

professionalism that has surpassed all expectations. Every day he manages to discuss fresh and bold topics. He never tires.

With "half his brain tied behind his back," Mr. Limbaugh is proving to the world that when you have a dream and are dedicated to achieving that dream, all things are possible. Rush has shown us all that when you live in America, you are able to achieve anything you set your heart to accomplish. Rush has recently encountered new challenges with the loss of his hearing. But because of his determination and spirit of adventure, he has chosen to remain seated in the throne behind that golden EIB Network microphone. In doing so he personifies the American spirit he has encouraged us all to embrace.

I commend Rush for his encouragement to me and all Americans to never settle for second best, but to strive for the higher mark. I ask my colleagues to join me today in paying a special thanks to Rush Limbaugh as a great American.

SUPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for one-half of the time until midnight.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, when the Islamic fundamentalist group, the Taliban, seized control of Afghanistan in 1996, it launched the Nation into a pit of oppressiveness and inequality. In the blink of an eye, the millions of women and girls who live in this desert nation in Central Asia were relegated to second class citizenship. The basic human rights that we in the free world take for granted were suddenly stripped away from these people.

Prior to the civil war there that propelled the Taliban to power, women in Afghanistan and especially the capital of Kabul were highly educated and employed. Women in Kabul represented 70 percent of school teachers, 50 percent of the civilian government workers and they also were members of parliament, and 40 percent of them were represented as doctors and physicians. And at Kabul University, females comprised half of the student body and 60 percent of the faculty.

In fact, the Afghan Constitution, which was ratified in 1964, had an equal rights provision for women contained within it. But today in Afghanistan, girls are no longer allowed to attend school. They are punished. Women are no longer allowed to work, forcing many to resort to begging or even prostitution to survive.

Females are not permitted to leave their home unless accompanied by a male relative. And when they do leave,

they are forced to be covered in a shroud which is known as a burqa.

Mr. Speaker, I have with me this evening a sample of what the women in Afghanistan have to wear, this burqa that covers their body. If we look closely, we will see that there is a section here about 3 inches wide that is kind of a filtered material that allows these women to see through this shroud. She must wear this every time she leaves the home and goes out in public. And if it is 100 degrees or 110 outside, she must wear this and have her body fully covered. If she does not, then she is faced with perhaps a public beating and even in some cases with death.

□ 2230

This garment is hot, as you can tell. It is restrictive, and it is difficult to see. In fact, some of the women who have to wear this burqa cannot see, or do not have any peripheral vision; and countless women and girls have been known to have had traffic accidents in their cities because they simply cannot see where they are going. In fact, the Taliban regime is so wary of women that it has ordered that publicly-visible windows where these women live be painted black so that no man can see inside of those homes.

Women who dare to defy these edicts imposed by the Taliban are subjected to brutal beatings, public floggings, or even death. For example, a woman who defied the Taliban orders by running a home school for girls was killed in front of her friends and family. A woman caught trying to flee Afghanistan with a man not related to her was stoned to death for adultery. An elderly woman was brutally beaten with a metal cable until her leg was broken because her ankle was accidentally showing underneath this burqa. But it is doubtful this woman ever had the chance to see a doctor or a physician, because male doctors are not allowed to treat women and women doctors are not allowed to practice their profession.

The most heart wrenching part of this story, though, is that millions of children, young girls, are growing up in a hostile environment. Here I have, Mr. Speaker, some artwork created by little girls growing up in Afghanistan. And even though we cannot read the writing, because this is a foreign language to me, it depicts what they are suffering, what they have seen with their own eyes. Basically, in this picture here, what we see are young girls, one woman in the background with the shroud, the other two holding and grasping their hands and looking at a fellow colleague who has been slain in front of a school house. Near the school house is a Taliban soldier carrying a rifle.

These are the kinds of things that these youngsters are having to go through every single day of their lives, since 1996. Here, on this side, we see a picture depicting three women covered

in their shrouds, almost held by chains up against a tower that looks like an area where praying goes on. These are some of the vicious kinds of things that these women are seeing and feeling, actual real-life incidents that are occurring in Afghanistan.

Despite these repeated condemnations of the Taliban actions by the international community, little has changed in Afghanistan; and millions of women and children, innocent people, caught in the crossfire of the Taliban's artillery have fled to the outskirts of Afghanistan to refugee caverns in Pakistan, where disease and starvation run rampant.

Despite the fact that we have air-dropped more than 100,000 food rations in Afghanistan, international relief organizations are repeatedly warning us that these military food drops fall too short of fulfilling the need. Part of the problem is that we are not sending enough food. And although the administration has pledged \$320 million in humanitarian relief efforts to Afghanistan, the United Nations estimates that it will take \$584 million to see Afghanistan through the long cold winter.

We need more help from the international community to ensure that these innocent Afghan citizens do not starve to death. Every effort has to be made to provide these people with adequate resources to survive this upcoming harsh winter, but part of the problem is that the food that we have dropped is not reaching these people. Many of these ready-to-eat meals are not being collected by the Afghan people, and in some cases are not easily located. Other times it is because the people fear retaliation for accepting the U.S. aid. Finally, some of the meals are falling into the hands of the Taliban forces that we are working so hard to fight against.

It is important for us to provide humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan, but aid alone cannot be the sole means of action. It is up to the United States and the Members of this body to speak for the class of women who are too oppressed to speak for themselves. We must work with the women of Afghanistan to form a more representative government, one that recognizes their accomplishments and allows them to participate in the process of democracy. We must be vigilant in our attempts to force the Taliban government to alter its treatment of women and girls and begin to correct these transgressions. Only by bringing these offenses to light can we hope to combat them.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), who is also co-chair of the Women's Caucus.

(Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, let me first thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from the

great State of California (Ms. SOLIS), for her leadership in bringing this very important issue to the forefront this evening.

You might recall, Mr. Speaker, that the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues met just a couple of weeks ago with the Ambassador to Pakistan to talk about the conditions of women in the Central Asia area. In talking with her, we realized the atrocities that women are continuing to go through in Afghanistan. This is an issue that the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues have now made as a top priority in this House; and it is a bipartisan effort, because, Mr. Speaker, years ago, as you can see by this very old paper, many of us tried to fight this issue on the atrocities, the genocide of women in Afghanistan.

Let me simply read some of the things that we talked about back in 1996. We talked to reporters to ask why they had not reported the atrocities against women. They simply said that the situation had received so little coverage because they were not sure that Americans were interested in this kind of news. Well, Mr. Speaker, the women of this House, the women around this country and across this Nation, and the women around the world are very much interested in how women are treated in Afghanistan. They are absolutely stripped of their very basic fundamental rights, a right to freedom of expression and the right to assemble. There is no way that we women in America can stand and allow women in other parts of this world to be treated so inhumanely.

A lot of us saw just a couple of weeks ago this "Beneath the Veil" documentary. That in itself told the story, the story of how women are treated. They are stripped of basic fundamental rights to education and training. They cannot even educate their children. We, in America cannot continue to allow these types of things to happen. These women and children are the first victims of this Taliban regime, this very rogue group of men who are allowing women to not have their basic rights.

Those of us here in the Women's Caucus have started this campaign. Tomorrow, I speak to a group of women again on the conditions of Afghani women. Next week, the Women's Caucus will be meeting with the Department of Defense to better understand the humanitarian efforts that they are putting forth and to make sure that the women and the children get the rightful benefits of this humanitarian effort that our President is putting forth. We applaud our President for the millions of dollars and for those relief efforts. But as I called the White House, I wanted to remind the President and the administration that we cannot just simply send this over and not have as a condition that women and children have their rightful share in this relief effort.

We will introduce legislation this week, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that

there will be Radio Free Afghanistan. We are not going to stop. We simply cannot do that. We, as the women of this House, are destined to make sure that the wellness of women goes across the hue, goes across the waters, goes not only from this country but to Afghanistan and other countries throughout the world. We must make sure that we fight for those women.

Let me just say this, Mr. Speaker. The women, as the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) has said, have been banned from working; the women and girls are prohibited from attending schools. But let me tell you some other things that are just absolutely inhumane. Women have been brutally beaten, publicly flogged, and killed for violating Taliban decrees, decrees that they have imposed on no one else. Let me cite some more horrific examples. A woman who defied the Taliban orders by running a home school for girls was killed in front of her families and friends. A woman caught trying to flee Afghanistan with a man not related to her was stoned to death for adultery. An elderly woman was brutally beaten with a metal cable until her leg was broken because her ankle was accidentally showing beneath that burqa that was demonstrated earlier.

We will not stop, Mr. Speaker. Our campaign is continuing. As you see this very yellow paper, where we started in 1996, we will continue to fight until justice is brought to the women of Afghanistan and to that region. We want our children to be educated. We want them educated here; we want them educated there.

And so I will simply say tonight is a night that we shed the light; we put the light on these atrocities. The documentary "Beneath the Veil" just re-energized us so that we can continue to fight for these women and children. I will be here throughout the rest of this hour to speak as we continue to unveil these atrocities against women and children, the suffering they endure at the hands of this Taliban regime, which absolutely has no regard for women and children. We will not tolerate the inhumane way by which they function.

So I would simply say to my dear friend and colleague that we thank her for bringing this Special Order tonight so that we can unveil these horrors and continue to fight for the women of Afghanistan.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), who has also agreed to speak on this topic. I do want to go back, first, however, and thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), who spoke very eloquently about the current crisis that is occurring and that we are faced with, not just in Afghanistan but also in Pakistan and other Middle Eastern countries.

We hope that tonight's discussion will lead our leaders to the direction of providing humanitarian assistance to

those families that are in need, particularly those women and those young girls.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY).

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) for organizing this Special Order and speaking out for the women in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, the attacks of September 11 broke the hearts and boggled the minds of most every American. It left us all wondering just what kind of people would turn planes into bombs and slaughter thousands of people simply because they showed up for work. The answer is the Taliban, the terrorists among the Taliban, the terrorists they harbor, and the terrorists they refuse to surrender. But anyone who was familiar prior to September 11 with how the Taliban treat women should have recognized that the Taliban are capable of doing just about anything.

□ 2245

The Taliban have controlled 90 percent of Afghanistan since 1996 when they unilaterally declared an end to women's basic human rights. The restrictions on women's freedoms in Afghanistan are unfathomable to most Americans. Women are banished from working. Girls are not allowed to attend school beyond the eighth grade.

Women and girls cannot venture outside without a burqa which they are forced to wear. It is an expensive, heavy, cumbersome garment which covers the entire body, and it includes a mesh panel covering the eyes. The veil is so thick it is difficult to breathe. The mesh opening for the eyes makes it extremely difficult to even cross the road.

Women must be escorted by male relatives to be allowed to leave their homes. Women are not allowed to seek health care from male doctors, even in emergency situations. Female doctors and nurses are not permitted to work, so women and girls are dying from treatable illnesses. An Afghan woman dies in childbirth every 30 seconds.

Violate the Taliban's draconian strictures, deliberately or accidentally, and you will pay dearly, sometimes with your life. Women who trip while crossing the road and show their face or ankles risk being beaten, arrested or even executed.

A 16-year-old girl was stoned to death because she went out in public with a man who was not her family member. A woman who was teaching children in her home was also stoned to death in front of her husband, her children and her female students. An elderly woman was beaten and suffered a broken leg because she exposed her ankle in public.

These atrocities are real, and the economic consequences for women are just as severe. They cannot earn money because they are not allowed to work.

Since they have no means of supporting themselves, many Afghan widows have no income at all. Unless they have a close male family member, they have no access to society or food for families and themselves.

Mr. Speaker, let us be clear, we are at war with the Taliban strictly because they are harboring Osama bin Laden and because they are involved in terrorism against the United States. Still, this just war which we have no choice but to wage has contributed to a humanitarian tragedy of staggering proportion.

Our commitment to helping the innocent people of Afghanistan must never waiver. There are now 1.5 million Afghan refugees along the Pakistan border. More than half of them are women. 66,000 are pregnant. Winter is imminent.

I salute the Bush administration for balancing war for compassion, for dropping food as well as bombs. Even in war, we are showing a regard for human life and human rights that the Taliban will never know.

The good news is that the Taliban's days are numbered, and that some women from Afghanistan are fighting for their freedom. I am submitting for the RECORD an inspiring article by Rone Tempest of the L.A. Times. It is about the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, or RAWA. RAWA sends women on dangerous missions into Afghanistan to set up secret schools for girls and to use cameras to document the abuse of women.

In Pakistan, RAWA runs hospitals, schools, orphanages and refugee camps. In the face of the most repressive regime in the world, women are risking their lives to gain rights so basic that we in the United States do not even think about them.

Well, this is a night to think about them and to express solidarity with our persecuted sisters in Afghanistan. We will continue to send humanitarian aid. We will continue to battle the Taliban, and the women in Afghanistan who are fighting for freedom should know that they are not fighting in vain. The women in Congress, the women across this country are standing with them.

The article previously referred to is as follows:

TRAINING CAMP OF ANOTHER KINID

In Pakistan, defiant young Afghan women bent on reversing years of brutal oppression study and plan. To them, the conflict has no good guys.

Khaiwa Refugee Camp, Pakistan—The sprawling refugee camps on the Pakistani-Afghan border have long been breeding grounds for male militants in Afghanistan—first for the mujahadeen fighters who battled the Soviet occupation in the 1980s and, more recently, for the fundamentalist Taliban.

But here in the dusty, abused terrain of Pakistan's northwestern frontier, the Khaiwa refugee camp is a uniquely feminist outpost.

Women in the Khaiwa camp shun the head-to-toe raiment known as a burka. Girls study science and Koranic scripture in a mud-

walled school and dream of attending university. The camp's male physician, Dr. Qaeem, vows that his infant daughter will be educated "from cradle to grave, until PhD."

Khaiwa is a training ground for a different kind of fighter: intense young women bent on reversing the trend of female oppression that has helped hurtle Afghanistan into a new dark age.

For the female activists based here, there are no good guys among the factions battling for supremacy in their homeland—not in the notorious Taliban and not in the opposition Northern Alliance. They worry that in the international rush to bring down the Taliban, the United States and its allies will form partnerships with the Northern Alliance or with other groups that also have a history of brutally oppressing women.

"The devil is the brother of evil. The dog is the brother of the world," Khaiwa camp school Principal Abeda Mansoor said in her native Dari language. "We condemn both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance."

Mansoor, a former geography teacher in Afghanistan, is a 16-year member of the Revolutionary Assn. of the Women of Afghanistan, or RAWA, a small but influential rights group that sends women on dangerous missions into Afghanistan to set up clandestine schools for girls and to use hidden cameras to document abuse of women. Under the Taliban's harsh version of Islam, girls cannot attend school and women are prohibited from working outside the home.

Displayed on the association's Web site at www.rawa.org, secretly taken photos and videos of public executions and floggings have played a major role in building international opposition to the Taliban. The recent critically acclaimed documentary "Beneath the Veil," by London-based filmmaker Saira Shah, was made with the help of RAWA workers who escorted Shah in Afghanistan.

In Pakistan, the group operates hospitals, schools and orphanages in the camps where 2 million Afghan refugees live. But even here, their activities remain mostly secret. Taliban-style fundamentalism thrives in many of the camps. A recent RAWA human rights procession in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, was attacked by stick-wielding fundamentalist students.

But the Khaiwa camp, in the middle of a rutted quarry surrounded by smoking brick kilns, is an island of tolerance. It is small and exceptional, home to only 500 families. But it is a microcosm of what Afghanistan might resemble if it was freed of religious extremism and civil war.

Safora Wali, 30, manages the camp's small orphanage, home to 20 Afghan girls ages 6 to 19. A former student at Kabul University in the Afghan capital, Wali also teaches older women in the camp how to read.

"My oldest student is 45 years old," Wali said. "She's so happy now to be able to read letters from her relatives. She told me, 'I now know the pleasures of my eyes.'"

The Khaiwa camp was founded in the early 1980s by one of the more enlightened mujahadeen commanders, who believed in universal education. He allowed RAWA workers into the camp to teach and counsel the families. The camp eventually became known as an open-minded haven for the RAWA activists, who run the 450-student school and the orphanage.

Wali came to the camp last year from western Afghanistan after Taliban authorities found her distributing RAWA literature and she was forced to flee.

In Afghanistan, Khaiwa is known as a place to send girls who are threatened by either the religious restrictions of the Taliban or the sexual aggression of Afghan warlords.

Danish, 15, said she was sent here after her father was killed by agents of the former Communist government in Kabul. She said her mother still lives in Afghanistan but could no longer protect her.

Like the other girls in the four-room adobe orphanage, she wants to finish high school and reenter Afghanistan as a RAWA operative—teaching in underground home schools.

When asked by a reporter how many of them planned to go to work for RAWA, all but the youngest of the 20 girls raised their hands.

Women in Afghanistan have suffered a long history of repression punctuated by brief periods of progressive leadership.

Inspired by the reforms of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, self-styled King Amanullah lifted the veil of subjugation for a short period in the late 1920s. But women in Afghan cities probably enjoyed their greatest freedom during the Soviet-backed Communist regime that ruled in Kabul from 1979 to 1992.

RAWA was founded in the capital in 1977. But its founder, known by the single name Meena, opposed the Soviet occupation and joined resistance forces to fight against it. Considered an enemy by both the Communist regime and the fundamentalist mujahadeen, Meena was assassinated in a Quetta, Pakistan, refugee camp in 1987.

Sahar Saba, 28, who like many of the RAWA activists uses a pseudonym for protection, grew up in one of the Quetta camps and was educated in a RAWA school. Now she works as a spokeswoman for the group in Islamabad and travels abroad seeking foreign support.

Saba came to Pakistan when she was 7 after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, she has spent much of her time working to make sure that the U.S. and its allies do not forget the cause of women's rights as they continue their campaign against the Taliban.

Besides providing a well-documented history of the Taliban's suppression of women, RAWA has recorded hundreds of cases of abuse by the Northern Alliance and non-Taliban warlords.

Saba and the other RAWA activists favor the return of Mohammad Zaher Shah, the former Afghan monarch who was deposed in 1973. Through the agency of the ex-king, she says, Afghanistan could have a new leadership tainted neither by the abuses of the warlords nor by the restrictions imposed on women by the Taliban.

When the Taliban swept into power in 1996, it capitalized on its claim to be a "protector of women." Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar gained fame by rescuing two girls who had been kidnapped by a warlord. According to Taliban lore, Omar killed the man and hanged his body from the barrel of a tank.

"The parties that were in power before the Taliban were in some ways worse," Saba acknowledged. "Many girls were raped. Many others committed suicide."

"When the Taliban came to power, women were safer," she added. "But they set the wheel of history back hundreds of years."

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS).

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend and thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) for organizing this special order on the plight of women in Afghanistan, and I thank also the Women's Caucus, particularly the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD)

for hosting this and gathering us together to speak in solidarity with our sisters in Afghanistan who are enduring such terrible hardship and prejudice and imprisonment in their society.

Mr. Speaker, it is an important topic which we should repeat over and over and over again in this well, even as we are able to do this in this country in stark contrast to the way of life our sisters across the world are now enduring.

For 5 years the Taliban militia have ruled Afghanistan so severely restricting and denying a woman's right to participate in social, economic, cultural and political life. We have known about this and seen news accounts. 5 years is a long time.

Prior to the Taliban control, many Afghani women held positions of great leadership, obtained higher education degrees, were engaged in professions and business interests in their community, adding to the vibrancy and strengthening of the economy. In the capital city of Kabul, 70 percent of school teachers, 50 percent of the civilian government workers, and 40 percent of the doctors were women. It is a different story today.

Women are denied access to education entirely. They are barred from the workplace, and as we have been listening this evening in the special order, they are forced to remain in their homes. Family planning is outlawed in the region, and women are forbidden to see a male doctor or surgeon. And, of course, the female doctors and nurses are prohibited from working; and, therefore, the majority of Afghani women are unable to seek medical treatment of any kind. In this century in this world.

For these reasons, I with my colleagues, 52 of my colleagues, are co-sponsoring legislation condemning the destruction, the Taliban's deduction of preIslamic laws which until their rein were the law of the land. I am also co-sponsoring a resolution with many of my colleagues which refuses to recognize the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan. Of course we are doing that for many reasons, but one of them surely must be the actions that they have taken against women and that they need to restore the women in Afghanistan their basic human rights.

The square of fabric that many of us are wearing, a piece of the burqa, the clothing of the Afghani women, we wear as a sign of solidarity to their suffering and torment. And I came to the podium following my colleague who wore the entire burqa. As I watched the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) standing in this place, which is the symbol of freedom that all of us enjoy in this country, her voice muffled, she could barely read the words on the page. This is today, this modern world, and yet in Afghanistan, and of course a woman would not even be allowed to be here, but they are confined even within their homes to wearing this kind of garment.

Women, as we have heard this evening and will continue to hear I am sure, women who ignore the decrees are beaten, publicly flogged and even murdered for a slight infraction of the rules. Through such public beatings the Taliban has succeeded in cowering the civilian population into submission, so it is even more critical during this time of political upheaval and turmoil that this country, the United States, continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the children and also to the women who have been forced to flee from their native land and forced to live the kinds of lives that they are living.

We remain and must remain committed to bringing the Taliban into compliance with international norms of behavior on all human rights issues. I know all of us stand in awe here as we speak on this topic. We stand in awe before the women of Afghanistan who are daring, even against all of these signs of oppression, daring to speak out, daring to gather the children together to teach, the young women, the girls, to offer them classes knowing that if they are caught, their lives will be ended.

Even as we speak freely in the House, our sisters in Afghanistan are finding ways to gather together to strengthen each other, to hold on to their inner burning of freedom, and they are counting on us to give them support.

Across this land there are groups that have sprung up. In my district I was approached by several women who are part of organizations contributing money to give aid directly to these women to support them in their freedom-fighting mission that really does reach to the heart of what we stand for in this country. So we stand in awe and solidarity with the women of Afghanistan, and we must work in this place.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I say to my colleagues, I hope this is just the beginning of our speaking out. We must speak out in ways across this country to join people together, women, but everyone together, to support the efforts of women in Afghanistan, to throw off their yokes of oppression and to be able to return to a life that they know and burns within them, the passion for that way of life in their hearts.

We have to find a way to let them know that the world is watching and supporting them and encouraging them in their struggle to retain and regain their sense of dignity and regain their personal freedoms.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR).

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) for bringing us together this evening so all of us coast to coast can express our union and solidarity with the women of Afghanistan, with those who are in country with their children, for those who have fled and are fleeing and are in refugee camps in Iran, in Pakistan, in Tajikistan, and God knows where else.

As I have read the press reports and I have been watching television and reading the newspapers and looking at the demonstrators and thinking about our role in the world and that region of the world, I keep looking for women and every picture only has men. Men fighting, men drinking tea, men demonstrating, and I keep saying, where are the women? Where are the women? Knowing that war has ravaged through that region for many, many years; and obviously there are more women than men. The demographics alone, because of war, would attest to that. So where are they?

In coming here to this chamber this evening I kept thinking about the words of the great Negro national anthem, and the words that ring in my ears tonight, "God of our silent tears, God of our weary years," a song borne of the great struggle for freedom in our own land and across the world, of those who were placed in slavery and whose heroic history has been so much part of America's own struggle for liberty.

I kept thinking about the silent tears of the women of Afghanistan and so many women of the Middle East and Central Asia. I thought about their silent tears. I thought most of the world never sees those tears because we do not see them, and under that burqa you cannot see anything.

In fact, I tried to look out of it as I handled it on the floor, and one cannot really see very well out of it. It looks like you are looking through a multi-screened door where so much of the light is shut out. Truly you feel like a prisoner. It is a visible symbol of the abysmal human rights record of the Taliban regime and the fact that women have no official dignity. In fact, they are beasts of burden. They are there to cook. They are there to carry their children and to bury their children. And they have absolutely no moment, no moment, no place, no home. No place of comfort. No place to hide, no place just to be.

They are in our hearts this evening because many of us understand some of the tinges of oppression, but nothing like what they are living through.

□ 2300

Others this evening have talked about their lack of access to health care and the fact that they can receive no health services. I can remember Congresswoman Pat Schroeder on this floor one evening talking about the fact that during World War I, more women died in childbirth than people were killed in the war. This is before health services were available to people. Can you imagine the struggle of bearing a child in Afghanistan?

God of our silent tears; God of our weary years. We think of them especially tonight. I learned from the world food program last week that, of course, the United States has provided some of the meager food sustenance that has kept that population alive over the last several years. Over 257 bakeries have

been started inside Afghanistan just to make use of the raw wheat, and the diet basically is a piece of wheat bread that looks like pita and tea, that is about what the average person eats every day. But the Taliban had ruled that because women, the mothers, the widows, were feeding the people and working in those bakeries, that they would shut those bakeries down because, in fact, women were doing the work and women were not allowed to be seen in public.

And there was such civil unrest across that country that the Taliban reversed its own ruling because the people were fighting for their own survival in a country that is now pre-famine and the world community is desperately trying to find ways to move donkey trains in there with wheat bags and trying to move product in any way that we can in order to help the civilian populations. We know the majority of people trying to feed the desperate are women and many of them are widows.

Tonight, I know that every single woman here thinks about the future, and every man and woman in our country wants to help those who are in dire need. I know that in the weeks ahead, this Women's Caucus through the leadership of the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), who has just been fantastic in her leadership on this issue, and so many others is going to make sure that our Women's Caucus keeps in sight, in fact right in the bull's-eye of U.S. policy in that region of the world humanitarian assistance and food programs, in fact, linking our food programs to education wherever we can possibly do it and that America's true greatness and the generosity of its people will be seen extending a hand across the ocean and a hand across a forgotten part of the world. We want every life that can be saved to be saved, and we know that our first partners in this effort will be the women of Afghanistan who know the price of life and the price of death.

This evening, we rise in their honor. Those of us who are wearing these little squibs of cloth cut from the burqa, we will not forget them. We ask the God of silent tears and God of weary years to be with them, to protect them and to know that we are in sisterhood and brotherhood with them.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I thank the distinguished Congresswoman from California, and I thank her very much for creating this opportunity for the women of this House to come together and to embrace, though distant, our sisters far away. You notice that the tone of our voice is somewhat somber and solemn. Tears are in our voices and tears are in our hearts and minds. We as women, however, are strengthened by the unity that we are showing tonight because we believe we are linked with our sisters in Afghanistan and

those who have escaped Afghanistan and are on the perimeters around in the different countries fighting from the outside for their sisters who are now contained.

I want to thank the distinguished gentlewoman from California because I believe that we should be on this floor day after day and night after night, create a movement, create an engine, create a movement that cannot be turned around. In fact, I would suggest, in following your lead and that of the Women's Caucus and my friend and colleague the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), who has given such comfort to women around the world, but also to the leadership of the women in the caucus.

We are known to have marched a day or two. I believe this may be the time to march for the women of Afghanistan, whether we take all the women of this House, or whether we ask women from the community to join us. I am reminded of the phrase, when women pray, things happen. When women march, when women speak, things happen. And the tragedy of the women in Afghanistan is so enormous, so frightening, so vicious, so violent that I think this day tonight is setting the tone; and I thank you very much for your leadership.

I do not know if people are aware, and I know that many of my colleagues might have already cited these numbers and statistics, but for me they loom very large. Journalist Jan Goodwin, before the Taliban banned female employment, gave us a bird's-eye view what women were doing before the Taliban banned women working. Seventy percent of the teachers in Kabul were women, 50 percent were civil servants and university students, and 40 percent were doctors. Today, lawyers and doctors who happen to be female cannot practice. They cannot practice medicine. They cannot practice law. Women are totally deprived of the right to education, of the right to work, of the right to travel, of the right to good health care, of the right to legal recourse, of the right to recreation, of the right to being a human being.

Those who are listening, men and women, know how much we pride our freedom in the United States even after the heinous acts, the horrific acts of September 11. Our lives changed after that day, but we still understand the first amendment, freedom of access, freedom of speech. We demand good health care, good education. We are always looking to improve the lot of others. And when that does not happen, we speak out against it and try to improve it.

But in this country, there are no rights for women. They cannot move about. They cannot be educated. They cannot go into a courtroom and protest how they are treated. They cannot laugh. They cannot be full of joy. They cannot skip rope. They cannot play tennis. They cannot go swimming.

They cannot recreate. They cannot go into the mountains and hills to look at the beauty of the sunrise or the sunset. They cannot be mountain climbers. They cannot be bicycle riders. They cannot enjoy life.

Although we respect the Islamic faith, this is not a denigration and a disrespect because our faiths are different, because we love the diversity of our faiths in this country, the diversity of our ethnic backgrounds, our racial backgrounds. We love the fact that America applauds the differences, but we acknowledge that the fundamentalism of Islamic faith treats women as subhumans, and it fits them in a category that can only be described as slavery and only as a source of procreation.

And so I think that it is extremely important to note that the life and plight of women in Afghanistan has gone to its lowest level.

□ 2310

Female education, from kindergarten to graduate school, is banned, and employment for women is banned. The beating of women for disciplinary action is accepted and routine. Women must be covered with the material that is on my suit top. They must be covered from head to toe. The burqa. You can hardly breathe. It is so hot. You can hardly see. You cannot enjoy, you cannot live.

The whipping of women in public for having non-covered ankles is acceptable. A ban on women laughing loudly is acceptable. A ban on women wearing brightly covered clothing is acceptable. Women are prohibited from going outside except for government-sanctioned purposes.

Finally, I would say that we love to wake up in the morning, hear the birds sing, smell the beautiful fragrances, go outside, travel as we desire to do. We desire to express freedom. But here in Afghanistan these women are not allowed to enjoy freedom, to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. And out of that tragedy comes more tragedy, such that a 20-year-old educated woman burned herself with gasoline as a way out of all of her misery that had poisoned her life for years. Her young life, she sought to extinguish it because she could see no future for someone who desired to be a bright and shining star.

So I hope that as we speak tonight some way, somehow, the women of Afghanistan are listening to us, and that they will know that we are united with them in sisterhood, and as they see that we are united, I would hope that we would move to the next step, which is to march for the freedom of the women in Afghanistan and on behalf of their survival and their life in the future.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. Millender-MCDONALD).

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I would just merely say the collective voices you have heard tonight simply is a determination to ensure that the women of Afghanistan be

given their rightful spot of freedom and democracy, and we will not stop until that is done. We will do an international strategy to ensure that the type of human rights that they deserve will be given to them.

We thank again this outstanding young freshwoman, freshman, freshperson, for tonight's special order, and for that, I am not sure if she wants to say a few words, but I thank her so much.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, in closing I just want to reiterate the importance of our discussion here tonight. Let us not forget the shroud, the burqa, that may veil and provide coverage in a foreign land that we do not know, but let us remember here as women, as Members of the House of Representatives, and our male colleagues, that we shall not go unheard; that our voices will be heard throughout the country and throughout the world; and that we are not just pleading for those woman who are suffering, those children in Afghanistan, but throughout the Middle East. There are many women who are treated very differently in other parts of the Middle Eastern countries. They do not have to wear this shroud. They walk in honor, they walk in dignity. They have education, they have jobs. We want that for women of Afghanistan, and we will not stop until our voices are heard.

I want to thank the Women's Caucus and the Members that shared the dais with me this evening, and for the artwork that was provided for us tonight, so that Members might see what young girls in Afghanistan are seeing through their eyes.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, our lives are marked by noises and silences. We wake each morning to an alarm clock, we return to bed quietly each night to sleep. We hear the scream of our children being born, the cheers at their graduation ceremonies, and the hush at the funerals of our parents. To these, we have recently added the low rumble of buildings collapsing, the tones of thousands of Americans singing before our baseball games and on the steps of the U.S. Capitol building, and the silence of moments of private reflection.

The lives of the millions of women in Afghanistan are also marked by the noises and silences around them. They hear the sound of their front doors closing as their husbands leave for jobs, something these women are no longer allowed to hold. As they walk by schools, always accompanied by a male relative, they hear lessons being taught, but only to their sons. These women hear the sound of beatings and public executions of women suspected of adultery, or who have cut their hair short, worn colorful clothes, nail polish, or white socks.

The lives of women in Afghanistan often depend on silence. They must not walk loudly. They must not talk loudly. They must not laugh in public. They must wear burqas, allowing only some sight, covering their ears and mouths entirely.

The women of Afghanistan recognize that their lives also depend on breaking silences. Through international aid organizations and their own resistance organizations, the experi-

ences they have quietly whispered to each other have been passed along to the outside world. What was once a few, sporadic reports has become a chorus pleading for recognition and compassion.

We must reassure these women that their pleas have echoed across mountains and oceans and reached our ears, and that we will answer them. The compassion we extend to our mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters must now be extended to the mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters in Afghanistan. Just as we have overcome our fear in the past few weeks, we must help these women overcome their fear by working to end the conditions which cause it.

We must use our voices and all of our abilities to ensure that the quiet voices of the women in Afghanistan are heard loudly and freely not just here in the United States, but in all countries, and especially, their own.

Ms. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to shed light on atrocities occurring halfway around the world. Long before the horrific events of September 11, the Taliban regime has been perpetrating egregious human rights violations against Afghan women and girls.

When the fanatically religious Taliban militia seized control of Kabul in September 1996, Afghanistan was transformed into a brutal state of gender apartheid. Under the extremist Taliban rule, women and girls are denied the most basic human rights.

The Taliban religious police, known as the "Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice," monitor strict conformity to Taliban edicts. Women are forbidden to work, go to school, leave their homes unless accompanied by a male relative, or speak above a whisper in public.

Many women are widowed due to their husbands being killed by the Taliban militia. They are routinely raped by militia men and forced to beg for scraps of food to feed their children. Other mothers hopelessly turn to prostitution, knowing that if they are caught, they will be publicly executed.

Women are ordered to wear a burqa—a large, heavy cloth which covers the body from head to toe—with only a small mesh-covered opening through which to see and breathe.

Women and girls are also denied access to basic health care services. They are denied admittance to most hospitals and from being examined by male physicians while prohibiting most female doctors and nurses from working.

A violation of any of these Taliban decrees results in women being brutally beaten, publicly flogged, and killed.

This regime is so heinous and oppressive that it executes little girls for the crime of attending school. Girls ages 8 and older caught attending underground schools are subject to being taken to the Kabul soccer stadium and made to kneel on the ground while an executioner puts a machine gun to the back of their heads and pulls the trigger. Spectators in the stands are instructed to cheer.

An elderly woman was brutally beaten with a metal cable until her leg was broken because her ankle was accidentally showing from underneath her burqa.

In a village outside of Kabul, three young girls were made to watch as the Taliban militia shot their mother in front of their eyes and then stayed in their home for two days while the mother's body lay in the courtyard.

The despair among women and children is so extreme, Physicians for Human Rights re-

ports that 76 percent of women living in Taliban-controlled areas are suffering from severe depression and 16 percent of women committing suicide.

The United States and the international community cannot turn its back on the plight of Afghan women and children. I was pleased by the President's recent announcement to increase humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees, 75 percent of which are women and children.

The United States must demonstrate that while we strongly oppose the Taliban regime, we support the people of Afghanistan. We must remain committed to improving the status of women and children in Afghanistan.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, women in Afghanistan have been suffering incredible human rights abuses since the extremist Taliban regime seized control of Afghanistan in 1996. Today, I rise in solidarity with Afghan women against this misogynist, fundamentalist regime and for women's rights.

The treatment and condition of women in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule is deplorable. Women have been beaten and stoned in public for not being completely covered, even if this means simply not having mesh covering in front of their eyes. One woman was beaten to death by an angry mob of fundamentalists for accidentally exposing her arm while she was driving. Another victim was stoned to death for trying to leave the country with a man that was not her relative. Husbands have the power of life and death over their female relatives, especially their wives, but an angry mob has just as much right to stone or beat a woman, often to death, for exposing an inch of flesh. Women live in fear of their lives for the slightest "misbehavior."

Women have been forced into poverty and destitution because they are not allowed to work or even go out in public without a male relative. Professional women such as professors, translators, doctors, lawyers, artists and writers have been forced from their jobs and restricted to their homes. Because they cannot work, those without male relatives or husbands are either starving to death or begging in the street.

There is a public health epidemic growing among women in Afghanistan. Depression is becoming so widespread it has reached emergency levels. There is no way in such a society to know the suicide rate with certainty, but relief workers are estimating that the suicide rate among women is extraordinarily high. Health care has suffered on many other levels. Men are not allowed to examine women patients without a chaperone. And even then, women are only allowed to be examined through their clothes. Even in life saving situations, surgery is unavailable for women in this country, if they have money, they might travel to Pakistan for needed operations. More than 1 in every 100 women dies in childbirth. The infant mortality rate is at an alarming number of 165 deaths per 1,000 births. Women give birth to their children on hospital floors and then watch them die due to minor complications. The Taliban regime is killing its own people.

As we move forward with our mission to eradicate terrorism, we must look for natural allies in this process. I would like to draw attention to the work of an organization that has fought the injustices committed against Afghani women and society by the Taliban,

the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA). RAWA strives to provide the basics of life, like education and health care, to women and girls in Afghanistan. The women of RAWA work underground, fighting for a true democracy and struggling to create a better life for the people of Afghanistan. These women fight at their own peril to create a better society. They are our allies. I urge this body and this government to recognize the voices of RAWA and provide support to their difficult, dangerous, and heroic work. We need to increase our efforts to help the women of Afghanistan live without their fundamental human rights violated. I hope this will be a policy that all of my colleagues can embrace.

PROVIDING SAFETY IN THE SKIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMMONS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized until midnight.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I have been fascinated by the previous remarks. I think it was excellent, and I commend the gentlewoman from California. I think it highlights the issue overall, and that is not just the abuse that the Taliban throws upon women in their society, but the abuse they throw upon their society as a whole.

For them to represent that they somehow speak for the religion of Islam, that they somehow speak for the Muslims of the world, is an insult. Obviously the Muslim world does not believe in the kind of abuses that the Taliban throws upon its women, nor does the religion of Islam. In fact the religion of Islam respects women, and that certainly is not something that you see in any kind of fashion whatsoever. In no fashion whatsoever do you see women given respect that they are entitled to or to the privileges, the equal rights or the access that they should have. Obviously that is not given when you talk about Afghanistan.

There are a couple issues, Mr. Speaker, I want to visit about that I think are very important. First of all, I listened to some of the previous speakers on the airport security bill. Obviously the airport security we have in this country has to be tightened dramatically. It has been tightened dramatically right now with the temporary use of the military. We have taken some very dramatic steps.

As you know, it was a pretty incredible event on September 11, that the Department of Transportation, upon order of the President of the United States, was able to take 2,600 or 3,000 commercial aircraft and bring every one of those aircraft down to a safe landing within about a 2 hour period of time. There were a lot of things that went wrong on September 11, but there were a lot of things in response to that horrible tragedy of September 11 that went right.

For example, the military alert, the high alert that went out to our mili-

tary throughout the world. Just picture yourself as a skipper of a carrier group out in the Pacific somewhere, or out in the Persian Gulf, and you are scrambled a message that the United States of America has just been attacked, that structures have been taken down in New York City, that the Pentagon itself has been struck.

Our military was immediately upon order of the President taken to probably the highest alert that they have been in in decades, and we did not have one misfire. Not one misfire. Not one officer who acted out of what the rule book says they should act. It was a good, solid response and it shows you that in time of emergency, there are a lot of things that can be done right.

We saw it, as I said, with the Department of Transportation, the Federal Aviation Administration, NORAD, which was contacted within minutes of the hijack knowledge and was able to try and track some of these commercial aircraft that were being used as weapons by the hijackers.

There were a lot of things in our system that worked. But one of the things that failed us was airport security across this country, and I do not know any of my colleagues that do not think that we do not need to increase airport security. Obviously we have got to improve the airport security in every airport in this country. Whether it is in Grand Junction, Colorado, or whether it is at LaGuardia, or whether it is at National Airport or Denver International Airport, we have got to improve security.

But the question is, how do you get the biggest bang for your buck for security? What kind of approach should we use to enhance that security, that we can be ensured that a year from now or 2 years from now or 3 years from now that the system is working?

Now, some have suggested that the only way to do it is to quickly act and for the Federal Government to create a new bureaucracy and hire tens of thousands of people, tens of thousands of people, as Federal employees, and put them in these positions of airport security.

To me, that makes about as much sense as the Federal Aviation Administration hiring all the pilots. Clearly and absolutely there is a role for the Federal Government to oversee security at these airports. They have to put down very tough and stringent guidelines as to what will be allowed and what will not be allowed; what training is required for the people that work in that security, what people will be allowed there, what kind of clearances they have, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

But before any of my colleagues, and some have, obviously, but before you sign on that the only way to answer this is to create a new Federal bureaucracy, think of the problems that we have.

Some inherently disagree with me. Some out here like a bigger Federal

Government. Some think that the only people that can get things done correctly is the government. I am saying, I do not think so. I think the government should oversee it.

But take a look at what happens if you hire these people. Take a look under our Civil Service regulations, where you cannot hardly fire a Federal employee if we have misbehavior. You cannot hardly move a Federal employee. To take an example, look at what happened in Denver and some of the other areas when we required Federal Aviation Administration personnel to move 50 miles or something like that. Take a look at what a racket that ended up being.

□ 2320

We lose lots of flexibility when, in a very short period of time, we put tens and tens and tens of thousands of people in the Federal payroll and create them permanently as Federal employees. It is not going to work. That is not the efficient way to provide the maximum amount of security that we want for our airports in this country.

Now, President Bush recognized this. President Bush's approach to this, which I think, by the way, is the correct approach, is number one, we all agree we need tougher airport security, we all agree that the status quo is not working, but as the President says, there should be Federal oversight, but it does not have to mean a new huge Federal bureaucracy for airport security any more than as I said earlier the Federal Aviation Administration should all of a sudden be required to hire all of the pilots in this country.

Clearly, the Federal Aviation Administration has a strong role in pilot qualifications, in how many hours the pilots fly, in the type of training that they need for particular aircraft and the type of training that they need for approached airports, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So the Federal Government has a strong role to play, it is just we should not take it across that line and, in a few weeks, end up hiring tens and tens and tens of thousands of people to become full-time, permanent, Federal employees.

So I am asking my colleagues to take a careful look at that. We do not need to have that many more new employees. What we need to do is review these procedures and make our airports safer. I look with disgust upon any of my colleagues that suggest that because some of us say we do not need a new Federal bureaucracy, that they make the suggestion that we do not care about airport security. I do not know one Member in this House, I do not know one Member in this House that does not want improved airport security. Not one. Not from the left, way over on the left to clear over on the right. We do not see it. Everybody in these Chambers wants better airport security. But the question is, how do we most effectively get there? Take a look at the track record. Frankly, the