

112TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 690

Recognizing the Proclamation of the Refugee Congress.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 19, 2012

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California (for herself, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. PETERS, and Mr. DIAZ-BALART) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the Proclamation of the Refugee Congress.

Whereas on August 3, 2011, refugees who had come to the United States between 1947 and 2011 gathered in a Refugee Congress to serve as the voice for the more than 3,000,000 refugees who have found protection in this country during the last 60 years;

Whereas the Refugee Congress Delegates approved that day a Proclamation expressing their gratitude for having received refuge and sanctuary in the United States and for the spirit of generosity in which they had been received by the people of the United States;

Whereas the Proclamation recognizes that there are still more than 43,000,000 people forcibly displaced worldwide, of whom 15,000,000 are refugees in need of protection, assistance, and a durable solution;

Whereas the Proclamation recognizes that each year less than 1 percent of the world's refugees are resettled globally;

Whereas the Proclamation recognizes that the majority of refugees are women, children, and elderly individuals, and that they continue to need protection, assistance, and hope for a life beyond a refugee camp;

Whereas the Proclamation recognizes that 2011 marked the 60th Anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th Anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has called on nations to renew their commitments to these historic documents;

Whereas the Proclamation supports the pledges proposed by UNHCR to the Government of the United States to use its moral authority to address issues of resettlement, protection, assistance, and durable solutions for refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons;

Whereas the Proclamation declares that the voices of all refugees should be heard and that the real faces and stories behind the statistics about forcibly displaced people must not be forgotten;

Whereas the Proclamation calls upon all nations, including the United States, and UNHCR, to make every effort to find solutions for these displaced communities, to promote conditions for safe voluntary return and reintegration, to encourage local integration where feasible, and to support resettlement;

Whereas the Proclamation recommends that each refugee receive relevant and comprehensive orientation, starting during selection for resettlement and extending through-

out the early stages of integration, in order to empower refugees and their families to achieve financial self-sufficiency and personal fulfillment;

Whereas the Proclamation recommends the promotion of refugees' increased awareness of, and access to, resources and opportunities through ongoing orientation and individualized guidance, strengthening collaboration among refugees to advocate for their communities, and greater community understanding of refugees and their potential, so that refugees achieve successful integration that enables them to be contributors to their new country;

Whereas the Proclamation encourages UNHCR and governments to recognize that refugees and asylees represent an untapped resource when responding to refugee situations around the world, and it calls upon them to incorporate refugees and asylees as actors and decisionmakers in providing protection and delivering humanitarian support, such as—

(1) encouraging the election of refugees by their peers to participate in the distribution of aid;

(2) bringing refugee educators from the diasporas as volunteer teachers of other refugees;

(3) including refugees in the evaluation of the effectiveness of all aspects of refugee protection through surveys and interviews, and as researchers and monitors; and

(4) educating and training refugees to be ambassadors who communicate about, and promote greater public awareness of, refugee situations;

Whereas the Proclamation recommends that an independent domestic advisory and advocacy council be established to

represent the unique refugee perspectives and experiences;

Whereas the Proclamation requests that UNHCR finalize the proceedings from the Refugee Congress, and share the findings and recommendations at the UNHCR Ministerial meeting, with the Administration and the Congress of the United States and other refugee program stakeholders;

Whereas the Proclamation calls upon UNHCR to include the voices of refugees as an integral and essential element in all discussions affecting refugees and in carrying out its mandate to protect and seek solutions for refugees; and

Whereas the Proclamation pledges to continue to do its utmost to remember, to represent, and to help fellow refugees, stateless persons, and other forcibly displaced individuals around the world: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—
- 2 (1) supports the ideals and values of the Ref-
- 3 ugee Congress and the Proclamation adopted by the
- 4 Refugee Congress Delegates; and
- 5 (2) affirms its support for the objectives and
- 6 principles of the 1951 Convention Relating to the
- 7 Status of Refugees and the 1961 Convention on the
- 8 Reduction of Statelessness.

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