

In fact, during the past year we witnessed continued disturbing trends in the human rights situation in China. Indeed, in last week's release of the State Department's annual Country Reports of Human Rights Practices, referring to China, it notes that, "We saw backsliding on key human rights issues."

Unfortunately, there are far too many examples of their "backsliding." In January, Tibetan activist Lobsang Dhondup (Lob-sang Dun-op) was executed without due process. Arrests and harsh sentencing of democracy activists, critics on the Internet, and labor organizers continued throughout the year. And other than the lone release of Tibetan prisoner of conscience, Phuntsog Nyidrol (Putt-sok Nee-droo), last week—the day after the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices was released—there have been no recent releases of political prisoners. Further, religious adherents continue to be persecuted, and Falun Gong followers remain targeted by the government. Another area of grave concern is Beijing's forced repatriation of North Korean refugees in China and other human rights abuses directed against these refugees, including the trafficking of women and children.

Mr. Speaker, the People's Republic of China must understand that increased bilateral cooperation in other areas, including security, does not in any way negate or lessen obligations to uphold basic human rights. I encourage my colleagues to support H. Res. 530.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHROCK). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 530, as amended.

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. SMITH of New Jersey. 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.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. 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. Res. 530, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

#### EXPRESSING SYMPATHY OF HOUSE FOR VICTIMS OF EARTHQUAKE IN IRAN

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the reso-

lution (H. Res. 526) expressing the sympathy of the House of Representatives for the victims of the devastating earthquake that occurred on December 26, 2003, in Bam, Iran.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 526

Whereas approximately 40,000 men, women, and children, including a United States citizen, perished in an earthquake that occurred on December 26, 2003, in Bam, Iran;

Whereas the people of the United States immediately expressed their sincerest sympathy by sending aid to the victims of the earthquake in Iran;

Whereas 90 percent of the 2,000 year-old city of Bam was destroyed;

Whereas the magnificent buildings in Bam belonged not only to the people of Iran, but to our common world heritage;

Whereas President George W. Bush lifted sanctions on Iran temporarily in order to enable United States relief organizations to swiftly send aid to Bam;

Whereas United States aid channeled through United States-based relief organizations and charities has been warmly welcomed by the people of Iran;

Whereas United States aid workers have been received with generosity and great appreciation in Iran;

Whereas the United States generosity has confirmed that the United States holds no ill will toward the people of Iran; and

Whereas the spirit and compassionate conduct of the United States has won it tremendous goodwill among the people of Iran: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its heartfelt sympathy for the victims of the earthquake that occurred on December 26, 2003, in Bam, Iran, and their loved ones;

(2) expresses its heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the courageous work of the United States and international aid personnel saving lives in Iran; and

(3) welcomes the President's decision to issue a general license for donations to nongovernmental entities engaged in humanitarian relief activities in response to the earthquake in Iran.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) and the gentlewoman from Minnesota (Ms. MCCOLLUM) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HYDE. 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 resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Today I rise in support of House Resolution 526, introduced by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) on February 11, 2004, expressing the sympathy of the House of Representatives for the victims of the devastating earthquake that occurred on December 26, 2003, in Bam, Iran. This resolution is a reflection of the goodwill that emanates

from the people of the United States to the people of Iran during their time of great need and profound sorrow.

On that tragic day, an earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale struck the southeastern area of Iran. During the days that followed, the American people and the rest of the world watched in sympathy as helpless Iranian families tried to put the pieces of their lives back together. With approximately 40,000 people dead, 30,000 people injured, and up to 75,000 people made homeless, the U.S. Government reacted in solidarity with the Iranian people by implementing necessary measures so that millions of dollars in emergency earthquake assistance could be distributed through United States relief organizations.

Immediately, the President directed that a general license be issued to temporarily permit U.S. individuals or nongovernmental organizations to transfer funds to organizations operating in Iran to assist humanitarian aid activities. I commend the administration's handling of this tragic situation and President Bush's message that "We stand ready to help the people of Iran."

Many factors characterize the perceived power and greatness of America throughout the world. However, it is the spirit of our unconditional compassion in times like these that truly resonates in the hearts and minds of the Iranian people and communicates our real hopes and desires for them.

Currently, the people of Iran need their courage and strength to help parallel the efforts by international aid personnel in rebuilding their lives. Children who are orphaned and homeless will need guidance and direction from their elders. Elders who are grieving the loss of their loved ones will need the inspiration of their youth to go on. Through their trials and tribulations, the Iranian people have proved to be a resilient force while never losing hope for the blessings of a new day. I am convinced that through exercising their faith and reconstructing their lives a stronger and empowered community will be unearthed.

I commend the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) for introducing this meaningful resolution and thank him for his understanding of Iran's needs and challenges. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this resolution and urge its passage.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. I commend the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) for this important resolution.

The suffering of the Iranian people from the Bam earthquake in December is incalculable. As many as 50,000 dead, countless injured. Tragic as well is the destruction of 90 percent of an historic 2,000-year-old city. This is truly a loss to all the world. The resolution appropriately expresses the heartfelt sympathy of the House for the victims of