WORLD REFUGEE DAY

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, June 24, 2005

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the courage, spirit and resiliency of refugees around the world and the compassion, generosity and valor of those who have helped them rebuild their lives. The amazing stories of these people are an inspiration to us all.

The lives of refugees are driven by fear of persecution based on race, religion or nationality; or even by membership in a particular social group or political opinion. The United States government plays a unique role in protecting the human rights of current refugees, resolving the conflicts and problems that produce refugees and preventing further refugee crises. Our government must remain a world leader in protecting the human rights of all refugees.

According to statistics from the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, as of December 31, 2004 there are approximately 11.5 million refugees worldwide. The United States has the capacity and the potential to receive many more refugees: in fiscal year 2004, the refugee ceiling was set at 70,000, while admissions into the United States totaled only 52,875.

I challenge the United States government to ensure a fair process for determining refugee status and to provide physical protection for those seeking asylum. Moreover, the United States should not unnecessarily detain refugee seekers in an effort to deter them or others from seeking asylum in the United States; such a process is fundamentally contrary to the hope of freedom and democracy that our country represents.

I applaud the United States government for granting refugees basic human rights such as access to work, the means to earn a livelihood and the freedom of movement.

As a representative from California, a State with one of the highest number of refugee arrivals each year, I know there is much yet to be done to protect the rights of refugees.

Mr. Speaker, honoring the courage of refugees requires more than mere praise; we need concrete actions and durable solutions. In this battle against despair, let us be an ally to refugees; let us provide a glimmer of hope; let us be the beacon that America has always symbolized.

PAUL KRUGMAN’S ESSAY ENTITLED “THE WAR PRESIDENT”

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.
OF MICHIGAN
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, June 24, 2005

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I recommend to my colleagues Paul Krugman’s essay entitled “The War President” which was published in today’s New York Times. How this country gets involved in a war always matters and since Congress has the Constitutional power to declare war, the Members of Congress must know how we got there, what we’re doing there now and how the war shall end.

[From the New York Times, June 24, 2005]

THE WAR President
(By Paul Krugman)

In this former imperial capital, every square seems to contain a giant statue of a Habsburg on horseback, posing as a conquering hero.

America’s founders knew all too well how war appeals to the vanity of rulers and their thirst for glory. They took care to deny presidents the kingly privilege of making war at their own discretion.

But after 9/11, with obvious relish, declared himself a “war president.” And he kept the nation focused on martial matters by morphing the pursuit of Al Qaeda into a war against Saddam Hussein.

In November 2002, Helen Thomas, the veteran White House correspondent, told an audience, “I have never covered a president who actually wanted to go to war”—but she made it clear that Mr. Bush was the exception. And she was right.

Leading the nation wrongly into war strikes at the heart of democracy. It would have been an unprecedented abuse of power even if the war hadn’t turned into a military and moral quagmire. And we won’t be able to get out of that quagmire until we face up to the reality of how we got in.

Let me talk briefly about what we now know about the decision to invade Iraq, then focus on why he’s wrong.

The administration has prevented any official inquiry into whether it hyped the case to purchase their medications and save and protect the human rights of current refugees, and to provide physical protection for those seeking asylum.

The United States government has played a unique role in protecting the human rights of current refugees, and preventing further refugee crises. Our government must remain a world leader in protecting the human rights of all refugees.

According to statistics from the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, as of December 31, 2004 there are approximately 11.5 million refugees worldwide. The United States has the capacity and the potential to receive many more refugees: in fiscal year 2004, the refugee ceiling was set at 70,000, while admissions into the United States totaled only 52,875.

I challenge the United States government to ensure a fair process for determining refugee status and to provide physical protection for those seeking asylum. Moreover, the United States should not unnecessarily detain refugee seekers in an effort to deter them or others from seeking asylum in the United States; such a process is fundamentally contrary to the hope of freedom and democracy that our country represents.

I applaud the United States government for granting refugees basic human rights such as access to work, the means to earn a livelihood and the freedom of movement.

As a representative from California, a State with one of the highest number of refugee arrivals each year, I know there is much yet to be done to protect the rights of refugees.

Mr. Speaker, honoring the courage of refugees requires more than mere praise; we need concrete actions and durable solutions. In this battle against despair, let us be an ally to refugees; let us provide a glimmer of hope; let us be the beacon that America has always symbolized.