

the Central African Republic to fulfill their obligations under international law to protect civilians, but also calls upon the President of the United States to continue humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons in the region.

While regional conflicts have proven substantive and continuous, the internal politics of Chad are by no means a beacon of stability and democracy. Since reaching independence in 1960, Chad has been consistently riddled with internal conflicts and civil wars. Unfortunately, despite American assistance to the government, the State Department reported that the last elections were, "orderly, but seriously flawed," as well as stating in the most recent Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices that, "the [Chadian] government's poor human rights record deteriorated further." The situation within Chad is even more precarious when one considers that the United Nations estimates that Chad is home to some 240,000 refugees from Darfur, 52,000 refugees from the Central African Republic, and more than 180,000 internally displaced people. In February 2008 alone, over 12,000 new refugees from Darfur entered the country.

Mr. Speaker, in the past three years, as fighting between the government and rebels increased, 180,000 Chadians have been displaced, adding to the inflow of 290,000 refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR) and Sudan's Darfur region. Although the government developed a plan for reform, and signed a peace agreement with rebel groups in 2007, the conflict has not ceased. In February 2008, rebel forces, supported by the neighboring Sudanese government, sought to remove President Idriss Déby from power, killing hundreds of civilians in the process. Despite the United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1778, authorizing a multidimensional presence intended to help create the security conditions necessary for reconstruction and social and economic development, this has not been the case. While the United States has provided over \$338 million in humanitarian assistance since 2004 and also provides security assistance to the Chadian army through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds, there is still much more that needs to be done.

This resolution is both timely and imperative because it calls on the United States to work harder to develop and implement a sound strategy to protect and assist Chadians and other refugees, and, together with the international community, condemn Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and the National Congress for their support of the armed rebellion. A further destabilization in Chad will lead to wider regional instability and hinder the United States' counter-terrorism capabilities in a very sensitive region.

By calling on the President of the United States to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced persons in the Chad and the Central African Republic and provide support to strengthen the rule of law, democratic institutions, and respect for human rights, this legislation works to not only alleviate suffering in the short term, but also prevent them from occurring in the long term. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support for H. Res. 1011, which calls on the United States and the international community to develop, fund, and implement a regional strategy which addresses the security and humanitarian crisis in Chad, the Darfur region of the Sudan, and the northern region of the Central African Republic.

This timely and important legislation, of which I am proud to be a cosponsor, not only calls on the Governments of Chad and the Central African Republic to fulfill their obligations under international law to protect civilians, but also calls upon the President of the United States to continue humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons in the region.

Chad has been plagued by intermittent conflict, both internally and with its neighbors, since it gained independence in 1960. The current President of Chad, Idriss Déby, took power after launching a coup across the border in neighboring Darfur, Sudan. He has since faced at least five coup attempts including one just this past February. Violence spurred by the Sudanese Government has also continued to destabilize Chad and the State Department's most recent Country Report on Human Rights Practices that, "the [Chadian] government's poor human rights record deteriorated further" this past year.

The refugee situation in Chad and the surrounding region continues to worsen. In the past three years, as fighting between the Government and rebels increased and 180,000 Chadians have been displaced, adding to the inflow of 290,000 refugees from the Central African Republic, CAR, and Sudan's Darfur region. The United Nations estimates that Chad is now home to 240,000 refugees from Darfur, 52,000 refugees from the Central African Republic, and more than 180,000 internally displaced people. In February 2008 alone over 12,000 new refugees from Darfur entered the country. We must develop a comprehensive plan to address the refugee crisis as well as the security problems that plague the region.

I visited Darfur and have seen the situation on the ground. Now high-tech GPS satellites and mass media allow everyone to bear witness to the tragedies in Chad, Sudan, and the surrounding areas: the burnt holes where villages used to be, the mass migrations of the internally displaced, starving children, and victims of rape.

With this knowledge comes a duty to act. As the wars in Chad, Sudan, and Central African Republic become increasingly intertwined, and as the massive displacements continue across the region, the United States and the international community must engage the crisis on a regional level.

This resolution recognizes that reality and calls for a comprehensive strategy to protect civilians, facilitate humanitarian operations, contain and reduce violence, and contribute to conditions for sustainable peace and good governance throughout the region with all nations.

I thank the sponsor of this resolution, Mr. WOLF, for introducing this important resolution, and I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H. Res. 1011, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### SENSE OF HOUSE REGARDING REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1166) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding provocative and dangerous statements and actions taken by the Government of the Russian Federation that undermine the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

#### H. RES. 1166

Whereas, since 1993, the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia has been reaffirmed by the international community, international law, and 32 United Nations Security Council resolutions;

Whereas the Government of the Republic of Georgia has pursued in good faith a peaceful resolution of territorial conflicts in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia since the end of hostilities in 1993;

Whereas, on March 28, 2008, and on April 12, 2008, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili introduced new and far-reaching peace proposals to resolve the territorial conflict in Abkhazia, including international guarantees of Abkhaz autonomy, broad political representation for the Abkhaz, the right to veto legislation related to the constitutional status of Abkhazia as well as its language and culture, the establishment of a joint Free Economic Zone in the Gali region, and an offer for more active involvement by the international community and Russian Federation to help forge a peaceful resolution to the conflict;

Whereas, for several years, the Government of the Russian Federation has carried out policies that seek to undermine the sovereignty of the Republic of Georgia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia by awarding individuals in these regions with Russian citizenship, Russian passports, economic subsidies, and the right to vote in Russian elections;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has also detailed Russian officials to take up positions in the separatist

governments, provided military equipment and support to separatists in the regions, and encouraged Russian volunteers to serve in militias in Abkhazia and South Ossetia;

Whereas the announcement from the Government of the Russian Federation on April 16, 2008, that it will establish "official ties" with the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, recognize their official documents and legal entities, and further involve itself in aspects of their governments appears to be a thinly veiled attempt at annexation;

Whereas, on April 20, 2008, tensions between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia further escalated when an unarmed and unmanned Georgian reconnaissance aircraft was shot down over Georgian territory, reportedly by a Russian MIG-29 fighter jet;

Whereas Russian officials have denied any involvement in the downing of the reconnaissance plane, claiming that Abkhazian rebels were responsible for the incident, although neither Georgia nor Abkhazian defense forces have MIG-29 fighter jets;

Whereas the statements and counter-productive actions of the Government of the Russian Federation in these regions has undermined the peace and security in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Republic of Georgia, and the Caucasus region as a whole;

Whereas the consistent effort to undermine the sovereignty of a neighbor is incompatible with the role of the Russian Federation as one of the world's leading powers and with its commitments to international peacekeeping made to the United Nations Security Council and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; and

Whereas, on April 23, 2008, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated that "the United States is firmly committed to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia, that we support Georgia's efforts to make certain that the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia feel fully a part of Georgia, and that we are very concerned at the recent move by the Russian Federation, the presidential decree that was issued": Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns recent decisions made by the Government of the Russian Federation to establish "official ties" with the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, a process that further impedes reconciliation between those regions and the Government of the Republic of Georgia and that violates the sovereignty of the Republic of Georgia and the commitments of the Government of the Russian Federation to international peacekeeping;

(2) calls upon the Government of the Russian Federation to immediately revoke its decision to establish "official ties" with the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia;

(3) strongly supports the restoration of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia and a peaceful resolution of the conflicts within Georgia's internationally recognized borders;

(4) encourages the Government of the Russian Federation to work with the Government of Georgia, the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the international community to find a peaceful solution to the conflict;

(5) welcomes the measured reaction of the Government of the Republic of Georgia to recent developments and commends President Saakashvili's latest initiatives to resolve territorial conflicts through peaceful means;

(6) calls on United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to conduct an investiga-

tion of the April 20, 2008, incident in which an unarmed Georgian reconnaissance aircraft was shot down by what reports indicate was a missile launched from a Russian MIG-29 fighter jet;

(7) urges all parties to the conflicts in the Republic of Georgia and governments around the world to eschew rhetoric and actions that escalate tensions and undermine efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the conflicts; and

(8) supports the declaration of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Bucharest Summit in Romania, which stated that the Republic of Georgia will become a member of NATO, reiterates its support for the commitment to further enlargement of NATO to include democratic governments that are able and willing to meet the responsibilities of membership, and urges the foreign ministers of NATO member states at their meeting in December 2008 to consider favorably the application of the Government of the Republic of Georgia's Membership Action Plan.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I am pleased to support this resolution that adds the House's voice to the chorus of condemnation from the administration and our European allies to the provocative actions taken in recent weeks by the Russian Federation against the Republic of Georgia.

I commend my distinguished colleague, Representative WEXLER of Florida and chairman of the European Subcommittee, for promptly introducing this important resolution.

For several years, the Russian Government has promulgated policies that have increasingly sought to undermine the sovereignty of the Georgian Government and its territorial integrity over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Such harmful policies include awarding residents in these regions with Russian citizenship, Russian passports, and even the right to vote in Russian elections.

In addition, the Kremlin has assigned Russian officials to hold positions in the separatist governments in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It has also provided military equipment and volunteer fighters to support militias active in these regions. Such behavior is

counterproductive to efforts to find a peaceful resolution to these conflicts and contrary to Russia's commitments to international peacekeeping.

Irritated by international recognition of Kosovo's independence despite its objections and incensed by Georgia's clear future in NATO, Russia escalated its dangerous actions towards Georgia in the weeks leading up to and immediately following NATO's Bucharest Summit. On March 6, Russia withdrew from the sanctions regime imposed on Abkhazia in 1996 by the Commonwealth of Independent States thereby eliminating the remaining limits on direct Russian economic relations with Abkhazia.

On March 21, the Russian Duma passed a nonbinding declaration asking the government to consider the "expediency of recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia." On March 25, Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's incoming president, spoke out against NATO membership for Georgia. During the NATO Summit, Russian President Putin sent letters to the separatist leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to express his support for their regimes.

As outlined in this resolution, President Putin instructed his government on April 16 to establish official ties with these separatist regimes. He further ordered his government to recognize legal documents issued by these authorities as well as legal entities registered by them. The tension reached its climax on April 20 when an unarmed and unmanned Russian reconnaissance aircraft was shot down over Georgian territory, reportedly by a Russian MIG-29 fighter. Despite Russian claims of innocence, neither the Georgians nor the Abkhazian rebels have this plane in their fleet.

Last week Russia further strained relations by moving an extra contingent of troops into Abkhazia. The Kremlin claims to be responding to a Georgia military buildup along the border, which the Tbilisi Government denies. Although Russia's troop level remains within the 3,000 soldier limit allowed under the 1994 U.N. ceasefire agreement, NATO has backed Russia's assertion that any increase must be approved by all parties.

Such hostile actions are in stark contrast to the recent attempts made by Georgian President, Mikheil Saakashvili, to find a peaceful and lasting solution to this conflict in the Caucasus. As he rightly stated, "There are no issues that we and the Abkhazians cannot solve through negotiations."

On March 28 and April 12, President Saakashvili introduced new proposals to facilitate a resolution to the conflict. They included international guarantees of Abkhaz autonomy, broad political representation for the Abkhaz, the right to veto legislation related to

the constitutional status of Abkhazia as well as its language and culture, and the establishment of a joint Free Economic Zone in the Gali region. President Putin has turned a deaf ear to these suggestions.

I ask my colleagues to join me in calling on the Russian Federation to revoke immediately its decision to establish official ties with these regions and to support the territorial integrity of Georgia's borders.

Rather than engaging in provocative acts, President Putin should respond favorably to President Saakashvili's call for active involvement by the Russian Federation as well as the international community to forge a peaceful and lasting solution to this conflict.

Furthermore, NATO should uphold its Summit promise to Georgia of a future in the Alliance by considering the extension of a Membership Action Plan at its December meeting. This act would welcome the country into the Euro-Atlantic community and could serve as a deterrent to further Russian aggression. I strongly support this resolution and urge my colleagues to join me.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there was a time when we could honestly hope that Russia was playing a fair and supportive role with regard to the resolution of the separatist conflicts in the Republic of Georgia. Unfortunately, our optimism in that regard is almost exhausted. It now appears obvious that Russia seeks to play a destabilizing role in Georgia, with the goal of undermining Georgia's political and economic development and, ultimately, its own sovereignty.

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Over several years Russia has reportedly supported the separatist forces with arms and trained personnel. It has applied boycotts on Georgian goods and shut off energy supplies to Georgia. It has broadly granted Russian citizenship and issued Russian passports to people living in Georgia's separatist regions. It has provided economic subsidies to the separatist regions and granted residents of those regions the right to vote in Russian elections. Its so-called "peacekeeping" forces in the separatist regions appeared to have played a biased role in favor, of course, of the separatist regime. More recently, on April 16, the Kremlin issued a decree further expanding its "official" ties with the separatist regions.

Most objective observers would affirm that the Georgian Government has tried to be fair and open-minded in its efforts to negotiate a settlement in the separatist conflicts. One has to wonder, however, if sporadic and mysterious incidents involving small-scale

attacks on Georgian territory and forces are meant to provoke the Georgian Government.

One such incident occurred on April 20. An unmanned and unarmed Georgian reconnaissance aircraft was shot down over Georgian territory, reportedly by a Russian MIG-29 fighter. Since neither Georgia nor the separatist regimes have MIG-29 jets among their forces, it seems difficult for Russia to deny its involvement.

Mr. Speaker, the Georgian people have made tremendous progress since the "Rose Revolution" of 2003. Georgia is not a perfect democracy, but it's heading in the right direction. It certainly compares very well with the trends in Russia, where a totalitarian regime is steadily being constructed once again.

Georgia deserves the support and encouragement of leading states of Europe and the support of the United States. Democracy and reform in Georgia will only succeed if the European Union, the leading states of Europe, and the United States remain engaged and strongly support it.

The resolution calls for the Kremlin to immediately revoke its decision to expand "official ties" with the separatist regions in Georgia. The resolution expresses strong support for the restoration of the territorial integrity of Georgia and for the peaceful resolution of conflicts within Georgia's borders. It also restates the declaration made by the NATO heads of state at the recent summit in Bucharest, Romania, in which they confidently stated their belief that the Republic of Georgia will become a member of NATO some day. And it urges NATO allies to favorably consider Georgia's application for admission in the Membership Action Plan, or MAP, during the NATO Ministers meeting this December, MAP being a program to simply help interested applicants for membership and prepare them to meet the standards required of all NATO allies.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is intended to support the sovereignty of Georgia and support an end to any irresponsible actions by the Russian Government that undermine its sovereignty and the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the separatist conflicts in that country.

I note again as well that nothing stated in this resolution with regard to NATO and Georgia's interest in membership in that alliance is any different from what was stated at the recent NATO summit.

I support this resolution and urge all my colleagues to do the same as well.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ).

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Speaker, as the co-Chair of the Congressional Georgia

Caucus, I rise in support of House Resolution 1166 and to express my strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia.

On April 16, 2008, the Russian Government declared that it would establish legal and official ties with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt by Russia to extend these regions, which are part of the sovereign nation of Georgia. This action was denounced by the international community, including the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, better known as NATO to all of us. Nonetheless, Russia remained unfazed by international opinion and further escalated tensions in the region just 4 days later by shooting down a Georgian unmanned aerial drone over Georgian territory.

Georgia is one of the strongest allies in the Caucasus region, and it is important for the United States to continue to stand by our allies. I spoke with President Saakashvili on Thursday, and he's very concerned about the situation and, as was mentioned by previous speakers, has offered a number of peace proposals. But he very much appreciates the statements that were made in support of Georgia by our State Department and is grateful for this resolution and the strong bipartisan support it demonstrates from Congress.

Since speaking with the President last week, the situation has become even more difficult for Georgia. The Russian Federation continues to move troops into Abkhazia, and yesterday we heard reports of possibly two more Georgian aircraft being shot down.

Considering our close relationship with Georgia, it is appropriate that the House of Representatives join the international institutions that have condemned Russia's actions and called for a peaceful resolution to the current tensions in the region. This resolution is supported by the chairman and ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, who were original cosponsors of the resolution. And it was introduced by Representative WEXLER, the chairman of the Europe Subcommittee.

I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution and appreciate its bipartisan nature.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 1166. The international community has affirmed the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia many times, and Georgia has sought in good faith a peaceful resolution of the conflicts with its regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Georgian Government has made generous proposals regarding internationally guaranteed autonomy, political representation, and the constitutional status of the regions.

I am deeply concerned that the Government of Russia has not responded with equal good faith. It has consistently undermined Georgian

sovereignty over these regions, for example, by giving people in these regions Russian citizenship, passports, voting rights, and even economic subsidies. The Russian Government has provided leaders, volunteers, and arms to separatist movements in these regions, and threatened to establish "official ties" with the Abkhazian and South Ossetian regions. According to reliable reports, the Russian Government has shot down unmanned drones over Georgian territory. It is outrageous for one state to undertake such hostile actions against a neighbor.

Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that the Secretary of State did the right thing when she recently committed the United States to Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and that the House will reaffirm American support for Georgia and condemn the Russian Government's unjust and destabilizing actions. Over and over again, we have seen how there are always people who are quick to make excuses for the Russian Government's unjust actions toward the small nations on its border—or toward the Russian people themselves. In the communist era, and since 1991, there have always been people who argued that, if we will just look the other way, allowing the Russian Government to do as it likes in some "sphere of influence," the Russian Government will respond by becoming become kinder, gentler, and more peaceful.

The historical record belies this argument. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, President Reagan, Pope John Paul II, Father Gleb Yakunin, the refuseniks in Russia in the 1970s and 1980s, the brave and beleaguered Russian human rights movement today—these people spoke the truth to and about the Russian Government. They have done more to promote peace and justice in the former Soviet Union than all those who argued for silence and compromise. Mr. Speaker, I am glad that this House is today choosing their road. What the Russian Government is doing to undermine Georgia is wrong, it is outrageous, and it must stop.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1166.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### CONDEMNING BURMESE REGIME'S UNDEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTION

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 317) condemning the Burmese regime's undemocratic constitution and scheduled referendum, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

##### H. CON. RES. 317

Whereas in 1974, then-dictator General Ne Win and his regime redrew the 1947 State Constitution and held a referendum for a military-backed constitution, endorsing a civilian front for military rule, known as the Burmese Socialist Program Party;

Whereas in 1988, the people of Burma came to the streets in a massive popular democracy uprising to call for democracy, human rights, and an end to military rule and a single party system;

Whereas the current military regime violently crushed the mass democracy uprising in 1988, killing more than 3,000 peaceful protesters and taking over power from the previous regime;

Whereas the current military regime, officially known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), known previously as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), held multi-party elections in 1990;

Whereas despite the threat and pressure by the military regime to vote for the candidates of the military-backed National Unity Party (NUP), the people of Burma voted 82 percent of Parliament seats for the candidates of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, led by detained leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and allied ethnic political parties;

Whereas the military regime refused to honor the election results and arrested and imprisoned both democracy activists and elected members of parliament;

Whereas the SPDC over a period of 14 years held a National Convention to draft a new constitution in which the process was tightly controlled, repressive and undemocratic;

Whereas the NLD walked out of the convention in 1995 because participants were not allowed to table alternative proposals or voice disagreement with the military regime;

Whereas in 2005, the leaders of the Shan Nationalities League of Democracy (SNLD) were all arrested on false charges and sentenced to more than 90 years in prison each;

Whereas the people of Burma, led by democracy activists and Buddhist monks in August and September 2007, took to the streets in nationwide peaceful protests demanding the military regime participate in a meaningful tri-partite dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the elected political parties from the 1990 elections and representatives of the ethnic nationalities for national reconciliation and a transition to democracy;

Whereas according to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Burma, Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, leading human rights groups and foreign diplomats based in Burma estimate the death toll from the August and September 2007 peaceful protests is much higher than reported by the regime;

Whereas the military regime brutally crushed the peaceful protests, killing at

least 31 people, leaving nearly 100 missing, and arresting 700 additional political prisoners bringing the number of Burma's political prisoners to approximately 1,800;

Whereas the United Nations Security Council Presidential Statement, issued by unanimous consent of all members of the Council on October 11, 2007, stated that "the Security Council strongly deplores the use of violence against peaceful demonstrators in Myanmar, emphasizes the importance of the early release of all political prisoners and remaining detainees";

Whereas the United Nations Security Council Presidential Statement also stressed "the need for the Government of Myanmar to create the necessary conditions for a genuine dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all concerned parties and ethnic groups, in order to achieve an inclusive national reconciliation with the direct support of the United Nations";

Whereas the United Nations and governments around the world also repeatedly called for the SPDC to hold a political dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, her party, the NLD, and representatives of ethnic nationalities to achieve national reconciliation and democratization and reverse the decades-long misrule by the regime which has resulted in a downward spiral of Burma's economic, educational, social, public health and infrastructure sectors;

Whereas the SPDC has ignored the repeated requests of the United Nations and the international community to release all political prisoners, end attacks against civilians, and engage in a meaningful dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, her party, the NLD, and representatives of ethnic nationalities;

Whereas at the same time, the SPDC assigned a commission to draft a constitution on October 18, 2007, with 54 hand-picked participants, in an attempt to ignore past election results, to lock in a process that excludes representatives of ethnic nationalities and the NLD from political participation, and to legitimize continued military rule;

Whereas the latest version of the draft constitution seeks to codify military rule by reserving 25 percent of parliamentary seats for military appointees, permits the head of the military to intervene in national politics, and ensures that key government ministries are held by military officers;

Whereas in October 2007, the SPDC appointed Labor Minister U Aung Kyi as liaison minister to engage with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for possible talks with Senior General Than Shwe, leader of the SPDC, but there has been no true exchange or tangible result from the few talks that were held;

Whereas recently, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi expressed through her party leaders that she is unhappy with the SPDC's unwillingness to establish political dialogue and she even urged the people of Burma to be prepared for the worst;

Whereas on February 9, 2008, the military regime announced that it will hold a constitutional referendum in May 2008 and a general election in 2010;

Whereas on February 12, 2008, the SPDC extended for another year the house arrest of U Tin Oo, Deputy Chairman of the NLD; and

Whereas early reports concerning the referendum voting indicate that Burmese voters were instructed how to vote under supervision of officials, sometimes under threat of physical violence and without an opportunity to read the ballot they were forced to cast: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—*