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H. RES. 258

Honoring and supporting women in the Middle East and North Africa for their bravery and leadership and calling on the United States Government and the international community to recognize their vital role in democracy movements and promote the rights and empowerment of women and girls in the region.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 10, 2011

Mr. CARNAHAN (for himself, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. MOORE, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut, Mr. McDERMOTT, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. SHULER, Mr. BERMAN, Ms. BASS of California, Ms. NORTON, Mrs. MALONEY, Mr. MORAN, Mr. RUSH, Mr. McGOVERN, and Mr. GARAMENDI) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Honoring and supporting women in the Middle East and North Africa for their bravery and leadership and calling on the United States Government and the international community to recognize their vital role in democracy movements and promote the rights and empowerment of women and girls in the region.

Whereas in the course of peaceful protests in countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa, women have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with men to advance their rights;

Whereas in late December 2010 and January 2011, Tunisia underwent a political upheaval, dubbed the “Jasmine Revolution”, resulting in the fleeing of President of Tunisia Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from the country on January 14, 2011, and sparking reform movements across the region;

Whereas women in Tunisia have been at the vanguard of social and political change since the 1940s and one of the first voices of the “Jasmine Revolution” was the sister of Mohammad Bouazizi, the young man whose death led to many of the peaceful protests in Tunisia;

Whereas, on January 25, 2011, demonstrations began across Egypt with thousands of protesters peacefully calling for a new government, free and fair elections, meaningful constitutional and political reforms, greater economic opportunity, and an end to government corruption;

Whereas women have been at the forefront of every major political movement in modern Egypt and were integral in organizing the most recent democratic movement, utilizing social media and galvanizing support among men and women for peaceful protest;

Whereas, despite the threat of potential violence, abuse, and harassment, women were among the crowd that came out to protest and according to press accounts, have been credited with spreading the movement to a wider base and helping stave off violence and extremism;

Whereas hundreds of women took part in a rally in Cairo on March 8, 2011, the 100th Anniversary of International Women’s Day, to remind women in Egypt that they must have a voice in their nation’s future;

Whereas, on February 25, 2011, the United Nations Security Council and the international community condemned the violence and use of force against civilians in Libya;

Whereas according to press reports, in Libya, women have played an integral role courageously participating in demonstrations and have been working behind the scenes making a profound difference to promote reform and keep the momentum of the uprising alive, listening to worried fathers whose sons are fighting on the frontlines, keeping up with the day-to-day clashes and casualty numbers, and holding meetings about health and education issues;

Whereas in the face of brutal crackdown, women in Syria have also turned out passionately in protest, even sometimes without men, calling for freedom, equality, and political change;

Whereas according to press reports, women are among the leaders of demonstrations calling for reform in both Bahrain and Yemen;

Whereas women's groups in countries such as Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iran have attempted to address oppressive legal, rule of law, and other practices inhibiting their rights;

Whereas women around the world face daunting obstacles;

Whereas women are disproportionately impacted by extreme poverty, comprising 70 percent of the world's poor, they occupy less than an average of 19 percent of seats in parliaments worldwide, and they are vastly more vulnerable in times of war, natural disaster, and other crises;

Whereas broadly, barriers to women's advancement include access to health care, education, and economic opportuni-

ties, lack of legal rights and judicial process, and targets of trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence;

Whereas while these challenges are significant, women are paradoxically the most promising and untapped agents of change;

Whereas the world cannot achieve lasting peace, prosperity, and security if half of the population does not have a voice at all levels of decisionmaking, from grassroots civil society to national government and international institutions;

Whereas women's leadership in peace processes positively correlates with sustainability of peace agreements, as numerous case studies demonstrate, women's inclusion enhances the credibility and transparency of peace processes and ensures a broader range of security-related issues, such as the return of internally displaced persons;

Whereas in post-conflict settings women leaders are resources for reconstruction and stabilization;

Whereas in states transitioning to democracy, women are key counterweights to ideological extremism and partners in establishing good governance;

Whereas the majority of women leaders active in preventing and ending conflict or promoting democracy work within civil society, and as such, civil society institutions should be consulted as a key stakeholder as states transition from conflict to stability or authoritarianism to democracy;

Whereas women of diverse backgrounds have marched in streets of countries from Tunisia to Iran in demand of governmental reforms for greater freedom and respect for human rights; and

Whereas women across the Middle East and North Africa have shown the world the pivotal role of women in civil society as change agents and beacons of hope and justice, as they courageously aspire for freedom, democracy, and rule of law: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) honors the women in the Middle East and
3 North Africa who have worked to ensure that women
4 are guaranteed equality and basic human rights;

5 (2) recognizes that women’s empowerment, spe-
6 cifically their inclusion in all decisionmaking struc-
7 tures, is inextricably linked to the potential of na-
8 tions to generate economic growth, security for all
9 its citizens, and sustainable democracy;

10 (3) acknowledges that women in the Middle
11 East and North Africa are demanding to be included
12 in revolutionary movements that will fundamentally
13 affect their lives, families, and communities;

14 (4) reaffirms the commitment of the United
15 States to the universal rights of freedom of assem-
16 bly, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and
17 supports the calls for representative and responsive
18 democratic governments that respect these rights;

19 (5) condemns any efforts to provoke or insti-
20 gate violence against women, and calls upon all par-
21 ties to refrain from all violent and criminal acts;

1 (6) underscores the vital importance of women’s
2 rights and political participation as leaders in the
3 Middle East and North Africa consider constitu-
4 tional reforms and shape new governments; and

5 (7) encourages the President to—

6 (A) reaffirm his commitment to pursue
7 policies to protect fundamental human rights
8 and civil liberties, particularly those of women
9 and girls; and

10 (B) in coordination with the international
11 community, ensure that the rights and em-
12 powerment of women and girls are a critical
13 component of the Administration’s diplomatic,
14 development, and democracy promotion strate-
15 gies, especially as calls for political change
16 sweep the Middle East and North Africa region.

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