

voiceless before the powerful Pastoral Land Commission.

In her work, Sister Stang took on powerful land interests, and steadfastly defended small groups of families and their traditional ways of life. Sister Stang taught the local communities ways of sustainable development and peaceful community living.

Because she was a thorn in the side of those powerful interests, Sister Dorothy received numerous death threats, but she always shrugged them off. She did so not carelessly or lightheartedly, but with a deep sense of the importance of her work and the peaceful approach to conflicts she had always promoted.

With the brutal murder of Sister Stang in February, the indigenous communities of the rainforest have lost one of their most powerful voices. Indeed, Brazil has lost one of the most respected human rights leaders.

We call on the Brazilian Government to bring to justice not only the people who pulled the trigger, but also those who devised the evil plot to kill her for sheer financial greed.

Sister Dorothy Stang leaves a huge legacy which puts the burden on the Brazilian and U.S. Governments to protect those communities for whom Sister Stang gave her life.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 7 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), the author of this resolution.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 89, and I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) and offer very warm thanks to the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE) and to the ranking member, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), for their leadership and support on this resolution which honors the life and the work of Sister Dorothy Stang.

I would also like to acknowledge Sister Dorothy's family, her sister, Marguerite, and her family from Fairfax, Virginia, and her brother, David Stang from Denver, Colorado.

Sister Dorothy was an American Catholic nun with the Order of Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. She was originally from Ohio, but had moved to Brazil nearly 40 years ago with four other sisters of Notre Dame in response to a request from then-Pope John XXIII who asked religious communities around the world to serve in Latin America.

She worked in earnest to profess the order's mission, to educate and stand with the poor. Sister Dorothy also worked with the Pastoral Land Commission, an organization of the Catholic Church that fights for the rights of rural workers and peasants. Sister Dorothy's selfless way of life brought comfort and hope to an area of the world wrought with corruption and despair. She was committed to social justice, and worked tirelessly to help poor farmers with sustainable development

techniques, minister and teach the men of the village to be faith leaders, and help in the building of houses and school rooms.

Sister Dorothy taught the women of Brazil to sew and to sell clothing to finance the building of a dam to provide electricity to their community. She pioneered 21 community centers. These centers taught agriculture, health care, education, and spirituality.

Although she was a profound leader and was loved by many, her fate did not parallel her life's work. Sister Dorothy was brutally murdered on February 12 of this year after receiving several death threats from loggers and landowners. Knowing of this grave danger, Sister Dorothy wrote, "I do not want to flee, nor do I want to abandon the battle of these farmers who live without any protection in the forest. They have the sacrosanct right to aspire to a better life on land where they can live and work with dignity while respecting the environment."

She then went on to say, "I am grateful to Notre Dame for not asking me to leave. This shows we are aware of the needs of the poor. The Sisters have said they are worried about any safety. It is not my safety, but that of the people which matters."

At the time of her death, Sister Dorothy had just traveled to drop off cloth and food to families whose homes had been burned by ranchers and loggers. She was approached by two gunmen, and knowing her fate, reached into her cloth bag, took out her Bible and began reading the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."

Sister Dorothy Stang is a true martyr. She lived and died teaching and fighting for peace and justice among a people who were poor and disenfranchised. She lifted up the oppressed and taught people about their rights as human beings. She was named "Woman of the Year" by the state of Para for her work in the Amazon, and in 2004 she received the Humanitarian of the Year award from the Brazilian Bar Association for her work in the region.

Sister Dorothy's dream was to have an area of land set aside by the federal government of Brazil as a federal reserve where the poor families and landless peasants would be safe, where they could farm their land, build their own income-producing businesses, and above all, where they could live in peace and dignity without threats to their lives.

Sister Dorothy reminds us all to be courageous and to work for what we believe in. We must all be champions of our principles and causes, and that our religion is not merely a set of beliefs, but a series of actions. She gave her life to protect the downtrodden and forgotten. While her brutal murder shows the great challenges we face in the pursuit of social justice, her life shows the awesome power one human being has to change the world.

I hope that this simple act of commemoration will not be the end of Sister Stang's story, but the very beginning. That Congress will use this opportunity to demonstrate its concern for inequality and poverty all over the world by making available the resources needed to combat these social ills.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, President Kennedy once said in a speech at Amherst College, honoring Robert Frost, that "A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces, but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers."

Today we honor a fearless, selfless defender of peace, a champion in sustainable development, a person affectionately known as "Irma Doroty," and "Angel of the Amazon," a brave martyr, Sister Dorothy Stang.

□ 1630

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 89.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### URGING ROMANIA TO PROVIDE RESTITUTION TO RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 191) urging the Government of Romania to recognize its responsibilities to provide equitable, prompt, and fair restitution to all religious communities for property confiscated by the former Communist government in Romania, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 191

Whereas the establishment of a Communist government in Romania after World War II proved disastrous for established religious institutions;

Whereas a central element of persecution by the Communist government in Romania was the uncompensated confiscation of real and personal property from religious communities and from leaders of religious communities, and the arrest and persecution of religious leaders;

Whereas 2,140 schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other charitable and civic institutions were illegally confiscated under communism from the four historic Hungarian churches (Roman Catholic, Hungarian Reformed, Evangelical Lutheran, and Unitarian) and actual possession and use of such properties has been denied in all but 30 cases;

Whereas Romania's wartime Fascist government began the process of confiscating Jewish property in September 1940 and its

postwar Communist government reaffirmed most of these confiscations;

Whereas only a handful of Jewish communal properties have been restituted, often with government agencies still using the facilities and paying no rent, and over 1,000 communal properties remain in the possession of the Government of Romania;

Whereas some Jewish claims have been willfully ignored for years, such as in the case of agricultural land in Iasi, where municipal authorities continue to sell parcels of this land;

Whereas on January 2, 1990, under terms of Decree-Law 126/1990, the 1948 decree which dissolved the Romanian Greek Catholic Church was abrogated, permitting Greek Catholics again to worship openly, and legal provisions and procedures were established for the return of confiscated properties that before 1948 belonged to the Greek Catholic Church;

Whereas the commission established under Decree-Law 126/1990 composed of representatives of the Romanian Government and Greek Catholic Church has proven ineffective in resolving disputed claims;

Whereas Romanian Law No. 501/2002, providing for the restitution of religious properties, was adopted in June 2002 without consultation with the affected religious communities, does not effectively meet the needs of those communities, contains numerous legal deficiencies, and is delayed in its implementation;

Whereas all of the religious communities have demanded the return of property seized by the Romanian Communist government;

Whereas since 1990, post-Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe have grappled with the question of how to redress these wrongful confiscations of religious property, but Romania has lagged significantly behind other post-Communist countries;

Whereas since the early 1990s, the United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe has monitored the property restitution and compensation efforts being made by the governments of post-Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe;

Whereas with respect to the role of the Romanian courts in the restitution process, the Chairman of the United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe observed: "In the mid-1990s . . . hundreds of court decisions in favor of property claimants were reversed by the Supreme Court after they had become final and irrevocable judgments. The European Court of Human Rights has recently ruled that these actions violated the European Convention on Human Rights."; and

Whereas Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that "[e]veryone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.": Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) notes with concern the unwillingness of past governments of Romania to recognize the responsibility to provide equitable, prompt, and fair restitution of religious property that was confiscated by the former Communist government of Romania;

(2) calls on the Government of Romania—

(A) to respect the constitutional rights of existence and practice of all religious communities to celebrate and practice their own religion in respectable locations, the right to propagate the given beliefs, and the right to

openly communicate the beliefs and laws of the religion;

(B) to provide fair, prompt, and equitable restitution to all religious communities under Romanian law and in accordance with the Constitution of Romania and all applicable international agreements to which Romania is a party; and

(C) to provide restitution for the property rights of all agricultural and forestry lands belonging to religious communities;

(3) calls upon the Government of Romania to amend Decree-Law 126/1990 to require that claims involving Romanian Greek Catholic properties be heard by an independent, disinterested, nonreligious commission, and calls upon the Government of Romania to prevent the demolition of Greek Catholic churches and to provide immediately for the security of all Greek Catholic churches and other religious buildings dating from the 18th and 19th centuries; and

(4) with respect to Romanian Law No. 501/2002, calls upon the Government of Romania—

(A) to amend the law to reflect the principle of "restitution in integrum" as urged by Resolution 1123/1997 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and to restore full ownership of all property and all rights emanating from such ownership;

(B) to amend the law to reduce the five-year period to one year during which public institutions can continue to occupy confiscated religious properties;

(C) to amend the law to include compensation, according to an equitable formula, for demolished religious properties;

(D) to increase to fair market value the amount of rent paid to religious communities for properties of which they cannot immediately regain use under law;

(E) to eliminate the practice of requiring monetary compensation from religious communities to cover state costs for maintenance and "improvement" of the buildings since their confiscation in the 1940s; and

(F) to obligate local government officials, bodies, and agencies to provide all necessary documentation and cooperation to facilitate the implementation of decisions issued by the central government's Special Restitution Committee and to cease posing court challenges and other obstacles against such implementation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days 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 gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 191. This resolution was introduced by the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS). House Resolution 191 urges the Government of Romania to recognize its responsibilities to provide equi-

table, prompt, and fair restitution to all religious communities for property confiscated by the former Communist government in Romania.

Specifically, this resolution expresses concern at the unwillingness of past governments of Romania to provide restitution of religious property that was confiscated by former Communist government officials of Romania. A central element of persecution by the Communist government in Romania was the uncompensated confiscation of property from religious communities and religious leaders, and the arrest and persecution of religious leaders. After the collapse of the Communist regime in Romania in 1989 and 1990, the new government of Romania adopted legislation to provide for the restitution of religious property seized during the previous 45 years of Communist rule. That legislation has been poorly and slowly implemented by Romanian governments over the past 15 years, and very little of this property has been returned to Romania's religious communities.

The religious communities that have been adversely affected include the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Hungarian Reformed Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, as well as the Unitarian Church, the Jewish community, and other religious communities. Given the inherent injustice in the confiscation of these properties as well as Romania's desire to engage with other democracies through Euro-Atlantic institutions such as NATO and the European Union, Romania must take steps to accelerate the return of these properties to their rightful owners.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for the government of Romania to face its responsibilities and implement what is necessary to resolve these issues. I urge the adoption of this important resolution.

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

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I rise in support of House Resolution 191.

I first want to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) for his effort in bringing this resolution forward for action in the House today. I also want to acknowledge our colleagues who introduced this legislation: the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO). As our colleagues know, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) has had a longstanding interest and concern for Central Europe and these issues involving religious liberty.

Mr. Speaker, freedom of religion is one of the most important of the blessings of liberty that is assured to us in the United States by the first amendment to our Constitution. It is also a freedom that is explicitly guaranteed in the universal declaration of human rights. Article 18 states: "Everyone has

the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

It is not enough, Mr. Speaker, for men and women to have freedom of conscience to believe what they choose. It is also essential that they have the right to join with others of like mind to practice and worship together as a religious community; and for this right to be meaningful, they must have the right to control property that they can use for religious, charitable, and educational purposes consistent with their beliefs.

The important resolution that we are considering today goes to the heart of this problem, and it raises serious questions about continuing difficulties of some religious communities in Romania. Romania, like many other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, faced 4½ decades of Communist rule, and Communist Party leaders feared that religion would undermine their authoritarian rule. As a result, most religious property in the country was seized by the Communist government.

Following the collapse of Communist rule, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have all had to deal with the restitution of property to religious communities, and it has been a difficult and complex process everywhere. In Romania it has been more complex and much slower than elsewhere. For this reason, the resolution before us today urges the Romanian government to recognize its responsibilities to provide equitable, prompt, and fair restitution to all religious communities for property confiscated by the former Communist government in Romania.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution singles out the three categories of religious communities for whom restitution has been particularly slow and unsatisfactory in Romania. The Jewish community saw its properties confiscated beginning in September of 1940 under the Fascist government that preceded the Communist government, but the Communist government reaffirmed these confiscations after it came to power. Only a handful of Jewish communal properties have been restituted and over 1,000 communal properties are still under government control.

The religious communities of the Hungarian ethnic minority have also faced the same problem. Over 2,000 schools, hospitals, orphanages and other charitable and civic properties were seized from the Roman Catholic Church, which in Romania is primarily Hungarian; the Hungarian Reformed Church; the Evangelical Lutheran Church; and the Hungarian Unitarian Church.

The third community is the Greek Catholic Church, a community which is united with the Roman Catholic Church but which observes the Greek Orthodox liturgy. In 1948 the Greek

Catholic Church was dissolved, and its members were forcibly merged with the Romanian Orthodox Church and its properties either seized by the government or given to the Romanian Orthodox Church. In 1990 the Romanian Government adopted legislation to recognize the Greek Catholic community and permit its members to worship openly. Unfortunately, the legal provisions to resolve property restitution have been singularly unsuccessful.

Mr. Speaker, the European Court of Human Rights and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe have both criticized the succession of Romanian governments' failures to satisfactorily deal with the problems. House Resolution 191 urges the recently elected government to take the initiative and work to solve religious property restitution. The government has recently adopted legislation that attempts to deal with some of the issues, and we welcome that effort to put better legislation in place to solve these problems. It will require active and continuing efforts, however; and we urge the government to take those steps.

Members of all of these religious communities in Romania have immigrated to the United States over the past century and even before, and most of the Members of this Congress have constituents who have expressed concern to us about these issues. Mr. Speaker, this resolution reflects the legitimate interests and concerns of American citizens. Let me also add that since Romania is now a member of NATO, it has an urgent responsibility and an extra responsibility to perform its responsibilities. We in the United States are looking to Romania as a NATO member, a fellow NATO member, to now act accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, as a cosponsor of this resolution, I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be a cosponsor of this bill, and I commend Mr. LANTOS and Mr. TANCREDO for bringing this matter before the Congress. The process of providing restitution or compensation for property confiscated by former regimes in Romania has been slow, complicated and difficult. We have raised concerns about this with Romanian authorities for many years now.

As of July 2003, more than 200,000 claims for property restitution had been filed in Romania by individuals, and more than 7,000 claims had been filed by religious denominations and communal groups. As the bill indicates, the historic Hungarian churches—including the Evangelical Lutheran, Hungarian Reformed, Roman Catholic and Unitarian—lost more than 2,000 schools, hospitals, orphanages and other institutions under the communist regime in Romania.

Jewish communal properties were decimated by the Fascist regime that ruled Romania during World War II, and those confiscations were reaffirmed by the postwar communist government. Mr. Speaker, the status of more than 1700 Jewish communal properties remains unresolved.

Further, the plight of Romania's Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church, which was banned by the communist government in 1948, is particularly distressful. More than 2,000 churches and other buildings seized from the Uniates were given to Orthodox parishes. The government decree that dismantled the Greek Catholic Church was abrogated in 1989; however, fewer than 200 of their confiscated properties have been returned.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased that the new government of Romania recently announced the creation of the National Authority for Property Restitution to implement Romania's property restitution laws, and it is my understanding that next week a legislative package designed to remedy these property issues is expected to be introduced. Apparently special attention will be paid to properties once belonging to religious communities and national minorities. The goal is for all outstanding claims to be resolved by the end of 2006. This would be a welcomed achievement.

For 15 years, these property claims have been a source of anguish and frustration for so many Romanians. The political will being demonstrated by President Basescu and his government is commendable. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in this action today, encouraging the Romanian authorities to provide equitable, prompt, and fair restitution of the confiscated properties.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 191 and I commend Mr. LANTOS and Mr. TANCREDO for bringing the issue of property restitution in Romania before the Congress.

More than 15 years since the fall of the communist regime in Romania, tens of thousand of claims for the restitution of, or compensation for, property remain unresolved. This situation is a source of anger and resentment for many citizens and, in my view, a destabilizing factor in Romanian society.

To date, more than 200,000 individual claims for property restitution have been filed with only 15,000—or 7 percent—resolved. The situation for religious and communal properties is equally as dismal. Of the more than 7500 claims for communal properties, less than 600 have been approved for restitution.

The resolution before us addresses the plight of religious and communal properties in Romania.

Jewish citizens of Romania suffered the appropriation of all of their personal and communal property by the fascist regime that ruled the country during World War II, only to have these confiscations confirmed by the post-war communist government that ruled Romania until the fall of Ceausescu in 1989. To date, the status of more than 1700 Jewish communal properties remains unresolved.

Romania's Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church has essentially been caught in a “catch twenty-two” for the past decade and a half. The Greek Catholic Church was banned by the communist government in 1948 and more than 2,000 churches and other buildings seized from them were given to Orthodox parishes. In 1989, the government of Romania annulled the earlier decree, yet to date, fewer than 200 of the Greek Catholic properties have been returned to the community. Successive Romanian administrations have maintained that even though it was a government decree that confiscated the Greek Catholic property, the government has no responsibility to secure the return of those properties to the community.

I am advised that the new government of Romania under President Basescu is taking administrative steps to resolve this crisis as soon as possible and that draft legislation to rectify the shortcomings of current law will be introduced in the near future. I urge the government of Romania to act expeditiously and to ensure a fair and equitable property restitution regime for all of its citizens.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the cooperation of our distinguished colleague from Colorado, a member of the International Relations Committee, Mr. TANCREDO, for his excellent cooperation and work in behalf of H. Res. 191. I also want to thank my friend Chairman HENRY HYDE for his support in bringing this resolution to the floor today.

It is unconscionable, Mr. Speaker, that a decade and a half after the end of the communist regime in Romania we are still dealing with the problem of the restitution of religious property. The communist government in Romania, as well as communist governments elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, wanted no challenge to their authority, and throughout that area all religious groups were systematically and meticulously brought under government control. As part of that process, most religious properties were confiscated by the communist governments for state or party use. In Romania, that amounted to the government seizure of literally thousands of religious schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other properties that religious communities used for charitable and humanitarian purposes.

With the fall of the communist governments in 1989, new democratic governments have had to deal with the restitution of this property to the religious communities. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the process in Romania has been slower and less equitable than most other post-communist countries. A series of Romanian governments since 1990 have failed to achieve a successful and fair resolution of this problem, which the European Court of Human Rights and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe both have criticized. Resolution 191 urges the recently elected government to take the initiative and work to solve religious property restitution.

Mr. Speaker, after Congressman TANCREDO and I introduced this resolution, the recently elected government of Romania adopted legislation to deal with some of the issues that our resolution discusses, and we welcome that effort. Legislation, as we have seen, is not necessarily the solution to the problem. It will require active and continuing efforts on the part of the government to solve these problems, and we urge Romanian officials to work actively and aggressively to take the steps necessary to deal with restitution in a fair and equitable manner.

This problem essentially involves all of the religious communities in Romania other than the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The Jewish community saw communal properties confiscated by the Fascist Romanian government beginning in 1940, and these seizures were reaffirmed by the communist government when it came power after 1944. Today over 1,000 Jewish communal properties remain under Romanian government control, properties have not been restored to communal ownership, and no rent or compensation is being paid to the community for their continued use.

The four historic Hungarian religious communities—the Roman Catholic, the Hungarian Reformed, the Evangelical Lutheran, and the Unitarian churches—lost over 2,000 schools and other buildings used for charitable and humanitarian activities. Possession and use of these properties by government entities continues today in all but about thirty instances.

The Greek Catholic Church in Romania is one of the most complicated and clearly one of the most frustrating cases. In 1948, the Greek Catholic Church, which recognizes the authority of the Pope in Rome but uses the Greek Orthodox liturgy, was forcibly merged with the Romanian Orthodox Church, and its properties were merged as well or seized by the government. In 1990 the decree of 1948 was abrogated, but untangling the properties after more than a generation has been extremely difficult.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen Romanian governments delaying and postponing restitution, the Romanian courts have reversed cases that had already been resolved, and inaction by government officials have prevented equitable resolution of the vast majority of these property claims. The European Court of Human Rights ruled that the actions of various Romanian governments in religious property restitution cases in the mid-1990s “violated the European Convention on Human Rights.”

Our resolution calls upon the Romanian Government to respect and resolve these religious restitution cases in a fair, prompt and equitable manner. In the case of the Greek Catholic Church, it calls upon the government to amend fundamentally the legislation establishing a commission for resolution of conflicting claims. In cases where property cannot be restituted within a period of one year, our resolution calls for fair compensation until the restitution can be carried out.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of our colleagues to support this resolution urging the Government of Romania to recognize its responsibilities to provide equitable, prompt, and fair restitution to all religious communities for property confiscated by the former Communist government in Romania.

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 191, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### URGING WITHDRAWAL OF SYRIAN FORCES FROM LEBANON

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 273) urging the withdrawal of all Syrian forces from Lebanon, support for free and fair democratic elections in Lebanon, and the development of democratic institutions and safeguards to foster sovereign democratic rule in Lebanon, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 273

Whereas the people of the Lebanese Republic have a rich, proud, and honorable history dating from ancient times to the present;

Whereas Lebanon and the United States have enjoyed a history of friendship and cooperation which has been marked by the immigration of many Lebanese to the United States where they and their descendants have contributed greatly to the fabric of American life;

Whereas Syria has dominated the Lebanese political scene, resulting in a deterioration of Lebanon's human rights situation, the manipulation of Lebanese election results to meet Syria's requirements, and the imposition of curbs on Lebanon's media, once the freest in the Arab world;

Whereas Syria has publicly withdrawn its military forces from Lebanon, leaving behind, however, an intelligence structure;

Whereas Congress conditioned the lifting of sanctions on Damascus in the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-175) upon the Government of Syria ending its occupation of Lebanon (including the complete withdrawal of intelligence and all other security-related personnel in Lebanon) and upon other factors;

Whereas the international community has, through the passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004), reaffirmed its call for the strict respect of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon;

Whereas there remains unresolved and as a matter of national and world concern the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri, former Lebanese prime minister, which has justly been condemned as a terrorist act;

Whereas the international community has begun investigations into the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri and it is the policy of the United States to urge full cooperation with the investigations;

Whereas the international community is considering further action to promote Lebanese sovereignty;

Whereas the emancipation of political prisoners and detainees held in Syrian and Lebanese prisons is a precondition for national reconciliation and a rebuilding of Lebanon's democratic institutions; and

Whereas general elections in Lebanon are scheduled to begin on May 29, 2005: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) Syria should complete its withdrawal of all remaining intelligence and security forces from the Lebanese Republic in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004);

(2) Lebanon should allow unfettered access to international monitors present for the purpose of verifying compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004);

(3) Lebanon should hold free, fair, and transparent elections to begin on May 29, 2005, in accordance with all international standards and agreements;

(4) the United States should aid the people of Lebanon in their efforts to restore the separation of powers, the rule of law, and a proper respect for fundamental freedoms of every citizen; and

(5) it should be the policy of the United States Government to—

(A) support free and fair elections in Lebanon by encouraging international election assistance and observers;