might affect the application of General Assembly resolution 1514(XV) in the decolonization of Western Sahara, and in particular, of the principle of the self-determination through the free and genuine expression of the will of the peoples of the territory."

I agree with many of my colleagues that Morocco is an important partner to the United States in our War on Terror and in international trade. However, the examples of human rights abuses that Moroccan officials have exhibited against the Saharawi people and the peaceful protestors is not the type of behavior we expect from our friends.

A conclusion for the conflict over Western Sahara is long overdue. Both sides of the conflict need to come together and implement the Settlement Plan elaborated by Secretary James Baker. A great step towards a peaceful resolution would be for Morocco to release all their political prisoners, including Mr. Tamek and Mrs. Haidar, to stop detaining and torturing peaceful protestors and human rights activists, and to allow freedom of thought and expression both in Morocco and in occupied Western Sahara.