

This resolution commends U.S. and Central American officials for their joint efforts to combat violence and encourages greater cooperation in the future. In the coming days, the Bush administration will present Congress with a plan to assist Mexico and Central America in dealing with issues of crime and violence, particularly as they relate to counternarcotics.

I look forward to working with my colleagues from the State Department and Central America as we begin to shape a future assistance package that will address violence in Central America.

Finally, I want to point to one area of progress that we have seen since this resolution was first introduced in July.

On August 1, Guatemala's legislature approved the international commission against impunity. This is a groundbreaking agreement between the Guatemalan Government and the United Nations to combat impunity in Guatemala. It is a major step for all of us who care so deeply about curbing violence in Central America, and I want to congratulate my colleagues in the Guatemalan Congress and the executive branch on this major accomplishment.

Let me say in closing that one of the things I have noticed as chairman is the feeling of neglect in the hemisphere that the other nations feel that the United States is not concentrating on this region, that we are looking elsewhere in the world. I think that this resolution and what we are doing goes a long way in combating that feeling.

I urge my colleagues to support House Resolution 564.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Mr. ENGEL, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SHERMAN. 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 gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 564, 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.

CONDEMNING THE PERSECUTION OF LABOR RIGHTS ADVOCATES IN IRAN

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 203) condemning the persecution of labor rights advocates in Iran, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 203

Whereas Iran, in violation of ILO principles, refuses to recognize independent labor unions;

Whereas, on April 9, 2007, Iranian agents arrested and imprisoned Mahmoud Salehi, founder of the Saghez Bakery Workers Association, a labor union that is independent and therefore not recognized under Iranian law;

Whereas Salehi's life is in grave danger as he sits in the Sanandaj prisons without access to kidney dialysis treatment;

Whereas, on July 10, 2007, plainclothes Iranian agents severely beat and arrested Mansour Osanloo, president of the Syndicate of Bus Drivers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, another labor union that is independent and therefore not recognized under Iranian law;

Whereas this arrest was the third time in less than two years that Syndicate president Osanloo has been arrested by Iranian agents;

Whereas Osanloo now sits in Iran's notorious Evin prison with a chronic heart condition and a serious eye condition that requires immediate surgery;

Whereas Osanloo has no access to medical or legal assistance and no contact with his family; and

Whereas, on August 9, 2007, the International Transport Workers' Federation, together with the International Trade Union Confederation, staged an international "day of action" to free Osanloo and Salehi: Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) condemns the Iranian regime for the arrest and imprisonment of Iranian union leaders Mahmoud Salehi and Mansour Osanloo and demands their immediate release;

(2) expresses its solidarity with the workers of Iran and stands with them, and with all Iranians, in their efforts to bring political freedom and individual liberty to Iran; and

(3) calls on the Iranian regime to respect the right of Iranian workers to form independent associations and unions, as required by its membership in the ILO.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHERMAN. 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 gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

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

I would like to thank our colleagues, Mr. KIRK from Illinois, Mr. ANDREWS from New Jersey, for introducing this important and timely legislation.

Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons in support of terrorism and its abuse of the human rights of its own people collectively form one of the most serious threats to peace and freedom faced by our country and faced by the world. It speaks volumes that Iran is a member of the International Labor Organization and formally subscribes to the core ILO principles like freedom of association, yet continues to jail those who attempt to form independent labor unions.

The mistreatment of two courageous labor leaders, Mr. Mahmoud Salehi and Mansour Osanloo, is yet another example of the unacceptable behavior of the regime in Iran.

Since 2004, Mahmoud Salehi, who comes from the Kurdish region of Iran, has been jailed on trumped-up charges for the crime of trying to organize a May Day rally in his own city. Unlike many well-known Iranian dissidents, Mr. Salehi is not a writer or a professor or even a politician. He is an ordinary man, a baker by trade, who has had the courage to stand up for the rights of working people. Since April 19 of this year, he has been imprisoned and denied access to the dialysis treatments he requires.

The same is true of Mansour Osanloo, who fell afoul of the regime for threatening in 2006 to lead his fellow bus drivers in Tehran out on strike. Mr. Osanloo was kidnapped from his bus by unknown parties and severely beaten. He too is now being held on vaguely worded charges.

It is appropriate and necessary for the United States House of Representatives to condemn the brutal mistreatment of these leaders and call for their immediate release.

I strongly support this resolution, and I encourage all my colleagues to do likewise.

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the author of this measure, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, this resolution before us demonstrates America's commitment to human rights around the world. As the cochair of the Iran Working Group and a member of the Human Rights Caucus, I am proud to stand here as the co-author of this Kirk-Andrews resolution.

On April 9, 2007, Iranian agents arrested and imprisoned Mahmoud Salehi, the founder of the Saghez Bakery Workers Association. Mr. Salehi is a kidney patient who now sits in the Sanandaj prisons, his life in grave danger as the regime blocks his access to dialysis treatment.

July 10, plain-clothed Iranian agents severely beat and arrested Mansour Osanloo, the president of the Syndicate of Bus Drivers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company. Osanloo now sits in Iran's notorious Evin prison with a chronic heart condition, no access to medical or legal assistance, and no contact with his family. The Teamsters have called on Iran to immediately release both men.

In August, the International Trade Union Confederation, together with the International Transport Workers Federation, staged an international "day of action" to free these union leaders; and now it's our turn. Together with my good friend and the cochair of the Iran Working Group, Congressman ROBERT ANDREWS of New Jersey, we introduced this resolution, a bipartisan

resolution condemning the Government of Iran for the arrest and imprisonment of Iranian union leaders, demanding their immediate release. Today, we speak with one voice, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans, to say to the Iranian people, we stand with your efforts to bring about political freedom and individual liberty in Iran.

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As a board member of the National Endowment for Democracy, I am proud of the U.S. Government's commitment to international workers' rights. This resolution embodies that commitment.

I want to thank Chairman LANTOS and Ranking Member ROS-LEHTINEN for their cosponsorship and continued leadership on this human rights issue.

I also want to thank my friend, Congressman ROB ANDREWS, and the vice chairs of the Iran Working Group, Congressman BOUSTANY and Congressman KLEIN, and key staff members, including Alan Makovsky, Yleem Poblete, Alan Goldsmith, Luke Ballman, Michael Hare and Mira Kogen for their hard work on this resolution.

I especially want to thank Richard Goldberg of my staff, who did the heavy lift on this piece of legislation, so heavy he might become an honorary Teamster.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important to see what is happening in Iran, that there is now an attack going on against Baha'is, there is now an attack going on against intellectuals, and there is now an attack going on against free union members. We need to speak out against all of these if we adhere to our principles of faith to the dignity of the individual as enshrined, not just in the Constitution of the United States, but in the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which the Government of Iran is a signatory.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to yield 3 minutes to the coauthor of this legislation, the chairman of the Education and Labor Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions, the very distinguished Mr. ANDREWS from New Jersey.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. I would like to thank the cochairman of the Iran Working Group, my good friend, Mr. KIRK, for his efforts and the staff's efforts. And I would associate myself with the remarks that MARK made about the staff members who worked so hard on this.

I'd like to thank our subcommittee chairman, Mr. SHERMAN, and ranking members on the other side for their help.

A prison must be a terribly lonely and solitary place. And I think there is no more lonely and solitary place on the face of the Earth than an Iranian prison, because in an Iranian prison you live in a place where there is no due process, there is no right to be heard, there is no sunlight, there is no chance to address your grievances.

Mr. Speaker, as we meet today, two men, Mahmoud Salehi and Mansour Osanloo sit in that solitary confinement. Their crime is speaking up for the members of the group for which they work. Their offense is trying to organize and represent the men and women next to whom they work. This is taken universally as a human right, the right to speak up for better working conditions, for fairness in the workplace. It is a right that Iran recognizes as a signatory to the International Labor Organization, and Iran is bound to follow the core principles of the ILO. Clearly, Iran is not doing so as we meet today.

For more than 6 months, Mr. Salehi has been confined in a prison. For more than 3 months, Mr. Osanloo has been confined in a prison.

It is my hope that this resolution today will have the Members of this House, Republican and Democrat, liberal and conservative, joining the voices of labor leaders around the world as expressed on August 9 saying to the Government of Iran that this imprisonment is unjustified. This is an egregious abuse of human rights. These men should be released. Their medical needs should be tended to, and justification should be given for the unlawful and inhuman incarceration of these individuals.

This is a larger question than the political relationship between the United States and Iran. It is a larger question than labor law and the right to organize. This is a fundamental question of human rights. Innocent, infirm people should not be held against their will with no rights and no right to address their grievances. Surely, Mr. Speaker, this House can and should join together today to rise up in opposition to this inhuman practice.

I would urge a "yes" vote.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution condemning the persecution of labor rights advocates in Iran.

During the past 2 years, the already brutal regime in Tehran has increased its repression of its own citizens, cracking down on religious and ethnic minorities, human rights and pro democracy activists, even university students, and now the labor movement.

Like many supposedly revolutionary governments, this regime has been particularly harsh to workers and their representatives who have dared to protest the injustices that pervade the present system in Iran.

On April 9 this year, Iranian agents arrested Mahmoud Salehi, the founder of an independent bakery workers association. And then on three separate occasions since 2005, this same Iranian regime has arrested and imprisoned Mansour Osanloo, the president of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, an independent labor association of transportation workers.

Most recently then, on July 10, 2007, reports indicate that plainclothes Iranian agents kidnapped, assaulted and imprisoned Mr. Osanloo.

When transport workers have attempted to strike in order to protest their lack of rights and the arrest of their representatives, the Iranian regime has beaten them and compelled them to return to work. Iran's deplorable behavior violates its own legal obligations under its own Constitution.

Article 26 of the Iranian Constitution permits, and I quote, "the formation of parties, societies, political or professional associations," and Iran's labor law recognizes that "it is prohibited to force a person to perform work against their will." So much for following their Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, while Iranian thug-in-chief Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke freely at the United Nations last week, labor representatives Mahmoud Salehi and Mansour Osanloo, both of whom suffer from medical conditions and medical problems, languished in Iran's infamous prisons without access to any medical attention. This current situation is intolerable.

The Iranian regime must stop its persecution of its own workers and systematic human rights abuses, release all the imprisoned labor representatives and fulfill its obligations in ensuring the right of Iranians to work freely and to organize freely.

I want to thank Mr. KIRK of Illinois and Mr. ANDREWS of New Jersey for introducing this resolution, and also labor unions in the United States for bringing this issue to the forefront.

This resolution condemns the Iranian regime for the arrest and imprisonment of Iranian labor leaders and demands their release. It also sends a simple but yet powerful message. As the people of Iran struggle to live freely and exercise their basic human rights, Congress and the United States stands with those people.

I urge my colleagues to adopt this legislation.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCGOVERN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 203, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. KIRK. 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.