

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 311

Expressing the sense of Congress that the international community should recognize the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab countries and that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East should establish a program for resettling Palestinian refugees.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 28, 2003

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself, Mr. PALLONE, and Mr. NADLER) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress that the international community should recognize the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab countries and that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East should establish a program for resettling Palestinian refugees.

Whereas disagreement about the status and future of refugees in the Middle East remains one of the major political and diplomatic obstacles to a lasting peace settlement to the Middle East conflict;

Whereas although 2 separate and distinct refugee populations exist in the Middle East, Arabs and Jews, the plight of

Jewish refugees from Arab lands has received little attention or international recognition;

Whereas Jews have lived in areas that are now Arab countries for more than 2,500 years;

Whereas during the time period surrounding the creation of the State of Israel, nearly 900,000 of these Jews fled Arab countries because they faced a campaign of ethnic cleansing and were forced to leave behind land, private homes, personal affects, businesses, community assets, and thousands of years of their Jewish heritage and history;

Whereas Israel absorbed approximately 650,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries during its first 10 years of statehood, granting them full Israeli citizenship and integrating them into Israeli society and culture, yet this integration does not diminish the plight of the refugees who left behind their heritage and their respective homelands;

Whereas although the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is the international body charged with protecting refugees and solving refugee problems throughout the world, a special agency, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), was established in 1950 for the exclusive benefit of the Palestinian refugees;

Whereas UNRWA makes no effort to permanently resettle Palestinian refugees, even those residing under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, which has perpetuated the Palestinian refugee problem and the suffering of the Palestinian refugees;

Whereas there is evidence that UNRWA facilities have been used for terrorist recruitment and training, as well as

bases for terrorist operations, with little attempt by UNRWA to prevent attacks or alert relevant law enforcement authorities about terrorist activities;

Whereas Congress has repeatedly raised concerns about connections between UNRWA facilities and violence and terrorist activities;

Whereas on July 16, 2003 the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1950, the Millennium Challenge Account, Peace Corps Expansion, and Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 2003, containing section 731(9), which “strongly urges UNRWA to meet the requirements, in letter and spirit, of section 301(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, including by comprehensively ensuring that no UNRWA assistance is rendered to anyone who has been involved with terrorism at any time and that all UNRWA beneficiaries be informed at the earliest possible time, and at regular intervals thereafter, that anyone involved with terrorism thereafter will be ineligible for UNRWA benefits”; and

Whereas that Act also contains section 731(11), which “notes the General Accounting Office (GAO) audit required by section 580 of the FY 2003 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act (Public Law 108–7), and strongly encourages the GAO to conduct, as part of this audit, an investigation and inspection of all recent United States assistance to UNRWA to ensure that taxpayer funds are being spent effectively and are not directly or indirectly supporting terrorism, anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish teachings, or the glorification or incitement of violence”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of Congress that—

3 (1) the international community should formally
4 recognize the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab
5 countries and the circumstances surrounding their
6 departure as a part of any settlement of the Middle
7 East conflict or as part of any agreement regarding
8 the issue of refugees;

9 (2) the United Nations Relief and Works Agen-
10 cy for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
11 (UNRWA) should establish a program for resettling
12 all of the Palestinian refugees under the authority of
13 UNRWA in the host countries or territories in which
14 they are living, other Arab countries, or third party
15 countries willing to assist, and a timetable for imple-
16 menting the program within 6 months of the date of
17 the adoption of this resolution;

18 (3) UNRWA should immediately replace text-
19 books and educational materials used in the
20 UNRWA education system that promote anti-Semi-
21 tism, deny the existence and the right to exist of the
22 state of Israel, and exacerbate stereotypes and ten-
23 sions between Palestinians and Israelis, and take
24 steps to ensure that UNRWA facilities are not being

1 used to store weapons or to promote violence or ter-
2 rorism; and

3 (4) Arab countries should contribute to a last-
4 ing solution to the refugee problem by accepting a
5 meaningful number of refugees and taking a larger
6 role in financing UNRWA and the cost of resettle-
7 ment.

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