

As Chair of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, with jurisdiction over the Americas—Latin America and Central America, North and South America—I am keenly aware that the use of this name has forever defined the region where we all live.

As we commemorate 500 years of the use of the name “America”, let us rededicate ourselves to promoting better and closer relations between the United States and the countries of the Americas and hope that the next 500 years will be an era of peace and prosperity throughout the hemisphere.

I urge Committee Members to support H. Res. 287.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 287, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING 2007 AS THE YEAR OF THE RIGHTS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN COLOMBIA

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 426) recognizing 2007 as the Year of the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons in Colombia, and offering support for efforts to ensure that the internally displaced people of Colombia receive the assistance and protection they need to rebuild their lives successfully, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 426

Whereas Colombia has experienced the internal displacement of more than 3,800,000 people over the past 20 years, representing approximately 8 percent of Colombia's population;

Whereas Colombia's internally displaced population is one of the worst humanitarian crises in the Americas, and the second largest internally displaced population in the world, after Sudan;

Whereas more than 200,000 people continue to be displaced internally every year;

Whereas Colombia's internally displaced people are often forced from their homes multiple times, and fear repercussions if they identify their attackers;

Whereas the International Committee of the Red Cross and the World Food Program have found internally displaced people in Colombia to be poorer and more disenfranchised than the general population, with 70 percent suffering from food insecurity, inadequate shelter, or limited health care services;

Whereas Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by displacement, representing almost one-third of the internally displaced;

Whereas women and children also comprise a large majority of the internally displaced;

Whereas very few internally displaced Colombians have been able to return to their original homes due to ongoing conflict throughout the country, and when returns take place they should be carried out voluntarily, in safety and with dignity;

Whereas, in 1997, the Government of Colombia passed landmark legislation, known as Law 387, to guarantee rights and assistance to its internally displaced population;

Whereas the Government of Colombia has expanded its ability to assist internally displaced people through its own agencies, and with the financial, technical, and operational support of the international community;

Whereas the Constitutional Court of Colombia has handed down multiple decisions recognizing the insufficient nature of the government's efforts to meet the basic needs of internally displaced persons and upheld the importance of implementing law 387 in light of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;

Whereas the Constitutional Court of Colombia, in consultation with the Government of Colombia, civil society, and the United Nations, has developed an extensive set of measurements to ensure government compliance with Law 387;

Whereas the Government of Colombia, the international community, and civil society are engaged in the London-Cartagena Process to develop coordinated responses to domestic problems, including humanitarian assistance and internal displacement;

Whereas the Government of the United States provides valuable, but limited, humanitarian assistance through Plan Colombia, and has programs targeted specifically for internally displaced people; and

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, on a visit to Colombia in March 2007, urged greater attention to the issue, stating that it should be a “national priority” and asked for “greater coherence” in programs to address the needs of the internally displaced: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Colombian Catholic Church, and the Consultancy for Human Rights and Internal Displacement should be commended for their initiative to declare the Year of the Rights of the Internally Displaced People in Colombia;

(2) the Government of Colombia and the international donor community should be encouraged to prioritize discussion of humanitarian assistance and internal displacement with the international donor community, especially within the context of the London-Cartagena Process; and

(3) the Government of the United States should increase the resources it makes available to provide emergency humanitarian assistance and protection through international and civilian government agencies, and assist Colombia's internally displaced people in rebuilding their lives in a dignified, safe, and sustainable manner.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROSE LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their re-

marks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation and yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would first like to express our appreciation to our colleagues, Congressman JIM McGOVERN and Congressman JOE PITTS, for introducing this important legislation. Let me also thank the Chair of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, Mr. ELIOT ENGEL, and the Chair and ranking member of the Africa and Global Health Subcommittee, Mr. PAYNE and Mr. SMITH, for bringing this issue to our attention. For those who have recently visited Colombia, I can assure the sponsors of this legislation that this is a timely and important and constructive addition to the assistance of displaced persons in Colombia.

The McGovern resolution brings long overdue attention to the continuing plight of Colombia's internally displaced people. Ongoing violence over the last 20 years among paramilitary groups, guerrillas and government security forces has forced millions of civilians to leave their homes, wander the streets and the countryside and simply struggle to survive. It has to be a miserable existence.

Colombia's internally displaced population represents one of the worst humanitarian crises in the hemisphere and the second largest population of internally displaced in the world after Sudan. While the entire world knows about the hardships facing the people of Sudan, Colombia's internally displaced suffer in great silence.

For this reason, the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees has deemed it the greatest hidden humanitarian crisis in the world. Over the past two decades, approximately 3.8 million Colombians, or about 8 percent of Colombia's entire population, have been displaced from their homes due to violence and conflict and through no fault of their own.

President Uribe is a solid ally of the United States in South America. He has made enormous strides in protecting his own people, but clearly he faces an uphill battle. In our conversations, in my visit to Colombia, along with several Members, including Congressman GREG MEEKS, we made this a very strong point, meeting with some of the internally displaced persons and recognize that this is an enormous challenge that this Congress must confront and provide assistance to these people and to the government to do what is right.

Sadly, an estimated 200,000 people are forced to flee their homes or places of refuge each year. For these people, Colombia is home, but Colombia has no

home for them. One-third of the internally displaced are from the Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples communities, a percentage likely to increase this year. This type of ethnically based displacement is particularly abhorrent. It is important to note as well that the people continue to be displaced, and they continue to be without a place to go.

Like many refugees around the world, the overwhelming majority of Colombia's internally displaced are also women and children. Few of these millions of people have been able to return to their homes. Tragically, these refugees often are misplaced multiple times. They are poor and more disenfranchised than the general population, and they are more fearful of repercussions should they attempt to identify their attackers. The World Food Programme and the UNHCR estimate that more than 70 percent suffer from food insecurity and inadequate shelter or limited health care services.

I am grateful to acknowledge the Mickey Leland Center, which my friend and colleague, Mr. McGOVERN, serves on, as do I, and the efforts they have made in providing food for persons like those displaced in Colombia.

With passage of this important measure, the United States Congress will encourage the United States, the international donor community, and the Colombian Government to create coordinated responses that address this humanitarian crisis, provide increased resources and protection for this highly vulnerable population and help them to successfully build their lives.

Bringing attention to the humanitarian crisis of Colombia's internally displaced people and assisting them to live in safety with dignity are priorities that every Member of Congress can and should embrace.

It is a call to our shared humanity, and I urge all Members to support H. Res. 426.

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, over the past 20 years, more than 3 million people have been internally displaced in Colombia, and each year 200,000 more are internally displaced.

This massive displacement is a little-known fact about the long and tragic conflict that goes on in Colombia. One of the goals of Plan Colombia was to help end the violence, violence from that conflict and, in turn, stop the ongoing displacement. Plan Colombia has, indeed, reduced the violence, and the numbers of newly displaced people are down.

For example, according to the Colombian Government, from the years 2002 through 2005, incidents of terrorism are down 63 percent; and for the same time frame, homicides are down 37 percent, along with an 80 percent decrease in kidnappings.

In turn, the number of displaced people is down 64 percent from a high of 424,193 in the year 2002 when our aid program of Plan Colombia started to kick in and to help the situation on the ground. Now things are much better. Seventy percent of these displaced people still suffer from food insecurities, from inadequate shelters, and limited health care facilities.

In 1997, the Government of Colombia passed legislation known as Law 387, to guarantee rights and assistance to its internally displaced population. Since then, the Government of Colombia has expanded its ability to assist internally displaced people, but the constitutional court of Colombia has called the government's efforts to meet the basic needs of internally displaced persons insufficient. This resolution commends the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Colombian Catholic Church, and the Coalition for Human Rights and Internal Displacement for their initiatives in declaring the Year of the Rights of the Internally Displaced People in Colombia.

It also encourages the Government of Colombia and international donor communities to prioritize the discussions of humanitarian assistance and internal displacement with the international donor community, especially within the context of the London-Cartagena Process, which set the scene for an international cooperation, in addition to guidelines and a mandate for working on bringing peace and stability finally to Colombia.

House Resolution 426 also calls on the United States to increase emergency humanitarian assistance and to assist Colombia's internally displaced people in rebuilding their lives in a dignified, safe and sustainable manner.

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

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 8 minutes to the distinguished member of the Rules Committee, Mr. McGOVERN, the author of the legislation, and a strong and dedicated and committed advocate for the displaced persons of Colombia, indigenous Afro-Colombians and others in need.

Mr. McGOVERN. I want to thank my colleague from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) for her generous words and for yielding me the time and for all of her work on behalf of human rights.

I want to thank the distinguished chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. LANTOS, for his leadership throughout the years on behalf of those who have lost their homes, their livelihoods, and their land through violence or natural disaster.

I would also like to recognize the ranking member for her work in educating Members of Congress about the suffering of refugees and the internally displaced.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 426, which shines a light on Colombia's more than 3 million internally displaced people, or IDPs, a number second only to Sudan.

□ 1800

In 2005, the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees described the IDP situation in Colombia as one of the most invisible humanitarian crises in the world. This is a crisis that the government of Colombia cannot handle alone.

Earlier this year, the UNHCR, the Colombian Catholic Church, and the Consultancy for Human Rights and Internal Displacement jointly declared 2007 as the Year of the Rights of the Internally Displaced People in Colombia. This resolution commends this initiative and encourages the United States and the Colombian governments and other donor nations to place greater priority on providing the necessary resources to aid and protect Colombia's internally displaced so that they might rebuild their lives.

Mr. Speaker, an estimated 3.8 million people have been displaced inside Colombia over the past two decades. This is approximately 8 percent of Colombia's total population. Currently, 200,000 people continue to be internally displaced every year. Almost one-third of these people are Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples, and with conflict escalating in the regions of Narino and Choco, this number is likely to increase. A large majority, like displaced people all around the world, are women and children. Very few can return to their original homes. Many are displaced multiple times, finding no safety anywhere. It comes as no surprise then that Colombia's IDPs are poorer and more disenfranchised than the general population. Around three-quarters suffer from lack of food, inadequate shelter, and limited health care and other services. And, sadly, the harsh realities of life faced by the internally displaced are invisible even to most Colombians. They are a forgotten people, a marginalized people.

Mr. Speaker, I have traveled to Colombia several times, and on each trip, I have included a trip to internally displaced communities. On my very first trip in 2001, I went to Barrio Kennedy in the slums of Bogota. The majority of these families are from Tolima. They had been violently displaced by attacks mainly from FARC guerillas. They were rural families used to growing their own food and making a living by farming. In the capital, they were lost. They had no jobs. They couldn't grow their own food. They would get up early in the morning and hang around the trucks that brought in produce for the markets and gather up the food that fell off the trucks into the mud. They picked through the garbage looking for food to eat or items to barter. Alcoholism and domestic violence were rising. They lived in horrible conditions with a growing sense of hopelessness.

In 2003, I traveled north to the Department of Sucre. In Sincelejo, I visited the community of Cristo Viene. These families had been violently displaced by paramilitaries from their

communities in the mountains of Maria. They had small shacks for shelter. They had organized their teenagers into a group making bracelets and other items to sell in order to give purpose to the young people and generate some income for their community. All the youngest children had the rusty colored hair indicative of malnutrition. Nearly all the infants and toddlers had serious eye disorders or were already blind from vitamin deficiency. They could get access to rudimentary electricity and water, but only if they sold their vote to a corrupt local politician.

The Colombian Catholic Church and the Mennonite churches had joined together in their first ecumenical initiative to provide schools of basic humanitarian aid for these people.

In 2001 and 2007, I visited IDP communities perched precariously on barren hills next to the municipality of Soacha, on the outskirts of Bogota. On my first visit, I saw a school and a school feeding program, both funded by the United States and carried out by World Vision and the World Food Programme. For these children, these programs were the only stability in an insecure world. Paramilitary and FARC agents roamed freely trying to recruit children into their ranks. A mother came up to me and thanked the United States for supporting the school and free meals. She told me that if these programs didn't exist, her 11-year-old son would have gone into one of the armed groups just so he could get something to eat.

When I returned to Soacha this March, little had changed. If anything, things were worse. Over the past 6 years, violence has forced hundreds of thousands out of the countryside. Many ended up in Bogota, settling in the Soacha slum. They were from all over the country. So-called landlords are charging them outrageous rents when IDPs build themselves a shack. Children can't walk to school without fear of being assaulted, robbed or raped. The price of water was several times higher than that of regular Bogota residents. IDP community leaders working with Colombian and international NGOs were doing their best to address the community's problems but lacked the necessary resources. And the local officials of Soacha were struggling to meet basic needs.

Madam Speaker, I am proud that the United States has always targeted resources for IDP communities, and the recent House-passed Foreign Operations appropriations bill increases that funding.

Madam Speaker, H. Res. 426 is a bipartisan bill, and I want to thank my colleague, Congressman JOE PITTS of Pennsylvania, for joining me in introducing this legislation. It is supported by Refugees International, Catholic Relief Services, the Mennonite Central Committee, Jesuit Refugee Services USA, the Jesuit Conference of the United States, Lutheran World Relief, the International Rescue Committee,

Mercy Corps and several other national organizations.

Madam Speaker, I commend the UNHCR, the Colombian Catholic Church and CODHES for bringing attention to this humanitarian crisis facing Colombia's internally displaced. I hope that there will be a renewed effort by the United States and the world community to help these people.

I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 426.

JULY 10, 2007.

DEAR HONORABLE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: As organizations concerned with refugees and internally displaced persons around the globe, we write to express our support for House Resolution 426 regarding the situation of internally displaced persons in Colombia.

More than 3.8 million people have been internally displaced over the past twenty years, and high levels of displacement continue to occur. Despite efforts by the international community and the Colombian government, internally displaced persons lack access to basic health care, shelter, adequate nutrition, secure employment, and educational opportunities. In many cases, they also lack basic protection from human rights violations and continued displacement.

The Colombian Catholic Church, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Colombian nongovernmental organization established an initiative to declare 2007 the Year of the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons in Colombia in order to call attention to a dire humanitarian situation which has been largely invisible both internationally and within Colombia. This resolution expresses support for this initiative and recognizes certain advances by the Colombian government such as establishing landmark legislation. The resolution calls for the international community, U.S. and Colombian governments to prioritize attention to help Colombia's internally displaced persons to "rebuild their lives in a dignified, safe, and sustainable manner."

We encourage you to help bring attention to this pressing problem of internal displacement in Colombia by supporting House Resolution 426.

Kenneth H. Bacon, President, Refugees International; Rev. Kenneth Gavin, S.J., National Director, Jesuit Refugee Service/USA; Sean Callahan, Executive Vice President, Overseas Operations, Catholic Relief Services; Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli, Senior Associate for Colombia and Haiti, Washington Office on Latin America; Rebecca Phares, Director, Public Policy and Advocacy Lutheran World Relief; Adam Isacson, Director of Programs, Center for International Policy.

Marino Córdoba, Charo Mina Rojas, AFRODES USA; Theo Sitther, Legislative Associate for International Affairs, Mennonite Central Committee, U.S., Washington Office; Lisa Haugaard, Executive Director, Latin America Working Group; Kimberly Stanton, Country Representative, Colombia, Project Counselling Services; Barbara Gerlach, Colombia Liaison, United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries.

COLOMBIA: INCREASING VIOLENCE REQUIRES MORE SECURITY, HUMANITARIAN SERVICES

Refugees International (RI) teams visited Nariño and Chocó departments in June 2006 and February 2007 and found that security conditions have seriously worsened. As a result, increased civilian displacement in the coming months is likely and Government au-

thorities are unprepared to respond adequately.

GROWING VIOLENCE INCREASES DISPLACEMENT

Civilians continue to flee their homes due to newly formed narco-paramilitary groups entering their lands and ordering people to leave. The displaced are also subject to violence upon return. Since the June 2006 displacement from the Remolino demonstration in Nariño (see: <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/8952/>), and the subsequent return of these communities to areas north of the provincial capital, Pasto, 70 people have been assassinated and 17 have disappeared, confirming threats made by paramilitaries in the area to those accompanying the returning convoys. In February 2007, the RI team visited the municipality of Samaniego, south of Pasto, and found that 8 people had been killed over the course of one weekend. These deaths were attributed to a new paramilitary group, 80 members strong, who are in the process of establishing themselves in the town.

In addition to conflict due to resurgent paramilitary groups, fighting has intensified for control of strategic territory used for cultivating, harvesting, processing and transporting coca to international markets. Samaniego, Nariño is the site of fighting between two left-wing guerilla groups—the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia) and the ELN (National Liberation Army) over drug resources. The Bajo Baudó region of Chocó is the scene of drug-related fighting between the FARC and the ERG (Guevarista Revolutionary Army). Fighting for similar reasons is also occurring between the FARC and paramilitary groups throughout Nariño and Chocó. Multiple reports indicate that combatants are driving entire indigenous and Afro-descendant communities out of contested areas, a tactic that crowds nearby villages and towns. In these contested areas used for growing coca, the national army has also begun to bomb and fumigate as part of its eradication program. These actions are also causing displacement as farmers are driven from spoiled lands.

According to official figures, violent crimes increased 13% in Nariño in 2006 in comparison to 2005. Multiple officials reported to RI that these are very conservative figures, and they estimate that the real death toll could be up to six times higher. Additionally, the alarming spread of new paramilitary groups seems to have benefited from army and police complacency, both of which are avoiding confrontation. Crimes committed by these new armed actors remain uninvestigated and the perpetrators impugn.

“A TIME BOMB ABOUT TO EXPLODE”

Humanitarian aid workers in Colombia are now referring to multiple crises in the country as time bombs. Contrary to official government statements, multiple conflicts are raging throughout the country. The roots of these conflicts are expanding, and do not represent only battle between government forces and guerrilla rebel groups. Rather, there is growing violence among left-wing guerrilla groups, additional fighting between guerrilla groups and resurgent paramilitary groups, and additional conflict involving the army. As a result, civilians are being caught between quickly changing actors—and being put at increasing risk as different armed groups enter and leave their communities.

In Nariño, 30 massive displacements [massive meaning displacement of more than 50 people] happened last year with additional 8 massive displacements in the first two months of 2007, bringing the total number of registered IDPs in the department to more than 54,000.

On February 15 fighting between FARC and ELN affected communities of around 2,000 people living in rural areas northwest of the municipality of Samaniego. "This is the second time we have been displaced this year. People are terrorized by the fighting and some 46 families have fled their homes to seek sanctuary in school buildings in a nearby town" said an indigenous leader. During their stay in schools, the local municipality and the church provided food and essential items. However, five days later, assistance from Acción Social, the government agency mandated to coordinate humanitarian response to the needs of displaced people, had not arrived, and reports indicated that many families had decided to return home for lack of assistance. These returnees found that landmines were laid down around their village and that fighting could erupt at any time. In the two weeks that proceeded RI's visit to Samaniego, 7 people had been injured or killed by a landmine or unexploded ordnance.

A similar situation of mounting tensions and violence also afflict communities in the San Juan and Baudó River Valleys, and along the tributaries of the Atrato River in the department of Chocó.

On April 6, 2006 more than 700 members of 5 Wounan indigenous communities from the Medio San Juan river basin fled their villages to seek security in the town of Istmina. The FARC accused 14 community leaders and teachers of being informants for the army and killed three people. The remaining people under threat, along with their families, were evacuated by United Nations agencies to Panama. In this instance, both local authorities and Acción Social failed to provide minimum levels of assistance, forcing the Church and international agencies to intervene in order to avert a humanitarian disaster. "Four children died during those two months because of epidemic diseases. We had to live crammed into four small makeshift shelters, and were forced to bathe in and cook with the polluted water of the river" said an indigenous leader. The group finally decided that living conditions were intolerable and opted to return to their villages. Since returning, the FARC has enforced tight social control over the group, and access to them has been cut off.

Throughout the month of February, more displacement to Istmina occurred from the Sipí river basin, caused by new paramilitary group activity, which has included multiple orders to villagers that they leave their houses within 8 hours. One family that was part of a group of more than 300 Afro-Colombians who arrived in Istmina on January 4, 2007 told RI: "We received some food, but only after 11 days, and it is not enough. No housing has been provided for us, and we don't feel like we have access to medical services, education or any way to support ourselves."

Based on solid evidence of increasing violence throughout Colombia, Refugees International recommends that:

The government of Colombia:

Increase its efforts to protect civilians from attacks from, and displacement caused by, illegal armed groups. Its security forces should do so in full respect of international humanitarian law.

Investigate the lack of criminal proceedings in Nariño and hold those who commit crimes against civilians accountable. Alleged links between the Colombian army, the police and paramilitary groups should be investigated immediately, and arrest and prosecution should follow where investigation warrant.

Provide additional resources to departmental and municipal authorities to strengthen their capacity to respond to the

housing, health and education needs of displaced families.

Acción Social:

Preposition food and non-food items in the cities of Istmina and Pasto in order to allow for a quickly accessible supply of goods for newly displaced groups. Closely monitor the provision of basic services to beneficiaries by its partners and local authorities.

Departmental and municipal authorities:

Prepare contingency plans to respond to new displacement. Plans should include the creation of dignified temporary housing, identification of cultivable lands for displaced households, and increase the response capability of local providers of basic services.

Create safety networks for particularly vulnerable displaced households such as women-headed households, orphans and the elderly, including sustained psychological services.

Allocate resources for the implementation of these plans and execute them when needed.

COLOMBIA: FLAWS IN REGISTERING DISPLACED PEOPLE LEADS TO DENIAL OF SERVICES

The government of Colombia should take immediate steps to ensure that people displaced as the result of the internal conflict are included in the Registry and provided the services guaranteed by law.

Colombian Law 387, which defines the government's obligations to IDPs, sets forth the following criteria for inclusion in the Registry: a person must be displaced because of violence or the threat of violence due to internal conflict, generalized violence, massive violations of human rights, or violations of International Humanitarian Law. Once people are forcibly displaced they must declare what happened to the Public Ministry, which then remits the declarations to the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation (known as Acción Social) for review.

The Colombian non-governmental organization Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES) and the Catholic Church keep independent databases of displaced people. The CODHES figures suggest that the government is greatly under-estimating the scale of displacement in the country. It gives a figure of 2.9 million people internally displaced from 1995 to 2006, while the government of Colombia cites 1.9 million for the same time period. Differences over cumulative statistic-keeping aside, displacement continues throughout Colombia on a massive scale; government figures indicate that more than 200,000 people are still displaced annually.

Refugees International is concerned that a very narrow interpretation of the law governing IDP registration results in the failure to recognize many of the causes of displacement, leading directly to undercounting and lack of response to the needs of the displaced. The restrictiveness of the law is evident in 2006 statistics from Nariño, where only 43% of applications were accepted into the Registry. In speaking with IDPs, RI identified a number of problems with the criteria used to add individuals to the Registry:

Displacement must be caused by conflict, but operations conducted by the army or police against civilian populations that do not involve other armed actors are not defined as conflict. For example, people displaced by police suppression of demonstrations in Remolino, Nariño in June of 2006 have not been included in the Registry.

Civilians displaced by anti-narcotic fumigations, which are often preceded by military operations, and the subsequent ruining of crops, are not eligible.

Displaced households traumatized by violence often fail to identify perpetrators and detail the circumstances that forced them to flee due to fear of reprisals. These applications are often rejected because they are considered incomplete.

Despite legal clarifications that allow IDPs to register after the first year of displacement and forgo emergency aid, found in Decree 2569/2000, the government continues to reject people who did not register within one year of their displacement.

The Register is used as the definitive list of people eligible for government services. Failure to be included on the Register denies the displaced a long list of services, including access to emergency assistance immediately after displacement, access to health, education and housing services, participation in training and income generation programs, and other forms of social support.

The government claims that once registered every individual remains on the list, but Refugees International documented dozens of cases in which the displaced have found themselves removed from the Register with no explanation. In town hall meetings with IDP communities in the departments of Cordoba, Chocó, and Nariño, RI found that as many as a third of the meeting's participants were told that their names could no longer be found on the registry by service providers. "Even when I presented the letter the government gave me saying I am in the Register, I was told that if I didn't show up in the computer, my letter was worthless," said one Afro-Colombian person displaced in Chocó.

The director of Acción Social in Cordoba told RI that these problems are due to the transfer of data in the Register from one database to another in the course of attempts to improve the system. Every time the data get transferred, names are dropped off by accident. But officials are either unable or unwilling to correct the resulting errors. A community leader from the Tierra Alta region of Cordoba told RI, "We gathered up all of the documentation from families in our community that had been dropped off the Register. We took these papers to the capital and presented them to Acción Social. That was six months ago, and no one has been put back on the list yet."

Additional problems with database management have the effect of excluding children and spouses from the Register, leaving some with access to services and others without. Currently, an entire family is put on the Register under the name of the head of household, but sometimes other family members are not included in the documentation. Acción Social staff explained these problems to RI as data entry errors, and maintained that these people could quickly get their family members reinstated. Despite this claim, the families RI spoke with had not succeeded in getting their loved ones on the Register.

Although Acción Social maintains the master Registry of all internally displaced people eligible for social services, this is not necessarily the database used for their actual provision. The database informs all agencies that participate in the Sistema Nacional de Atención Integral a la Población Desplazada (SNAIPD) or the National System for Unified Attention to the Displaced Population. Many of the agencies that participate in the SNAIPD maintain their own databases to determine who is actually eligible. RI received repeated complaints from displaced people that despite their inclusion on the Acción Social Register, they were not in the database for specific services.

The majority of complaints focused on the health care system. One man recently displaced to Pasto, Nariño told RI, "I am registered as an IDP and received my emergency food aid. But I am losing vision in one eye. I have not been able to get any treatment or medicine because I am told that I do not appear in the health system's database. I am afraid I will go blind."

Failure to be registered with Acción Social does not just impede access to government-provided services. Many international service provision agencies are working in partnership with Acción Social to target and implement their projects. Most notable in this category are contractors that use U.S. government funds, such as the Pan-American Development Foundation (PADF). Staff from a local partner of PADF in Chocó told RI of a project under development to improve or rebuild 200 houses for IDP and other local poor households. In the selection of displaced recipients, they were required to limit eligibility only to people included on the Register. In the first round of applications for participation in the project, almost half of the families had to be turned away because they were not on the Register, despite valid claims of need. Similarly, in Montería, Córdoba, a community-based organization that received funds from the Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF), which in turn received its funding from the U.S. government, had to limit its emergency assistance to individuals that were referred by Acción Social.

Refugees International Recommends:

The Government of Colombia:

Amend regulatory Decree 2567/2000 of Law 387 in order to expand the eligibility criteria for IDP status.

Acción Social:

Instruct regional offices to validate incomplete declarations from displaced people whenever there is a lack of contradictory information regarding the cause of displacement.

Instruct regional offices to allow IDPs who did not register within the first year of their displacement to be included in the Register and provide them access to the full range of services offered to long-term IDPs.

Fix database problems that cause people to be deleted from the Register, and choose one final database program that can manage Acción Social's needs.

Institute a transparent process to allow individuals who have been dropped from the Register to apply for reinstatement. Implement reasonable deadlines for placing a dropped individual back into the system.

Revise the operating procedures of the SNAIPD to require that all governmental service provision agencies have access to the Acción Social Register, and that the Register be the only database used to determine eligibility for services.

Donor governments:

Use independent means of determining IDP eligibility other than the Acción Social Register when providing services to displaced beneficiaries.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I recognize Mr. PITTS of Pennsylvania for such time as he may consume, the cosponsor of this resolution.

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman for his leadership on this issue, and I would like to thank the gentlelady for yielding time and thank her for her leadership in bringing this issue to the attention of the House.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 426, which recognizes 2007 as the Year of the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons

in Colombia, and offer support for efforts to ensure that the internally displaced people of Colombia receive the assistance and protection they need to rebuild their lives successfully.

I have worked with internally displaced persons around the world. These people are not refugees. They do not flee or leave their country; they are within their country displaced internally. And their stories are similar. People love their countries. They do not want to flee. But, because of circumstances, they are forced to leave their homes or their towns.

According to the United Nations, at the beginning of the year 2006, there were estimated to be 23.7 million IDPs, internally displaced people, around the world. That is a little over the size of the population of the entire State of Texas.

IDPs in Colombia frequently get caught in the conflict between the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, and government troops. It is important that this body support and encourage IDPs around the world and today, in particular, in Colombia. IDPs deserve recognition. They deserve the assistance and resources as they seek to rebuild their lives.

If you travel to these countries and meet with IDPs, many times you will find them despondent, despairing, saying, "Why don't we get the assistance that the U.N. and the U.S. give to refugees?" We need to recognize their plights, and I commend my colleagues, Mr. LANTOS and Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, for their leadership on bringing this issue to the attention of the House. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the resolution.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlelady from California, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, a member of the Committee on Appropriations and a Member with a long history of advocating for those unempowered persons around the world.

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, let me first thank the gentlelady for yielding and for her leadership on this issue and on so many issues that affect those who have no voice in our own country and throughout the world.

I rise in strong support of this resolution, which calls on the United States, the United Nations and the government of Colombia to recognize 2007 as the Year of the Rights of the Internally Displaced Persons in Colombia.

And let me thank my colleague, Mr. McGOVERN of Massachusetts, for being such a leader on this issue and on his tireless work to end human rights abuses around the world, particularly in Latin America, now as a Member of Congress but also in his prior life as a staff member. He is truly committed to ending human rights abuses, and his life's work is about that. So I thank him, and congratulations on this resolution.

Madam Speaker, after Sudan, Colombia has the largest number of inter-

nally displaced persons. Estimates range from 2 million to 3.6 million persons. Less than one-third of IDPs receive emergency assistance, and many have to wait months to receive that emergency aid.

Of those IDPs, traditionally marginalized, and I mean marginalized, Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities have been disproportionately affected.

In 1993, the National Development Plan for the Afro-Colombian population awarded land titles to protect ancestral property rights. Madam Speaker, in recent years Afro-Colombians have been forcibly displaced from more than half of their land. The April 2001 massacre of Afro-Colombians in the Naya region brought international attention to the plight of these communities. This resolution takes a very important step towards ending the violence and terror that Colombia's internally displaced persons have faced.

I hope all of us support this resolution. I am very delighted that this is a bipartisan resolution. I want to commend again Mr. McGOVERN for this. We must end this grave injustice.

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

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I thank the ranking member for her leadership on this issue and the chairman of the full committee, Mr. LANTOS. Again, my appreciation and the committee's appreciation to Mr. McGOVERN and Mr. PITTS for their joint collaboration on a very instructive and important lifesaving measure.

As someone who has recently returned, let me again say that the voices of these individuals have to be heard through the humanitarian efforts of this Congress.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, as Chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 426 and I want to thank my colleagues, Congressmen JIM McGOVERN and JOE PITTS for introducing this important resolution.

As my colleagues have said, Colombia's internally displaced population represents one of the worst humanitarian crises in the hemisphere, and the second largest population of internally displaced in the world.

I many estimate that Colombia has the highest number of displaced persons in the world after only Sudan—up to 3 million people.

According to Amnesty International, over 60 percent of these displaced persons have been forced off areas of mineral, agricultural or other economic importance.

In fact, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has deemed it the "greatest hidden humanitarian crisis in the world."

This problem is particularly severe among Afro-Colombians and the indigenous. I hope that Colombian President Alvaro Uribe and the Bush administration can concentrate on this during the next phase of Plan Colombia.

The Colombian government's proposal for the second phase of Plan Colombia—the Strategy for Strengthening Democracy and Social Development—focuses greater attention on socioeconomic aid. However, the President's FY 2008 budget for Colombia did not reflect this change.

Therefore, I was particularly pleased that my friend and colleague from the neighboring district to my own Chairwoman NITA LOWEY made welcome changes to our foreign assistance to Colombia in the FY 2008 House State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill.

In particular, I appreciate Chairwoman LOWEY's report language that indicates that U.S. foreign assistance to Colombia should be increased for organizations working with internally displaced persons (IDPs) and municipalities and departments with high IDP populations.

I was also pleased that funds in the FY 2008 Foreign Ops bill were targeted specifically towards Afro-Colombians who as I noted are among the chief victims in Colombia's civil conflict.

I would be remiss not to mention that I have been impressed by the significant progress made by President Uribe in reducing kidnappings, homicides and massacres in his country. No one can deny these results.

But I believe that we must now build on this success by working together in improving social conditions in Colombia, chief among them the plight of Colombia's internally displaced.

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 426, recognizing 2007 as the Year of the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons in Colombia, and offering support for efforts to ensure that the internally displaced people of Colombia receive the assistance and protection they need to rebuild their lives successfully.

This resolution recognizes the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' finding that Colombia's estimated 2-3 million internally displaced persons (IDP) ranks only second to Sudan as the world's largest internally displaced population. As a close ally and strategic partner in Latin America, it is in the deep interest of the United States to assist Colombia's IDPs in rebuilding their lives in a dignified, safe, and sustainable manner.

The violence and poor economic situation in the country has disproportionately affected the Afro-Colombian community. Between 1995 and 2005, an estimated 61 percent of Afro-Colombians who received land titles through "Law 70" were forcibly displaced from their homes in a deliberate strategy of war by armed groups, many of whom are paramilitaries. In April of this year, my colleagues and I sent a letter to Secretary Rice urging her to ensure that the needs of Afro-Colombians and IDPs are a prime focus of American policy and assistance. It remains our recommendation that initiatives that help develop the capacity of Afro-Colombian communities, including technology transfers, management expertise, global distribution, and economic growth opportunities, and foreign investment that respects the collective land rights of Afro-Colombian communities, would best stabilize the living condition for the impoverished communities.

Furthermore, there must be a concerted effort to provide diplomatic and technical support to help secure the return of land to Afro-Colombians and indigenous communities internally displaced by violence, and to increase aid to protection programs. As a newly appointed member of the House Appropriations Committee, I am very pleased to report that the recent State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill for FY2008 includes important language in assisting Colombian IDPs through

stronger economic aid. It is our hope that the leadership of the United States through the implementation of progressive programs will finally help heal this open wound on universal human rights.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 426 as we help internally displaced persons of our close ally Colombia rebuild their lives safely and swiftly.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. DEGETTE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 426, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONDEMNING THE DECISION BY THE UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE UNION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO SUPPORT A BOYCOTT OF ISRAELI ACADEMIA

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 467) condemning the decision by the University and College Union of the United Kingdom to support a boycott of Israeli academia, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 467

Whereas, on May 30, 2007, the leadership of the University and College Union (UCU) of the United Kingdom voted in favor of a motion to consider at the branch level a boycott of Israeli faculty and academic institutions;

Whereas the UCU was created in 2006 out of a merger of the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE);

Whereas both AUT (in 2005) and NATFHE (in 2006) have passed resolutions supporting a boycott of Israeli academics and academic institutions;

Whereas, however, the AUT boycott resolution was overturned after one month in a revote, and the NATFHE boycott resolution was voided when the two organizations merged into the UCU;

Whereas Britain's National Union of Journalists called for a boycott of Israeli goods in April 2007;

Whereas the UCU boycott motion appears to have spawned similar movements in Britain to boycott Israel economically and culturally, and the country's largest labor union, UNISON, said it would follow the union of university instructors in weighing punitive measures against Israel;

Whereas these unions have a hypocritical double standard in condemning Israel, a free and democratic state, while completely ignoring gross human rights abuses occurring throughout the Middle East and around the world;

Whereas Article 19, section 2, of the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that, "Everyone shall have the

right to . . . receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice";

Whereas these and other attempts to stifle intellectual freedom through the imposition of an academic boycott are morally offensive and contrary to the values of freedom of speech and freedom of inquiry;

Whereas American Nobel laureate Prof. Steven Weinberg refused to participate in a British academic conference due to the National Union of Journalist's boycott and stated that he perceived "a widespread anti-Israel and anti-Semitic current in British opinion"; and

Whereas the senseless boycotting of Israeli academics contributes to the demonization and attempted delegitimization of the State of Israel: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns the vote by the leadership of the University and College Union of May 30, 2007, to consider at the branch level a boycott of Israeli academics and academic institutions;

(2) urges the international scholarly community, the European Union, and individual governments, to reject, or continue to oppose vigorously, calls for an academic boycott of Israel;

(3) urges educators and governments throughout the world, especially democratically-elected governments, to reaffirm the importance of academic freedom;

(4) urges other unions and organizations to reject the troubling and disturbing actions of the UCU leadership; and

(5) urges the general members of the UCU to reject the call of the union's leadership to boycott Israel.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROSELEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me first express our great appreciation to our colleague from Pennsylvania, Representative PATRICK MURPHY, for introducing this important and timely measure.

Madam Speaker, on May 30, the University and College Union of the United Kingdom voted to urge its membership to boycott Israeli faculty in academic institutions, an extraordinary action by men and women of letters in a free society and the belief in academic freedom.

Mr. MURPHY's resolution today voices the extreme disapproval of the United States Congress of the Union's shortsighted, simpleminded and singularly