

I rise today as a proud cosponsor of this bill and as co-chairman of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus.

Mr. Speaker, this administration talks about spreading democracy and expanding liberty. In the case of Taiwan, we don't need to topple a dictator in order to show our support for one of the world's most embattled democracies, we simply need to help them protect themselves. And yet we cannot get this administration to tell us if they in fact will deliver the arms that they have already promised to Taiwan. Will they allow Taiwan to acquire the weapons they need, or will this administration continue to curry favor with the Chinese and refuse to help our democratic ally in its time of need?

We have written letters, Members of this body have made statements, and now we're passing a law just to get simple answers from the President of the United States. We cannot and should not wait any longer. Taiwan and its democratic citizens ought not have to wait any longer. Let us deliver the arms that we have promised to the Taiwan people.

I urge support for this bill.

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

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6646, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

UNITED STATES COMMITMENT TO PRESERVATION OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL SITES

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 255) expressing the sense of Congress regarding the United States commitment to preservation of religious and cultural sites and condemning instances where sites are desecrated, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 255

Whereas the Congress is committed to protecting and preserving the cultural heritage of all national, religious, and ethnic groups, including sacred sites of such groups, including cemeteries in the United States and abroad;

Whereas the Holocaust annihilated much of Europe's Jewish population and in many countries, none were left to care for the communal properties that represent a historic culture in the area and constitute an integral part of the Jewish religion;

Whereas the Holocaust and 45 years of atheistic, Communist governments created a critical need that led to the establishment of

the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad;

Whereas the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad is tasked with identifying and reporting on cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings in Eastern and Central Europe that are associated with the heritage of United States citizens and obtaining assurances from the governments of those regions that the properties will be protected and preserved;

Whereas the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad has in effect over 20 bilateral agreements between the United States and foreign governments assuring the protection and preservation of cultural property;

Whereas many properties continue to be endangered and many governments and communities continue to face fundamental and compelling challenges in the preservation of these properties;

Whereas Congress is outraged by the construction that occurred within the perceived boundaries of the historic Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania;

Whereas cemeteries are sacred sites and are established to remain undisturbed in perpetuity, and the sanctity of a cemetery is determined by the bodies buried therein;

Whereas construction of a commercial building on the site disgraces the cemetery, it does not change its status;

Whereas experts within Lithuania and from around the world community believe that the cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, is a Jewish cemetery and is therefore sacred ground;

Whereas the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, is known by scholars within Lithuania and from around the world as the first Jewish cemetery in Vilnius and dates back to the 15th century, and it is believed that before the government closed the cemetery in the early 1800s, more than 50,000 Jews were buried there;

Whereas the fact that the Government of Lithuania has allowed construction to take place within the perceived boundaries of the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, and that desecration continues into the 21st century is an affront to the international Jewish community, the American people, and everyone who values religious freedom and ethnic diversity around the world;

Whereas the failure of the Government of Lithuania to protect the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, violates the October 15, 2002, bilateral agreement between Lithuania and the United States on the protection and preservation of certain cultural properties, including cemeteries;

Whereas specifically, Article 1 of the bilateral agreement states: "[E]ach party will take appropriate steps to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of all national, religious, or ethnic groups that reside or resided in its territory, including victims of genocide during the Second World War. The term 'cultural heritage' for purposes of this agreement means '... cemeteries, and memorials to the dead...'; and

Whereas Congress welcomed the decision by the Government of Lithuania to conduct a geophysical survey of the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, in the summer of 2008 to establish definitively the boundaries of the cemetery, as well as to designate the land as a cultural heritage site: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) expresses strong support for the work of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad and for the European countries that continue to work to preserve sacred historical sites, despite ongoing challenges;

(2) expresses strong sentiments to the Government of Lithuania that the people of the United States believe the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, must not be desecrated;

(3) calls on the Government of Lithuania to give serious consideration to the recommendations being prepared by the international experts group on the basis of the geophysical survey of the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, and to take steps that guarantee the permanent preservation of the cemetery site, including the possibility of placing the land under government ownership; and

(4) declares that constructive bilateral relations between Lithuania and the United States are important to the governments, citizens, and shared agendas of both countries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the resolution and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I want to thank our colleague, Mr. FERGUSON of New Jersey, for introducing this resolution that draws congressional attention to an ongoing dispute in Lithuania about construction on the grounds of a former Jewish cemetery in that country. I would also like to thank my good friend, Representative ROS-LEHTINEN, for her leadership on this issue, and recognize the efforts of Representative SHIMKUS in seeking to find a constructive solution to this problem.

One of many tragic consequences of the Holocaust was the decimation of Jewish populations that would otherwise have cared for communal property that represents an important part of Europe's history. The Jewish cemetery in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, is just one example. Archival documents suggest it was established as Vilnius's first Jewish cemetery in the 15th century, served as the burial place for more than 50,000 Jews, and was closed by Czarist Russia in 1831.

As part of our ongoing dialogue with Lithuania regarding the 2002 U.S.-Lithuanian agreement on the preservation of the cultural property of the victims of the Nazi regime, Congress has been concerned about construction on perceived boundary lines of this cemetery.

Despite repeated requests by the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius and Jewish organizations to the Lithuanian Government to address this issue, there has been little movement in recent years.

Congress welcomed the decision by the Government of Lithuania to conduct a geological survey and archaeological investigation of the site this past summer to establish these cemetery boundaries. While the Government's designation of the area as a cultural heritage site is also a helpful step, the fact that the entire site remains in the hands of a private developer raises concerns about the prospects of future construction on the site.

Congress feels very strongly that the Lithuanian Government should take steps to guarantee the permanent preservation of the Snipiskes cemetery, including the possibility of placing the land under government ownership. The government should also consider the recommendations of the International Experts Commission regarding the preservation of these sacred grounds.

The United States greatly values its long friendship with Lithuania, which could be further enhanced by a prompt and sensitive resolution to this difficult situation.

I strongly support this resolution and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

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, I rise to express my support for House Concurrent Resolution 255, which deals with the preservation of the historic Jewish cemetery in Lithuania. I thank our colleague, Congressman FERGUSON, for introducing this important measure.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us speaks to the preservation of a historic Jewish cemetery located in Vilnius, Lithuania, a city that was once a major center of Jewish culture in all of Europe. That cemetery has been in existence since the 13th century and is considered by religious experts around the globe and those of the Jewish faith to be sacred ground.

In 2002, the Government of Lithuania entered into a bilateral agreement with the United States to ensure the protection and the preservation of certain historical, cultural and sacred properties, including cemeteries such as the one in Vilnius. Regrettably, despite that bilateral agreement, construction of a condominium building took place within the perceived boundaries of the Jewish cemetery in Lithuania.

The resolution before us expresses the view that the Jewish cemetery in Vilnius must not be desecrated. It urges the Lithuanian Government to protect the cemetery site from future construction and desecration.

I want to note at this point, Mr. Speaker, that Lithuania has indeed been our ally in NATO since 2004. In-

deed, the United States and Lithuania have had a strong relationship. And I believe that bilateral cooperation on issues of importance such as this issue that is addressed by the measure before us today will strengthen that relationship.

This resolution simply calls on the Lithuanian Government to do more to protect and preserve this cemetery site. Such action by the Government of Lithuania would indeed reaffirm the values shared by our two nations, and in so doing, enhance the broader relationship between the United States and Lithuania.

I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

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

Mr. CROWLEY. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FERGUSON), the author of this resolution and a member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank my friend and colleague, Mr. CROWLEY, for working with me on this resolution, and I appreciate his leadership on the floor today. I want to thank Chairman BERMAN of the committee and Ranking Member ROS-LEHTINEN for their strong support in helping us bring this resolution to the floor today.

This Congress is committed to protecting and preserving the cultural heritage of all national, religious, and ethnic groups, including sacred sites such as the cemeteries here in the United States and around the world.

There are over 20 bilateral agreements between the United States and foreign governments assuring the protection and preservation of cultural property. However, in recent months, the bilateral agreement between the United States and Lithuania has, unfortunately, been broken.

We're disappointed that there has been a lack of meaningful action by the Lithuanian Government in preserving the Jewish cemetery in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania. Instead of preserving this site, the government in Lithuania has allowed an apartment complex to be built over the assumed boundaries of this particular cemetery.

Now, cemeteries are sacred sites and are established to remain undisturbed in perpetuity, and the sanctity of a cemetery is determined by the bodies and the families of those bodies that are buried in them. This resolution expresses this body's deep commitment to preserving these sacred cultural sites. Those buried there and their families deserve nothing less than that.

As I close, I just want to again thank the chairman of the committee, my friend from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) and the ranking member of the committee, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I also want to thank my legislative director, Mandy Tharpe, who worked very hard on drafting this legislation, and all the

members of the staff for helping us with this important resolution.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my support for House Concurrent Resolution 255, expressing the sense of Congress regarding the United States commitment to preservation of religious and cultural sites and condemning instances where sites are desecrated. The heart of this bill is protecting the memory and beliefs of those around the world. Protecting the beliefs of others allows me to rest easy that my beliefs and the beliefs of those in the 18th Congressional District of Texas are kept safe.

Protecting religious freedoms isn't just about allowing anyone to pray to whatever God they believe in, it is also about allowing them to have religious sites that are safe from molestation by people who disagree with what those places symbolize and embody. These sites are more than Churches, Synagogues, and Mosques; they are gardens, statues, and cemeteries.

Before 9/11 happened, the Taliban was still in the midst of wreaking havoc on all those who believed in things different from them. In March 2001, Supreme Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar issued an edict against un-Islamic graven images. This edict made two mountain sized, 1,500 year old sandstone statues of Buddha against the law. Through hand placed dynamite and tank shells fired from below, these two majestic monuments of sixth century ingenuity were reduced to rubble. As if this wasn't bad enough, the culprits of this despicable deed went through local museums with sledge hammers finding anything that was related to other religions. After it was over, 2,500 artifacts from centuries passed were lost forever to what can only be described as petty, but effective, vandalism.

Mr. Speaker, destruction like this should not be allowed. This does not just hurt those who follow the teachings of Buddha; this hurts those who have their own beliefs shared by people around the world. Christian burial grounds, Jewish monuments to the Holocaust, and Islamic mosques need to be protected to assure that every man, woman, and child has the right to practice whatever religion they want.

Second only to personal safety, in regard to defending religious rights, is safeguarding the sites that are sacred to a religion. Buddhists around the world were gravely hurt by the destruction of their statues. Before the Taliban had come to power, these 15 story tall monuments had served as a beacon for Buddhists everywhere. They could come and view the proof that people just like them 15 centuries ago had the same basic beliefs that they did. This was proof that this faith could endure and in fact, had for generations.

This bill will express to the world, in a clear and unwavering voice, that the United States of America will not tolerate such brutal attacks on religion. Residents of my district know that if anyone in the world was attacking their most tightly held beliefs and religious ideals that the Federal Government would not sit idly by and watch as a repeat of the destruction on the mountainside of Bamiyan, Afghanistan, occurred.

Sites from Jerusalem's Wailing Wall to the supreme holy city of Mecca to the Vatican City should remain protected from those who don't believe what these places represent. In the end, the right to practice any religion you

choose doesn't just protect those who practice; it protects those who don't practice. Religion, like speech, is such an engrained belief in our country, since the time of the founding of the country, that it must be protected at all costs.

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

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 255, 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. FERGUSON. Mr. 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 motion will be postponed.

□ 1545

CONDEMNING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1227) condemning sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and calling on the international community to take immediate actions to respond to the violence, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1227

Whereas the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has been recognized as the worst crisis of violence against women in the world, according to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women;

Whereas the Democratic Republic of the Congo has experienced the world's deadliest crisis since World War II, with an estimated 5.4 million deaths since 1998;

Whereas hundreds of thousands of women and girls have experienced an exceptionally violent type of rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the full extent of incidence of sexual violence is unknown as most survivors experience repeated rapes, live in inaccessible areas, are afraid to report the attacks, or did not survive them;

Whereas sexual violence is used as a method of warfare by all parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a means to terrorize and destabilize entire communities;

Whereas in 2007, Malteser International estimated that 70 percent of all rapes in South Kivu were committed by nonstate armed groups, including foreign militia from Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, 16 percent by Democratic Republic of the Congo military forces, and 14 percent by civilians;

Whereas control over the Democratic Republic of the Congo's natural resources is central to the ongoing conflict;

Whereas in 2002, the United Nations Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Nat-

ural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo alleged nine United States business enterprises to be in violation of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises;

Whereas, on July 30, 2007, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women reported, "Women are brutally gang raped, often in front of their families and communities. In numerous cases, male relatives are forced at gun point to rape their own daughters, mothers or sisters. Frequently women are shot or stabbed in their genital organs, after they are raped. Women, who survived months of enslavement, [said] that their tormentors had forced them to eat excrements or the human flesh of murdered relatives";

Whereas rape with the use of knives, gun barrels, beer bottles, cassava roots, or sticks can result in a tear or fistula between a woman's vagina and bladder or rectum, or both, causing the development of traumatic gynecologic fistula;

Whereas some women and young girls reportedly have had their lips or tongues cut off by their attackers so that they won't report the crime to authorities;

Whereas the Panzi Hospital, a specialized institution in South Kivu, receives about 3,500 cases annually of women who suffer from traumatic fistula and other severe genital injuries resulting from these sexual atrocities;

Whereas at Heal Africa Hospital in Goma, doctors reported treating 4,800 rape victims and, in 2005, doctors performed 242 fistula-repair operations;

Whereas current activities to treat survivors meet only a portion of the need;

Whereas the scope of the sexual violence affects women and girls of all ages, from 10 months to 80 years old;

Whereas a culture of impunity continues in eastern Congo and rape has become a societal norm;

Whereas in July 2006, the Congolese Parliament passed the Law on the Suppression of Sexual Violence, which attempted to strengthen penalties and criminal procedures, but in reality, little action has been taken by the authorities to implement the law and perpetrators continue to enjoy impunity; and

Whereas the United States Government has codified its commitment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-456): Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) strongly condemns the use of all forms of sexual violence, including rape, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(2) condemns the actions of all armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including militias and rebel groups, such as the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), Mai-Mai Militia, and the Front for Patriotic Resistance of Ituri, that have created a culture of impunity for rape and sexual violence;

(3) calls on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to develop a strategy to address and end the large-scale sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by—

(A) protecting its civilians from violence and enforcing and respecting the rule of law in accordance with international norms and standards;

(B) holding all armed groups accountable for their actions by implementing judicial reforms to investigate, arrest, and try suspected criminals;

(C) prosecuting and punishing members of the Congolese Armed Forces who have committed crimes of sexual violence and other atrocities; and

(D) establishing a verification mechanism to ensure that officers who have engaged in or have been complicit in the commission of sexual violence, including rape, do not receive important posts in the Congolese Armed Forces, the national police, and other security services;

(4) urges an increased effort by the United States through the Department of State and other donor countries to provide greater assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo for police and military human rights education and training, and training for those in the judiciary in order to improve their ability to investigate, prosecute, and sentence rapists;

(5) strongly urges the United States Agency for International Development to increase its assistance to victims of rape and sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(6) urges the Secretary of State to appoint a special envoy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to sustain United States engagement in a peace process and stabilization programs, and to continue its leadership towards the implementation of the Nairobi communiqué;

(7) encourages the Secretary of State to continue to work with the heads of the other agencies implementing programs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to develop a plan for systematically assessing the United States Government's overall progress in achieving the policy objectives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006;

(8) encourages the international community to ensure greater coordination in its response to sexual violence and to provide further humanitarian and psychosocial assistance to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(9) reaffirms its support for democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and calls upon regional African leaders to support the preservation of a democratic political system in the country;

(10) encourages full protection of women and girls and the promotion of their rights by emphasizing the responsibilities of all countries to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide crimes, including those related to sexual and other forms of violence against women and girls;

(11) calls on the Secretary General of the United Nations and the permanent members of the Security Council to immediately take steps to—

(A) ensure that the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is fully funded and strategically deployed in areas where sexual violence is most prevalent;

(B) include an adequate number of female troops and police in MONUC to properly manage incidents of rape and sexual violence;

(C) provide more in-depth and continuing gender-sensitive training to its peacekeepers; and

(D) hold all military and civilian personnel associated with MONUC who have committed acts of rape or sexual exploitation accountable for their crimes and ensure that they are permanently barred from serving in any future peacekeeping operation;

(12) encourages a transparent process for the government of the Democratic Republic