

spirit of national unity to seek what is best for the country;

(5) recognizes that while the Government of Burma has made important progress towards democratization, there remain serious challenges and impediments to the realization of full democratic and civilian government, including the reservation of unelected seats for the military and the disenfranchisement of groups of people including the Rohingya;

(6) expresses hope that newly elected members of parliament will contribute to the ongoing political transformation and will herald a new generation of responsible democratic leadership in Burma;

(7) calls on the Government of Burma to support meaningful efforts to reform the 2008 Constitution of Burma, with the full and unfettered participation of all the people of Burma and in a manner that promotes and protects democratic development of Burma and safeguards against arbitrary interference by the military;

(8) calls on the Government of Burma to release all political prisoners;

(9) supports negotiations between the Government of Burma and ethnic groups and organizations toward a genuine national ceasefire;

(10) encourages the President of the United States, in close and timely consultation with Congress, to continue to support efforts to promote genuine democratic transition and to ensure that any changes in United States policy toward Burma, including the consideration of any potential relaxation of restrictions, are aligned with support for a genuine and sustainable democratic transition; and

(11) reaffirms that the people of the United States will continue to stand with the people of Burma in support of democracy, partnership, and peace.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment be agreed to; that the resolution, as amended, be agreed to; that the preamble be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 320), as amended, was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

#### CELEBRATING THE 135TH ANNIVERSARY OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ROMANIA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 322, S. Res. 326.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 326) celebrating the 135th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Romania.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations with an amendment to the preamble.

(Omit the part in boldface brackets and insert the part printed in italic.)

S. RES. 326

Whereas the United States established diplomatic relations with Romania in June 1880;

Whereas the Governments of the United States and Romania strive to continually improve cooperation between government leaders and strengthen the two countries' strategic partnership, focusing on the political-military relationship, law-enforcement collaboration, trade and investment opportunities, and energy security;

Whereas the Governments of the United States and Romania are committed to supporting human rights, advancing the rule of law, democratic governance, economic growth, and freedom;

Whereas Romania joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004, and has established itself both as a resolute ally of [both] the United States and as a strong NATO member;

Whereas the Government of Romania continues to improve its military capabilities, and has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to provide forces and assets in support of operations that address the national security interests of the United States and all NATO members, including deployments to Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Kosovo;

Whereas, in 2011, the United States and Romania issued the "Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century Between the United States of America and Romania," reflecting increasing cooperation between our countries to promote security, democracy, free market opportunities, and cultural exchange;

Whereas the United States and Romania signed a ballistic missile defense (BMD) agreement in 2011, allowing the deployment of United States personnel, equipment, and anti-missile interceptors to Romania;

Whereas, in October 2014, the United States Navy formally launched Naval Support Facility Deveselu to achieve the goals of the 2011 BMD agreement and thus established the first new United States Navy base since 1987;

Whereas, in September 2015, Romania stood up a NATO Force Integration Unit;

Whereas Romania will host the Alliance's Multinational Division-Southeast headquarters in Bucharest and commits significant resources to the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force;

Whereas Romania has agreed to host components of the United States European Phased Adaptive Approach missile defense system, which will be operational by the end of 2015; and

Whereas, for the past 25 years, the Government of Romania has shown leadership in advancing stability, security, and democratic principles in Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, and the Black Sea region, especially in the current difficult regional context: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) celebrates the 135th anniversary of United States-Romanian diplomatic relations;

(2) congratulates the people of Romania on their accomplishments as a great nation; and

(3) expresses appreciation for Romania's unwavering partnership with the United States.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to; that the amendment to the preamble be agreed to; that the preamble, as amended, be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 326) was agreed to.

The amendment to the preamble was agreed to.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

#### CONDEMNING THE ONGOING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM YEZIDI, CHRISTIAN, SHABAK, TURKMEN, AND OTHER RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES BY ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND SYRIA MILITANTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 297, S. Res. 310.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 310) condemning the ongoing sexual violence against women and children from Yezidi, Christian, Shabak, Turkmen, and other religious communities by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria militants and urging the prosecution of the perpetrators and those complicit in these crimes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here to support the bipartisan efforts and goals of my colleagues in S. Res. 310, which condemns the ongoing sexual violence perpetrated by ISIL against women and children from Yezidi and other religious communities.

The horrific and despicable actions of ISIL against women and girls who were kidnapped, enslaved, tortured, raped, and impregnated in conflict-affected regions there and others around the world are one of the horrors of terrorism. This resolution addresses it, but it could and should have gone much further. In fact, it lacks the recognition of the full range of support that Yezidi survivors of sexual violence desperately need. That is the reason that I offered two amendments to improve this important resolution, to urge the President to exercise his existing authority. No new author is necessary for him to provide and support age-appropriate, comprehensive post-violence care, including the provision of treatment to prevent HIV infection, trauma and surgical care, mental health services, social and legal support, and a full range of medically necessary reproductive health services, including emergency contraception, safe abortion care, and maternal health services.

When the horrors that ISIL inflicts on the Yezidis came to light in the New York Times report entitled "ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape," including systematic rape of women and children in ISIL-held territory, I demanded that our great Nation take action. I refer my colleagues' attention to that article.

We cannot allow for the continued use of rape as a tool of warfare to destabilize and disrupt communities, to

exert control over women and girls, and in the case of the Yezidis, to impregnate them purposefully and relentlessly. Survivors should not be forced to carry pregnancies to full term simply because access to reproductive health care is not available following their vicious assault.

We cannot stand idly by while witnessing such violations of human rights and dignity. The United States must work to increase access to reproductive health care for the vulnerable populations, particularly safe abortion services, and most especially for the Yezidi girls and women who were purposefully impregnated as a tool of terrorism by ISIL.

I have called on the administration multiple times to confront this horror. In September, I wrote a letter with five of my Democratic colleagues to Secretary Kerry, calling on the State Department to declare Iraqi religious minorities, including the Yezidis, as protected priority groups so they could seek refugee assistance within Iraq's border.

In October, I wrote a letter with 27 of my Democratic colleagues, calling on the President to take action to properly implement existing law. Existing law includes the Helms amendment. Tomorrow is the 42nd anniversary of the Helms amendment. For its entire existence, the Helms amendment has been incorrectly interpreted, and it continues to serve as a critical obstacle in our foreign aid efforts to provide for safe abortions in the case of rape, incest, and life endangerment.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter and the response of the administration dated December 7, 2015, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, October 22, 2015.

President BARACK OBAMA,  
The White House,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We write to express our deep concern for the reproductive health of women and girls who are kidnapped, enslaved, tortured, raped, and impregnated in conflict-affected zones worldwide. Rape is increasingly used as a tool of warfare to destabilize communities, exert control over women and girls, and in some cases purposely impregnate them, as executed by Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Syria and Iraq. Survivors are forced to carry pregnancies to full term because access to reproductive healthcare is not available following their assault. We cannot be bystanders to such gross violations of the human dignity of these women and girls. If the U.S. does not work to increase access to reproductive healthcare for vulnerable populations, particularly safe abortion services, there will be negative, long-term consequences. As such, we implore you to take the following actions to confront this crisis.

We request you take action to correct the overly constrained implementation of the Helms Amendment which serves as a critical barrier to safe abortion, particularly impacting women and girls fleeing conflict. Al-

though the Helms Amendment prevents U.S. foreign aid from being used to perform abortions for family planning purposes, for over 40 years it has been incorrectly interpreted to prevent the use of foreign aid to fund safe abortions even in the cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment. These three cases clearly fall outside the restrictions enacted by the Helms Amendment. As such, we urge you to issue guidance to the relevant agencies, allowing them to support safe abortion services in at least the limited circumstances of rape, incest, or life endangerment, including for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

Subsequently, we urge you to exercise your existing authority to ensure U.S. foreign aid does not stand in the way of women and girls fleeing conflict who seek abortion services. The Helms Amendment restricts U.S. foreign aid from being used to pay for abortion even in countries where abortion is permissible by local law. For instance, although abortion remains illegal in Syria and Iraq, regional countries which receive U.S. foreign assistance—Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt—have welcomed millions of refugees and have varying legal exceptions or allowances for abortions related to rape, incest, or life endangerment, which are undermined by limitations imposed by this policy.

Finally, we applaud commitments made by this Administration to address these issues, including those made last year at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and those in the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP). We request that you further strengthen actions taken under the NAP implementation plan. A high-level objective of the NAP is ensuring women's access to relief and recovery in a manner that recognizes the unique needs of women and girls in conflict-affected zones and the need to provide humanitarian services. As expressly noted in the NAP, women's access to relief and recovery can be addressed by "support[ing] access to reproductive health in emergencies and humanitarian settings." As such, we encourage increased attention to this matter and request a report of the Administration's comprehensive review and update to the NAP, scheduled to be released this year. We also ask that the Administration provide an assessment of how the relevant agencies are fulfilling their respective duties to provide access to the full range of reproductive healthcare.

We look forward to working with you to ensure these actions are implemented. As the world's largest aid donor, the U.S. can and should endeavor to provide the reproductive healthcare that is desperately needed by some of the world's most vulnerable populations.

Sincerely,

Richard Blumenthal; Jeanne Shaheen; Kirsten E. Gillibrand; Barbara Boxer; Michael F. Bennet; Claire McCaskill; Mazie Hirono; Patty Murray; Edward J. Markey; Patrick J. Leahy; Al Franken; Sherrod Brown; Christopher A. Coons; Brian Schatz; Cory A. Booker; Elizabeth Warren; Maria Cantwell; Charles E. Schumer; Tammy Baldwin; Barbara A. Mikulski; Christopher Murphy; Richard J. Durbin; Ron Wyden; Bernard Sanders; Dianne Feinstein; Debbie Stabenow; Gary C. Peters; Amy Klobuchar.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,

Washington, DC, December 7, 2015.

Hon. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL,  
U.S. Senate,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR BLUMENTHAL: Thank you for your letter of October 22 to President Obama regarding your concern about access

to reproductive health care in conflict settings. We have been asked to respond on the President's behalf.

The Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development take this issue very seriously. The Helms Amendment has prohibited since 1973 the use of U.S. foreign assistance to pay for the performance of abortion as a method of family planning or to motivate or coerce any person to practice abortions. We review our policies on an ongoing basis to ensure maximum effectiveness in improving health outcomes, including for those who are highly vulnerable to sexual violence because of conflict or other crises.

Through our policies and investments, we continue to demonstrate our commitment to rights and protection of women and girls worldwide. We do so by working with the international community, including the UN Population Fund, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other development and humanitarian organizations. We work together to: respond to the challenges of increasing access to reproductive health services in crisis settings; strengthen global coordination to prevent sexual violence; promote justice and accountability; and provide health care, including sexual and reproductive health services.

The U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security outlines the United States' commitment to the protection and participation of women in a broad range of efforts to resolve conflict and sustain peace. The Department of State and other agencies are reviewing the NAP under the auspices of the National Security Council. This inter-agency review reflects our commitment to accountable implementation and rigorous learning of best practices. Upon completion of the review later this year, the Department would be pleased to brief you and your staff on relevant findings.

Your letter provides valuable input on these important issues. We welcome any additional input you or your staff may have, and look forward to continued dialogue.

Sincerely,

JULIA FRIFIELD,

Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. The letter very simply asks that the administration "take action to correct the overly constrained implementation of the Helms amendment which serves as a critical barrier to safe abortion, particularly impacting women and girls fleeing conflict." The letter asks that the administration recognize that American foreign aid can be used to fund safe abortions even in the cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment. That is a very simple principle.

Preventing our foreign aid funds from being used for that purpose not only denies critical assistance to Yezidi girls and women, but also overly constrains the assistance of this great Nation to the victims of terror and horror abroad.

Today, the U.S. Senate will adopt S. Res. 310, and I have joined in supporting it. I am deeply disappointed that the administration has essentially denied even considering a change in policy. This action does not mean that the United States should be complacent regarding the dismal state of protection for the Yezidi girls and women.

The amendments I offered were rejected by my Republican colleagues,

and I understand my colleagues' goal of expressing concern for girls and women and others. Despite my reservation and profound disappointment with the administration's reaction to and the denial of these two amendments, I am supporting this resolution. I have withdrawn my amendments, recognizing the reality of our current situation on the floor of the U.S. Senate, but it remains essential that we recognize the full scope of the post-rape health care needed by survivors of rape. These victims have been hideously and gruesomely used as a tool of terrorism invoked by ISIL.

Fully countering ISIL's terrorist strategy means providing necessary and compassionate care for girls and women who have been victims and have been shunned by their families. They have been rejected by their communities. They have been victims many times over as a result of these heinous crimes committed against them.

I hope that my fellow Senators will join me as I continue to call on the administration to right this wrong. As the world's largest donor of assistance around the world, the United States can and should do better and do more to provide health care that girls and women vitally need when they become vulnerable and, in fact, victims of terror inflicted by these heinous criminal acts.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Lankford amendment to the resolution be agreed to; that the resolution, as amended, be agreed to; that the preamble be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 2931) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To define "complicit" for purposes of the resolution)

On page 3, line 4, insert "by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria militants" before the semicolon at the end.

On page 3, line 10, strike "and".

On page 4, line 2, strike the period at the end and inserting "; and".

On page 4, after line 2, add the following:

(4) defines "complicit", for purposes of this resolution, as having knowingly and willingly taken actions which have directly supported, promoted, enabled, aided, abetted, or encouraged crimes involving sexual violence against women and children from Yezidi, Christian, Shabak, Turkmen, or other religious communities by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria militants, including actively working to deny, cover up, or alter evidence of such crimes.

The resolution (S. Res. 310), as amended, was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, as amended, with its preamble, reads as follows:

#### S. RES. 310

Whereas the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has publicly and systematically targeted communities on the basis of their religious identities, including Yezidis, Chris-

tians, Shi'a Muslims, Shabaks, Turkmen, and Kaka'i, in a campaign of violence that includes summary executions, beheadings, torture, arbitrary detainment, forced displacement, rape and sexual violence, and enslavement;

Whereas enslavement and sexual violence against women is a widespread practice among ISIS militants, who have, according to the Yezidi Affairs Directory, captured and enslaved as many as 5,500 Yezidis, including as many as 3,000 women, since August 2014;

Whereas ISIS has established a formal slave trade in which women and girls as young as 5 years old are systematically abducted, transported, categorized according to physical traits and perceived value, and traded among ISIS militants or sold for as little as \$10;

Whereas the Research and Fatwa Department of ISIS has issued guidelines and directions for the enslavement of Yezidi women and children and has justified the actions on the basis of religious teachings;

Whereas the New York Times reported that "the Islamic State has developed a detailed bureaucracy of sex slavery, including sales contracts notarized by the ISIS-run Islamic courts";

Whereas according to various reports, including testimony before Congress by Khidher Domle, a Yezidi activist and Director of the Media Department at the University of Dohuk, the enslavement and sexual violence used against Yezidi women and children by ISIS militants in their attack on Mount Sinjar was premeditated;

Whereas ISIS has initiated the mass killing of Yezidi men and boys, the sexual violence and enslavement of Yezidi women and children, and the forced displacement of Christians and other religious communities;

Whereas the threat and reach of ISIS extends beyond Iraq and Syria into the rest of the world, as demonstrated by ISIS-affiliated attacks and recruitment of foreign fighters from the United States, Europe, Central Asia, and Africa;

Whereas, according to testimony presented before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives on September 29, 2015, it is possible that one of the ISIS militants involved in the sexual slavery of Yezidi women and children is a United States citizen; and

Whereas the United States Government should investigate and urge prosecution of American citizens who are perpetrators of or complicit in such crimes: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the ongoing sexual violence against women and children from Yezidi, Christian, Shabak, Turkmen, and other religious communities by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria militants;

(2) calls on the Attorney General to commence the investigation and prosecution of any United States citizens alleged to be perpetrators of or complicit in these crimes and to report back to Congress what steps are being taken to investigate and urge the prosecution of those involved;

(3) calls on the Government of Iraq and the governments of other countries to identify individual perpetrators and individuals involved in these crimes and take appropriate measures to arrest and urge the prosecution of those individuals; and

(4) defines "complicit", for purposes of this resolution, as having knowingly and willingly taken actions which have directly supported, promoted, enabled, aided, abetted, or encouraged crimes involving sexual violence against women and children from Yezidi, Christian, Shabak, Turkmen, or other religious communities by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria militants, including actively

working to deny, cover up, or alter evidence of such crimes.

#### ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2015

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Thursday, December 17; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business until 6 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:52 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, December 17, 2015, at 10 a.m.

#### NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

##### THE JUDICIARY

PAUL LEWIS ABRAMS, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA, VICE DEAN D. PREGERSON, RETIRED.

SUZANNE MITCHELL, OF OKLAHOMA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF OKLAHOMA, VICE DAVID L. RUSSELL, RETIRED.

SCOTT L. PALK, OF OKLAHOMA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF OKLAHOMA, VICE STEPHEN P. PRIOT, RETIRED.

RONALD G. RUSSELL, OF UTAH, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH, VICE BRIAN THEODORE STEWART, RETIRED.

#### CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate December 16, 2015:

##### UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THOMAS O. MELLA, OF MARYLAND, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

##### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

GABRIEL CAMARILLO, OF TEXAS, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE.

MARCEL JOHN LETTRE, II, OF MARYLAND, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE.

##### IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

##### *To be admiral*

VICE ADM. KURT W. TIDD

##### NATIONAL FOUNDATION ON THE ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES

THOMAS EDGAR ROTHMAN, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE ARTS FOR A TERM EXPIRING SEPTEMBER 3, 2016.

##### DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

STEVEN MICHAEL HARO, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE.