

H. Res. 426

In the House of Representatives, U. S.,

July 11, 2007.

Whereas Colombia has experienced the internal displacement of more than 3,800,000 people over the past 20 years, representing approximately 8 percent of Colombia's population;

Whereas Colombia's internally displaced population is one of the worst humanitarian crises in the Americas, and the second largest internally displaced population in the world, after Sudan;

Whereas more than 200,000 people continue to be displaced internally every year;

Whereas Colombia's internally displaced people are often forced from their homes multiple times, and fear repercussions if they identify their attackers;

Whereas the International Committee of the Red Cross and the World Food Program have found internally displaced people in Colombia to be poorer and more disenfranchised than the general population, with 70 percent suffering from food insecurity, inadequate shelter, or limited health care services;

Whereas Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by displacement, representing almost one-third of the internally displaced;

Whereas women and children also comprise a large majority of the internally displaced;

Whereas very few internally displaced Colombians have been able to return to their original homes due to ongoing conflict throughout the country, and when returns take place they should be carried out voluntarily, in safety and with dignity;

Whereas, in 1997, the Government of Colombia passed landmark legislation, known as Law 387, to guarantee rights and assistance to its internally displaced population;

Whereas the Government of Colombia has expanded its ability to assist internally displaced people through its own agencies, and with the financial, technical, and operational support of the international community;

Whereas the Constitutional Court of Colombia has handed down multiple decisions recognizing the insufficient nature of the government's efforts to meet the basic needs of internally displaced persons and upheld the importance of implementing law 387 in light of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;

Whereas the Constitutional Court of Colombia, in consultation with the Government of Colombia, civil society, and the United Nations, has developed an extensive set of measurements to ensure government compliance with Law 387;

Whereas the Government of Colombia, the international community, and civil society are engaged in the London-Cartagena Process to develop coordinated responses to domestic problems, including humanitarian assistance and internal displacement;

Whereas the Government of the United States provides valuable, but limited, humanitarian assistance through Plan Colombia, and has programs targeted specifically for internally displaced people; and

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, on a visit to Colombia in March 2007, urged greater attention to the issue, stating that it should be a “national priority” and asked for “greater coherence” in programs to address the needs of the internally displaced: Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Colombian Catholic Church, and the Consultancy for Human Rights and Internal Displacement should be commended for their initiative to declare the Year of the Rights of the Internally Displaced People in Colombia;

(2) the Government of Colombia and the international donor community should be encouraged to prioritize discussion of humanitarian assistance and internal displacement with the international donor community, especially within the context of the London-Cartagena Process; and

(3) the Government of the United States should increase the resources it makes available to provide emergency humanitarian assistance and protection through

international and civilian government agencies, and assist Colombia's internally displaced people in rebuilding their lives in a dignified, safe, and sustainable manner.

Attest:

Clerk.