

SENATE RESOLUTION 54—CONDEMNING THE ESCALATING VIOLENCE, THE GROSS VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS, AND THE ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT IN SIERRA LEONE

By Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself, Mr. FRIST, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. WELLSTONE, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. Res. 54. A resolution condemning the escalating violence, the gross violation of human rights and attacks against civilians, and the attempt to overthrow a democratically elected government in Sierra Leone; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

Whereas the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) military junta and the rebel fighters of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone mounted a campaign of "Operation No Living Thing" in 1997 and have recently renewed the terror;

Whereas the atrocities and violence against the citizens of Sierra Leone, which include forced amputations, raping of women and children, pillaging farms, and the killing of the civilian population, has continued for more than 8 years;

Whereas the AFRC and RUF continue to kidnap children, forcibly train them, and send them as combatants in the conflict in Sierra Leone;

Whereas the Nigerian-led intervention force, Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which has deployed nearly 15,000 troops to Sierra Leone, has made a considerable contribution towards ending the cycle of violence there, despite the fact that some of its members have engaged in violations of humanitarian law;

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that in 1998 more than 210,000 refugees fled Sierra Leone to Guinea, bringing the total number of Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea to 350,000, in addition to some 90,000 Sierra Leonean refugees who sought safe haven in Liberia;

Whereas the refugee camps in Guinea and Liberia are at risk of being used as safe havens for rebels and staging areas for attacks into Sierra Leone;

Whereas the humanitarian crisis in Sierra Leone has reached epic proportions with people dying from lack of food and medicine; and

Whereas the escalating violence in Sierra Leone threatens stability in West Africa and has the immediate potential of spreading to neighboring Guinea: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) urges the President and the Secretary of State to give high priority to aiding in the resolution of the conflict in Sierra Leone and to bringing stability to West Africa, including active participation and leadership in the Sierra Leone Contact Group;

(2) condemns—

(A) the violent atrocities committed by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) throughout the conflict, and in particular its attacks against civilians and its use of children as combatants; and

(B) those external actors, including Liberia, Burkina Faso, and Libya, for contributing to the continuing cycle of violence in Sierra Leone by providing financial, political, and other types of assistance to the AFRC or the RUF, often in direct violation of the United Nations arms embargo;

(3) supports continued efforts by the regional peacekeeping force, ECOMOG, to re-

store peace and security and to defend the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone;

(4) recognizes that basic improvements in ECOMOG's performance with respect to human rights and the management of its own personnel would markedly improve its effectiveness in achieving its goals and improve the level of international support needed to meet those goals;

(5) supports appropriate United States logistical, medical and political support for ECOMOG and notes the contribution that such support has made thus far toward achieving the goals of peace and stability in Sierra Leone;

(6) calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and respect for human rights, and urges all members of the armed conflict in Sierra Leone to engage in dialogue to bring about a long-term solution to such conflict; and

(7) expresses support for the people of Sierra Leone in their quest for a democratic, prosperous, and reconciled society.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I rise today to offer S. Res. 54 with regard to the escalating violence, the gross violation of human rights and attacks against civilians in the West African country of Sierra Leone. I am joined in this effort by my colleagues, Senators FRIST, BIDEN, JEFFORDS, WELLSTONE, and FEINSTEIN.

This resolution expresses in the strongest terms the condemnation of the ongoing atrocities committed by rebel forces in Sierra Leone, including forced amputations, the rape of women and children, the pillaging of farms, and the murder of unarmed civilians. It urges all parties in the brutal violence to cease hostilities and engage in a dialogue to bring about a lasting solution that will support the people of Sierra Leone in their quest for a democratic, prosperous, and reconciled society. It further calls upon the President and the Secretary of State to give high priority to solving the conflict and supporting United Nations efforts to monitor respect for human rights and humanitarian law by all parties to this deplorable situation.

Mr. President, since it gained independence in 1961, Sierra Leone has endured a series of military regimes and rebellions in struggles over economic and political power. However, the latest round of violence is unique in the scale and brutality of the attacks on innocent civilians. Let me provide a little history to help set the stage for the current human tragedy faced by the people of Sierra Leone. In May 1997, a group of military officers, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) seized power. During their nine month tenure, the AFRC joined forces with the armed rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to form a regime characterized by serious human rights abuses and a complete breakdown of the rule of law. In response to this situation, in February 1998 the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a Nigerian-led African peacekeeping force that helped restore stability to neighboring Liberia, forced the AFRC/RUF out of power, restoring President Ahmad Kabbah, who had been elected in March 1996 in Si-

erra Leone's first multi-party elections in almost three decades. Since their ouster, the AFRC/RUF forces have waged an increasingly vicious struggle against the weak Kabbah government. The situation is further complicated by the apparent participation by neighboring governments, Liberia and Burkina Faso, in supporting the rebel forces. Libya, too, has been identified as providing support to the rebels.

In recognition of the unacceptable state of human rights and the massive humanitarian crisis brought on by the civil war, the United Nations took action in July 1998, when the Security Council established the UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) for an initial period of six months, until January 1999. UNOMSIL, formed of up to 70 military observers and a small medical unit, was tasked with monitoring the military and security situation in the country, including the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants, and the adherence to international humanitarian law. Unfortunately, a rebel assault on the capital in January forced the evacuation of UNOMSIL to neighboring Guinea.

Mr. President, it is difficult for most of us to comprehend the extent and the brutality of the human crisis in Sierra Leone. The United Nations has estimated that over 400,000 Sierra Leoneans have fled the fighting, either as refugees to neighboring Guinea and Liberia or to camps for the internally displaced. Conditions for both internally displaced persons and refugees are often severe due to a lack of access to camps and poor security conditions.

Mr. President, words cannot adequately describe the horrors that have been waged by the AFRC/RUF forces, which have included some of the most heinous acts ever committed in wartime. Human Rights Watch estimates that thousands of Sierra Leonean civilians have been raped, deliberately mutilated (often by amputation), or killed outright by the AFRC/RUF. In February 1998, these rebel groups launched two loosely organized campaigns of terror, "Operation No Living Thing" and "Operation Pay Yourself," designed to loot, destroy, or kill anything in the path of the combatants. During these campaigns, rebel fighters were encouraged to actively target women and commit sexual violence, including rape. Children, too, have not been spared from the gross violations of human rights committed by both sides to the conflict. The AFRC/RUF has abducted as many as 2,500 children—probably in the thousands—for use as laborers, fighters, and in the case of girls, sexual prisoners. They have abducted many children, some as young as eight or ten years old, and turned them into some of the rebels' fiercest fighters.

In December, the Chairman of the UN Security Council's Sierra Leone Sanctions Committee stated that it was hard to find words strong enough to describe the atrocities committed by the

rebels. He cited instances where AFRC/RUF forces have cut off body parts with large machetes or burned civilians alive. He estimated that more than 4,000 people had been summarily executed or mutilated, just since April. Given the restrictions on access to a significant portion of the country, these numbers are likely just the tip of the iceberg.

The scope of the catastrophe is overwhelming, yet it is even more heart rending when viewed through the lens of the stories of individual experiences. International human rights groups have interviewed hundreds of survivors of the violence, each with a tale of suffering that is incomprehensible to many Americans. One woman described how she was captured, cut with a machete by a child rebel, had her hand amputated, and was left to bury her own hand. A reporter for the "Herald Guardian" reported seeing rebels cut off the foot of a boy and then execute him, with the final words of "You're too tall." Another woman recounted being captured, beaten, raped, and having the backs of her ankles sliced just below the Achilles tendon to ensure that she could not run away. Hundreds of Sierra Leoneans, who have swelled the refugees ranks in border camps in Guinea and Liberia, have similar stories.

Mr. President, although the bulk of the condemnation must go to the rebel forces of the AFRC and the RUF, the Kabbah government is itself no paragon of liberty and the rule of law. In particular, the Kamajor civilian defense forces affiliated with the Kabbah regime have been cited for indiscriminate killings and torture. Many of the more than 2,000 prisoners in Sierra Leone have been held under the 1998 Public Emergency Regulations, which provide for indefinite detention without trial. Section 13 of the same Public Emergency Regulations even declares that "disturbing reports" by the media are punishable offenses. Further exacerbating human rights abuses, government prisons are often overcrowded, unsanitary, and lacking in health care and the regular provision of food.

In other examples, the High Court of Sierra Leone sentenced to death twenty-seven civilians convicted of treason, including five journalists and a seventy-five-year-old woman. International observers questioned the appropriateness of the treason charges for the journalists, and criticized the lack of a right to appeals in sentencing by the military court. In October, the government of Sierra Leone executed by firing squad, without benefit of an appeal process, twenty-four soldiers.

Unfortunately even elements of the otherwise admirable ECOMOG forces must also shoulder some of the responsibility for the devastation that wracks Sierra Leone. According to international humanitarian groups, shelling by ECOMOG during its assault on Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, in February 1998, took a high toll on civil-

ians. Its forces have also obstructed humanitarian assistance and some members may seek to prolong their mission in order to exploit the conflict for economic gain.

Mr. President, it is unconscionable to allow this situation to continue without exerting every effort to help resolve the conflict that generates such atrocities. While no other country or international organization can impose a settlement on Sierra Leone, it is incumbent upon us to offer our assistance in ending the catastrophic violence. We must call on the combatants to come to the negotiating table, and on neighboring governments to cease their support for the rebel forces that have prolonged Sierra Leone's political and humanitarian agony. We should be prepared to support such a process through provision of additional logistical support to the regional peacekeeping force and through encouragement of a renewed commitment for UNOMSIL to carry out its mandate. To provide for a long term solution, we must also actively support multinational humanitarian operations to address the wide-ranging needs of a displaced and brutalized population. But even if the humanitarian disaster can be stemmed, we must not walk away until there is the prospect of a government that adheres to the rule of law and supports the universally recognized standards of human rights.

Mr. President, it does not please me to have to introduce this kind of resolution here in the Senate. But I believe it is important for the Senate to be on record in strong condemnation of the atrocities currently raging in Sierra Leone. I hope we can all move quickly to pass this resolution through the Committee on Foreign Relations and through the full Senate.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to co-sponsor the resolution being submitted by Senator FRIST and Senator FEINGOLD condemning the escalating violence and violation of human rights in the nation of Sierra Leone. The past six weeks we have seen the end to peace and security in that country as a result of the renewed offensive by the combined forces of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council military junta, known as the AFRC and a rebel group known as the Revolutionary United Front, or RUF in a effort to once again overthrow the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone.

The Economic Community of West African States stepped in almost a year ago, sending its Military Observer Group, called ECOMOG, to restore President Tejan Kabbah to power. Since that time, ECOMOG has been the sole thin line standing between notoriously inhumane AFRC/RUF forces and the fall of the democratically elected government.

Unfortunately on January 6 of this year, the AFRC/RUF once again attacked Freetown and continued waging an inhumane and unbelievably brutal

war on the civilian population in the countryside. There are disturbing reports both in the media and from our embassy in Sierra Leone that the AFRC/RUF has rounded up civilians including men, women and children for the purposes of torture and mutilation. AFRC/RUF soldiers use machetes to amputate one or both hands, feet, ears, arms, and fingers of their civilian victims.

These reports indicate that victims are sometimes instructed to take a severed limb, body part or note to the government or ECOMOG stating that the government should replace the amputated body part, and that ECOMOG should leave Sierra Leone. These atrocities are carried out regardless of age or gender, and do not appear to be ethnically or religiously motivated.

Women and girls are kidnapped and forced into sexual slavery. Some kidnap victims are used as labor in rebel camps. Boys and young men are compelled to join the AFRC/RUF as soldiers against their will. Witnesses say that children as young as seven years have been forcibly recruited by the rebels.

The result of the escalated violence has been the exodus of over 450,000 people into neighboring Guinea and Liberia. Nearly twice as many are wandering around within the borders of Sierra Leone, their homes and villages destroyed, vulnerable to further attacks from insurgents, without access to food or medicine.

With the help of external actors who are acting in direct violation of a United Nations arms embargo, the AFRC/RUF has been able to effectively sustain its assaults against civilians and ECOMOG troops. However, the AFRC/RUF has demonstrated no organized political platform or agenda. It enjoys no popular support among the people of Sierra Leone. In short, this group can accurately be described as a band of well armed, determined thugs.

I applaud the administration for providing aid to ECOMOG. However, as I wrote to the Secretary of State this week, and as this resolution indicates, the United States can and should do more to support ECOMOG financially. While ECOMOG is far from perfect, it is the only thing standing between the civilian population the fall of the duly elected government to indiscriminate, brutally violent AFRC/RUF forces.

It is for all of the above reasons that I join my colleagues Senators FRIST and FEINGOLD in sponsoring this resolution.

In addition to condemning the heinous actions of the AFRC/RUF rebels and the involvement of external actors in support of the rebels, the resolution urges the Administration to continue to give a high priority to solving this conflict.

Thousands of innocent men, women and children have been wounded, maimed and killed in the past months alone. We must do all we can do to bring about a swift and long-term political solution to this war. This is the

only way to put a decisive end to the suffering of the population of Sierra Leone.

NOTICE OF HEARING

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a full committee hearing has been scheduled before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The hearing will take place on Thursday, March 4, 1999 at 10:00 a.m. in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC.

The purpose of this hearing is to consider the nomination of Robert W. Gee to be an Assistant Secretary of the Department of Energy for Fossil Energy.

For further information, please contact David Dye of the Committee staff at (202) 224-0624.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet on Thursday, February 25, 1999, at 9:30 a.m. in open session, to receive testimony on U.S. policy regarding Kosovo.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, February 25, 1999, in open session, to receive testimony from the unified commanders on their military strategy and operational requirements in review of the fiscal year 2000 defense authorized request and future years defense program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, 1999, to conduct a hearing on financial services legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, for purposes of conducting a full committee hearing which is scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m. The purpose of this oversight hearing is to consider the President's proposed budget for FY2000 for the Department of En-

ergy and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, for purposes of conducting a full committee hearing which is scheduled to begin at 2:00 p.m. The purpose of this oversight hearing is to consider the President's proposed budget for FY2000 for the U.S. Forest Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Subcommittee on Public Health, be authorized to meet for a hearing on Antimicrobial Resistance: Solutions to a Growing Public Health Threat during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, 1999, at 9:30 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary, be authorized to hold an executive business meeting during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, 1999, at 10:00 a.m., in room 226 of the Senate Dirksen Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules and Administration be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, 1999 at 9:30 a.m. to conduct its organizational meeting for the 106th Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ANTITRUST, BUSINESS RIGHTS, AND COMPETITION

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Antitrust, Business Rights, and Competition, of the Senate Judiciary Committee, be authorized to hold a hearing during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, 1999 at 2:00 p.m. in room 226 of the Senate Dirksen Office Building, on: "The Third Anniversary of the Telecom Act: A Competition and Antitrust Review."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during

the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, 1999, at 10:00 a.m. to hold a hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

MEAT LABELING ACT OF 1999

• Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on the subject of the Meat Labeling Act of 1999. This measure, introduced earlier this year by South Dakota Senator, TIM JOHNSON, would require the country-of-origin labeling of beef, lamb, and pork prior to their sale at a retail level in the United States.

This bill will protect the consumers—who right now have no way of telling what country their meat is coming from—and come to the aid of an industry which has had to face severe competition from foreign countries in recent years.

Mr. President, last year, the U.S. agriculture industry faced devastating losses. Bad weather, pest infestation, decreased demand stemming from the Asian financial crisis, and increased imports, especially from Canada, all contributed to the record low prices in nearly every sector.

In Wisconsin, the hog industry took a big hit as cash prices dropped an average of 55%. Incomes were slashed, farms were sold for pennies on the dollar, and over 600 producers left the business.

This year, the Asian crisis continues, as well as the financial problems in Russia, in Brazil and other countries. The truth is that the market for U.S. agriculture products is bleak and it does not appear to be changing anytime soon.

America's meat producers face not only tough global competition from abroad, but a big disadvantage here at home, because their products aren't marked "made in the USA."

That means consumers can't distinguish a U.S.-grown pork chop from a Mexican one. This raises health and safety concerns, since meat-handling standards in other countries may not be as stringent as our own, and it means that consumers can't choose to put their buying power behind American farmers in the check-out aisle.

Right now the only guidance consumers do have is misleading at best—since many of us would assume that a steak that carries a USDA inspection and grade label is U.S. produced. But in many cases, this couldn't be farther from the truth. That steak could be from Mexico, Canada, or Nicaragua. And for a variety of reasons, I think Wisconsinites want to know if the pork chop they are buying is from Marquette or Mexico.

Recent scares over food imported from foreign countries make this issue more important than ever to consumers. Cases of disease and numerous