

**MISTREATMENT OF AFGHANI WOMEN IS NOT CULTURAL—IT IS CRIMINAL**

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about an item that ought to outrage not only everybody on this floor but everybody throughout the world. The plight of Afghani women is desperate. So desperate, in fact, that at least half of the passengers on a recently hijacked Afghani airliner have now sought political asylum in England. So desperate that English authorities continue to investigate whether some of the passengers, men and women, aided their captors in an effort to escape the brutal, vicious, thug-like Taliban regime in Kabul.

Mr. Speaker, as we enter a new century marked by hope and optimism, marked by the expansion of freedom and democracy, the Taliban regime seems bent on dragging its citizens, and in particular its women, back to the dark ages. In fact, it is probably worse than the dark ages.

To be female in Afghanistan today is to be a target, a target for repression, a target for brutality, a target for physical and emotional terror that knows no peer.

As First Lady Hillary Clinton has stated, "We must all make it unmistakably clear this terrible suffering inflicted on the women and girls in Afghanistan is not cultural, it's criminal. And we must do everything in our power to stop it."

The First Lady was absolutely correct. Ever since the Taliban seized power in 1996, it has enforced edicts that have destroyed basic human rights for Afghani women.

According to the U.S. State Department and human rights groups, women and girls are prohibited from attending school. With few exceptions, women are prohibited from working outside the home. Women and girls may not go outside unless they wear a head-to-toe covering called a Barca. A three-inch square opening provides the only means for vision.

Women are prohibited from appearing in public unless accompanied by a male relative. My colleagues, listen to this: Access to medical care for women and girls is virtually nonexistent.

Mr. Speaker, I am the father of three young women, three girls, and the grandfather of a beautiful 13-year-old granddaughter. Intolerable situations.

Women are not allowed to practice medicine. And listen to this: Male doctors are prohibited from viewing or touching women's bodies. How can a woman get medical services if women are prohibited from practicing medicine and men are prohibited from viewing or touching women?

Windows in houses that have female occupants must be painted so that one cannot see from the street.

It is hard to believe that any society in the world would force its citizens to

endure such Draconian conditions. But, in the 21st century and the dawn of the century, it is the sad truth.

Violations of the Taliban code brings swift, brutal punishment from the religious police, known as the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtues and Suppression of Vice.

What a warped understanding of virtues the Taliban has. Women have been beaten on the street for showing an inch of ankle below the Barca or for wearing shoes that make sounds while walking. One woman reportedly was shot for appearing in public while taking her sick child to a doctor. What a warped sense of virtue these Taliban have.

Other women are randomly rounded up and imprisoned for no apparent justification. Women are frequently stoned, hung, and beaten for alleged violations of various Taliban laws.

Some, I suppose, would argue that the treatment of Afghani women and girls half a world away is none of our business. But when basic human dignities are stripped from so many and so violently, we should not, we must not stand by silent. Indeed, we must express our collective outrage and, yes, perhaps do more than that. It would be, Mr. Speaker, unconscionable for us to look away while an entire generation of Afghani women are desperately crying out for help.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this time, but more importantly, I appreciate the fact that all of my colleagues join in expressing this outrage and reversing this criminal behavior. I am pleased to have the opportunity to join my colleague, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), in bringing this matter, this desperate matter, to the attention of our colleagues.

**SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT COLOMBIA ASSISTANCE PACKAGE**

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, the administration has recently sent to Congress a request for \$1.6 billion, primarily in military and security assistance, to be sent to the Government of Colombia over the next 2 years. The majority of this assistance, namely \$800 million to \$900 million, will be voted on next month as part of an FY 2000 supplemental appropriations bill. These monies will supplement the \$300 million in mainly security assistance that the Congress has already approved for Colombia for fiscal year 2000. The remainder of the funds is requested for fiscal year 2001.

The ostensible purpose of these funds is to cut the supply of drugs coming out of Colombia to the United States and to support Colombian President Pastrana's efforts to negotiate peace with guerilla factions and to reform government institutions.

Now, I am sure that everyone in this Congress shares the administration's

concerns about the threat to Colombia's democracy and development from narcotics traffickers, rebel forces, and paramilitary groups. And I am sure everyone in this Congress supports President Pastrana and the peace process in Colombia. These issues are not in question.

What I do question is whether the proposed aid package for Colombia is the right aid program and the right policy for Colombia. I do question whether the aid under consideration will meet either the counternarcotics objective, let alone further the peace process.

Our current policy, which has already involved hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance to the Colombian security forces, has not, I repeat, has not reduced coca cultivation in Colombia, the flow of cocaine or heroin to the U.S. from Colombia, or the profits of drug traffickers. Why do we believe that more of the same is better?

I also question providing substantial assistance to the Colombian Armed Forces, which has a long and rotten history of human rights violations, including support for paramilitary groups. I question a package that does not address at all the problems posed by the paramilitary groups, which are responsible for the majority of human rights crimes, the internal displacement of more than 1.5 million Colombian peasants and who are more directly linked to drug lords than the guerillas.

I urge my colleagues to not rush consideration of the Colombian supplemental. I urge my colleagues to ask the administration whether this is a counternarcotics strategy or a counterinsurgency strategy.

I urge my colleagues to ask the administration how long they expect the United States will need to be in Colombia to accomplish even their stated objectives.

This package is for 2 years, by which time most of the military equipment will be just arriving in Colombia. Are we going to be in Colombia for just 2 years, or for 4 years, or 6 years, or who knows how many years?

I challenge the administration to explain how launching military operations in Colombia at a time when the peace negotiations are moving forward will help the peace process.

Mr. Speaker, we must ask these questions now because later may be too late.

I will just close by again urging my colleagues to carefully consider the implications of this aid package. Let us not rush to judgment on this package and do something that we will regret in years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the following letter that the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY) and I sent to Secretary Albright about these issues: