

death sentences handed down to them in the Leningrad trial of December 1970, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry was created.

□ 1700

The Greater New York Conference, under the direction of the then young activist Malcolm Hoenlein, initiated the profoundly important Solidarity Day marches, modeled after Jacob Birnbaum's Jericho, Redemption, and Exodus marches and rallies of the 1960s. Mr. Hoenlein is now the Executive Vice Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Of great significance was the creation in 1970 of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, a coalition of non-established regional groups, under the chairmanship of Dr. Louis Rosenblum, with whom Jacob Birnbaum worked for many years.

Mr. Hoenlein has publicly stated that he considers Mr. Birnbaum "the father of the Soviet Jewry movement." Similar statements have been made by other major public figures such as Dr. Meir Rosenne, who worked closely with Mr. Birnbaum in the early formative period of 1964 to 1967. Dr. Rosenne later became Israel's Ambassador to France and then to the United States. Sir Martin Gilbert, the official British historian of Winston Churchill and his times, has made a similar statement.

In May, 1965, Mr. Birnbaum was the first person to testify before a congressional committee on the importance of utilizing economic leverage on the Kremlin to secure the liberation of Soviet Jews. When the late Senator Henry Jackson initiated the legislation which finally resulted in the passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment in 1974, Mr. Birnbaum worked closely with the director of Senator Jackson's office, Dorothy Fosdick, and, of course, with his other aide, Richard Perle, who played a major role in the initiation and development of the legislation.

The idea of placing economic pressure on Communist states to increase emigration played a key role in softening up the Kremlin regimes to make possible the Soviet Jewry demand of "Let My People Go." For the first time, there was legislation to put teeth into the previous congressional humanitarian resolutions.

From 1976 to 1986, Jacob Birnbaum conducted annual Most Favored Nation campaigns, based on Jackson-Vanik, to pressure various countries, including Romania, to increase emigration and to release prisoners. He testified annually before both Senate and House Committees.

In the latter 1970s, Mr. Birnbaum enlarged his Soviet Jewry strategy. He expanded the slogan "Let My People Go" by adding "Let My People Know." Let them know their heritage. The Kremlin had pulverized Jewish religious, cultural and community life, and, in the 1960s, the Soviet Jewish resistance underground began to generate Jewish self-education, cultural,

religious and Hebrew-speaking groups in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Birnbaum conducted numerous campaigns for their protection, enlisting the aid of many Christian religious denominations. These efforts reached a high point when he organized and led a delegation of the Synagogue Council of America to meet with the Deputy Secretary of State and the Department's Human Rights Director, Warren Zimmerman, in September 1985.

Mr. Birnbaum's vision was partially realized with Malcolm Hoenlein's Solidarity Rallies in New York, and, finally, by the great national rally in Washington on December 7, 1987, on the eve of President Gorbachev's meeting with President Reagan.

Finally, in 1990, the Kremlin conceded to all the pressure and permitted a mass emigration, which has now totaled more than 2 million people, about 1 million to Israel and 1 million elsewhere, mostly to the United States. This was no small accomplishment. And many people played a role in making it happen.

In addition to the courageous work of Mr. Birnbaum, tribute ought to be paid to the many pioneers and the other national organizations which fought so strenuously for the liberation of Soviet Jews:

Morris Abram, U.S. Human Rights Commissioner; Dr. Moshe Deeter, the scholar whose research fueled the early movement; former Justice Arthur Goldberg; the distinguished theologian, Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Heschel; Senator Jacob Javits; NASA scientist Dr. Louis Rosenblum of the Cleveland Committee on Soviet Anti-Semitism; and Elie Wiesel, whose book, "The Jews of Silence" was so influential.

Many organizations also played an important role, and I will name them in my extended remarks.

Following the collapse of the Soviet regime, Mr. Birnbaum spent a substantial part of the 1990s in combating anti-Semitic manifestations in former Soviet Central Asia, mostly in Uzbekistan, intervening through the State Department and enlisting Malcolm Hoenlein's aid in engaging the Uzbek Ambassador in Washington.

In his 81st year, Mr. Birnbaum continues to support groups engaged in the Jewish education of former Soviet Jews and their children. His dedication to his beliefs remains as strong as ever.

For all these reasons, Mr. Speaker, the House of Representatives ought to honor the life and six decades of public service of Jacob Birnbaum and especially his successful commitment to freeing Soviet Jews from religious, cultural, and communal extinction. He is a true hero.

I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, for moving this resolution quickly through his committee. I would also like to thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) for managing the consideration of this resolution today,

and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for her leadership on this.

Again, I urge all my colleagues to join me in passing this resolution to honor this work of this unique hero of this century.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 137, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CALLING ON GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA AND LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY TO RECOMMIT TO POLITICAL SOLUTION IN NORTHERN UGANDA

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 80) calling on the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to recommit to a political solution to the conflict in northern Uganda and to recommence vital peace talks, and urging immediate and substantial support for the ongoing peace process from the United States and the international community, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 80

Whereas for over two decades, the Government of Uganda has been engaged in an armed conflict with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that has resulted in up to 200,000 deaths from violence and disease and the displacement of more than 1,600,000 civilians from eastern and northern Uganda;

Whereas former United Nations Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland called the crisis in northern Uganda "the biggest forgotten, neglected humanitarian emergency in the world today";

Whereas Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA, and several of his associates have been indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including rape, murder, enslavement, sexual enslavement, and the forced recruitment of an estimated 66,000 children;

Whereas the LRA is a severe and repeat violator of human rights and has continued to attack civilians and humanitarian aid workers despite a succession of ceasefire agreements;

Whereas the Secretary of State has labeled the LRA "vicious and cult-like" and designates it as a terrorist organization under the Immigration and Nationality Act;

Whereas the 2006 Department of State report on the human rights record of the Government of Uganda found that "security

forces committed unlawful killings . . . and were responsible for deaths as a result of torture" along with other "serious problems", including repression of political opposition, official impunity, and violence against women and children;

Whereas in the 2004 Northern Uganda Crisis Response Act (Public Law 108-283; 118 Stat. 912), Congress declared its support for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in northern and eastern Uganda and called for the United States and the international community to assist in rehabilitation, reconstruction, and demobilization efforts;

Whereas the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, which was mediated by the Government of Southern Sudan and signed by representatives of the Government of Uganda and the LRA on August 20, 2006, and extended on November 1, 2006, requires both parties to cease all hostile military and media offensives and asks the Sudan People's Liberation Army to facilitate the safe assembly of LRA fighters in designated areas for the duration of the peace talks;

Whereas the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement expired on February 28, 2007, without ever having been fully implemented, and though the parties resumed peace talks on April 26, 2007, and signed a preliminary agreement on May 2, 2007, they have not yet arrived at a sustainable negotiated settlement and observers remain concerned that hostilities between rebel and government forces could resume;

Whereas a return to civil war would yield disastrous results for the people of northern Uganda and for regional stability, while peace in Uganda will bolster the fragile Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan and de-escalate tensions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and

Whereas continuing violence and instability obstruct the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of northern Uganda and impede national and regional trade, development and democratization efforts, and counter-terrorism initiatives: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) disapproves of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leadership's inconsistent commitment to resolving the conflict in Uganda peacefully;

(2) urges the LRA and the Government of Uganda to engage in good-faith negotiations to pursue a political solution to this conflict;

(3) encourages all parties in the region to immediately cease human rights violations and address, within the context of a broader national reconciliation process in Uganda, issues of accountability and impunity for those crimes against humanity already committed;

(4) urges leaders on both sides of the conflict in Uganda to renounce any intentions and halt any preparations to resume violence and to ensure that this message is clearly conveyed to armed elements under their control; and

(5) calls on the Secretary of State, the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, and the heads of other similar governmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations within the international community to continue to augment efforts to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in northern Uganda and to support a peaceful resolution to this crisis by publicly and forcefully reiterating the preceding demands.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATSON. 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 California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the distinguished gentleman from Georgia, Mr. HANK JOHNSON, for sponsoring this important and timely resolution on the nightmarish conflict in northern Uganda.

Two decades of horrific battle between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government have taken up to 200,000 lives and displaced nearly 2 million civilians from their homes. But the human tragedy in Uganda cannot be simply represented by numbers and statistics. It is about the daily pain and terror of victims and their families.

Like other rebel forces that have fought the tragic civil wars of Africa, the Lord's Resistance Army built its ranks with child soldiers, both girls and boys, and used vicious and unspeakable methods to alienate these children from their families and their villages. Time and again, Uganda child victims have been forced to commit unthinkable acts, to kill their parents and other relatives before being abducted themselves.

Over two decades of war, more than 30,000 children have been kidnapped and faced a horrible fate, becoming absorbed into the LRA. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of terrified children leave their home villages each evening at dusk and walk to distant towns to avoid being kidnapped by the LRA and pressed into service. They are known in Uganda as the "night commuters."

Mr. Speaker, every parent in the United States labors to reassure their young children that they are safe at home when sleeping in their own beds. The greatest crime of the Lord's Resistance Army is to take even this basic right away from children and families of northern Uganda.

While the LRA is responsible for the overwhelming majority of violence and abuse of children and their families, the government of Uganda also has been cited time and again for human rights violations. In August of last year, South Sudan's President brokered a cessation of hostilities agreement between the government and the rebel forces, but the accord broke down and only last month did the 10-month effort resume.

I believe the Uganda people deserve both peace and justice. It is incumbent upon the international community to

work with Uganda people, particularly the people of northern Uganda, along with the International Criminal Court and the Ugandan judiciary, to make sure both a lasting peace and real justice are achieved.

The healing and the recovery of the Uganda people, particularly the children, from this tragic war, requires that we make their personal peace the priority right now. It is the only path to lasting stability for northern Uganda. That is why I urge the passage of this legislation, to put Uganda on a path to peace once again.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 80, which calls on the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, the LRA, to recommit to a political solution to the conflict in northern Uganda by engaging in good faith negotiations, and it urges support for the ongoing peace process from the United States and the international community.

As my good friend from California, Ambassador Watson, has pointed out, since 1986, northern Uganda has been embroiled in a vicious conflict which pits the forces of Uganda President Museveni against the rebel Lord's Resistance Army, LRA, of Joseph Kony. Kony claims to hold mystical powers and asserts that he has been guided by God to protect the Acholi people of northern Uganda who have been marginalized by Museveni's government. However, it is the Acholi themselves who have suffered disproportionately at the hands of the LRA.

The LRA, which has been designated as a terrorist group subject to the State Department Terrorist Exclusion List, moves in small, well-coordinated groups from bases in southern Sudan and more recently in eastern Congo. They hold no clear political agenda and make no attempt to hold territory, but they mutilate, torture, murder, rape and loot with impunity.

The LRA has abducted more than 20,000 people, mostly children, Mr. Speaker, to work as laborers, soldiers and sex slaves. Children are forced to the front lines, and those who do manage to escape from the LRA find it difficult, if not impossible, to return to their villages after having been forced to commit atrocities in front of their families.

One of the most visible signs of the collective trauma suffered by the people of northern Uganda was pointed out by Ambassador Watson, and this is the "night commuter" phenomenon. At the peak of the conflict, over 20,000 children would walk up to 15 kilometers from their village to the relative safety of the towns each and every night. They would spend the night under grossly overcrowded tents, sleeping on concrete floors, before getting up at dawn to make the return journey to

their villages. It was not for food, nor for the promise of social services that drew these children to these towns, but it was fear of abduction by the LRA.

While security conditions in northern Uganda have improved and the number of “night commuters” has decreased over the past years, roughly 90 percent, 90 percent, Mr. Speaker, of the local population remains homeless.

□ 1715

These 1.4 million people have been forced from their homes and herded by the Government of Uganda into camps for internally displaced persons. Despite attempts to “decongest,” the conditions in these camps are abysmal.

A health survey conducted by the Ugandan Ministry of Health in 2005 asserts that up to 1,000 people have died in the camps each week due to treatable illnesses such as diarrhea and malaria. The HIV/AIDS rate in the camps is more than double the national average. Sexual violence and domestic violence against women has increased dramatically, and the IDPs complain that camp life has all but destroyed the social fabric of the region.

For its own part, the Ugandan Government has failed in its efforts to defeat the LRA militarily, and to provide adequate protection for the citizens of northern Uganda. Instead, the government has embraced a highly questionable three-pronged approach towards resolving the conflict, and this includes: number one, pursuing a military campaign against the LRA; two, supporting indictments by the International Criminal Court, the ICC, against the LRA’s top leaders; while, three, participating in peace talks while offering amnesty to LRA rebels.

It should come as no surprise that these mutually incompatible efforts have complicated matters and have failed to yield lasting results. Ill-timed military campaigns have undermined numerous mediation efforts, and the ICC indictments have led the LRA to question the sincerity of the amnesty deal offered by the government leaders.

Further, both the Government of Sudan and the LRA have routinely violated the agreement that is called the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement which has now expired without ever having been fully implemented. These actions have prompted skeptics to warn that both sides may be using the pretext of talks to rearm and replenish their forces.

If this is in fact the case, both the LRA and the Ugandan Government should be reminded of the fact that a military solution has alluded them for over 20 years. It is unlikely that a military solution will be any more viable now.

Thankfully, peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the LRA have resumed in Juba, Southern Sudan, and appear to be gaining momentum. Despite numerous challenges, not the least of which is the fact that delegations allegedly representing the

two parties have questionable credibility, the Juba process is being hailed as the best chance yet to ending the conflict by political means.

H. Con. Res. 80 serves as an expression of support for this political dialogue. It expresses disapproval of the LRA leadership and its inconsistent commitment to resolving the conflict and it urges both the LRA and the Government of Uganda to engage in good-faith negotiations. It encourages all parties to immediately stop human rights violations and address the issues of accountability, and it calls on both the LRA and the Government of Uganda to renounce any intentions and halt any preparations to resume this violence.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the resolution calls on the State Department, on the United States Agency for International Development, and other similar government and nongovernment organizations within the international community to continue and to augment efforts to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in northern Uganda and to support a peaceful resolution to this humanitarian crisis.

According to the U.N. Office of Humanitarian Affairs, the conflict of northern Uganda is characterized by a level of cruelty seldom seen, and few conflicts rival it for its sheer brutality.

Despite all of this, Mr. Speaker, it remains one of the most overlooked humanitarian and human rights crises in the world today. H. Con. Res. 80 seeks to shed some well-deserved attention on the crisis in northern Uganda. It affirms the resolve of this Congress that the victims of this atrocious conflict shall not be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for bringing this important resolution to the floor. I urge support by all of our Members.

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

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON).

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from California and also the honorable gentlewoman from Florida for their support for this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 80, a resolution that I introduced which calls on the Government of Uganda and the Lord’s Resistance Army, or the LRA, to recommit to a political solution to the conflict now raging in northern Uganda, and to recommence and sustain vital peace talks.

It also urges immediate and substantial support for the ongoing peace process from the United States and the international community.

When it comes to international affairs, Mr. Speaker, the Congress is somewhat limited in the action that it can take to address issues of concern. As we all know, it is primarily and rightfully a function of the executive branch. However, we do have the right

and the ability to use this platform to focus attention on human suffering around the globe, if only for a moment.

So now is our moment to put a spotlight on the situation in northern Uganda. The situation has been explained by both the gentlewoman from California and the gentlewoman from Florida so I will not duplicate what they have said.

My sincere hope is that H. Con. Res. 80 will help bring peace to the ravaged region of northern Uganda. Specifically, this bill calls on the Government of Uganda and the LRA to recommit to a political solution to the conflict in northern Uganda and to sustain the vital peace talks that are now ongoing. It also urges immediate and substantial support for the ongoing peace process from the United States and the international community.

Mr. Speaker, the tragedy in Darfur rightfully has been receiving a great deal of attention as of late, but to the southeast of that region, another tragedy has been developing for nearly two decades. More than 200,000 Ugandans have died from the violence and disease brought about by the conflict between the Ugandan Government and the LRA.

Almost 2 million people have been displaced from their homes and villages, having been forced to flee the violence. What is particularly disgusting about this conflict is the forced recruitment of children by the LRA. As many as 38,000 children have been abducted. The boys are turned into killing machines and the girls into sex slaves.

Former U.N. Under Secretary General Jan Egeland has called the crisis in northern Uganda “the biggest forgotten, neglected humanitarian emergency in the world today.”

Today, with the passage of H. Con. Res. 80, I hope to take a small step toward changing this unfortunate truth, and I respectfully ask that my colleagues support the resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, having personally visited Uganda in April 2006, I chaired a hearing on the endangered children of northern Uganda for the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations. We heard from a number of witnesses and we raised it and continue to raise it with the administration.

But one of our witnesses was a particularly noteworthy person, Grace Akallo. Grace is, or was, a child soldier, an abducted young girl, who was totally mistreated by the Lord’s Resistance Army. She was turned into a child soldier. And just a couple of days ago, announced her new book called “Child Soldier” which makes chilling reading for anybody who wants to know what really goes on in northern Uganda, and how crazed Joseph Kony

and his people are; and how, as the distinguished gentleman said just a moment ago, they turn girls into sex slaves and killers and the young men into killing machines. It is a terrible, horrible indictment on how low the individual can sink to.

And Joseph Kony, as we all know, has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for serious crimes against humanity. And, regrettably, this killing continues to go on.

I urge Members to read the book. It is an awakening not just on how she suffered, but also how a person when surrounded by people who love her and give her the kind of support that any individual like herself needs to get, how they can come back, the resiliency of the human spirit. She is a soft-spoken, poised, gentle, lovely young woman who has a great future, but she has been through a nightmare. We ought to keep her and her friends in our prayers.

She also pointed out just last week in a meeting that we had announcing her book that she cries out and prays every day for her friends, many of whom she does not know what happened to them. They are still there, she thinks. They may be dead. But she has no idea. I think that puts additional impetus on us to do more, to save these children, this lost generation.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 20 years as many as 1.5 million persons, an estimated 90 percent of the population of the Acholi area in northern Uganda have been forced into internally displaced camps as a result of the violence between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda. Nearly half of these internally displaced persons are children under the age of 15, people like Grace Akallo.

One quarter of the children in northern Uganda over 10 years of age have lost one or more parents. About a quarter of a million children receive no education at all. The fact that 60 percent of the schools in northern Uganda no longer function is directly attributable to the war. I point out that those that do function do so in a very meager way.

Because of the war in the north, Uganda has developed a lost generation that has grown up in dire circumstances with fear and deprivation as their constant companions. Nearly half of the children in one town are stunted from malnutrition. They are likely to never recover.

The latest 2006 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices summarized in a chilling fashion the horror that has been perpetrated on the people of northern Uganda, particularly by the head of the Lord's Resistance Army, Joseph Kony. It states that "at the height of the war, the LRA, led by Joseph Kony, committed serious abuses and atrocities, including abduction, rape and the killing of civilians. The LRA used children as soldiers, held children and others in slave-like conditions, and subjected female captives to

rape and other forms of severe sexual exploitation."

This resolution tries to put additional focus, additional girth, behind the effort to finally find a negotiated solution to this ongoing killing fields, and we all hope and pray this will have at least a happier ending than thus far.

Again, I urge Members to read the book by Grace Akallo, "Girl Soldier."

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

Ms. WATSON. 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 California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 80, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title was amended so as to read: "Concurrent resolution calling on the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to recommit to a political solution to the conflict in northern Uganda by engaging in good-faith negotiations, and urging immediate and substantial support for the ongoing peace process from the United States and the international community."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NOTING KILLINGS OF DOZENS OF INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS IN RUSSIA AND CALLING ON RUSSIAN PRESIDENT TO AUTHORIZE COOPERATION WITH OUTSIDE INVESTIGATORS

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 151) noting the disturbing pattern of killings of dozens of independent journalists in Russia over the last decade, and calling on Russian President Vladimir Putin to authorize cooperation with outside investigators in solving those murders, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 151

Whereas Paul Klebnikov, the editor of the Russian version of Forbes Magazine, who was investigating suspect business dealings and corruption cases in Russia, was shot to death in Moscow on July 9, 2004;

Whereas Mr. Klebnikov's murder remains unsolved;

Whereas Anna Politkovskaya, an acclaimed Russian journalist and human rights activist who wrote numerous articles critical of Russia's prosecution of the war in Chechnya, of human rights abuses by the Russian government and of Russian President Vladimir Putin was shot to death in Moscow on October 7, 2006;

Whereas Ms. Politkovskaya's murder remains unsolved;

Whereas Ivan Safronov, a military affairs reporter for the Russian newspaper

"Kommersant" who wrote articles criticizing the failure of Russian military programs and who was planning to report on potential Russian arms sales to Middle Eastern countries, including to state sponsors of terrorism Iran and Syria, died in mysterious circumstances, falling five stories from a window in the stairwell of his apartment building in Moscow on March 2, 2007;

Whereas, Russian prosecutors subsequently suggested that Mr. Safronov may have committed suicide, although he left no suicide note and the circumstances surrounding his death raised unanswered questions;

Whereas the cause of Mr. Safronov's death remains undetermined;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, twenty-one reporters have been murdered in Russia since March 2000 and many of those murders remain unsolved;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, Russia was one of the six most dangerous countries for journalists to work in during 2006;

Whereas a number of those reporters who were murdered had reported on alleged corruption, malfeasance and other controversies at the federal, provincial and local levels of government in Russia;

Whereas a number of those murdered had reported on alleged human rights abuses by the Russian Government;

Whereas a number of those murdered had reported on the Russian government's conduct of the war in Chechnya, which has involved numerous allegations of gross human rights violations and corruption;

Whereas, if journalists are killed or silenced through undue pressure with impunity, a vibrant and participatory civil society sector cannot emerge and democratic developments are stalled; and

Whereas, according to the President of the International News Safety Institute, "murder has become the easiest, cheapest and most effective way of silencing troublesome reporting, and the more the killers get away with it the more the spiral of death is forced upwards": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) recalls the essential role that transparency and the free flow of information play in creating and preserving democratic institutions and civil society in any country;

(2) recognizes the vital contribution made by independent journalists in Russia in bringing transparency and a free flow of information to readers after decades of Communist censorship and repression;

(3) notes the disturbing trend of murders of independent journalists in Russia over the last decade;

(4) encourages the President of the United States to formally offer Russian President Vladimir Putin and other officials of the Russian Government United States Government law enforcement investigative assistance to help identify and bring to justice those responsible for the many unsolved murders of journalists in Russia during the past decade; and

(5) urges President Putin to seek out competent, outside law enforcement assistance in the investigation of the unsolved murders of numerous independent journalists in Russia.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.