

was a time of shortages, a time when getting food meant managing ration coupons. Despite their efforts, though, on August 4, 1944, the Gestapo raided the secret hiding place, and they captured the eight hideaways who were betrayed by an anonymous tip.

Miep Gies discovered the pages of the diary that Anne kept during her time in hiding, and Miep locked them in a desk drawer for safekeeping. When she learned that Margot and Anne had died of typhus at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, she returned Anne's diary to Otto Frank, the only one of the eight to have survived the Holocaust.

Later in her life, she testified against the Neo-Nazis, who denied the authenticity of the diary. She helped in the establishment of a museum in the small building where Anne and her family had hid.

As was noted, she passed away recently, on January 11, 2010, at the age of 100, but she kept alive a very important part of Holocaust history by preserving Anne's diary and by helping us to learn, to understand and to remember so it will not happen again.

The "Diary of a Young Girl," by Anne Frank, has been translated into 70 languages—an inspirational story about hope in the face of war and an important testament for future generations so that the horrors of the Holocaust will not be forgotten. Like so many others who read Anne's diary, as a young woman, I was deeply moved by her steadfast optimism even during a period of her life defined by the evil of that day.

Thanks to Miep Gies' bravery, Anne's recollections have been preserved for future generations. Miep later described her efforts to assist the eight people in hiding, saying, "Of course, it's nice to be appreciated, but I only did my duty to my fellow man. I helped people in need. Anyone can do that, can't they?"

This understated appraisal of her heroic acts is just one example of her modesty and her integrity. We can learn much from Miep Gies, an ordinary woman, who showed extraordinary courage in the face of unspeakable peril during Nazi occupation and the Holocaust. She is a powerful symbol of resistance against oppression and injustice. She is an example of our human capacity to rise even to the most daunting of challenges.

I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing this incredible woman's life and legacy.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I stand before you today in support of H. Res. 1074 "Honoring the life of Miep Gies, who aided Anne Frank's family while they were in hiding and preserved her diary for future generations."

I would like to begin by thanking my colleague Representative MARY JO KILROY for introducing this resolution in the House, as it is important that we honor and recognize those who helped and aided groups of people who were persecuted by the Nazis during World

War II. Furthermore, we must never forget the horrible atrocities of the Holocaust and continue to fight against acts of genocide around the world as well as fight against bigotry and intolerance here at home in the U.S.

During the Second World War, Miep Gies helped and assisted Anne Frank and her family by hiding and protecting them from Nazi persecution. In fact, Miep Gies agreed to hide and assist the Frank family in avoiding Jewish persecution at the hands of the Nazis without hesitation.

Miep Gies initially met Anne Frank's father, Otto Frank, in 1933 and worked as a secretary in his pectin manufacturing company, Opekta. After some time, she became well acquainted with the Frank family, as did her husband Jan Gies, whom she married on July 16, 1941.

In the early 1940s, the Nazis began targeting specific groups of people including Jews, ethnic Poles, Romani, Soviet civilians, Soviet prisoners of war, people with disabilities, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other political and religious groups. Between 1940 and 1945 during the Holocaust, more than 6 million Jews and other targeted groups were exterminated by the Nazis.

During this time, Miep Gies along with her husband and several colleagues helped hide the Frank family including Edith and Otto Frank, their daughters Margot and Anne, Hermann and Auguste van Pels, their son Peter, and Fritz Pfeffer, from Nazi persecution. Miep Gies' husband Jan Gies was a member of the Dutch Resistance who was dedicated to assisting Jews and other persecuted peoples escape by obtaining illegal ration cards for food and finding good hiding places. Miep Gies and her husband hid the Frank family in a secret upstairs room of the office building that was used by Mr. Frank's spice company from July 1942 to August 1944.

Every few days Miep Gies would come by the secret upstairs room of Mr. Frank's former office building and bring food supplies in addition to writing supplies for Anne Frank. Because of Miep Gies' genuine compassion and selflessness, her friends were able to evade the horrors of Nazi persecution for two years.

Sadly, on the morning of August 4, 1944, the Grüne Polizei arrested Anne Frank and her family who were hiding in the secret upstairs room of Mr. Frank's office building. Because of her genuine care and compassion for her friends however, Miep Gies attempted to petition and bribe the Austrian Nazi officer to release her friends for several days after their arrest. Unfortunately the officer would not allow for their release.

After being arrested, Anne Frank and her family were deported to the Auschwitz Nazi Concentration Camp where Anne stayed until being transferred to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Sadly, Anne Frank later died there in March 1945 at the age of 15 though her father Otto Frank, from whom she was separated, survived the war.

Sometime after Anne Frank and her family were arrested and deported, Miep Gies found the diary Anne Frank had kept while hiding from the Nazis in the secret room and safeguarded it through the end of the war. It wasn't until after the end of World War II that Miep Gies released the pages of Anne Frank's diary to her father, Otto Frank.

The diary of Anne Frank was later published and entitled "The Diary of a Young Girl." The diary was also translated into 70 languages

and remains as a testament for future generations on the horrors of the Holocaust and the importance of preventing genocide in all forms.

Sadly Miep Gies recently passed away on January 11, 2010 leaving behind a legacy of compassion and teaching. Today I stand in recognition of the courage that Miep Gies had in risking her own life to shelter and provide for the Frank family while they were in hiding from the Nazis. The love and selflessness that Miep Gies showed in sheltering her friends from the hatred and persecution of Nazi Germany should be an example to us all.

I would also like to commend Miep Gies for recovering and preserving the diary of Anne Frank through the end of World War II. Because of the thoughtfulness of Miep Gies, the Diary of Anne Frank now serves as both an inspiration as well as an example to millions of people around the world.

It is important that we never forget the horrible actions that took place during the Holocaust. It is also important that we never forget the courageous and noble acts of people all across Europe in the fight against the Nazi regime as well as those who assisted persecuted groups during those terrible times.

Furthermore, I would also like to urge countries and leaders across the world to reassess their efforts in fighting racism, intolerance and anti-Semitism. Through providing education and instruction to adults and children alike, we can help to ensure that what happened in Europe during the Holocaust is never allowed to happen again.

I ask my colleagues for their support of this legislation as well as their support for those who protect defenseless people across the world. I strongly urge you to support this resolution.

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

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and 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. McMAHON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1074.

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. McMAHON. 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 motion will be postponed.

#### EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN IRAQ

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 944) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives on religious minorities in Iraq, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 944

Whereas threats against members of even the smallest religious and ethnic minority communities in Iraq could jeopardize the future of Iraq as a diverse, pluralistic, and free society;

Whereas according to the Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report, violent acts continue to pose a significant threat to members of the country's vulnerable non-Muslim religious minority communities, including documented attacks against Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, and other Christians, Sabean Mandeans, and Yazidis, and "very few of the perpetrators of violence committed against Christians and other religious minorities in the country have been punished";

Whereas according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, there are grave threats to religious freedom in Iraq, particularly for members of the smallest, most vulnerable religious minority communities in Iraq, including Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, and other Christians, Sabean Mandeans, and Yazidis;

Whereas the February 2009 Country Report on Human Rights Practices issued by the Department of State identifies on-going "misappropriation of official authority by sectarian, criminal, and extremist groups" as among the significant and continuing human rights problems in Iraq;

Whereas in recent years, there have been alarming numbers of religiously motivated killings, abductions, beatings, rapes, threats, intimidation, forced conversions, marriages, and displacement from homes and businesses, and attacks on religious leaders, pilgrims, and holy sites, in Iraq, with the smallest, non-Muslim religious minorities in Iraq having been among the most vulnerable, although Iraqis from many religious communities, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, have suffered in this violence;

Whereas the Assyrian International News Agency reports that 59 churches were bombed in Iraq between June 2004 and July 2009;

Whereas persecution and violence in Iraq have extended to church leaders as well, such as the March 2008 kidnap for ransom and killing of 65-year-old Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho;

Whereas many members of non-Muslim religious minority communities in Iraq reportedly do not receive adequate official protection, and are legally, politically, and economically marginalized;

Whereas control of several ethnically and religiously mixed areas, including the Nineveh and Tamim (Kirkuk) governorates, is disputed between the Kurdistan regional government and the Government of Iraq, and Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, and other Christians, Sabean Mandeans, Yazidis, and Muslim ethnic minorities Shabak and Turkomans are caught in the middle of this struggle for control and have been targeted for abuses and discrimination as a result;

Whereas many members of vulnerable non-Muslim religious minority communities in Iraq have fled to other areas in Iraq or to other countries;

Whereas the flight of such refugees has substantially diminished their numbers in Iraq;

Whereas approximately 1,400,000 Christians were estimated to have lived in Iraq as of 2003, including Chaldean Catholics, Assyrian Orthodox, Assyrian Church of the East, Syriac Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, Armenians (Catholic and Orthodox), Protestants, Evangelicals, and others;

Whereas it is widely reported that only 500,000 to 700,000 indigenous Christians remained in Iraq as of 2009;

Whereas since 2003, the Sabean Mandaean community has found itself targeted by both Sunni and Shia Islamic extremists, and by criminal gangs who use religion to justify their attacks;

Whereas the Sabean Mandaean community in Iraq reports that almost 90 percent of the members of that community either fled Iraq or have been killed, leaving only about 3,500 to 5,000 Mandeans in Iraq as of 2009;

Whereas in August 2007 a series of bombings targeted the Yazidi community of Iraq resulting in an estimated 200 deaths and more than 200 injuries;

Whereas at least 20 people were killed and 30 wounded in a double suicide bombing in August 2009 which targeted the Yazidi minority in northern Iraq;

Whereas the Yazidi community in Iraq reportedly now numbers about 500,000, a decrease from about 700,000 in 2005;

Whereas the Baha'i faith, estimated to have only 2,000 adherents in Iraq, remains prohibited in Iraq under a 1970 law;

Whereas the ancient and once-large Jewish community in Iraq now numbers fewer than 10, and they essentially live in hiding;

Whereas in 2008, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that approximately 221,000 Iraqis returned to their areas of origin in Iraq, the vast majority of whom settled into neighborhoods or governorates controlled by members of their own religious community;

Whereas many of these returnees reported returning because of difficult economic conditions in their countries of asylum, principally Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon; and

Whereas many members of vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities are not believed to be represented in more than negligible numbers among these returnees: Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) the United States remains deeply concerned about the plight of members of the vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities of Iraq;

(2) the Secretary of State should develop and report to Congress on a comprehensive strategy to encourage the protection of the rights of members of vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities in Iraq;

(3) the United States Government should urge the Government of Iraq to enhance security at places of worship in Iraq, particularly where members of vulnerable religious minority communities are known to be at risk;

(4) the United States Government should continue to work with the Government of Iraq to integrate religious and ethnic minorities into the government in general, and the Iraqi Security Forces, in particular, with the goal of ensuring that members of such communities—

(A) suffer no discrimination in recruitment, employment, or advancement in government positions, in general, and the Iraqi police and security forces, in particular; and

(B) while employed in the Iraqi police and security forces, be initially assigned, in reasonable numbers, to their locations of origin, rather than being transferred to other areas;

(5) the Government of Iraq should, with the assistance of the United States Government—

(A) ensure that the upcoming national elections in Iraq are safe, fair, and free of intimidation and violence so that all Iraqis, including members of vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities, can participate in the elections; and

(B) permit and facilitate election monitoring by experts from local and international nongovernmental organizations, the international community, and the United Nations, particularly in ethnic and religious minority areas;

(6) the United States Government should encourage the Government of Iraq to work with members of vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities to develop and implement tangible, effective measures to protect their rights and measures to reverse the legal, political, and economic marginalization of religious minorities in Iraq;

(7) in providing assistance to Iraq, the United States Government should continue to take into account the needs of vulnerable members of religious and ethnic minority communities and expand upon efforts to work with local organizations that serve those communities;

(8) the United States Government should continue to fund capacity-building programs for the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights, the independent national Human Rights Commission, and the newly-created independent minorities committee whose membership is selected by members of vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities of Iraq;

(9) the United States Government should strongly encourage the Government of Iraq to direct the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights to investigate and issue a public report on abuses against and the marginalization of members of vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities in Iraq and make recommendations to address such abuses; and

(10) the Government of Iraq should, with the assistance of the United States Government and international organizations, help ensure that displaced Iraqis considering return to Iraq have the proper information needed to make informed decisions regarding such return.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. McMAHON. 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 gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, H. Res. 944 expresses the sense of the House of Representatives on the status of religious minorities in Iraq.

When the Iraq war began in 2003, little thought was given to the impact on Iraq's religious minorities. Only 3 percent of the population in Iraq is non-Muslim. These populations include Christians, Yazidis, Sabian-Mandeans, Baha'is, Shabaks, Kaka'is, and a very small number of Jews.

Although the new Iraqi Constitution recognizes Islam as the official religion of Iraq, it also states that no law may be enacted that contradicts principles of democracy or the rights and basic

freedoms stipulated in the constitution. The constitution also guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and religious belief and practice for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Although the Iraqi Government generally respects these rights, ongoing violence restricts the free exercise of religion, and this violence poses a significant threat to the country's vulnerable religious minorities. These minorities continue to suffer at the hands of terrorists, extremists, criminal gangs, and even at the hands of unsavory elements within the Iraqi Government. Sectarian violence, including attacks on religious leaders and religious places of worship, continues to hamper their ability to practice religion freely.

Many experts consider the situation for Iraqi Christians as especially dire. According to Chaldean Catholic Auxiliary Bishop Andreos Abouna of Baghdad, the number of Christians in Iraq may have been cut in half since 2003. As documented by the State Department, Christians have been threatened with violence if they do not leave their homes. They have been accosted on the streets and have even been assassinated. Their churches have been bombed and destroyed.

Reports indicate that other religious minorities face similarly treacherous situations. The Yazidis, who are considered heretical by many Muslims because of their beliefs, have suffered under a tremendous onslaught of violence. Another targeted group, the Sabian-Mandaeans, numbered about 60,000 in 2003. Today, only about 5,000 Sabian-Mandaeans remain in Iraq, meaning that more than 90 percent have left the country or have been killed.

That is why we are considering House Resolution 944 today, and that is why I am proud to say that I am an original cosponsor of that resolution.

This resolution urges the Government of Iraq to enhance security in places of worship in Iraq, particularly where religious minorities are known to be at risk. The resolution calls for the urgent training of an appropriate number of security forces to protect religious minorities. It also urges the Iraqi Government to take affirmative measures to reverse the legal, political and economic marginalization of religious minorities in Iraq. In addition, it asks the United States to consider implementing programs for religious minorities as part of its overall economic assistance to Iraq.

□ 1445

Madam Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution in an effort to make certain that all religions survive and have a chance to prosper in the new Iraq.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I also rise in support of House Resolution 944, and I want to thank the gen-

tleman from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) for bringing this important human rights issue before us today.

The protection of members of vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities, including the smallest minority groups, is integral to the future of Iraq as a free and stable country. Iraq is home to ancient and diverse Catholic, Orthodox, and other Christian groups, including Chaldean, Assyrian, Syriac, and Armenian Christians, among many others. They have been targeted for kidnapping and murder by radical Islamic extremists. Various credible sources estimate that more than half of Iraq's Christians have already fled the country during the last several years.

However, these dangers are certainly not confined to Christians. The Baha'i faith remains prohibited in Iraq, and Iraq's ancient and once-flourishing Jewish community has reportedly dwindled to fewer than a dozen people.

All of us understand that Iraq's young democracy faces many challenges, including its own threats from insurgents and other extremists. But the marginalization, the displacement, the violence that threatens Iraq's minority communities also endanger the vitality and the inclusiveness of Iraqi society as a whole.

We must strive to ensure that the work that we and our allies do helps to build Iraq's capacity and commitment to protect its minority citizens, and we must encourage the Government of Iraq to ensure that its forthcoming elections are an opportunity to reinforce the growth of democracy and freedom in that country. Those elections should be safe, should be fair, should be transparent so that all Iraqis, including members of these vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities, can participate. And we must not let members of those minorities under siege think that they are alone or that they are forgotten.

For these reasons, Madam Speaker, I am grateful for this resolution, which deserves our unanimous support.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, at this time I yield 3 minutes to the prime sponsor of this resolution, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. PETERS).

Mr. PETERS. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York for yielding the time.

While the majority of Iraqis are Muslim, there are many communities of religious and ethnic minorities whose history in Iraq goes back thousands of years. This includes Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, and other Christians, as well as Sabian Mandaeans and Yazidis.

Since 2003, approximately 2½ million refugees and asylum seekers have fled Iraq, and millions more have become displaced, forced to flee their homes and neighborhoods because of sectarian violence. In fact, there were approxi-

mately 1½ million Christians in Iraq in 2003, and today there is less than half of that amount.

Many of these Iraqis would like nothing more than to return home. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in 2008, approximately 221,000 Iraqis returned to their home village or neighborhood in Iraq and the vast majority settled into areas where members of their own religious community controlled the neighborhood or local government.

Unfortunately, Iraqi religious minorities do not have militia or tribal structures to defend themselves, and they do not receive adequate protection from the police or security forces. Not only does this make the possibility of return nearly impossible for Iraqi religious minorities, it also leaves them particularly vulnerable to violence.

Iraqi Christians and other religious minorities are often specifically targeted in gruesome and random acts of violence such as murder, rape, and abductions. This includes the Chaldean community, who this week is mourning the kidnapping and murder of Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho on February 29, 2008.

Archbishop Rahho spent almost his entire life living in Mosul and serving its Christian communities which are among the oldest and largest in Iraq. For years, the archbishop was threatened with violence because he spoke out against discrimination against Christians by Muslim extremists. Sadly, the archbishop was murdered because he refused to lend the support of his church to terrorists in their fight against U.S. forces in Iraq.

These stories continue to be tragically common, and more must be done by the United States Government and by the Government of Iraq to protect religious minorities.

This resolution calls upon the United States and the Iraqi Government to protect religious minorities by encouraging free and fair elections, training Iraqi security forces, and providing safe places to worship. It also seeks an investigation into human rights violations and calls for an end to the abuse of Iraqi religious minorities. Finally, the resolution calls for the United States to work with the Iraqi Government to ensure the physical and economic safety of those wishing to return to Iraq.

I would like to thank my colleagues, Mr. WOLF and Ms. ESHOO, who, as co-Chairs of the Religious Minorities in the Middle East Caucus, have shown great leadership on this issue and for their support of this resolution. I would also like to thank Chairman BERMAN and Ranking Member ROS-LEHTINEN for their support and for their staffs' work in helping me bring this resolution forward today.

It is no longer possible to stand by and watch as millions of religious minorities are subject to torture, abuse, and discrimination, which is why I ask my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), the co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Congressional Human Rights Commission and the coauthor of this important measure.

(Mr. WOLF asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WOLF. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding the time.

I want to support the comments that have been made by Members of both sides and let Members think about it for a moment. With the exception of Israel, the Bible, the Bible contains more references to the cities, the regions, and the nations of ancient Iraq than any other country. The patriarch Abraham came from the city of Ur. I actually visited the site, when the war began, of the location of Abraham's house. Isaac's bride, Rebekah, came from northwest Iraq. Jacob spent 20 years in Iraq, and his sons, the 12 tribes of Israel, were born in northwest Iraq. A remarkable spiritual revival as told in the Book of Jonah occurred in Nineveh. The events of the Book of Esther took place in Iraq, as did the account of Daniel in the lion's den.

So all of these religious things have taken place, and yet people have almost forgotten about Iraq. And the previous speaker in his comments has said the Christian community in these areas has been going through tremendous pressure.

I have appreciated Ambassador Chris Hill's commitment to this issue. In recent correspondence, he indicated that the security of the Christian community remains one of his paramount concerns, especially in light of attacks directed at Christian churches in Baghdad and Mosul over the past 5 months.

But there needs to be leadership from the highest levels within the State Department as well. We've long advocated both during the previous administration and the current one that the U.S. needs to adopt a comprehensive policy to address the unique situation of these defenseless minorities. This resolution, and I thank both sides for bringing it up, urges the Secretary of State to develop such a strategy.

In closing, let me just say it is time for this administration to start taking religious freedom seriously. The position of U.S. Ambassador for International Religious Freedom has been vacant, has been vacant for over a year. Did anyone hear? There is no ambassador for religious freedom that has been appointed by this administration. The position has been vacant, vacant for 1 year. Yet we see the persecution of the Coptic Christians in Egypt, the Assyrian Christians in Iraq, the Catholic Church in China, the Catholic Church in Vietnam, on and on. So we want to see this administration have an ambassador who can advocate, as the resolution calls for, to help Chris Hill and helps others to speak out and advocate. But the very fact that there

has been no ambassador appointed for over 13 months kind of tells the story. Personnel, personnel is policy, and if there's no personnel, it's not a good policy.

Let me just end. I want to thank the gentlemen on both sides and the gentlewoman for speaking. And I hope there's a rollcall vote on this. I hope we have to vote up and down so we can send a message to the Assyrian Christians and those who are going through tremendous persecution wondering whether anybody in the West cares.

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I do have an additional speaker in case the gentleman would like to reserve his time.

Mr. MCMAHON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to reclaim the balance of my time.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I now would like to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN), a member of the Natural Resources, Oversight, and Transportation Committees, for his insight and the insight of his constituent who's very concerned about religious minorities in Iraq.

Mr. DUNCAN. I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for yielding me this time.

I also want to thank all of the previous speakers: the gentleman from Michigan, the original author of the resolution; the gentleman from New York; and especially the gentleman from Virginia, Congressman WOLF, who has been such a leader on these issues for many years now.

I rise in strong support of H. Res. 944, expressing the sense of the House of Representatives on religious minorities in Iraq.

While this bill calls attention to various religious minorities in Iraq that are victims of acts of violence and religious persecution, one group that is extremely vulnerable, especially vulnerable, is the Iraqi Christians. In the most recent series of attacks in Iraq's northern city of Mosul, five Iraqi Christians were attacked and killed just last week in various acts of violence. According to a February 17, 2010, article from Reuters, "Bombings and shootings are recorded almost daily in the violent northern city of Mosul, where the situation has been described by one Christian priest as 'miserable.' Iraqi Christians are forced to hide in their homes in fear of being the next victim of what is being called a 'systematic campaign of violence against minorities.' And Sunni Islamist insurgent groups have labeled Christians and other Iraqi minorities as devil worshipers and infidels."

There is growing concern, Madam Speaker, of even more violence and

killings in the wake of the upcoming elections in March. These attacks are being used as a means of intimidation to discourage Iraqi Christians from voting in the upcoming elections. There have also been threats of violence using military means to prevent the elections from happening at all.

I first spoke out about the violence against Christians in Iraq that last year when one of my constituents and a native of Iraq, Susan Dakak, brought to my attention the escalation of violence against this particular religious group. I also met recently, a few weeks ago, with a member of the Iraqi Parliament, Yonadom Kanna, recently to discuss the ongoing persecution of Iraqi Christians.

The horrendous human rights violations and acts against religious minorities must end. The United States should do as much as possible to help stop the discrimination against and persecution of the Christian community in Iraq, and this resolution will be a meaningful step in that direction.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 944—"Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives on religious minorities in Iraq." As a cosponsor of this resolution, I join my colleagues in expressing my concern about the plight of vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities of Iraq, and we are particularly concerned for the Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, and other Christians, Sabean Mandeans, Yazidis, Baha'is, Jews, and Muslim ethnic minorities, the Shabak and Turkomen, and other religious and ethnic minorities of Iraq.

Political and religious freedom in Iraq is a vital concern with regards to the nation and region. When we envision the long-term peace and security of Iraq, we envision a country with a strong, functioning democracy that respects the rights of all citizens. That vision is not a product of the imperialism of Western ideas; the tradition of religious plurality has roots in the history and religious beliefs of the Iraqi people. But, although Iraq has a strong history of multiculturalism, it must not rest on this reputation. The rights of minorities in Iraq are not fully protected, and the Iraqi government can and must do more to protect the rights of its minorities.

The degree to which Iraq protects those rights is a reflection on our country. Because of the United States' unfortunate detour from our struggle against terrorism into Iraq, the actions of the new government of Iraq directly reflect upon us. So far, I believe that the actions of the government of Iraq with respect to political and religious freedoms are problematic.

In no case is the Iraqi government's treatment of minorities more troubling than their treatment of the residents of Camp Ashraf. Although Camp Ashraf is halfway around the world, the conditions there affect Americans, including in my own district and throughout the state of Texas where some of my constituents have family members in Camp Ashraf. For example, my constituent, Mitra Sohrabi, has a brother who is currently detained in Camp Ashraf, and worries about his health on a daily

basis. I also know many people in Houston and throughout the state of Texas who were affected directly by the July 2009 raid on Camp Ashraf.

Late last year, three months after U.S. forces turned over control of Camp Ashraf, Iraqi Security Forces violated the human rights of the People's Mujahideen of Iran (PMOI). Camp Ashraf detains over 3,400 exiled Iranian political dissidents, who are members of the PMOI, including over 1,000 women. The PMOI opposes the current Iranian regime, and for their political beliefs they have been exiled from Iran and sequestered in Camp Ashraf. Several women detained at Camp Ashraf have reported acts of intimidation and threats of physical and sexual violence by members of the Iraqi security forces.

On July 28, 2009, Iraqi Security Forces conducted a raid on the detainees at Camp Ashraf. The raid occurred fewer than three months after the U.S. passed control of Camp Ashraf to the government of Iraq. The raid began on Tuesday, July 28th when Iraqi armored vehicles began attacks against the Iranian prisoners. The attacks continued for two full days and resulted in the death of 11 exiles and the injury of over 400 more. As a result of the raid on Camp Ashraf, 36 men were arrested under allegations of violent behavior. The 36 arrested Camp Ashraf residents have since been freed, but the United States has a continuing interest in ensuring that the events of July 28th never occur again.

Although most of the residents of Camp Ashraf were not religious minorities, the Iraqi government's treatment of the camp's residents sets a dangerous example. In recent years, there have been alarming numbers of religiously motivated killings, abductions, beatings, rapes, threats, intimidation, forced conversions, marriages, and displacement from homes and businesses, and attacks on religious leaders, pilgrims, and holy sites, in Iraq, with the smallest religious minorities in Iraq having been among the most vulnerable, although Iraqis from many religious communities, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, have suffered in this violence. In summary, members of small religious minority communities in Iraq do not have militia or tribal structures to defend them, do not receive adequate official protection, and are legally, politically, and economically marginalized.

This resolution will remind the Iraqi government that minorities of any type—be it race, religion, political affiliation, or difference of thought—are integral components of a robust civil society and a true democracy. I have faith that Iraq can and will achieve such a democracy, but we must remember that building democracy requires more than a constitution—it requires a commitment to democratic principles.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker. I rise tonight in support of H. Res. 44, a resolution expressing concern about the situation facing religious minorities in Iraq. I'd like to thank my colleague, Congressman PETERS, for introducing this resolution, and for being a persistent champion on this important issue.

I am proud to cosponsor this resolution, which encourages the United States government, the Iraqi government, and the international community to take positive steps to protect Iraqi religious minorities.

Nearly seven years after the U.S.-led invasion, Iraq faces one of the largest displace-

ment crises in the world. The country's religious minorities face a particularly desperate situation. Iraqi ethno-religious minorities, including Iraqi Jews as well as Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Syriac Christians, continue to face targeted killings, sexual assaults, abductions, and other forms of threats and violence. They comprise a disproportionately large percentage of the over 4 million Iraqis who have been displaced by the ongoing violence and instability.

Those who flee Iraq often encounter a life of crippling poverty. Many have great difficulty finding work in their new countries and often cannot support their families. They may bear physical and emotional scars as a result of years of trauma, tragedy, and abuse. Those who stay in Iraq, on the other hand, face a life of constant fear, intimidation, and outright violence.

I have a longstanding concern for Iraq's ethno-religious minorities. In particular, I have worked closely with Chicago's vibrant Assyrian community on efforts to protect Iraqi religious minorities and provide opportunities for refugees. In August of last year I wrote to Secretary Clinton, urging her to develop a comprehensive plan for protecting these groups. This critical issue is crying out for the attention it deserves.

That's why this resolution is so important. The protection of ethno-religious minorities must be a component of our overall strategy in Iraq, and the United States government must do more in partnership with the Iraqi government and the rest of the international community to ensure that all Iraqis, regardless of religious affiliation, can live free of fear and intimidation.

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 944. I commend Representative PETERS for his valuable work with the Caucus on Religious Minorities in the Middle East, which, together with my colleague Representative FRANK WOLF, I am proud to co-chair. The second anniversary of the kidnapping and brutal murder of the Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul is a fitting time to remember our responsibility to these vulnerable groups both during and in the aftermath of the war.

As an Assyrian American, I am deeply disturbed by the ongoing struggle Iraq's minorities face each day. There have been dozens of church burnings, kidnappings, and random acts of violence against Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, and numerous other minority groups and this Resolution calls on the Iraqi government to take meaningful action to address their plight.

Last year, we took an important step by appropriating \$10 million to assist Iraq's minorities in the Nineveh Plains region. I'm pleased that today's Resolution calls on the Iraqi government to protect the people in that area. Madam Speaker, for the sake of a free and pluralistic Iraq, I urge a "yes" vote on today's Resolution.

□ 1500

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from New York (Mr. McMAHON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 944, 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. McMAHON. Madam 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.

#### COMMENDING THE U.S. NAVY FOR ITS WORK IN HAITI

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1048) commending the efforts and honoring the work of the men and women of USNS *Comfort* and the United States Navy in the immediate response to those affected by the earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

#### H. RES. 1048

Whereas, on January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the country of Haiti;

Whereas casualty estimates, upwards of 150,000, as well as damage to roads, ports, hospitals, and homes, make this earthquake one of the worst catastrophes to hit Haiti in over two centuries;

Whereas an estimated 3,000,000 people have been directly affected by the disaster in Haiti, nearly one-third of the country's population, who are currently at risk of long-term displacement and vulnerability;

Whereas Haiti is the poorest, least developed country in the Western Hemisphere;

Whereas prior to the earthquake, Haiti was recovering from a terrible string of hurricanes and tropical storms, food shortages and rising commodity prices, and political instability, but was showing signs of improvement and resolve;

Whereas President Obama vowed the "unwavering support" of the United States and pledged a "swift, coordinated and aggressive effort to save lives and support the recovery in Haiti";

Whereas the people of Haiti have shown remarkable resilience and courage in the face of epic tragedy;

Whereas the United States Navy responded within hours of the earthquake to swiftly provide the Haitians with aid;

Whereas the USNS *Comfort* and its crew of more than 1,200 has provided 24-hour care for over 900 Haitians, ranging from newborns to critically ill patients;

Whereas the USNS *Comfort's* over 550-person medical staff includes trauma surgeons, orthopedic surgeons, head and neck surgeons, eye surgeons, and obstetricians and gynecologists;

Whereas the medical staff of the USNS *Comfort*, as of February 18, 2010, had performed over 755 surgeries;