

choose doesn't just protect those who practice; it protects those who don't practice. Religion, like speech, is such an engrained belief in our country, since the time of the founding of the country, that it must be protected at all costs.

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

Mr. CROWLEY. 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. CROWLEY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 255, 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. FERGUSON. 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.

□ 1545

CONDEMNING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1227) condemning sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and calling on the international community to take immediate actions to respond to the violence, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1227

Whereas the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has been recognized as the worst crisis of violence against women in the world, according to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women;

Whereas the Democratic Republic of the Congo has experienced the world's deadliest crisis since World War II, with an estimated 5.4 million deaths since 1998;

Whereas hundreds of thousands of women and girls have experienced an exceptionally violent type of rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the full extent of incidence of sexual violence is unknown as most survivors experience repeated rapes, live in inaccessible areas, are afraid to report the attacks, or did not survive them;

Whereas sexual violence is used as a method of warfare by all parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a means to terrorize and destabilize entire communities;

Whereas in 2007, Malteser International estimated that 70 percent of all rapes in South Kivu were committed by nonstate armed groups, including foreign militia from Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, 16 percent by Democratic Republic of the Congo military forces, and 14 percent by civilians;

Whereas control over the Democratic Republic of the Congo's natural resources is central to the ongoing conflict;

Whereas in 2002, the United Nations Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Nat-

ural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo alleged nine United States business enterprises to be in violation of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises;

Whereas, on July 30, 2007, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women reported, "Women are brutally gang raped, often in front of their families and communities. In numerous cases, male relatives are forced at gun point to rape their own daughters, mothers or sisters. Frequently women are shot or stabbed in their genital organs, after they are raped. Women, who survived months of enslavement, [said] that their tormentors had forced them to eat excrements or the human flesh of murdered relatives";

Whereas rape with the use of knives, gun barrels, beer bottles, cassava roots, or sticks can result in a tear or fistula between a woman's vagina and bladder or rectum, or both, causing the development of traumatic gynecologic fistula;

Whereas some women and young girls reportedly have had their lips or tongues cut off by their attackers so that they won't report the crime to authorities;

Whereas the Panzi Hospital, a specialized institution in South Kivu, receives about 3,500 cases annually of women who suffer from traumatic fistula and other severe genital injuries resulting from these sexual atrocities;

Whereas at Heal Africa Hospital in Goma, doctors reported treating 4,800 rape victims and, in 2005, doctors performed 242 fistula-repair operations;

Whereas current activities to treat survivors meet only a portion of the need;

Whereas the scope of the sexual violence affects women and girls of all ages, from 10 months to 80 years old;

Whereas a culture of impunity continues in eastern Congo and rape has become a societal norm;

Whereas in July 2006, the Congolese Parliament passed the Law on the Suppression of Sexual Violence, which attempted to strengthen penalties and criminal procedures, but in reality, little action has been taken by the authorities to implement the law and perpetrators continue to enjoy impunity; and

Whereas the United States Government has codified its commitment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-456): Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) strongly condemns the use of all forms of sexual violence, including rape, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(2) condemns the actions of all armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including militias and rebel groups, such as the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), Mai-Mai Militia, and the Front for Patriotic Resistance of Ituri, that have created a culture of impunity for rape and sexual violence;

(3) calls on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to develop a strategy to address and end the large-scale sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by—

(A) protecting its civilians from violence and enforcing and respecting the rule of law in accordance with international norms and standards;

(B) holding all armed groups accountable for their actions by implementing judicial reforms to investigate, arrest, and try suspected criminals;

(C) prosecuting and punishing members of the Congolese Armed Forces who have committed crimes of sexual violence and other atrocities; and

(D) establishing a verification mechanism to ensure that officers who have engaged in or have been complicit in the commission of sexual violence, including rape, do not receive important posts in the Congolese Armed Forces, the national police, and other security services;

(4) urges an increased effort by the United States through the Department of State and other donor countries to provide greater assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo for police and military human rights education and training, and training for those in the judiciary in order to improve their ability to investigate, prosecute, and sentence rapists;

(5) strongly urges the United States Agency for International Development to increase its assistance to victims of rape and sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(6) urges the Secretary of State to appoint a special envoy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to sustain United States engagement in a peace process and stabilization programs, and to continue its leadership towards the implementation of the Nairobi communiqué;

(7) encourages the Secretary of State to continue to work with the heads of the other agencies implementing programs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to develop a plan for systematically assessing the United States Government's overall progress in achieving the policy objectives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006;

(8) encourages the international community to ensure greater coordination in its response to sexual violence and to provide further humanitarian and psychosocial assistance to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(9) reaffirms its support for democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and calls upon regional African leaders to support the preservation of a democratic political system in the country;

(10) encourages full protection of women and girls and the promotion of their rights by emphasizing the responsibilities of all countries to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide crimes, including those related to sexual and other forms of violence against women and girls;

(11) calls on the Secretary General of the United Nations and the permanent members of the Security Council to immediately take steps to—

(A) ensure that the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is fully funded and strategically deployed in areas where sexual violence is most prevalent;

(B) include an adequate number of female troops and police in MONUC to properly manage incidents of rape and sexual violence;

(C) provide more in-depth and continuing gender-sensitive training to its peacekeepers; and

(D) hold all military and civilian personnel associated with MONUC who have committed acts of rape or sexual exploitation accountable for their crimes and ensure that they are permanently barred from serving in any future peacekeeping operation;

(12) encourages a transparent process for the government of the Democratic Republic

of the Congo's review of mining contracts; and

(13) strongly encourages United States companies investing and operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to exert oversight concerning where their products are coming from and who is benefitting from the trade of such products.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CROWLEY. 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. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the resolution and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend and colleague, Congresswoman CAROLYN MALONEY, as well as Congressman BRAD MILLER, for urging the condemnation of the most vicious crime imaginable, the systematic rape and mutilation committed against women, girls and boys taking place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, known as the DRC.

The conflict in the DRC has been called the deadliest since World War II. Within the last 10 years, more than 5 million people have died, and the numbers keep rising. In fact, more people have died because of war in the DRC than in Iraq, Afghanistan and Darfur combined. As in other wars, women in the DRC are overwhelmingly the target of military aggression. Rape and mutilation are the perpetrators' preferred weapon of choice. Unlike other wars, the scale and systematic nature of rape in the DRC is unparalleled. In some villages, as many as 90 percent of the women and girls have been raped.

This important resolution encourages the Secretary of State to work with the DRC Government to develop a strategy to address and end the large-scale sexual violence in the DRC. Our State Department and our American embassy in the DRC should have this extremely important mission.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues in the House to support this resolution.

With that, I will 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 support of House Resolution 1227, which condemns pervasive sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and calls upon responsible nations to take immediate steps to respond.

While many have focused well-deserved attention on the humanitarian and human rights crisis in Darfur, Sudan, scant attention has been given to a deadly, festering conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The war in Congo has been called Africa's first "world war," having drawn in seven neighboring countries and spawning some of the worst human rights atrocities known to man. An estimated 4 million people were killed by war, disease and starvation. Armed groups engaged in systematic rape, looting and acts of cannibalism often forcing their victims to victimize others. Children were forcibly recruited to serve as soldiers, and civilians were used as human shields.

Though a 2002 peace agreement and elections in June 2006 paved the way for a new beginning in Congo, these atrocities have continued in the eastern part of the country where a proxy war for control over Congo's vast natural resources continues to rage.

The level of sexual violence in eastern Congo is particularly alarming. It has become so pervasive, Mr. Speaker, and so severe, that the Panzi Hospital in South Kivu has had to perform an estimated 3,500 surgeries annually to repair a particularly stigmatizing injury suffered by those who have been brutally raped. And that is just one hospital. Countless others suffer the physical injury and the social consequences of rape in silence living as outcasts in their own communities.

All parties to the conflict in eastern Congo have taken part in such human rights atrocities, including the armed forces of the Congo and an increasingly vast array of armed militias. Even the United Nations peacekeepers, who have been deployed to help protect civilians in Congo, have engaged in acts of sexual exploitation and abuse themselves.

This is an unspeakable and unforgivable crime that cannot be swept under the carpet.

I want to thank my colleague, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, for seeking to draw attention to the scourge of sexual violence in the eastern Congo and for seeking to inspire responsible nations to provide critically needed assistance to those in need.

I would like to thank the sponsor, Mrs. MALONEY, as well as our chairman, HOWARD BERMAN, for agreeing to modifications which would allay fears raised regarding the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and what was referred to as "women's reproductive health."

With these critical changes accepted, I urge support to House Resolution 1227, Mr. Speaker.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I would now yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from New York, Mrs. CAROLYN MALONEY, the sponsor of the resolution.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. I thank my colleague from New York for his tremendous leadership and my

friend from the other side of the aisle for her support for this critical bill and so many others that are important to our country. I would like to thank Chairman BERMAN and Representative BRAD MILLER for their leadership along with 39 of our colleagues who have cosponsored this important Resolution 1227. I thank my colleagues for highlighting the sexual violence crisis that is plaguing the women and girls of the Democratic Republic of the Congo or the DRC.

The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the world's richest countries in natural resources, but it has been recognized as the worst place on Earth to be a girl or a woman. Women and girls from the age of 8 to 80 are being violently raped systematically on a scale unimaginable in the hundreds of thousands. As a strategy of war, they are often raped with guns and knives which destroy their sexual organs and forces them into a life of suffering from fistula and other deformities.

As my friend from the great State of Florida mentioned, there are hospitals that are dedicated only to trying to restore their destroyed bodies from not only rape but the use of a knife or a gun. Countless women are being sold in sexual slavery for months on end. According to UNICEF, the DRC is currently witnessing the world's deadliest humanitarian crisis since World War II.

In this war, the battlefield is literally the bodies of women and girls. Congress must continue its commitment to the people of the DRC as it has demonstrated in the past.

I thank my colleagues for their support. The women in DRC and the girls deserve justice.

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

Mr. CROWLEY. We have no further speakers on our side, 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. CROWLEY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1227, 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.

REMEMBERING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UKRAINIAN FAMINE-GENOCIDE OF 1932-1933

Mr. SCOTT of GEORGIA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1314) remembering the 75th anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine-Genocide of 1932-1933 and extending the deepest sympathies of the House of Representatives to the victims, survivors, and families of this tragedy, and for other purposes, as amended.