

As my colleagues may know, on the 15th of November a powerful, category five-equivalent tropical cyclone struck low-lying areas of Bangladesh from the Bay of Bengal. Mr. Speaker, in the West we call these tropical storms hurricanes, and in the Far East they call them cyclones. Be that as it may, they both have destructive power. Being from southeast Texas on the gulf coast, we call the area "hurricane alley," and we are not unfamiliar with hurricanes. Even this year, Hurricane Humberto, and Hurricane Rita 2 years ago hit my area of the State of Texas.

So, the effects of hurricanes and cyclones are devastating. The effects of Cyclone Sidr has been extremely devastating to the people. Some 6.8 million people have been affected by this disaster, 3,000 people have died, 1,000 people are unaccounted for, and approximately 15,000 people have been injured. In the immediate aftermath of this storm, President and Mrs. Bush offered condolences to the victims, especially those who lost loved ones, people who lost homes and livelihoods in this tragedy.

The United States immediately conveyed to the authorities in Dhaka its willingness to assist in responding to this natural disaster. The United States Agency for International Development provided more than \$19 million in emergency funds to support relief and early recovery activities, including shelter and water, sanitation, hygiene programs and emergency food assistance. The United States Department of Defense has also provided invaluable assistance, with 2,400 United States marines and sailors helping the Bangladesh Government provide clean water, medical aid, food, and other relief supplies to the victims of this cyclone. Indeed, more than 162,000 pounds of relief supplies have been delivered to Bangladesh by USS *Kearsarge* and the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit as of early this month.

Mr. Speaker, Bangladesh and the United States have been close friends since 1971. Our hearts go out to those who have suffered so grievously during this disaster, and on behalf of the American people it is fitting that we reiterate our commitment to assist the people of Bangladesh as they recover from this devastating storm, and I urge support of this resolution.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker. I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 842, expressing sympathy to and pledging the support of the House of Representatives and the people of the United States for the victims of Cyclone Sidr in southern Bangladesh, introduced by my distinguished colleague from New Jersey, Representative ROTHMAN. This important resolution reaffirms the commitment of the United States to the people of Bangladesh in the wake of the devastation of Cyclone Sidr.

Mr. Speaker, Bangladesh has long been a valued ally of the United States; and a key Muslim democracy in a region where adherence to democratic principles is at a premium. Recently, I met with Mr. Don Haque, nephew

of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. After listening to his concerns and insights, it is my hope that Bangladesh will move swiftly toward regaining its status as a thriving, emerging democracy and set an example for its neighbors and the rest of the world.

The region has been undergoing serious political and economic changes, with several nations undergoing significant political upheaval. Key among these is Bangladesh, where emergency rule was declared by President Iajuddin Ahmed following opposition protests during the run-up to the January 2007 elections. This military-backed caretaker government, currently headed by Fakhruddin Ahmed, is expected to continue to hold power through 2008, though some observers have estimated that elections will not actually take place until 2009 or later.

It is my sincere hope that the military-backed caretaker government currently in power in Bangladesh will promptly lift the state of emergency and move expeditiously toward holding free and fair elections. It would also be my expectation that the caretaker government will abide by internationally recognized standards of human rights and due process in its activities. I am personally concerned by reported events in Bangladesh, including the ban on political and union activity; the restrictions on free movement, free assembly, free association, free speech and a free press; and the denial of bail and other due process rights to more than 200,000 jailed individuals, according to some accounts.

In this key period of political change, one that will hopefully ensure a more free and fair democratic Bangladesh, the nation has been hit by an unthinkable natural disaster that has affected all ways of life. On November 15, the southern coast of Bangladesh was struck by Cyclone Sidr with raging winds of 155 miles-per-hour smashing tens of thousands of homes, damaging roads and buildings, and causing a 16 foot tidal surge that has destroyed thousands of hectares of crops.

This natural disaster is estimated to have affected over 4 million people thus far, with millions being evacuated from their homes due to loss or damage. The Bangladesh Disaster Ministry now estimates that some 750,000 homes were damaged or destroyed in the aftermath of Cyclone Sidr. As a Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Chair of the Congressional Children's Caucus, I am especially concerned by the internal displacement of millions of Bangladeshis, over 400,000 of whom are children below the age of five. The catastrophic death toll has already reached 3,500, though the Bangladesh Red Crescent has warned that the number of deaths may climb as high as 10,000 in what is being called the greatest destruction from a cyclone in Bangladesh in 16 years.

It appears we are only just beginning to see the effects of this great human catastrophe. While Cyclone Sidr is responsible for widespread destruction, the five provinces of Patuakhali, Barguna, Bagerhat, Barisal, and Pirojpur that sit on the southern coast of Bangladesh were the most drastically affected. The nation's capital, Dhaka, which is located over 130 miles away from the country's devastated coastline, still lost access to power and food for days following the storm. Hundreds of thousands of people in southern Bangladesh's remote areas have been cut off from relief operations leading to massive suffering

and starvation due to the current lack of access to drinking water and medicines. One relief worker in Bagerhat went so far as to say that the region looked like a "valley of death." Unfortunately, the worst may be yet to come. Health officials have begun to warn against the serious threat posed by cholera, dysentery, and other waterborne diseases as a result of the limited access to water supplies and sanitation facilities that millions of Bangladeshis will face.

As a member of the international community, the United States must offer its support and assistance to a nation that has been devastated by such a tremendous natural disaster. The United Nations World Food Program has appealed to the international community to provide aid to the peoples of Bangladesh, noting that food supplies have been severely disrupted by the cyclone leading to an increased and very real threat of famine. This resolution is significant because it reaffirms the commitment of the United States to provide relief aid to the victims of Cyclone Sidr as its effects continue to unfold. Furthermore, this resolution calls upon the United States to immediately make available any and all appropriate assistance that has been requested by the Bangladeshi authorities.

I believe that it is imperative that the United States government express its heartfelt sympathy and support to the people of Bangladesh in the wake of this terrific disaster, which is why I am a proud cosponsor of this legislation. I urge my colleagues to join me in strongly supporting this legislation, and to call for still more to be done.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MEEKS of New York. 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 New York (Mr. MEEKS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 842, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. MEEKS of New York. 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.

HONORING THE LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF LUCIANO PAVAROTTI

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 708) honoring the life and accomplishments of Luciano Pavarotti and recognizing the significant and positive impact of his astounding musical talent, his achievement in raising the profile of opera with audiences around the world, and his commitment to charitable causes.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 708

Whereas Luciano Pavarotti was born on October 12, 1935, in the outskirts of Modena, Italy;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti first began singing in a church choir at the age of 9;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti was trained as a teacher and taught second grade in Italy before deciding to pursue his music full time;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti began serious voice training at the age of 19 under Arrigo Pola, a respected teacher and professional tenor in Modena, Italy;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti made his operatic debut on April 29, 1961, as Rodolfo in *La Bohème* by Giacomo Puccini, at the opera house in Reggio Emilia;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti made his American debut with the Greater Miami Opera in February of 1965 as a last minute replacement in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti's February 17, 1972, performance in Donizetti's *La Fille du Régiment* at New York's Metropolitan Opera, included nine high C's during the signature aria and helped him break through to American audiences;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti made frequent television performances which attracted some of the largest audiences ever recorded for televised opera events;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti, with Plácido Domingo and José Carreras, made their debut as "The Three Tenors" in Rome during the 1990 World Cup;

Whereas "The Three Tenors" recording from their debut concert became the biggest selling classical record of all time;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti earned five Grammy awards and a Grammy Legend Award;

Whereas on December 12, 1998, Mr. Pavarotti became the first and, so far, only opera singer to perform on "Saturday Night Live";

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti organized and hosted annual "Pavarotti and Friends" charity concerts in his home town of Modena in Italy, to raise money for worthy United Nations' causes;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti sang at numerous benefit concerts to help victims of natural and manmade tragedies;

Whereas in 1998 Mr. Pavarotti was named the United Nations Messenger of Peace;

Whereas in 2001 Mr. Pavarotti received the Nansen Medal from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees for his efforts raising money on behalf of refugees worldwide;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti received the Kennedy Center Honors in 2001;

Whereas on February 10, 2006, Mr. Pavarotti sang "Nessun Dorma" as the final act of the 2006 Winter Olympics Opening Ceremony in Turin, Italy;

Whereas Mr. Pavarotti's immense talent, and passion for his art encouraged people around the world to embrace opera; and

Whereas Luciano Pavarotti died on September 6, 2007 in a hospital in Modena, Italy: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives honors the life and accomplishments of Luciano Pavarotti and recognizes the significant and positive impact of his astounding musical talent, his achievement in raising the profile of opera with audiences around the world, and his commitment to charitable causes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS) and the gen-

tleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MEEKS of New York. 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 New York?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, let me first thank my good friend and colleague from California, Representative LORETTA SANCHEZ, for introducing this timely resolution.

Mr. Speaker, there is literally no one who has done more to expand world audiences for opera than the late Luciano Pavarotti. He achieved this with a combination of inimitable talent, determination, and an untiring and affable manner. Just as important, he parlayed this fame into an international presence, which he used to push for a host of important causes. This resolution honors his life, his talent, his commitment to those causes.

Like many an Italian boy, Pavarotti dreamed of becoming a soccer star and was better at it than most of his later fans would ever know. But his father, himself an amateur singer, and his recording of the great Italian tenors soon put young Luciano on a path which would catapult him to fame.

From his operatic debut in 1961 to his U.S. debut a few years later opposite Joan Sutherland in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Pavarotti soon became known for the sheer beauty of his voice. But the world was wowed in 1972 when Pavarotti struck nine unwavering high C's at New York's Metropolitan Opera House, earning him a title the "King of High C's."

Roughly 20 years later, he recorded the biggest selling classical music album of all time, when he teamed up with Plácido Domingo and José Carreras as the Three Tenors. It must have caused the man who once dreamed of soccer stardom great joy to have debuted this project for the 1990 Soccer World Cup in Italy.

He shared the stage with rock stars, including U2's lead singer, Bono, Eric Clapton, and even pop stars like Celine Dion and the Spice Girls. Pavarotti also won humanitarian awards during the Bosnia war, as well worked alongside Diana, Princess of Wales, to raise money to ban land mines, was named a U.N. Messenger of Peace in 1998, and received the Nansen Medal from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in 2001. He never tired of bringing his voice to rally around causes that make us all proud. When he died this year, his wife, sister, four daughters, neph-

ews, and close relatives and friends were all at his side.

Mr. Speaker, Luciano Pavarotti was a man blessed with an unusual talent, a talent he used to promote not only opera, but a myriad of other causes that helped men and women all throughout the world. This resolution seeks to cast a small light on a soaring life, and I urge its passage.

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

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

I am pleased to rise in support of H. Res. 708, which honors the life and accomplishments of Luciano Pavarotti and recognizes the significant and positive impact of his amazing and astounding musical talent, his achievement in raising the profile of opera with audiences around the world and his commitment to charitable causes.

On September 6th of this year, a legend of the opera would take his final curtain call. When the great Luciano Pavarotti passed away in September, the world lost one of its most beautiful voices. Those with a love of all kinds of music, everyone from opera singers to instrumentalists and pop singers, grieved at the loss of such a great talent. One of those musicians, the rock singer Bono of the group U2, described Pavarotti as, and I quote, "a great volcano of a man who sang fire but spilled over with a love of life in all its complexity."

From the time that he made his first debut in 1961, Luciano Pavarotti was an inspiration, not just for the unmatched quality of God-given voice and talent, but for his generosity. Indeed, he used immense talent to raise funds for many worthy causes, including his concerts on behalf of refugees throughout the world.

In 1998, he was named United Nations Messenger of Peace. In 2001, the same year that he received the Kennedy Center Honors, he received a medal from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for his fundraising efforts on behalf of refugees throughout the world.

In memory of this giant man of music, beloved by all those who enjoy the great opera, I ask my colleagues to join in supporting H. Res. 708, introduced by our colleague from California, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ.

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

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ).

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Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. I thank my good friend from New York.

I am pleased that today the House of Representatives is considering House Resolution 708, honoring the life and accomplishments of Luciano Pavarotti. As the sponsor of this legislation, I would like to thank the Committee on Foreign Affairs, especially the chairman, Mr. LANTOS, for his assistance in

bringing this before the end of the year, the year 2007, the year in which Mr. Pavarotti died.

He was born on October 12, 1935, and he died on September 6, 2007, in Modena, Italy. I know, because I was in the Veneto that day when his death was announced by his family. And during his life, Mr. Pavarotti shared his incredible talent and passion for opera with the entire world. During his life, he actually began as a second grade teacher before he decided to turn to his pursuit of music full time. After devoting himself to serious voice training for over 7 years, Mr. Pavarotti made his operatic debut in the role of Rodolfo in Puccini's "La Boheme."

From that initial performance, Pavarotti continued to follow his dream of performing opera around the world. And after many years of hard work, of course, he became really one of opera's premier performers. But in addition to his incredible voice and his talent on stage; Mr. Pavarotti made frequent television performances, and as a result he really opened up the world of opera to a whole new audience. Mr. Pavarotti, with Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras, entered into one of the most famous collaborations in music, and The Three Tenors continued to bring opera music to more and more people around the world. As an established opera star, he decided to use his talent and his connections to benefit charities, and he began hosting the annual Pavarotti and Amici, or Pavarotti and Friends, concerts in Modena, Italy, to raise money for worthy United Nations causes.

Mr. Pavarotti's appeal to opportunities, he got an opportunity to see things that are rarely enjoyed by most of us. He earned five Grammy Awards and a Grammy Legend Award, and he became the first and so far the only opera singer to perform on "Saturday Night Live." Mr. Pavarotti also received numerous honors for his charitable work including being named the United Nations' Messenger of Peace and receiving the Nansen Medal from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in honor of his efforts to raise money on behalf of refugees around the world.

Mr. Pavarotti's career is an inspiration to aspiring young artists around the world, and it encourages them to continue to go after their dream. In addition, Mr. Pavarotti's commitment to charitable causes provides an important example of how artists can raise awareness in funding for people in need.

Mr. Speaker, since his death, the world has missed his talent and his passion. And although we will always have recordings of his beautiful music, we will continue to miss his presence and his love for life. And I know that in the last 10 years of his life he filled his life and was very fulfilled. But we should remember that Mr. Pavarotti once said: "A life in music is a life beautifully spent, and this is what I have devoted my life to."

Mr. Pavarotti's life was indeed a life beautifully spent, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting House Resolution 708 to honor his life and his achievements.

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

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 708.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTMAS AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 847) recognizing the importance of Christmas and the Christian faith, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 847

Whereas Christmas, a holiday of great significance to Americans and many other cultures and nationalities, is celebrated annually by Christians throughout the United States and the world;

Whereas there are approximately 225,000,000 Christians in the United States, making Christianity the religion of over three-fourths of the American population;

Whereas there are approximately 2,000,000,000 Christians throughout the world, making Christianity the largest religion in the world and the religion of about one-third of the world population;

Whereas Christians and Christianity have contributed greatly to the development of western civilization;

Whereas the United States, being founded as a constitutional republic in the traditions of western civilization, finds much in its history that points observers back to its Judeo-Christian roots;

Whereas on December 25 of each calendar year, American Christians observe Christmas, the holiday celebrating the birth of their savior, Jesus Christ;

Whereas for Christians, Christmas is celebrated as a recognition of God's redemption, mercy, and Grace; and

Whereas many Christians and non-Christians throughout the United States and the rest of the world, celebrate Christmas as a time to serve others: Now, therefore be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the Christian faith as one of the great religions of the world;

(2) expresses continued support for Christians in the United States and worldwide;

(3) acknowledges the international religious and historical importance of Christmas and the Christian faith;

(4) acknowledges and supports the role played by Christians and Christianity in the founding of the United States and in the formation of the western civilization;

(5) rejects bigotry and persecution directed against Christians, both in the United States and worldwide; and

(6) expresses its deepest respect to American Christians and Christians throughout the world.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that 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 New York?

There was no objection.

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

Let me first thank our colleague from Iowa, STEVE KING, for introducing this important and timely resolution.

Mr. Speaker, along with people of other faiths, our Christian friends and neighbors around the world mark this time of year as a special festive season. As Kwanzaa approaches and Hanukkah draws to a close, it is notably the Christmas season. We are in the midst of Advent, and this discussion today is bracketed by two holidays observed by many Catholics who make up the majority of Christianity: the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and Our Lady of Guadalupe. There are approximately 2 billion Christians, making Christianity the largest religion of the world and the faith of about one-third of the global population.

On December 25, Christians will celebrate Jesus the Christ, whom they have embraced as their savior. For believers, this holiday is a recognition of God's redemption, mercy, and grace. For Christians and non-Christians alike, Christmas is also a time to serve others. The celebration of Christmas requires devotion to faith, community, and family, truly universal values we all can share.

It is both fitting and important for the United States House of Representatives to mark this event. This legislation expresses the deep respect we feel for Christians in the United States and throughout the world. The House must reject bigotry and persecution directed against Christians, both in the United States and worldwide. We must affirm the values of religious freedom in this country and abroad. I strongly support this legislation, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased, as original cosponsor, to rise in support of this