

LOCATING AND SECURING RETURN OF ISRAELI SOLDIERS MISSING IN ACTION

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1175) to locate and secure the return of Zachary Baumel, an American citizen, and other Israeli soldiers missing in action, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1175

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS.

The Congress finds that—

(1) Zachary Baumel, a United States citizen serving in the Israeli military forces, has been missing in action since June 1982 when he was captured by forces affiliated with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) following a tank battle with Syrian forces at Sultan Ya'akub in Lebanon;

(2) Yehuda Katz and Zvi Feldman, Israeli citizens serving in the Israeli military forces, have been missing in action since June 1982 when they were also captured by these same forces in a tank battle with Syrian forces at Sultan Ya'akub in Lebanon;

(3) these three soldiers were last known to be in the hands of a Palestinian faction splintered from the PLO and operating in Syrian-controlled territory, thus making this a matter within the responsibility of the Government of Syria;

(4) diplomatic efforts to secure the release of these individuals have been unsuccessful, although PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat delivered one-half of Zachary Baumel's dog tag to Israeli Government authorities; and

(5) in the Gaza-Jericho agreement between the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel of May 4, 1994, Palestinian officials agreed to cooperate with Israel in locating and working for the return of Israeli soldiers missing in action.

SEC. 2. ACTIONS WITH RESPECT TO MISSING SOLDIERS.

(a) CONTINUING COMMUNICATION WITH CERTAIN GOVERNMENTS.—The Secretary of State shall continue to raise the matter of Zachary Baumel, Yehuda Katz, and Zvi Feldman on an urgent basis with appropriate government officials of Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, and with other governments in the region and elsewhere that, in the determination of the Secretary, may be helpful in locating and securing the return of these soldiers.

(b) PROVISION OF ECONOMIC AND OTHER ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN GOVERNMENTS.—In deciding whether or not to provide United States economic and other forms of assistance to Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, and other governments in the region, and in deciding United States policy toward these governments and authorities, the President should take into consideration the willingness of these governments and authorities to assist in locating and securing the return of the soldiers described in subsection (a).

SEC. 3. REPORTS BY SECRETARY OF STATE.

(a) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall prepare and submit to the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a written report that describes the efforts of the Secretary pursuant to section 2(a) and United States policies affected pursuant to section 2(b).

(b) SUBSEQUENT REPORTS.—Not later than 15 days after receiving from any source any

additional information relating to the individuals described in section 2(a), the Secretary of State shall prepare and submit to the committees described in subsection (a) a written report that contains such additional information.

(c) FORM OF REPORTS.—A report submitted under subsection (a) or (b) shall be made available to the public and may include a classified annex.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

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

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, this measure before us today, H.R. 1175, is on behalf of three Israeli MIAs, one of whom, Zachary Baumel, is a dual American-Israeli national.

I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) for sponsoring this measure. I have worked closely, as has the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), with the Baumel, the Feldman and the Katz families since 1983 trying to locate and to secure the return of sons from the battle of Sultan Yakub in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley in 1982 while they were engaged against Syrian forces.

It has been a long 17 years since those Israeli soldiers faced Syrian forces in Lebanon's Bekaa valley on June 11, 1982. These soldiers were declared missing on that day, and all efforts since then, which have spanned the globe, have not brought them back to their families.

Mr. and Mrs. Baumel deserve answers, as do the Feldman and Katz families. I want to acknowledge Mr. and Mrs. Baumel, who are with us today to witness House consideration of this measure on behalf of their son and his military colleagues. They have been tireless in their quest to obtain their son's release or information with regard to their son.

Accordingly, H.R. 1175 emphasizes the importance which Congress places on helping these families locate their sons. We hope the State Department appreciates the priority that we have given to this critical humanitarian issue.

It reflects language that has been negotiated with the State Department which requires the Department of State to raise the missing in action of Zachary Baumel, Yehuda Katz, and Zvi Feldman with appropriate government

officials of Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority.

This measure also requires our Nation to raise the issue with other governments which may be helpful in locating and securing the return of these soldiers.

H.R. 1175 also requires a written report and follow-up action from the Department of State to the Congress.

The legislation further notes that our Nation should take into consideration the willingness of regional governments to assist in locating and securing the return of these soldiers when reviewing U.S. financial assistance programs.

Regrettably, despite the fact that the Syrian government is in a position to assist with this investigation, appeals made to President Hafiz al-Assad has gone unanswered. Moreover, inquiries to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat have met with a dead end.

Nonetheless, Congress continues to be extremely concerned about the lack of resolution of these cases and wants to make certain that the administration utilizes all of our available avenues in order to return these men to their families. This is evidenced by the fact that H.R. 1175 has now been co-sponsored by almost 100 Members of this body.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues to strongly support H.R. 1175, as amended.

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

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. First I want to pay tribute to the distinguished chairman of the Committee on International Relations for his outstanding leadership on this very important issue. I also want to thank over 100 of my colleagues across the political spectrum who have chosen to co-sponsor my legislation.

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Mr. Speaker, I want to associate myself fully with the remarks of the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), and I would like to add a few thoughts.

In 1991, our ambassador to Israel, the distinguished ambassador, William Brown, wrote a letter to the Israeli Coordinator for Lebanese Affairs, and I would like to quote from that letter: "Without the statesmanship that Israel demonstrated, I do not believe that we would be celebrating so soon the release of all American hostages."

This is the time, Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues will recall, that there were numbers of American hostages held by various Palestinian and Arab terrorist groups and governments, and the Israeli government played a pivotal role in the release of these hostages, including Terry Anderson. It is only appropriate that we now do the same thing for Israel that they did for us.

This bill calls on our State Department to do everything in its power in contacting all the relevant governments and other groups in the region

to obtain the release of these three young men who have been imprisoned for 17 long years. The time is long overdue to bring their nightmare and the anguish of their families to an end.

We Americans know all too well, Mr. Speaker, the bitter legacy of missing soldiers and prisoners of war. That legacy can haunt a Nation, and it interferes with the effort of building new and better relations with the countries that are involved. At a time when Israel has a new government, at a time when there is new consideration being given to Syrian-Israeli negotiations and the achievement, at long last, of peace between those two nations, I believe it is incumbent on Mr. Asaad, President of Syria, and all other leaders in the region to deal with the issue of these three young men who have been languishing in prisons for 17 years.

In 1993, Mr. Speaker, Yasser Arafat conveyed to the late Prime Minister Rabin half of the dog tag of one of these young men. We have had constant indications over the years that these three young men are alive and in prison. The time has come to put an end to their incarceration and suffering and to allow their families to be reunited with them.

I want to pay particular tribute, Mr. Speaker, to the parents of Zachary Baumel, Miriam and Yona Baumel, who are sitting in the gallery today. As a parent myself, I do not think I can fully appreciate the 17-year ordeal they have endured. They have worked tirelessly on behalf of their son and the other two soldiers. They have visited communities across this Nation. They have met with countless Members of this House and of the Senate. I hope and pray that at long last their heroic efforts on behalf of these three young men will come to a fruitful conclusion.

I also want to applaud the efforts of the International Coalition for Missing Israeli Soldiers for spearheading the grassroots effort to bring this bill to passage.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The Chair reminds all Members to refrain from references to visitors in the gallery.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1175, a bill introduced by my distinguished colleague from California, Representative TOM LANTOS. I am proud to be one of 91 cosponsors of this important bipartisan initiative, which will help to locate and secure the return of Zachary Baumel, an American citizen, and other Israeli soldiers missing in action.

The United States has a unique responsibility to ensure the security of Israel—a steadfast ally and strategic partner in democracy. The United States also has an unquestionable responsibility to secure the well-being of its citizens when possible, no matter where they may be located.

Zachary Baumel is an American citizen. He has been missing since 1982, when he was

captured following a tank battle with Syrian forces at Sultan Ya' akub in Lebanon. At the time, Mr. Baumel was serving in the Israeli military. It is important to note that Mr. Baumel's service in Israel at no time altered his status as an American citizen.

I feel strongly that the United States should make every effort to secure information as to the whereabouts of Zachary Baumel as well as insist upon his release. I also would hope that the United States would support efforts made by Israel to secure the release of Zvi Feldman and Yehuda Katz, two Israeli citizens who served in the Israeli military and were captured along with Zachary Baumel at Sultan Ya' akub in Lebanon.

Yasser Arafat of the PLO provided evidence to Israeli government officials that Zachary Baumel was alive and that Mr. Arafat had information as to his whereabouts. In the Gaza-Jericho agreement reached between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government, Palestinian officials agreed to cooperate with Israel in locating and working for the return of Israeli soldiers missing in action. Five years have passed since the Gaza-Jericho agreement and Zachary Baumel, Yehuda Katz, and Zvi Feldman are still missing.

I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill. It is imperative that the U.S. Department of State raise the issue of Zachary Baumel, Zvi Feldman, and Yehuda Katz on an urgent basis with the appropriate government officials which may be helpful in locating and securing the return of these soldiers. The United States government must remain vigilant in its efforts to locate these brave soldiers, who have been missing for more than 17 years.

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1175, introduced by Congressman Lantos.

Mr. Chairman, for seventeen years, the fate of three missing Israeli soldiers has remained a mystery that has haunted their families and their nations.

On June 11, 1982, Zachary Baumel, a dual U.S.-Israeli citizen, Yehuda Katz, and Zvi Feldman were captured in northeastern Lebanon, in a battle with Syrian and Palestinian forces. The PLO had custody of the three soldiers for the first year and a half of their captivity. When a pro-Syrian faction split with the PLO, they took the three Israeli soldiers with them and their whereabouts are unknown.

The Syrian government currently claims they have no knowledge concerning the fate of the soldiers. However, western journalists and Syrian radio reported that the three soldiers were paraded through Damascus several hours after they were captured. Three weeks later, on July 4, 1982, the Syrian secret police delivered four bodies for burial to the Jewish cemetery in Damascus claiming they were the bodies of the Israeli soldiers. The Syrians also provided name tags, which Israeli intelligence sources reported were supplied by the PLO's Fatah faction. Fifteen months later, the Red Cross exhumed the four graves, finding only one Israeli body.

The most recent evidence which indicates that Zachary Baumel may still be alive came from PLO leader Yasser Arafat. In 1993, Arafat delivered half of Zachary Baumel's dog tags to Israeli officials. Chairman Arafat promised that more information was forthcoming, but it was never received. As recently as 1997, information has been obtained that

Baumel, along with two other men, may still be in custody in Lebanon.

With the resumption of the Middle East peace process, the State Department should urge the Syrian and Lebanese governments, along with Chairman Arafat, to secure information that will resolve the fate of the missing soldiers. The State Department should communicate to these governments that their willingness to assist efforts in the search for the missing soldiers will be considered among other factors in the provision of future economic and foreign assistance.

The plight of the missing soldiers was brought to my attention by Miriam and Yona Baumel, who have asked me to help find more information concerning their son and the other missing soldiers and to secure their return. They believe, as I do, that the soldiers may still be alive. One cannot imagine the pain of uncertainty and fear they have felt for the past 17 years waiting to hear about the fate of their son.

I urge my colleagues to support House Resolution 1175. The three missing Israeli soldiers are the longest held hostages in the Middle East, and it is time that they are released to return to their families.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1175, a bill authorizing an investigation into the disappearance of Zachary Baumel.

Zachary Baumel, an American citizen who was serving in the Israel Defense Forces, was captured alive along with two of his colleagues in June 1982 following a tank battle against Syrian and terrorist forces during the course of Operation Peace for Galilee. It is believed that they were captured by forces affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization and subsequently transferred to a splinter group of the PLO. Since June of 1982, the world has heard nothing from Zachary Baumel.

Mr. Speaker, this is a cruel fate indeed. Zachary Baumel's parents have had to live with their son's missing in action status, knowing full well that he might be alive and well in some prison cell in Lebanon or Syria. They cannot mourn because they can't be sure that he is dead, only that he is missing.

It is for this reason, to end the suffering of the Baumel family and to restore their son to their care, that this bill has been introduced. The bill would require that the State Department investigate the circumstances surrounding the capture of Zachary Baumel and his colleagues and initiate discussions at the highest levels with the governments of Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority with the intention of securing the return of these prisoners of war if possible. This is a worthy cause and I urge my colleagues to support this important measure.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no requests for time, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I have no more requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GILMAN. 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. GILMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1175, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

COMMUNITY RENEWAL THROUGH COMMUNITY- AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 207) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives with regard to community renewal through community- and faith-based organizations.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 207

Whereas, while the steady economic growth and low inflation in the United States has yielded unprecedented prosperity, many American citizens have not benefited from this prosperity and continue to be socioeconomically disadvantaged;

Whereas millions of our fellow citizens who live in the inner cities and rural communities continue to be plagued by social breakdown, economic disadvantage, and educational failure that fosters hopelessness and despair;

Whereas our most intractable pathologies—crime, drug addiction, teen pregnancy, homelessness, and youth violence—are each being addressed by small, and sometimes unrecognized, community- or faith-based organizations, whose expertise should not be ignored;

Whereas these nonprofit organizations have local experts who are moving individuals from dependency to self-sufficiency and restoring the lives of men, women, and families across the country;

Whereas many community- and faith-based organizations are offering the American public a new vision of compassion, designed to encourage volunteerism, strengthen the community, and care for the poor and vulnerable;

Whereas private sector investment in capital development—social and economic—in the most poverty stricken pockets across the country is key to long-term renewal of urban centers and distressed rural communities;

Whereas economic growth attracts new businesses, provides stability to neighborhoods, as well as provides jobs that yield income to support families and nurture self-respect;

Whereas over 100 bipartisan Members of Congress have cosponsored H.R. 815, the American Community Renewal Act, which targets the 100 poorest communities in the Nation for pro-growth tax benefits, regulatory relief, brownfields cleanup, and homeownership opportunities that combine to create jobs, hope, and a sense of community;

Whereas the President and the Vice President, along with congressional organizations such as the Renewal Alliance, have recognized the importance of community renewal and have recently promoted strategies designed to rebuild communities to empower faith-based organizations on the front lines of renewal in our country; and

Whereas a concerted effort to empower community institutions, encourage community renewal, and implement educational reform will help those who reside in inner cities and distressed rural communities to gain their share of America's prosperity: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) extends gratitude to the private nonprofit organizations and volunteers whose commitment to meet human needs in areas of poverty is key to long-term renewal of urban centers and distressed rural communities;

(2) seeks to empower the strengths of America's communities, local leaders, and mediating institutions such as its families, schools, spiritual leaders, businesses and nonprofit organizations;

(3) should work to empower community- and faith-based organizations to promote effective solutions to the social, financial, and emotional needs of urban centers and rural communities, and the long-term solutions to the problems faced by our culture; and

(4) should work with the Senate and the President to support a compassionate grassroots approach to addressing the family, economic, and cultural breakdown that plagues many of our Nation's urban and rural communities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER).

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 207 which recognizes a significant role that neighborhood community- and faith-based organizations are playing in the renewal and empowerment of struggling families and communities around this country. Today we want to commend and extend our gratitude to the private nonprofit organizations and volunteers whose commitment to meeting human needs compassionately and effectively in areas of poverty is key to the long-term renewal of our urban centers and distressed world communities.

It is the strength of mediating institutions such as families, churches, schools, nonprofit organizations, local leaders and businesses which empower individuals and communities. These are the unsung heroes in my district and throughout the country that are making the difference in the lives of people.

As a renewal alliance, our desire is to eliminate barriers which may hinder the effective community building work of these groups. We can assist legislatively by helping lessen the tax on regulatory burdens on our most distressed communities as H.R. 815, the American Community Renewal Act, does in a bipartisan manner with a hundred cosponsors, including 19 Democrats.

We can also seek to empower charities and faith-based organizations around this country by providing a level playing field so that they can also compete for government funds when they are providing services which the government is contracting out. Just last week, the House of Representatives extended this principle of religious nondiscrimination in charitable choice to juvenile justice programs by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 346 to 83.

This principle has been in law since 1996 when we passed it in welfare re-

form and more recently in 1998, when we included it in the Community Services Block Grant Reauthorization. It may not be as glamorous or as newsworthy as our debates on guns and/or the Ten Commandments, but the fact is we have been moving ahead systematically over a number of years of expanding charitable choice.

Another way that we can help these community builders is by encouraging charitable donations to these effective charities. I have my own legislation which encourages giving to charities in general, the Giving Incentive and Volunteer Encouragement Act which increases the charitable deduction 120 percent of individuals' contribution, allows non-itemizers to once again receive a deduction for charitable contributions, eliminates the cap on how much people can give and deduct, and extends the charitable contribution deadline to April 15.

This House can also encourage State charity tax credits, as we did in the Community Services Block Grant where we gave flexibility—the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH) in H.R. 1607, the Charity Empowerment Act, which I cosponsored, extends this discretion past what we did to other Federal block grants and expands the principle of charitable choice in a manner and addition consistent with what Vice President Gore.

Not only has the leading Republican contender, Governor Bush, but now Vice President Gore, has started promoting charitable choice. States as varied as Texas, Maryland, Indiana are partnering with faith-based organizations in the effort to assist those groups most able to walk alongside those individuals in greatest need. Local communities and taxpayers are impressed with the results. Government can be a partner rather than a hindrance in a barrier to renewed communities.

I urge the support for this resolution to commend and thank all those unsung heroes throughout this country who are working to restore hope to all segments of American society.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) will control 20 minutes pursuant to the rule.

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I support the notion that faith-based organizations should be able to receive Federal funds where constitutionally appropriate to provide services for individuals in need. We all recognize the contributions that these organizations have made. Some of them, in fact, do a better job than other nonprofits that are not religiously affiliated.

But while I support the underlying premise of H. Res. 207, and recognizing the contributions that faith-based organizations have made, I take issue