

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

offensive action. What the University and College Union has done flies in the face of the very values that define democracies and are critical to their success, freedom of inquiry and freedom of speech, or freedom to disagree.

If the University and College Union follows through with this boycott, it will also spark numerous individual and institutional boycotts against British academics and others who likewise have similar values. An academic boycott is a blatant effort to stifle free thinking and debate, the hallmarks of a democratic society. From any point of view, it is wrong. Only in the most extreme moral exigencies would I find the need to take such an action and for such an action to be acceptable.

□ 1815

In this particular instance, however, it seems outright wrong. By singling out the conduct of Israel, which is a democratic and pluralistic society surrounded by states with many charges of human rights violations against them, the union's leadership has revealed its true purpose, to demonize Israel. It is simply inexplicable how the union has turned a blind eye to the world's worst violators of human rights and targeted Israel only.

If anything, Israeli universities are one of the few places in the world where one will find Jews and Arabs learning side by side. The union's selective sympathy demonstrates a profound ignorance of Israel's academic community and the threats that the country faces.

Having personally visited Israel and its academic institutions, I can tell you that Jews and Arabs do study side by side, and the good news is that they learn, and they learn from each other, and out of that comes positive reaction to the conflicts of the region.

The events of this past month in the Gaza Strip in which Hamas lay waste to the legitimate institutions of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza further underscore the profound misjudgment of union leaders to narrowly condemn Israel.

The University and College Union of the United Kingdom has thus far chosen to ignore these developments and instead focused its wrath on Israel's ongoing efforts to defend itself against Hamas and other terrorists. If the union truly cared about helping Palestinians, it would help nurture dialogue among Israeli and Palestinian academics and come to the resolution that the two states must live side by side, and Israel has a right to exist. It would support institutions that help to develop, not stunt the educational sector for Israelis and Palestinians. And most importantly, it would condemn Hamas and others that repeatedly hijack and sabotage any possibility of a lasting two-state solution to the conflict.

By blaming the victims for the terrorists' crimes, the union's actions represent a bizarre inversion of the most

fundamental principles of human rights. People of conscience have no choice but to speak out against this hypocrisy. In the face of terror and those who are morally blind to it, we must stand up for the values we cherish: openness, dialogue, democracy and freedom.

That is why Mr. MURPHY's legislation is so important, and that is why I call upon all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 467, which condemns the decision by the leadership of the University and College Union of the United Kingdom to support a boycott of Israeli academia.

This is not the first time, Madam Speaker, that we have faced such a challenge from the fringes of this academic establishment. In fact, on May 29, 2006, the British National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education falsely accused Israel and the Government of Israel of practicing what they said was "apartheid policies" and adopted a resolution to boycott the faculty of Israel and its academic institutions that do not denounce these nonexistent policies.

A similar resolution in favor again of an academic boycott of Israel was passed by the British Association of University Teachers, AUT, in April 2005, and then rescinded 1 month later by a special council of the AUT.

Fortunately, Madam Speaker, mainstream academics within the United Kingdom and internationally rejected these tragic and derisive attempts to undermine the principles of academic freedom and the free State of Israel.

Make no mistake, Madam Speaker, Israel is the strongest ally of the United States and a true democratic partner in the Middle East, one which upholds the principles and values of academic freedoms.

The boycotting of Israeli academics only serves to demonize the State of Israel. Moreover, the boycott of academic institutions from democratic countries represents a dangerous assault on the principles of academic freedom and open exchanges.

Representatives of the British Government, as well as many university presidents, academic bodies and leading scholars in the United States and Great Britain, have repeatedly spoken out against such campaigns.

I especially wish to highlight the strong voice of support from Donna Shalala, the President of the University of Miami in my congressional district, in favor of this resolution. Let us aid the efforts of these distinguished scholars and officials by passing this critical resolution before us tonight and demonstrating to the world that the United States Congress believes in free minds and free countries.

Madam Speaker, I commend my distinguished colleagues and friends, Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania and Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for introducing this important resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, it gives me particular pleasure to introduce and to yield 6 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from the Eighth District of Pennsylvania, Representative PATRICK J. MURPHY, a member of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and a veteran of the Iraq war. I believe this may be his first legislative initiative, and we yield to him 6 minutes as we congratulate him for his leadership.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlelady from Texas for her leadership on this issue and the gentlelady from Florida.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer a resolution to let the world know that this House stands opposed to anti-Semitism and reaffirms our support for academic freedom. It is sad that in this day and age I would have to offer such a resolution, but the actions of a misguided group thousands of miles away have forced this body to act.

Madam Speaker, in May the leadership of the University and College Union, or UCU, the main union representing 120,000 British college teachers, called for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions. As a former professor myself at the United States Military Academy at West Point, I know how wrong this action is from an academic and diplomatic perspective.

This boycott will sever academic contacts and exchanges of personnel between British and Israeli academic institutions, as well as have a significant economic impact, given that the union enjoys significant influence in Britain.

The reasons given by the leadership of the UCU for endorsing a boycott consist of the same tired propaganda and inflammatory rhetoric typically used by the enemies of Israel and do not deserve to be repeated on the floor of this distinguished body. This call for a boycott by the UCU is even more disturbing, given that Britain's National Union of Journalists called for a similar boycott this past April.

It should come as no surprise that these boycotts have drawn harsh criticism. In a recent editorial entitled "Malicious Boycotts," the New York Times called them nonsense, writing, and I quote, "Who would respect the judgment of a scholar who selects or rejects colleagues on political grounds? Who would trust the dispatches of a reporter who has openly engaged against one side of a conflict? Critical thinking and well thought-out criticism are intrinsic to good scholarship and good journalism. These boycotts represent neither."

The criticism, though, does not end there. Now former Prime Minister

Tony Blair has criticized the boycott saying, “I hope very much that decision is overturned because it does absolutely no good for the peace process or for relations in that part of the world.”

Madam Speaker, the former Prime Minister is right. We need to build dialogue and trust in the Middle East and we cannot do that without our greatest ally there, the State of Israel. Israel is a stable democracy that shares our values. This is rare in a region of the world where few nations have democracy, rule of law and religious freedom.

As an Iraq war veteran, I know firsthand just how dangerous that part of the world truly is. That’s why when Israel comes under attack from hatemongers, it’s the American values that are also under such attack. Today, by passing this bipartisan resolution, we’re stating with one voice that this Congress will stand up and defend our friend, the State of Israel.

Specifically, my resolution condemns the decision by the UCU leadership to boycott Israeli academia and urges the general membership to reject the boycott. It also urges the academic community and individual governments to reject any call for a boycott of Israel and to reaffirm the importance of academic freedom.

Limiting academic exchange and shrinking the marketplace of ideas only hinders our ability to bring peace to the Middle East and to help solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I want to make sure that I thank some of my distinguished colleagues who were instrumental in bringing this resolution to the floor today; the chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe, ROBERT WEXLER; and the chairman and ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, TOM LANTOS; and Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. These three distinguished Members have proven themselves to be leaders in standing up for Israel, and I thank them for all their work in bringing this resolution to the floor.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will conclude by urging swift passage of this critical resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I’d like to congratulate the gentleman from Pennsylvania for this very important resolution, and I yield back the balance of our time.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, let me add my appreciation to Congressman MURPHY for a powerful statement on the floor in affirmation of the sense of responsibility involving academic freedom and the important responsibility in opposition to anti-Semitism that seems to plague this world on many occasions. Let me thank him for his leadership, thank Mr. BURTON and thank the ranking member and the chairman of the full committee.

With that, I ask my colleagues, with great enthusiasm, to support this resolution.

Mr. WAXMAN. Madam Speaker, Anti-Israel propaganda has reached a new low, with a re-

newed campaign by a group of British academics to boycott Israeli academics and universities.

Spearheaded by the British University and College Union, the initiative calls on British academics to refrain from collaborating on research with Israeli counterparts or working with journals published by Israeli companies.

It is incumbent upon the United States to oppose this assault on academic freedom and stand against efforts to isolate Israeli institutions. While I am encouraged that there is little support for this initiative beyond a vocal and extreme minority, it appears that similar undertakings have been attempted by British unions representing journalists and government workers.

I welcome the bold statements by the UK Education Minister and university presidents across the United States condemning this misguided crusade. Those who sincerely believe in the cause of peace should encourage dialogue, cooperation, and the free exchange of ideas. It is disappointing that the Palestinian trade unions promoting these kinds of boycotts are more interested in promoting prejudice than in building a future of coexistence.

With this resolution, let us raise our voices in solidarity with Israel and reaffirm the fundamental values of academic freedom.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, academic freedom is one of the bedrocks of a free society. This is known in the United Kingdom, just as it is known in the United States and other democratic nations.

Among the nations with an open academic climate is the democratic state of Israel. The views expressed on its campuses span the spectrum from left to right and liberal to conservative. Its students are of all ethnicities, speaking many different languages. But, on May 30, the University and College Union of the United Kingdom voted to urge its membership to consider boycotting Israeli faculty and academic institutions. This deplorable action by men and women of letters runs against the very tenets of free academic exploration. How can people of learning expect to share the studies of the great questions of our time if they are not speaking to one another?

Moreover, I fear that the reason behind this extraordinary step is much more dark and ominous. I believe that underlying this attack on Israel’s academia is a not-so-well-veiled anti-Semitism. By singling out the conduct of Israel, a democratic and pluralistic country surrounded by a sea of dictatorships, the Union’s leadership has taken absurdity and hypocrisy to new heights.

The legislation on the floor of the House today voices Congress’s extreme disapproval of the Union’s short-sighted, bigoted, and offensive action. I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 467 and tell the nations of the world that academic societies are no places for closed-minded, hate-filled efforts to stifle free exchange.

Ms. WASSERMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 467, condemning the appalling and frightful decision by the University and College Union of the United Kingdom to support a boycott of Israel academia. I commend my colleague from Pennsylvania, Representative PATRICK MURPHY, for his leadership in this critical issue.

The University and College Union of the United States made the determination to boycott Israel based on a biased, ignorant, and

destructive targeting of the State of Israel, the only free and democratic country in the Middle East.

The UCU’s vote to freeze European funding for Israeli academic institutions, as well as condemning “the complicity of Israeli academia in the occupation,” is disgraceful. The Union’s discriminatory actions echo the anti-Semitic rhetoric that has reverberated throughout history and alarmingly, as the UCU vote attests, is still with us today.

Furthermore, the UCU boycott strips the principle of academic freedom from one of the world’s most established democracies, undermining the academic dialogue and exchange of ideas that foster and sustain intellectual pursuit. These senseless initiatives only defame the reputation of British academics as they violate fundamental standards of academic freedom by censuring the only country in the Middle East where open scholarship and debate are not only allowed, but encouraged.

As a Member of Congress, serving a nation founded on the ideals of democracy and freedom, I urge my fellow Members to support H.R. 467, condemning the decision by the University and College Union of the United Kingdom to support a boycott of Israeli academia.

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I rise with serious concerns over this legislation. Let me first state that I am personally not in favor of the University and College Union of the United Kingdom boycott against Israeli academia. I oppose all such refusals to engage and interact even where strong disagreement exists. I believe such blockades, be they against countries or academic groups, to be counterproductive. I strongly encourage academic and cultural exchanges, as they are the best way to foster international understanding and prevent wars.

My concerns are about this particular piece of legislation, however. I simply do not understand why it is the business of the United States Congress—particularly considering the many problems we have at home and with U.S. policy abroad—to bring the weight of the U.S. government down on an academic disagreement half a world away. Do we really believe that the U.S. Government should be sticking its nose into a dispute between British and Israeli academics? Is there no dispute in no remote corner of the globe in which we don’t feel the need to become involved?

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam 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. 467, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

## EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE NEW POWER-SHARING GOVERNMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 482) expressing support for the new power-sharing government in Northern Ireland, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

## H. RES. 482

Whereas the Good Friday Agreement, signed on April 10, 1998, in Belfast, and endorsed in a referendum by the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, set forth a blueprint for lasting peace in Northern Ireland;

Whereas on May 8, 2007, leaders from the major political parties in Northern Ireland took office as part of an agreement to share power in accordance with the democratic mandate of the Good Friday Agreement;

Whereas on May 8, 2007, Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness became Northern Ireland's first minister and deputy first minister, marking the beginning of a new era of power-sharing;

Whereas Dr. Paisley, the Democratic Unionist leader, and Mr. McGuinness, the Sinn Fein negotiator, have put aside decades of conflict and moved toward historic reconciliation and unity in Northern Ireland;

Whereas on May 8, 2007, Dr. Paisley declared, "I believe that Northern Ireland has come to a time of peace, a time when hate will no longer rule.;"

Whereas Mr. McGuinness declared this new government to be "a fundamental change of approach, with parties moving forward together to build a better future for the people that we represent";

Whereas former British Prime Minister Tony Blair declared that "[T]oday marks not just the completion of the transition from conflict to peace, but also gives the most visible expression to the fundamental principle on which the peace process has been based. The acceptance that the future of Northern Ireland can only be governed successfully by both communities working together, equal before the law, equal in the mutual respect shown by all and equally committed both to sharing power and to securing peace. That is the only basis upon which true democracy can function and by which normal politics can at last after decades of violence and suffering come to this beautiful but troubled land.;"

Whereas the Taoiseach of Ireland, Bertie Ahern, declared that "[O]n this day, we mark the historic beginning of a new era for Northern Ireland. An era founded on peace and partnership. An era of new politics and new realities.;"

Whereas both communities have worked together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect to solve the problems of concern to all the people of Northern Ireland, including the decision by all the major political parties to join the Northern Ireland Police Board and support the Police Service of Northern Ireland; and

Whereas President George W. Bush, like his predecessor President William J. Clinton, has worked tirelessly to bring the parties in Northern Ireland together in support of fulfilling the promises of the Good Friday Agreement: Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) The United States stands strongly in support of the new power-sharing government in Northern Ireland;

(2) political leaders of Northern Ireland, former Prime Minister Tony Blair, and Taoiseach Bertie Ahern should be commended for acting in the best interest of the people of Northern Ireland by forming the new power-sharing government;

(3) May 8, 2007, will be remembered as an historic day and an important milestone in cementing peace and unity for Northern Ireland and a shining example for nations around the world plagued by internal conflict and violence; and

(4) the United States stands ready to support this new government and to work with the people of Northern Ireland as they strive for lasting peace for the people of Northern Ireland.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) 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 include extraneous materials 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.

I would like, first of all, to commend our distinguished colleague, Mr. GALLEGLY of California, for introducing an important resolution that commemorates a historic occasion in the quest for lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

## □ 1830

On May 8, Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern pronounced "the historic beginning of a new era for Northern Ireland, an era founded on peace and partnership, an era of new politics and new realities."

That day indeed marked a new era as age-old rivals Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party and Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein became Northern Ireland's First Minister and Deputy First Minister, respectively, taking their places in the new power-sharing government at Stormont.

May 8 also marked the end of direct rule from London and the end of guns and bombs as a form of political expression. These developments provide an opportunity for the people of Northern Ireland to govern themselves.

Finally, that day marked the end of decades of conflict and gave hope to the spirit of reconciliation, hope that may inspire those in other communities ravaged by sectarian conflict to keep striving to find peace. We think in particular today of the conflicts of Iraq, Lebanon, Israel and Palestine, Cyprus, and Kashmir. The end to civil wars can bring true peace. Ireland is a true example. And since, of course, the

war in Iraq is raging as a civil war, this is a most potent model of success for peace and reconciliation.

We know it will not be easy for these dividing societies to achieve lasting peace, but it was not an easy road for Northern Ireland's war-weary politicians. The prospect of reconciliation was tantalizingly close in April, 1998, when political leaders signed the Good Friday Agreement and voters endorsed its provisions in a referendum. I am reminded of traveling to Ireland with then chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Ben Gilman, as we went from area to area talking with the disparate groups addressing the question of peace in Ireland. In December, 1999, the new Northern Ireland Executive finally met for the first time after repeated failures to agree upon its membership.

During the next 3 years, the assembly operated in fits and starts as political leaders sought to reach agreement on outstanding issues, such as the decommissioning of weapons and reform of the police service. Trust between the two communities deteriorated to such a point that devolution was suspended in October, 2002, and not restored until this past May. It is due in large part to the tireless efforts of Northern Ireland's political representatives as well as the constant encouragement of Ireland and Britain's long-serving leaders, Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair, that solutions were eventually found to the most vexing problems. And may we be reminded that there were those who were willing to lay down their weapons.

I would also like to pay tribute to the efforts of Presidents Bush and Clinton as well as former Senator George Mitchell, who worked together with British and Irish leaders to fulfill the promises of the Good Friday Agreement. Senator George Mitchell worked without ceasing and worked with passion and heart.

It is, of course, the people of Northern Ireland who are the biggest winners, as we in this House hope the establishment of the new power-sharing government heralds the dawn of a truly new era characterized by peace, prosperity and mutual respect for all races and religions.

Madam Speaker, I strongly support this resolution, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I am pleased to take this opportunity to rise in strong support of House Resolution 482, expressing support for the new power-sharing arrangement for the government in Northern Ireland.

Madam Speaker, on May 8, long-standing enemies in the violent conflicts in Northern Ireland came together in a historic agreement to put down violence and instead sit together in Parliament. With the formation of a