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WORLD REFUGEE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate World Refugee Day, which is being celebrated today in the United States and in almost 90 countries around the globe. The theme for this year's World Refugee Day is "Refugee Women," which is very appropriate since almost 80 percent of the refugees worldwide are women and children.

World Refugee Day gives us a chance to reflect upon the almost 50 million uprooted people in the world and to think about what the United States is doing to help alleviate their suffering. In fiscal year 2001, the U.S. welcomed 68,426 refugees to its shores and gave those disparate people the chance to seek a new life. While there are some encouraging aspects to our Nation's refugee policy, there is much more to be concerned about.

An extreme regional inequity exists in our Nation's refugee admissions process regarding African refugees. On November 21, 2001, President Bush authorized the admission of 70,000 refugees into the United States for fiscal year 2002. Yet, as of May 31, 2002, slightly more than 13,800 refugees have been admitted. Of these admitted by the end of May 8, 933 were from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, whereas only 891 refugees were from Africa.

When the Congressional Black Caucus asked the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the State Department in March why so few refugees from Africa had been admitted this fiscal year, they replied that security concerns prevented them from admitting the refugees. Yet if security is a reason for the delay, why is it that almost 1,500 refugees from the Near East and South Asia have been admitted when the region is known to have much more serious security concerns than Africa?

Mr. Speaker, I am asking for an equitable refugee admission process. Worldwide, 28 percent of the refugees are from Africa, and I believe that 28 percent of refugees resettled in the U.S. should be African in origin. But to date, less than 7 percent of the refugees admitted this fiscal year to the United States are from Africa. This imbalance really cannot continue.

What can we do to correct these regional inequities? We can roll over fiscal year 2002 admission numbers into fiscal year 2003 numbers so that a precious chance to rebuild a life does not expire. We can institute direct flights from refugee camps to a facility in the United States so that the refugees can be processed within the U.S., as was done for Kosovo Albanians during the Balkan war at Fort Dix in New Jersey.

We could give preferential treatment to African refugees into very safe settings, as was done for the Montagnards from Vietnam, and we can increase circuit rides so that refugees can be interviewed where they actually live. Mr. Speaker, where there is a will, there is a way.

The statistics that I have cited are useful in understanding the severity of the refugee admissions crisis that is taking place, but they also obscure the fact that we are talking about desperate, suffering people. Each fraction of a percentage point represents a family that has been united and given a new lease on life; each number represents someone who has escaped a hopeless refugee camp or a violent urban detention center.

Each number represents someone like Rose, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who has resettled in Dallas, Texas, the district that I am proud to represent here in Congress. Rose's husband, an ethnic Tutsi, fled the violence and chaos under the former Zaire to Rwanda to escape persecution. At that time, Rose was expecting her second child. As the war and violence of the Great Lakes Region raged around them, Rose and her children were forced to leave. They found temporary refuge in Benin.

In February 2000, Rose and her two children arrived in Dallas. Rose quickly found a job at a photo processing lab that enabled her to support her two children. Although she was self-sufficient, her life was incomplete without her husband. But by working with resettlement agencies, Rose was able to unite her family in March of this year.

Mr. Speaker, the story of Rose from my district has a happy ending, and it demonstrates the hope and opportunity that we can offer if we will.

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

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

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

(Ms. BROWN of Florida addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. MEEKS of New York addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CELEBRATING WORLD REFUGEE DAY

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

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, today is World Refugee Day. For many years, numerous countries all around the world have set aside a day for remembering the plight of refugees. One of the most widespread is African Refugee Day celebrated June 20 in several African countries.

In 2000, as an expression of solidarity with Africa, a special U.N. General Assembly resolution was passed naming June 20 of every year World Refugee Day.

Some of my colleagues may be thinking, why do we need a day to celebrate refugees? Why? Because today, right now, there are over 21 million refugees worldwide, people displaced by conflict, humanitarian disasters, and crises; men, women, and children whose lives are starkly different from those we lead because they find it very difficult

to meet just basic needs such as food, shelter, and water. Many times, men, women, and children find themselves living in destitute conditions in camps that leave them vulnerable to attack and to disease. There are anywhere from 3 million to 6 million refugees and approximately 10.6 million internally displaced refugees in Africa. More than half of all African refugees have fled from four countries: Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, and Angola. These four countries, along with Eritrea, Burundi and Liberia, each produce over a quarter of a million or more of refugees. The numbers are staggering, too large even to imagine, and difficult to connect to human lives.

So what do we do? What does it mean to be a refugee? Who needs to be resettled?

Let me tell my colleagues the story of one. Jean Pierre Kamwa, a student activist from Cameroon, fled to the United States in 1999 seeking asylum from imprisonment and torture, evils visited upon him because of his activism, ethnic background, and pro-democracy rhetoric. After arriving at JFK Airport from the long trip and treacherous ordeal, he was immediately taken into custody, fingerprinted, photographed, and handcuffed by an INS officer. Mr. Kamwa was told to remove his clothes and was subsequently searched. Then he was taken, still handcuffed, to the Wackenhut detention facility in Queens, New York, where he was detained for 5 months until granted asylum in April of 2000.

Mr. Kamwa now works with refugee visitation programs, such as First Friends, a community-based network that coordinates visits to the Elizabeth, New Jersey, immigration facility where 300 refugees are being held waiting for their cases to be judged and, might I add, at a facility that still does not reach the standards, in my opinion, that it should.

This one man's story shows that even refugees who find their way to our shores have a long way to go before they can lead normal lives again. Now imagine that you are a refugee, seeking asylum in the United States. Imagine how difficult life is, held in detention, while you are being processed.

Since September 11, that wait has become even longer. Understandably, the tragedy that occurred created a delay in the processing of immigration and refugee resettlement cases. On November 21, 2001, President Bush authorized the admission of 70,000 refugees into the United States for fiscal year 2002. Yet, as of May 31 of this year, slightly less than 13,800 refugees have been admitted. Given the current pace of processing, it is highly unlikely that the allocation admissions level will be reached by September 30 of 2002; and, therefore, those people will not have an opportunity to come into this country.

What is even more disturbing is that while 28 percent of the refugees worldwide are Africans in origin, less than 7

percent of the refugees admitted into this country in fiscal year 2002 are of African origin. A mere 891 African refugees have been admitted this year, while 14,089 refugees from the Near East and South Asia have been resettled in the same amount of time; and a staggering 6,470 have come from the former Soviet Union. There is clearly an imbalance here, and it has to be redressed.

Testifying at a February 12 hearing held by the Senate Immigration Subcommittee, the head of the State Department's Refugee Bureau, Assistant Secretary Dewey, and INS Commissioner James Ziglar committed their agencies to working very diligently to admit the 70,000 refugees that President Bush pledged to bring to the United States of America. In his testimony Ziglar said, "The terrorist attacks of September 11 were caused by evil, not immigration. We can and will protect ourselves against people who seek to harm the United States, but we cannot judge immigrants or refugees by the actions of terrorists. Our Nation must continue in its great tradition of offering a safe haven to the oppressed and persecuted."

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join in to try to make the processing of refugees more humane.

The Refugee Resettlement program has proved to be a success for many individuals seeking asylum from terrible situations in their own countries, such as the thousands of Dinka youths that have come to be known as the "Lost Boys" of Sudan. The treacherous war in Sudan, fueled by the lust for oil, has forced thousands of Southern Sudanese to flee to neighboring countries like Kenya and Ethiopia. As the war rages on, thousands of Sudanese boys went from one country to another and 5,000 survivors of the 33,000 who originally fled Sudan ended up in a refugee camp in Northern Kenya called Kakuma. They have since become known as the "Lost Boys" of Sudan.

John Tot and 109 other Sudanese teenagers arrived in Philadelphia and other cities around the U.S. in late 2000, part of a humanitarian effort of the State Department and the UN High Commissioner on Refugees. These young boys have overcome numerous obstacles to learn English, graduate from high school, and even make their way to college.

The refugee resettlement program can work and can mean the difference between barely surviving and leading a full, productive life. We must do what we can to urge the processing of African refugees. It's a matter of life and death.

WARPED LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss this administration's and this Republican leadership's warped and dangerous legislative priorities. Let us start with Social Security, which is dead last on their priority list. This House leadership has simply refused to

bring up Social Security. Not only are they refusing to debate. They are completely dodging the issue.

The situation is so bad that this week, Democrats were forced to launch a discharge petition wherein we have to get 218 signatures in order to try to bring a bill to the floor to provide the American public with the debate on Social Security that our people deserve. All the while, the Republicans are on a course to raid and are raiding the Social Security trust fund to the tune of \$1.8 trillion.

This debt clock tells the story of this week. Every week since they have started to do this, because we were in surplus a year and a half ago, finally, after years of budget regimen during the Clinton years and this Congress, we were able to bring revenues and expenditures into balance, even though we have an accumulated debt we are paying off. Nonetheless, they have begun to try to raid the Social Security trust fund to pay for ongoing expenses; and every week while they are doing this, I am going to come down here and let the American people know how much they borrowed this week.

So as of today, they have now taken \$218,095,890,410, which amounts to, for each citizen in our country, they dipped into your pocket \$775. You could say it is akin to a tax imposed on each senior and their family in this country.

Now, what do Republicans propose to do about it? Nothing. In fact, if they had their way, they would sneak through a debt ceiling increase and go on about the business of pushing their number one priority, one which lies at the very heart of the Republican Party, and that is cashing out the revenues of the people of the United States to the wealthiest people and corporations in this country, even those that locate their headquarters offshore, as the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), the Republican leader, endorsed yesterday.

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Members know the companies I am talking about, the energy giants like Enron Corporation, which is going to take 350 million more dollars of our seniors' money for tax breaks that are given to them, and the pharmaceutical companies that lined up for the big dinner that the Republicans held last night over here at the convention center, where they raised over \$30 million for this fall's election.

Let us look at veterans. That is another low priority on the Republican list. This administration has proposed a 250 percent increase on copay for pharmaceuticals that our veterans must buy when they go into the veterans' clinics or veterans' hospitals.

If one is a heart patient or somebody that needs 10 prescriptions a month, figure out, if one is charged an additional \$7 per prescription, that is over \$70 to \$100 additional per month. That is a tax on our veterans.

Republicans who profess to be the party of tax cuts would impose new