

by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform. I ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. I ask God in his loving arms to hold the families who've given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. And God, please bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in Your eyes for Your people. And God, please give wisdom, strength, and courage to President Obama that he will do what is right for Your people in this country.

And, Madam Speaker, three times, God, please, God, please, God, please, continue to bless America.

Mr. CONYERS. Will the distinguished gentleman yield?

Mr. JONES. I yield to the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. CONYERS. I want to thank the gentleman for his contribution tonight and associate myself with his excellent statement and remarks.

Mr. JONES. I thank the gentleman, Mr. CONYERS. Thank you so much for joining me.

GIVING THE GIFT OF WATER TO THE NEEDIEST THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker and Members of the House, I rise to point out that a very important consideration is about to take place in the next 3 days dealing with the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act. Its main sponsor is the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER). It has 97 cosponsors. And I want to commend the bipartisan spirit in which this bill has been put forward, because we have no less than one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten Members of the House that belong to the minority that are cosponsors. And in the other body, we have one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight Members of that distinguished body who are in the minority there, plus two Independent Senators that have joined us.

And why? Because we've been working on this question of water for the continent of Africa and the states and the millions of people there suffering there and in Haiti. And we have a very rare opportunity in these next several days. The other body has passed the measure, and I stand before the House tonight to urge that it be taken up here as soon as possible.

As we gather for the holiday season, we are giving thanks for family and friends, but what may be unconsidered and unmentioned is appreciation for access to the water and adequate sanitation, something that's taken for granted in our great country.

And so I rise to remind us that there are 884 million people across the planet who went without access to clean water this year, and 2.5 billion men, women, and many, many children who

went without adequate sanitation. Without access to these basic building blocks, many of the people of undeveloped nations will likely have been left without the ability to work because of health problems that hamper productivity and discourage economic investment.

The countries of the world, including our great Nation, have come together to say that we can do better. And so a set of shared goals, entitled the Millennium Development Goals, have set specific targets relating to increasing access to water and sanitation by 2015. With these goals, we and the international community have pledged to halve, by 2015, to cut in half, the proportion of people who are unable to reach or afford or come into possession of safe drinking water. Think of it. And many of these are children. That's the worst part of it all.

And as this Congress draws to a close, we have a sensitive opportunity to make good on that promise. Important legislation, entitled the Water for the World Act, H.R. 2035, has already passed in the other body. We need it here. And, if enacted, this bill could help 50 million people over the next 6 years.

Please join me in helping move this legislation across the finish line and provide millions of our fellow world citizens with the gift of water.

IN HISTORIC VOTE, UN DECLARES WATER A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

Juan Gonzalez: The United Nations General Assembly has declared for the first time that access to clean water and sanitation is a fundamental human right. In an historic vote Wednesday, 122 countries supported the resolution, and over forty countries abstained from voting, including the United States, Canada and several European and other industrialized countries. There were no votes against the resolution.

Nearly one billion people lack clean drinking water, and over two-and-a-half billion do not have basic sanitation.

Bolivia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Pablo Solon, introduced the resolution at the General Assembly Wednesday.

Pablo Solon: [translated] At the global level, approximately one out of every eight people do not have drinking water. In just one day, more than 200 million hours of the time used by women is spent collecting and transporting water for their homes. The lack of sanitation is even worse, because it affects 2.6 billion people, which represents 40 percent of the global population. According to the report of the World Health Organization and of UNICEF of 2009, which is titled "Diarrhoea: Why Children Are [Still] Dying and What We Can Do," every day 24,000 children die in developing countries due to causes that can be prevented, such as diarrhea, which is caused by contaminated water. This means that a child dies every three-and-a-half seconds. One, two, three. As they say in my village, the time is now.

Amy Goodman: Bolivia's ambassador to the United Nations, Pablo Solon, urging support for the resolution Bolivia introduced recognizing access to clean water and sanitation as a fundamental human right.

For more on this historic vote, we're joined now here in New York by longtime water justice advocate Maude Barlow. She's the chair of the Council of Canadians, co-

founder of the Blue Planet Project and board chair of Food and Water Watch. Last year she served as senior adviser on water to the President of the United Nations General Assembly.

Welcome to Democracy Now!

Maude Barlow: So glad to be here.

Amy Goodman: Talk about the significance of this. If you asked people in this country, they would have no idea this has passed.

Maude Barlow: I know, I know, which is why you matter, I just have to say. This is very, very distressing to know something this important happened and it's been blanketed. There's no media here; it's just like it didn't happen. It's had media in other places.

There's no human—there has been on human right to water. It wasn't included in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. And then, more recently, when people have realized that it needed to happen, there were very powerful forces against it—powerful countries, powerful corporate interests and so on. But Ambassador Solon and a number of developing countries decided that they were going to move this, countries from the Global South, that they were going to move this through, and they just tabled it a month ago, and yesterday, at the vote at the United Nations, they won. Not one country had the guts to stand against them, even though lots of them wanted to do it.

And basically, for the first time, the United Nations General Assembly debated the right to water and sanitation—it's very important both were included—and acknowledged and recognized the right of every human being on earth to water and sanitation. And this matters because—as you know, because we've talked so many times—we are running—a planet running out of water. Brand new World Bank study says that the demand is going to exceed supply by 40 percent in twenty years. It's just a phenomenal statement. And the human suffering behind that is just unbelievable. And what this did as basically say that the United Nations has decided it's not going to let huge populations leave them behind as this crisis unfolds, that the new priority is to be given to these populations without water and sanitation.

Juan Gonzalez: And the countries that abstained, could you talk about—did any of them talk about why they were not voting "yes," or did they just remain quiet?

Maude Barlow: Oh, it was the usual gang. It was the United States and Canada, the European—not the European Union—the United Kingdom some of the European countries voted to abstain; some were wonderful—Australia, New Zealand. So it was all of the Anglophone, neoliberal, you know, bought into this whole agenda that everything is to be commodified, countries who are able to continue to supply clean water to their citizens, which makes it doubly appalling that they would deny the right to water to the billions of people who are suffering right now.

They used procedural language about this and that. There's another process in Geneva with the Human Rights Council, which we support, and they used the excuse that we have to wait for that. But that's a long-term process, and it could or could not end in something very specific. So they just cut through it. A bunch of brave countries from the Global South said, "We can't wait. We need this now." And it's not a surprise that it came from Bolivia, because, remember, Bolivia is suffering double whammy with a, you know, dearth of water, dearth of clean water, but also melting glaciers from climate change.

Amy Goodman: Well, let's go back to Bolivia. I want to go back to Bolivia's UN representative, Ambassador Pablo Solon, at a

speech he gave in Toronto, the event that you organized, Maude, last month, shortly before the G20 meetings. He outlined the need to support a UN declaration on the human right to water, referencing the long struggle for water rights in Bolivia, which successfully fought against Bechtel's water privatization efforts ten years ago.

Pablo Solon: In those days, I was a water warrior. Now I'm a water warrior ambassador. We have to have water declared as a human right in the UN. It is not possible to see that we have declared in the UN food, the right to food, the right to health, the right to education, the right to shelter, the right to development, but not the right to water. And we all know that without water, we can't live. So nobody can argue that it's not a basic and fundamental and universal human right. But even though, until now, it's not recognized as a human right. So, we have presented, two weeks ago, a draft resolution so that this coming month, in July, we expect to have a vote in the General Assembly of the United Nations. And we want to see which countries are going to vote against that resolution. We want to go to vote to see which governments are going to say to the humanity that water is not a human right.

Amy Goodman: That was Bolivia's ambassador to the United Nations, Pablo Solon, speaking in Toronto. Which nations are not going to say that water is a human right? Well, you said the United States didn't vote for this. Canada didn't, though they didn't vote against. What is their rationale?

Maude Barlow: Well, it depends on the country. The United Kingdom says they "don't want to pay for the toilets in Africa." That's a direct quote from somebody who wouldn't be quoted, from a senior diplomat in the government of Great Britain, that was in—quoted in a Canadian paper.

Canada hides behind the false statement that we might have to share our water, sell our water to the United States, which is nonsense. We're in way more danger from NAFTA, which declares water to be a commodity.

The United States, as you know, has not been supporting rights regimes for decades now, so this is just a continuation. And I have to tell you, listening to the statement from the United States yesterday at the United Nations, I wouldn't have thought there was any difference between George Bush and Barack Obama's administrations. It was haughty language. They scolded Bolivia. Bolivia came under a lot of heat, a lot of insults yesterday from these countries.

New Zealand and Australia are both going private. Australia has privatized its water totally, and basically it's now for sale. And there's a big American investment firm that's actually buying up water rights. It was supposed to be, originally, just to get the farmers of the big farm conglomerates to share, to trade, but now it's all gone private and international, so they're hardly going to support something that says that water, you know, is a human right, when they've commodified it and said it's a market commodity.

So, really, what you're seeing is a split between those countries that see water as a public trust, although that wasn't in the language of the legislation, but that see water as a public trust and a human right and that should belong to all, as opposed to those who are going to move to a market model. And I think that's the truth behind what happened.

And it's very important for you to know that they did not allow the inclusion of the words "access to," and that was one of the demands. I think some of those countries would have said yes to something that said "access to." And it's very important. It's not

semantic, because if you say you have access to it, then all the country—all the government has to do is provide you access. Then they can charge you, or they can have a private company come in and deliver it and charge you. And if you can't afford it, they provided you access, it's not their fault if you can't pay it. So it's very important that Bolivia and the other sponsoring countries held on to the language of the human right to drinking water and sanitation. They wouldn't drop sanitation. They wouldn't add the words "access to." And those were the sticking points.

Juan Gonzalez: And in practical terms, what will be the impact of this resolution on those efforts to continue to commodify or privatize water supplies in countries around the world, especially in the third world?

Maude Barlow: It's a fight we're in. You know, I'm not going to say that suddenly everything is going to be fine tomorrow or today, today being the day after the vote, that anybody woke up in a different situation today, anybody had more water today than they did yesterday, or more access to sanitation.

What it is is a moral statement, a guiding principle, of the countries of the world—and basically the UN is the closest thing we have to a global parliament—that they have taken a step in a direction of saying that water is a human right and a public trust and that no one should be dying for lack of water, and they shouldn't have to watch their children die a horrible death for lack of water because they cannot pay. And that was a statement that has taken us years and years to get the UN—they hadn't even debated the water issue. They hadn't even debated it in the past. They've done all this work on climate and absolutely no work on water. So it was a huge step forward to establishing some principles that we need if we are to avoid the crisis that I honestly see coming, that I think is going to be worse than anybody can imagine, in terms of the suffering.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THANKING LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART FOR HIS SERVICE IN CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I would like to honor a great public servant and a dear friend, Congressman LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART, who, after 17 years of distinguished service to our south Florida community here in Congress, is retiring. The House of Representatives is indeed losing a great man and a dedicated leader.

LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART has left a legacy that is extensive and worthy of praise. He has led a life guided by his principles, and he has not wavered in his convictions; convictions based on his love for this great country and the freedom that it embodies.

LINCOLN's story is truly an American story. Having fled the Castro regime

with his family, he became a fierce and staunch defender for human rights and the rule of law throughout the world. He became a voice for those whose own voices are silenced by repressive governments.

His commitment to public service is a testament to not only his character, but to the valuable lessons that he learned from his father, Rafael Diaz-Balart. The courage that Rafael demonstrated as he fought against Castro's totalitarian tactics left a profound impact on his son LINCOLN. It instilled in LINCOLN a sense of duty and a fierce urgency to help others.

From the beginning of his life in public service, LINCOLN devoted himself to aiding those less fortunate. Early in his career, he used his expertise as an attorney to assist south Florida's most vulnerable by providing free legal services to the poor. He also served as an assistant State attorney in Miami-Dade County.

LINCOLN began his career in politics by being elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 1986 and later to the Florida Senate in 1989. And then, in 1992, he was elected to our body, the U.S. House of Representatives.

I have enjoyed working with LINCOLN as we have tackled the issues that have been of vital importance to our south Florida communities.

And two of his proudest moments, Madam Speaker, were the passage of the Helms-Burton Act and the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act, both of which he helped author. The Helms-Burton Act strengthened and codified into law the embargo against the Castro dictatorship. And the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act granted temporary protected status to hundreds and hundreds of refugees who were fleeing repressive governments in Central America.

Another proud moment came in 1997, when LINCOLN helped secure legislation that extended SSI benefits to so many legal immigrant families.

□ 1910

LINCOLN has also been a tireless advocate for providing Hispanic youth the resources necessary to compete in a global economy.

Recognizing that the Hispanic community has and will continue to contribute much to our great Nation, LINCOLN helped create the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute, CHLI, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that provides Hispanic youth with the opportunities to interact with leaders in the public and private sectors. Its Global Leaders Congressional Internship Program has helped hundreds of Hispanic students expand their professional horizons and enhance their understanding of governments and businesses.

LINCOLN will be missed in Congress, but I know that south Florida will continue to count him as a leader. He will soon begin to work closely with the