

the property to the church. The government has since reversed itself and announced plans to go forward with the seizure. I fear the seizure will trigger violence or bloodshed. Unarmed clergy and lay persons holding vigil within the compound could be in harm's way.

The action by the government in Khartoum makes a mockery of its claims to respect religious freedom and human rights, and demonstrates, yet again, its intentions to continue to persecute Christians and Muslims who do not agree with the regime's particular brand of Islam.

The United States government has been active in opposing this kind of human rights abuse in Sudan, and I ask our State Department to continue to shine a spotlight on this kind of human rights violation. In addition, I call upon our allies and friends in the world community to intervene with the government of Sudan to stop these human rights abuses.

In particular, I challenge the governments of Canada and France, whose companies are helping to develop Sudan's oil reserves, to speak up boldly in defense of religious freedom and against these unjustified actions by the government of Sudan. Concrete actions by these governments to denounce these human rights violations may make the difference between freedom and oppression for these people, and possibly between life and death. The United States and the entire international community must not stand by in the face of persecution.

HATE CRIMES

SPEECH OF

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 13, 1999

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise this evening to join my colleagues in calling on the Republican Leadership to bring hate crimes legislation to the floor of this House.

For too long, this House has failed to act in the face of the growing list of victims who have fallen to the culture of hatred that seems to be on the rise in this country. We have seen synagogues burned to the ground. We have seen James Byrd dragged to his death down a dusty road in Texas. And one year ago yesterday, we lost Matthew Shepard after he was beaten and left for dead on a cold night in Laramie, WY. And there have been too many stories, some that the Nation has not yet heard, of young men and women visited by untimely and violent deaths.

In Texas City, TX, Laaron Morris and Kevin Tryals were shot to death, one of their bodies left in a burning car, simply because they were gay.

In Ft. Lauderdale, CA, Jody-Gaye Bailey was shot in the head by a self-proclaimed skinhead. Minutes before the shooting, her assailant ranted about his desire to kill her just because she was black.

In Sylacauga, AL, Billy Jack Gaither was beaten to death with an ax handle, his body set afire on a pile of burning tires, because he was gay.

In Kenosha, WI, two African-American teens were intentionally run down while walking on the sidewalk. Eight years earlier, their assailant had deliberately rammed a van carrying five African-American men.

In northern California, three synagogues were burned to the ground by two brothers who are also suspected of gunning down two gay men in Redding, CA.

Even as violent crime continues to decline in America, the awful list of hate crime victims continues to grow. According to the FBI, there were nearly 8,000 hate crimes committed in 1995 alone. From attacks on synagogues in northern California early this summer to the tear gassing of a gay pride parade in San Diego this past August, we have seen assault after assault on individuals because of their religion, their race, or their sexual orientation.

We are all appalled by these violent, hateful crimes. But how many more of our citizens have to fall to the epidemic of hate crime in this country before this House is compelled to act? We passed resolutions condemning hatred and racism. We came to the floor of this House and sent out thoughts and prayers to the families of the victims. We spoke of the loss of values in America. But a Nation's values must also be reflected in its laws. We should not just speak of our outrage. We should pass this legislation and help put a stop to acts of hatred.

Currently, the law only allows the prosecution of a hate crime if it is committed while the victim is exercising a federally protected right, such as voting or attending school. This law was written to address the challenge of segregationists attempting to prevent minorities from voting or going to school, it does not meet the challenge of today's hate groups that seek to terrorize entire communities with their violent acts. By passing the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, we empower federal prosecutors to assist local law enforcement in finding and punishing those who commit hate crimes based on a person's race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

Hate crimes are not just assaults on individual victims, they are an assault on entire communities. The murder of one gay man is about attacking the entire gay community. Burning down a synagogue is about striking fear into the hearts of Jews everywhere. Let's call hate crimes what they really are—terrorism. When the supporters of hatred and division turn their thoughts into hateful acts, they need to know that we will come after them with full force of law and that they will pay for their crimes.

I want to thank my colleagues who came to the floor this evening to keep this issue on the national agenda. We will continue to fight for passage of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act and we will not stop until it is the law of the land. Let us do this in memory of the victims of hate crimes. And let's do it to ensure that we are not here this time next year, remembering the life of Matthew Shepard and mourning the loss of another 8,000 victims of hate crimes.

SENATE SHOULD PASS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY PROTECTION ACT

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 14, 1999

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, recently, this House passed H.R. 1691, the Religious Liberty Protection Act. The bill is currently in committee in the Senate and I would like to take this opportunity to urge our colleagues in the other house to pass this bill as soon as possible.

America is a secular democracy, a country where the religious rights of every citizen are protected by the Constitution. In many other countries, including some that call themselves secular and democratic, people do not enjoy these freedoms. We must do whatever we can to protect religious freedom for every American.

The Sikh religion requires Sikhs to have five symbols known as the "five Ks." The five Ks are unshorn hair (Kes), a comb (Kanga), a bracelet (Kara), a kind of shorts (Kachha), and a ceremonial sword (Kirpan). These are required by the religion.

In a recent incident in Mentor, Ohio, outside Cleveland, a 69-year-old Sikh named Gurbachan Singh Bhatia was involved in a minor traffic accident. When the police arrived at the scene, a policeman saw Mr. Bhatia's kirpan (ceremonial sword). He was arrested for carrying a concealed weapon. The case is scheduled to be heard in December. In a case in Cincinnati involving similar circumstances, the judge, the Honorable Mark Painter wrote, "To be a Sikh is to wear a kirpan—it is that simple. It is a religious symbol and in no way a weapon."

Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, has been working to get the Religious Liberty Protection Act to protect the rights of Mr. Bhatia and all religious people of all faiths in America. No person should be harassed for his religious faith. He has written to Senator HATCH, who chairs the Judiciary Committee over there, and all members of the committee in support of this bill.

I call on the local authorities in Mentor to drop all charges against Mr. Bhatia and I also call on my colleagues over in the Senate to pass H.R. 1691, the Religious Liberty Protection Act.

I submit Dr. Aulakh's letter to Senator HATCH into the RECORD for the information of my colleagues.

COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN,

Washington, DC, October 7, 1999.

Hon. ORRIN HATCH,

Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Washington, DC.

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO EXPEDITE PASSAGE OF
H.R. 1691 TO PROTECT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

DEAR SENATOR HATCH: On behalf of over 500,000 Sikhs, I am writing to you in support of H.R. 1691, the Religious Liberty Protection Act.

The Council of Khalistan represents the interests of the Sikh Nation in this country and worldwide. It was constituted by the Panthic Committee to represent the Sikh struggle for freedom. We have worked for the last 12 years in pursuit of this objective.