

lot of money to jam those broadcasts. RFE/RL has still managed to provide valuable coverage of the recent uprising there, allowing Iranian democrats to know that they are not alone in this world.

These broadcasts are all the more important now that the administration has muffled itself when it comes to the Iranian democratic movement. As it trims back on programs supporting democracy-seeking Iranians, one expert notes that the administration views the green revolution as a wrench in the works of nuclear negotiations with the Iranian regime.

These broadcasts could be greatly complimented by the White House bully pulpit. They aren't.

A divide between the broadcasters and the diplomats is not new, frankly. In the 1960s, Washington moved to improve relations with Ceausescu's Romania, despite its abysmal human rights record, but RFE kept a spotlight on Bucharest, irritating some of the diplomats. Today, it keeps a spotlight on Tehran's transgressions—the jailing, the abuse, the murder of those who abuse the regime.

Importantly, this resolution commends the employees and reporters of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty for their services and acknowledges their sacrifices. Just as the communist police took steps to prevent the truth from penetrating their house of lies, so has the Iranian regime.

The Iranian Government harasses the journalists for RFE/RL's Persian service, its headquarters in Prague, and their families back in Iran. Those inside Iran who might provide the station with information have been threatened. This fall, two young journalists with the service were killed and a third went into a coma when their car was struck by a truck outside of Prague.

This is the information war happening today. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and its sister surrogates are keeping us in the game. As technology evolves, they can and need to do better, while staying true to their support for freedom and respect for human rights and for the rule of law.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for those statements.

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

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today in support of H. Res. 641, which recognizes the 60th anniversary of the founding of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. I support this resolution because of the incredible role that Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty played in helping to end the cold war.

In 1949, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, RFE/RL, was established by the United States to promote democracy in communist-controlled parts of Europe. RFE/RL broadcasted unbiased and factual information and ideas, providing valuable reporting and demonstrating the value of the freedom of the press. The information provided in the broadcasts was

more comprehensive than the information provided on state-controlled media sources, leading some Communist authorities to use secret transcripts to stay informed.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty played an important role in bringing about the demise of communism in Europe. Leaders from Russia and other former Soviet Union countries have extolled the virtues of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Former Polish President Lech Walesa famously said that RFE/RL's influence "could not be described." Former President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic and former President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, have also described the significant role that RFE/RL played in bringing the end of communism in Europe. Its virtue was encapsulated by the former President of Estonia, Lennart Meri, who nominated RFE/RL for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

During the cold war, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty was subject to attacks by Communist governments of the Soviet Union. The Soviet intelligence agency and secret police, the KGB, as well as other Communist intelligence agencies infiltrated radio stations with spies and attempted to disrupt reporting by jailing and intimidating sources. Georgi Markov, an RFE/RL correspondent in Bulgaria, was murdered in London in 1978 by Bulgarian Communist intelligence service agents. In 1981, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty was attacked when Romanian security agents exploded a bomb outside of the RFE/RL headquarters in Munich, West Germany. Such acts of violence by the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries demonstrate the fear that the Communist leaders had for the democratizing influence of the free press.

Today, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty continues to operate in Eastern Europe, Eurasia, and Asia. RFE/RL broadcasts in 28 languages to over 30 million listeners in 20 countries, including Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Georgia, the Balkans, Belarus, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan. To this day, RFE/RL correspondents and employees are subject to violence and intimidation by regimes that consider the free press threatening.

In 1823, Thomas Jefferson said, "The only security of all is in a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted when permitted freely to be expressed. The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary, to keep the waters pure." From the cold war to today, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty has demonstrated Jefferson's words throughout the world. By bringing the free press to countries with repressive governments, RFE/RL has proven for over 60 years that governments that use censorship to protect their authority cannot stand forever.

Mr. BERMAN. 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 California (Mr. BERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 641, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. BERMAN. 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.

□ 1815

CONDEMNING THE ILLEGAL EXTRACTION OF MADAGASCAR'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 839) condemning the illegal extraction of Madagascar's natural resources, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 839

Whereas Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island, and home to up to 150,000 species of unique flora and fauna;

Whereas during the last 20 years, with the support of the U.S. Government and others, Madagascar has made substantial progress in stopping environmental degradation, effectively managing natural resources and preserving its unique biodiversity;

Whereas three-quarters of Madagascar's people live in rural areas and two-thirds live on less than \$2 per day, safeguarding these natural resources is essential to Madagascar's continued economic growth and development;

Whereas these natural resources contribute to economic development through the tourism sector, drawing an estimated \$390,000,000 per year;

Whereas, on March 17, 2009, Marc Ravalomanana was forced to resign as the democratically-elected President of Madagascar and Andry Rajoelina was installed as de facto head of state;

Whereas, on March 20, 2009, the United States condemned the removal of Marc Ravalomanana and the installation of Andry Rajoelina as tantamount to a coup d'etat, undemocratic, and contrary to the rule of law, announced a suspension of non-humanitarian assistance, and later terminated compact assistance through the Millennium Challenge Corporation to the de facto Rajoelina government;

Whereas two-thirds of Madagascar's people depend on natural resources for their sustenance and livelihoods, and decreased assistance for conservation efforts may have dire humanitarian consequences;

Whereas the African Union and the Southern African Development Community have suspended Madagascar's participation until constitutional order is restored;

Whereas in October 2009, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Conservation International, and the Wildlife Conservation Society condemned an interministerial order issued by the de facto administration granting sweeping authorization to export raw and semi-processed hard wood as "legaliz[ing] the sale of illegally cut and collected wood onto the market; allow[ing] for the potential embezzlement of funds in the name of environmental protection; and constitut[ing] a legal incentive for further corruption in the forestry sector";

Whereas natural resource degradation occurring under the de facto government includes—

(1) open and organized plundering of precious wood from natural forests, including World Heritage Sites such as Marojejy and Masoala National Parks;

(2) intimidation and menace of legitimate local community management structures,

and expropriation of revenue and benefits from them, causing suffering and impoverishment;

(3) intensified smuggling of endemic and protected species and species parts and/or products to the national and international markets;

(4) proliferation of destructive practices such as illegal mining and slash-and-burn agriculture within protected areas and environmentally sensitive areas;

(5) degradation of forests, pushing some rosewood and ebony species to the brink of extinction; and

(6) the degradation of the resource base that rural communities depend upon represents an immediate and future threat to local governance, local incomes, and food security; and

Whereas the vast majority of this precious wood is destined for global export markets: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) strongly condemns the March 2009 coup d'etat in Madagascar and supports the people of Madagascar in immediately undertaking a democratic, consensual process to restore constitutional governance, culminating in free, fair, and peaceful elections;

(2) commends the African Union and the Southern African Development Community for taking strong action against anti-democratic forces in Madagascar and encourage their continued resolve to return Madagascar to the rule of law;

(3) strongly condemns the illegal extraction of Madagascar's natural resources and its impact on biodiversity and livelihoods of rural communities, including illegal logging, smuggling of wild species, and illegal mining;

(4) supports action by competent authorities and the people of Madagascar to stop this illegal devastation and bring those perpetrating these crimes to justice;

(5) calls upon importing countries to intensify their inspection and monitoring processes to ensure that they do not contribute to the demand for illegally sourced precious woods from Madagascar; and

(6) calls upon consumers of rosewood and ebony products to check their origin, and boycott those made of Malagasy wood, until constitutional order is restored.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 839, a resolution introduced by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) which condemns the illegal extraction of Madagascar's natural resources.

On March 17 the democratically elected President of Madagascar was forced from office in a coup and replaced by Andry Rajoelina, who remains in power today. Over the past 7 months, the political situation has remained tenuous as discussions between both sides continue over the possibility of new elections.

Meanwhile, policies pursued by the de facto Rajoelina government have done terrible harm to Madagascar's fragile ecosystem, which boasts up to 150,000 unique species of plants and animals.

On September 21, the government permitted 13 operators to export 325 containers filled with raw and semi-processed woods. The government reportedly earned almost \$12 million in taxes from these transactions.

The World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, and the Wildlife Conservation Society condemned the decision as "legalizing the sale of illegally cut and collected wood onto the market." This decision came on top of months of illegal activities and violent actions in Madagascar's forests.

Since political turmoil began in January, local communities and officials have reported that armed groups have entered the previously protected Masoala and Marojejy World Heritage Sites and the Mananara-Nord Biosphere Reserve. The NGO Global Witness reports that 7,000 cubic meters of rosewood and ebony have been shipped out of Madagascar since the beginning of the year.

These actions harm not only Madagascar's environment but the local communities that depend on the forests for their income. Without this revenue, communities may be forced to resort to slash-and-burn agriculture, thus furthering damaging Madagascar's sensitive ecosystem.

I commend my friend and colleague Mr. BLUMENAUER for bringing this resolution and this issue before the Congress and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in total support of H. Res. 839, which condemns the March 2009 coup in Madagascar and subsequent upsurge in the illegal extraction of Madagascar's natural resources.

Due to its geography, Madagascar hosts one of the most unique and diverse ecosystems on the planet. According to the World Wildlife Fund, 92 percent of Madagascar's reptiles, 68 percent of its plant life, and 98 percent of its land mammals are unique to Madagascar, existing nowhere else on Earth.

One need only take a page from the latest issue of National Geographic to be inspired to explore Madagascar's tropical rainforests, dry forests, spiny deserts, reefs, and estuaries, not to mention the impenetrable Stone Forest, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, where new species are being discovered on a regular basis.

With such unique biodiversity, ecotourism obviously holds great potential to help lift Madagascar's population out of its poverty. Realizing this opportunity, the government in 2003 set aside 3 percent of the island for national parks and reserves, while endeavoring to stem illegal logging and assist rural populations in developing sustainable farming methods.

In April 2005, the Millennium Challenge Corporation signed a 4-year \$110

million compact with Madagascar, the very first compact of the MCC, to assist poor rural farmers in transition from subsistence agriculture to a market economy, while promoting environmental sustainability. By all accounts, great progress was being made in reducing world poverty while promoting conservation.

Unfortunately, much of that progress has been dashed since March of 2009 when an illegal coup displaced the elected President of Madagascar in favor of a former disc jockey and mayor of the capital city who is not even old enough to hold office pursuant to Madagascar's own constitution.

The days leading to the coup and the months since have been characterized by deadly protests and serious human rights abuses. The donor community was forced to withdraw support from the government, and critical assistance including the MCC compact was terminated. Madagascar was also suspended from the African Union and the regional Southern African Development Community.

Illegal logging, mining, and smuggling of wildlife in officially protected areas has intensified, as criminal networks exploit political instability and impoverished Malagasy in rural areas struggle to survive.

H. Res. 839, as amended, condemns the coup and the subsequent upsurge in the illegal extraction of Madagascar's resources. It laments the impact these illegal activities are having on conservation and poverty reduction efforts and calls for a boycott of certain wood products until constitutional order is restored.

I commend the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for introducing this timely resolution, which deserves our support.

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

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the author of the resolution, who brought this to my attention less than 2 weeks ago, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I thank Chairman BERMAN for his courtesy and for the prompt action of the committee. I deeply appreciate the bipartisan support and the quick turnaround that we've had from both sides of the aisle on the committee. It is important to move quickly, and I deeply appreciate putting this on the agenda.

The irreplaceable role of healthy forests as havens for biodiversity, carbon sinks, and renewable resources demands that we fight against and reverse a global legacy of environmental pillaging.

Illegal logging and resource extraction is not just about environmental decimation, with watershed pollution, loss of biodiversity, and increased carbon emissions. It's about human loss as well, the local communities left devastated without resources for survival and for their future and beyond to everyone on the planet. We all benefit

from the medicines, the carbon captures, and species diversity that these forests provide.

For years it's been a personal project of mine to work against the illegal logging trade, to make sure that the United States can lead by example and stop our own demand for illegally logged wood. I was pleased that our Legal Timber Protection Act was incorporated into legislation and signed into law by President Bush last year. The United States Government is now empowered to ask where imported wood and plants actually come from to promote legal harvest. Yet the illegal trade continues.

Last month, with Chairman PAYNE and Chairman FALCONE, I introduced this legislation to condemn the illegal logging and extraction of Madagascar's unique and invaluable natural resources.

As has been pointed out by my two colleagues, Madagascar hosts some of the planet's greatest diversity. It's an island larger than the State of California. It broke off from the African mainland 160 million years ago, thus spawning the biological laboratory that my colleagues referenced, the diversity of plants and animals found nowhere else, massive moths, towering trees. There are more than a hundred species alone of lemurs.

Sadly, the majority of Madagascar's people are trapped in a cycle of poverty, less than \$2 a day. That's why the United States did step forward with the first Millennium Challenge program. And protection of these incredible and unique resources, only 10 percent of which remain, could be key to a sustainable and economically secure future.

As has been referenced on the floor, the political turmoil is putting the honest livelihoods of many, as well as our planet's greatest treasure, in extreme peril.

Political instability breeds corruption and mismanagement. Twenty years of partnership with the United States Government and NGOs that has resulted in more effective management and preservation is being undone in a matter of months. The de facto regime is using the endangered resources to boost its regime and has issued sweeping decrees allowing the harvest and export of woods from protected forests and World Heritage Sites.

The reports from Madagascar are dire and detail rampant illegal logging, mining, and resource degradation. Traffickers smuggle out record numbers of the world's rarest tortoises to Asian and European collectors. Poachers kill and roast scores of lemurs for restaurants. Armed loggers brazenly plunder protected forests, looting dwindling hardwood for furniture.

The media has detailed this ongoing destruction. Activities that not only deny access to basic resources to locals, they degrade the country's thriving ecotourism industry which brought in almost \$400 million badly

needed last year. The United States has condemned the current government, suspended all nonhumanitarian aid, and terminated assistance from the aforementioned Millennium Development Corporation compact.

I am pleased that we will join today with the World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, and the Wildlife Conservation Society, all of whom have denounced this wholesale exploitation of these precious resources.

I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, that we are moving forward. I deeply thank the prompt action and bipartisan support for this legislation.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), the ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution, which condemns the illegal extraction of Madagascar's natural resources, although it does so without identifying who's doing the extracting, which I think I'd like to comment on.

I have traveled to Madagascar; and as the co-chairman of the International Conservation Caucus, I have seen the pristine habitat of this island. It has got a very unique biodiversity, as has been mentioned. Ninety percent of the species there are endemic to that island, and that's one of the reasons a lot of people call Madagascar the "eighth continent." It is because it is so unique in this way. And the inhabitants of that island rely very heavily on that biodiversity and on biotourism as an industry. The biotourism draws about \$400 million a year. So preserving Madagascar's unique beauty is important not just from an ecologic standpoint; it's also very critical as an economic necessity, basically, for many of the inhabitants of that island. And, rightfully, this resolution condemns the act. It condemns the litany of natural resource degradation that's occurred.

But it's important that it mentions the plundering of precious forests. Unfortunately, from my standpoint there's no mention of who is doing the plundering or where these resources are being sold.

□ 1830

From my standpoint, this would be similar to condemning an act of terror without naming the terrorist.

This resolution would be greatly strengthened by including such information. Reports that I have read from Global Witness identify rosewood taken out of Masoala National Park as being for sale in China. That is the destination of the illegal logging.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution but also to take a closer look at China's role at resource exploitation in Africa and across the developing world. I chaired the Africa Subcommittee for 8 years. I can tell you, the picture of China in Africa is not

pretty, and this action in Madagascar is one more example of it.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H. Res. 839 "Condemning the illegal extraction of Madagascar's natural resources." This timely resolution calls upon the leadership of Madagascar to undertake democratic reforms as well as immediately implement measures to protect their fragile and beautiful environment.

There are many beautiful places in this world, but few are as diverse as the island nation of Madagascar. Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island, covering over 144 million acres. This unique island has a wide range of ecosystems including rain forests, dry forests, volcanic mountains, and a large desert. The climate ranges from tropical along the coast to temperate inland to arid in the south. This environmental diversity supports an equally large range of biodiversity. The island is home to 150,000 species of unique flora and fauna, as well as thousands of animals found nowhere else on earth. According to the World Wildlife Fund, "approximately 92 percent of Madagascar's reptiles, 68 percent of its plant life and 98 percent of its land mammals, including lemurs, exist naturally nowhere else on Earth."

Madagascar is also home to over 20 million people who depend on the biodiversity to survive. For example, the Wildlife Conservation Society estimates that 150,000 people depend on the Makira-Masoala rainforest as their primary source of water. Approximately 80 percent of Madagascar's population lives below the poverty line, 70 percent of the population live outside cities, and many Malagasy people depend on subsistence farming; thus, the fate of the Malagasy people is closely intertwined with that of their environment.

Mr. Speaker, as this resolution points out, the livelihoods of the people, animals and plants on Madagascar are threatened by a political crisis that triggered a pillage of its valuable wildlife and forests. In mid-March 2009, President Marc Ravalomanana's government was overthrown by forces led by Andry Rajoelina. Mr. Rajoelina, a key opposition leader and sitting mayor of Madagascar's capitol city was upset with the President's conflict of interest between his extensive commercial interests and running the country. Ravalomanana was both the President of the government and the country's mammoth business conglomerate.

Protestors accused the President of wasting international aid money and striking a harmful land deal with Daewoo, Inc. of South Korea. Under the deal, Daewoo would own an area of farmland the size of Belgium.

During the coup, over 135 people died and thousands were injured in frequent clashes between protestors and police and army forces. The violence has crippled the island's \$390 million-a-year tourism sector, and unnerved foreign investors in Madagascar's mining and oil industries. The human rights of Ravalomanana's supporters are being threatened throughout the country. Many of his supporters that remain in the country are in hiding, have been beaten, or are in jail.

The Obama Administration has condemned Marc Ravalomanana's forced resignation as President of the Republic of Madagascar, and Andry Rajoelina's installation as de facto head of state, as tantamount to a coup d'etat, undemocratic, and contrary to the rule of law. By

designating the regime change as a coup, the U.S. has suspended all non-emergency foreign assistance. The African Union and other international organizations have similarly denounced the coup but, despite international pressure, a return to democracy seems unlikely.

This is a sad sequence of events for a country once lauded as a success story in Africa. Madagascar, as you may recall, was the first country to receive a contract from the Millennium Challenge Cooperation when, in April 2005, the Millennium Challenge Corporation signed a 4-year, \$110 million Compact with the Republic of Madagascar to raise incomes by assisting the rural population to transition from subsistence agriculture to a market economy.

Today, the new government threatens not only the fragile ecosystems, but the citizens of their own nation. This is why I strongly support this resolution that calls on people of Madagascar to immediately undertake a democratic, consensual process to restore constitutional governance, culminating in free, fair and peaceful elections, as well as denounce the illegal extraction of Madagascar's natural resources.

Mr. POE of Texas. We have no other speakers, Mr. Speaker, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 839, 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. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

CALLING ON THE U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF SRI LANKA'S TAMIL INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 711) calling on the United States Government and the international community to address the human rights and humanitarian needs of Sri Lanka's Tamil internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently living in government-run camps by supporting the release of such IDPs, implementing and facilitating an independent oversight of the process of release and resettlement, and allowing foreign aid groups to provide relief and resources to such IDPs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 711

Whereas May 2009 marked the conclusion of the 26-year struggle between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a State Department designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, and the Government of Sri Lanka, and the Government of Sri Lanka committed itself to caring for and ensuring the speedy return of the civilians internally displaced as a result of the fighting;

Whereas the Government of Sri Lanka is seeking to identify former combatants who were part of the LTTE and as part of the vetting process the Government of Sri Lanka has set up make-shift camps that initially housed over 280,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) who fled their homes as the war drew to an end;

Whereas of those 280,000 internally displaced persons at the end of the war, approximately 10,000 of those individuals are being separately held by the Government of Sri Lanka as former combatants or on suspicion of having supported the LTTE;

Whereas as part of the United Nations Human Rights Council 11th Special Session on Sri Lanka held on May 27, 2009, the Government of Sri Lanka made commitments to the world to improve the conditions for the civilians housed in the camps and stated that the "bulk" of the IDPs would be resettled within 180 days;

Whereas as of October 23, 2009, over 51,000 IDPs have been released from the closed camps in the Vanni, and of those 36,000 have been returned to their districts of origin and found accommodation in their own homes or, pending return to their homes, with host families and in vacant houses of friends or relatives; and over 16,000 IDPs of special categories, such as the elderly, pregnant women and their families, priests, students, or people of special needs, have been released to host families or institutions;

Whereas as of October 23, 2009, some 220,000 civilian IDPs still remain in military-guarded camps in the four northern districts of Vavuniya, Mannar, Jaffna, and Trincomalee;

Whereas the Government of Sri Lanka has announced that it would facilitate in the next few weeks the voluntary return of over 40,000 civilian IDPs by the end of October and 60,000 per month of the remaining IDPs in the camps;

Whereas the Government of Sri Lanka has made some progress in easing camp congestion, registering IDPs, expanding access to humanitarian organizations, and demining the north, but much remains to be done to improve humanitarian conditions, particularly before the onset of the monsoon season;

Whereas the United States is urging the safe and speedy return of civilian IDPs, continued access for international humanitarian organizations, and the registration and provision of national identification cards to IDPs, to help promote freedom of movement; and

Whereas the United States supports the rapid release and voluntary return of all civilian IDPs as a critical element of national reconciliation in Sri Lanka: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) urges the Government of Sri Lanka, consistent with its obligation to provide security for all of its citizens, to expeditiously allow freedom of movement for civilian internally displaced persons (IDPs) to leave their camps voluntarily and return in safety and dignity to their homes or, where that is

not possible, to live with host families or move to open transit sites;

(2) calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that IDP camps are truly civilian in nature and administered by civilian authorities, rather than under military supervision, and give full access to national and international humanitarian organizations and observers, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, in order to monitor the situation and to assist in the care of IDPs; and

(3) urges the Government of Sri Lanka to promote justice and political reconciliation for all parties, and engage in dialogue with all parties, including Tamils inside and outside Sri Lanka on new mechanisms for devolving power, improving human rights, and increasing accountability.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BERMAN. 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 California?

There was no objection.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself such time as I may consume.

This resolution calls upon the Government of Sri Lanka to expeditiously release its internally displaced Tamil population from military-guarded camps and begin the process of political reconciliation.

This past May marked the conclusion of a long and brutal civil war between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Eelam, or LTTE, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization. While the United States and the international community welcome the end to this bloody war and congratulate the Government of Sri Lanka on its military victory, it is now time for the government to accelerate the process of releasing the hundreds of thousands of ethnic Tamils from the squalor camps where they have been confined.

By all accounts, the Government of Sri Lanka has made great progress in demining the northern part of the country to allow the successful return of the Tamil population. Now with the timeline it previously provided to the international community having come and gone, it must take the next step and provide the international community with a transparent and implementable road map for the release of the remaining IDPs.

For the safety of its own citizens who seek a return to normalcy, the Government of Sri Lanka should turn the camps over to proper civilian authorities and allow frequent, unconditional, and uninhibited access to the United Nations, the International Committee