

Homeland Security and Transportation committees and a former Jesuit seminarian.

Mr. CAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 761 to commemorate the lives and work of those that were executed by members of the Salvadoran Army on the 20th anniversary of their deaths next month.

On November 16, 1989, members of the Salvadoran Army entered the Universidad Centroamericana Jose Simeon Canas in San Salvador and massacred six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter. This senseless mass murder was incited when the six priests took a stand for social justice and against the oppressive elements in the Salvadoran society, notably the tyrannical military.

Among the victims were Father Ignacio Ellacuria, a rector of the university and an outspoken critic of the Army; Father Ignacio Martin Baro, a prolific writer and an intellectual on the effects of war on the human psyche; Father Segundo Montes, founder of the Human Rights Institute at UCA and a congressional adviser on Salvadoran refugees; Father Amano Lopez, a respected member of the Society of Jesus, gifted counselor, and a pastoral worker; Father Joaquin Lopez y Lopez, director of the Fe y Alegria education program in poor communities; Father Juan Ramon Moreno, a theological scholar and publicist; and Elba Ramos, the Jesuits' housekeeper, who was killed alongside her teenage daughter, Celina, when she wrapped her body around Celina trying to protect her from the shooting.

Having spent 6 years in the Jesuit order studying to become a Jesuit priest, I have a deep appreciation for the sacrifice these people made in pursuit of religious freedom and human rights. These eight martyrs actually inspired me to join the Society of Jesus in 1990 and to carry on their struggle for religious freedom and human rights 19 years later.

Today, the 28 Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States have annually observed the November 16 anniversary of the murdered Jesuits and the two murdered women. This resolution commends those institutions for their solidarity with the UCA and extends sympathies to the families, friends, colleagues, and religious communities of the deceased.

Finally, the measure calls upon the President, the Secretary of State, and other United States Federal agencies to support efforts by the Salvadoran Government and other public, private, and religious organizations to reduce poverty and hunger and to promote educational opportunity, human rights, and the rule of law and social equity for the people of El Salvador.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to honor the lives of these human rights martyrs and support H. Res. 761. And in the words of the Jesuit Fathers, "ad majoram dei gloriam."

Ms. WATSON. I continue to reserve my time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, having no further speakers on the subject, again I want to thank Mr. MCGOVERN for bringing this forward.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. 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. 761, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CALLING ON VIETNAM TO RELEASE IMPRISONED BLOGGERS AND RESPECT INTERNET FREEDOM

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 672) calling on the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to release imprisoned bloggers and respect Internet freedom.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 672

Whereas the Internet is a tool to exercise freedom of expression and association, both of which are basic human rights;

Whereas the Internet is a medium to share information freely, promote social and economic development, and connect Vietnamese citizens domestically and internationally;

Whereas the Government of Vietnam created the Administration Agency for Radio, Television and Electronics Information in October 2008 and issued Circular 07 in December 2008 to restrict Internet freedom, censor private blogs, and compel information technology companies to cooperate with government efforts to monitor personal information of Internet users;

Whereas the Government of Vietnam has imprisoned bloggers and numerous democracy activists who have distributed their peaceful views over the Internet;

Whereas the Government of Vietnam continues to firewall external websites promoting democracy and human rights; and

Whereas these actions violate individuals' right to freedom of speech and expression: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the right of Vietnamese citizens to access websites of their choosing and to have the freedom to share and publish information over the Internet;

(2) calls on the Government of Vietnam to repeal Circular 07, Article 88, and similar statutes that restrict the Internet, so as to be in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a signatory;

(3) calls on the Government of Vietnam to become a responsible member state of the international community by respecting individuals' freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom of political association; and

(4) calls on the Government of Vietnam to release all political prisoners, including but

not limited to the following bloggers and cyber activists—

- (A) Le Cong Dinh;
- (B) Le Nguyen Sang;
- (C) Le Thi Cong Nhan;
- (D) Nguyen Van Hai (Dieu Cay);
- (E) Nguyen Xuan Nghia;
- (F) Ngo Quynh;
- (G) Nguyen Ngoc Quang;
- (H) Nguyen Thi Hong;
- (I) Nguyen Van Dai;
- (J) Pham Ba Hai;
- (K) Pham Thanh Nghien;
- (L) Pham Van Troi;
- (M) Tran Huynh Duy Thuc;
- (N) Truong Minh Duc;
- (O) Truong Quoc Huy;
- (P) Vu Hoang Hai;
- (Q) Nguyen Tien Trung; and
- (R) Vu Hung.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) 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 may 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 rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I would like to thank my good friend, Representative LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, for her leadership in introducing this important resolution.

This resolution calls on the government of Vietnam to release imprisoned bloggers and respect individuals' rights to freedom of speech and expression.

Over the past decade, Vietnam has seen an explosion in Internet use due to the country's increasing economic integration and a decline in the cost of access to the Internet. Today, an estimated 24 million of Vietnam's 88 million people are online. A major leap forward for freedom of expression in Vietnam has been the rise of the blogs. Blogs have taken an important space in Vietnam society, providing a rare platform for Vietnamese citizens to exchange ideas and debate issues outside of the State-controlled media.

Rather than embracing this new form of communication, authorities in Hanoi have chosen to join the likes of China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt in employing a mix of detentions, regulations, and intimidation in order to monitor users and censor views.

On October, 2008, the government passed a new edict that gave the police broad authority to move against online critics, including those who oppose the "State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." Since 2002, about 30 "cyberdissidents" have been jailed in Vietnam. Seven of those 30 remain behind bars, and these people were expressing

their views peacefully and posed no threat to Vietnam's national security.

According to the 2008 press freedom index by Reporters Without Borders, Vietnam was ranked 168 out of 173 countries.

Vietnam must stop criminalizing free speech and begin upholding the international covenant on civil and political rights to which Vietnam is a signatory. Censoring private blogs and forcing technology companies to cooperate with authorities to restrain critical speech threatens not just the Vietnamese people but Internet users everywhere.

I strongly support this resolution and urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume and rise in support of this measure.

While the government of Vietnam was striving to secure permanent normal trade relations from the United States 3 years ago and World Trade Organization membership in 2007, it was given the benefit of many doubts about its human rights practices. A lot of attention was paid to marginal improvements in personal freedoms inside Vietnam at that time, and in one controversial decision, the United States removed Vietnam from our list of Countries of Particular Concern for religious freedom violations.

□ 1230

But once the regime in Hanoi secured the trade status that it was seeking from the United States and multilateral organizations, it stepped up its repression. Since then, the human rights situation inside Vietnam has deteriorated, a fact that is readily apparent in the Vietnamese Government's crackdown on peaceful Internet dissent.

Although Internet usage has grown among the Vietnamese people, the regime in Hanoi restricts services to a limited number of state-owned Internet service providers, ISPs. Government regulations require global Internet companies who offer blogging services to report to the government every 6 months and to provide requested information about individual bloggers.

The state security apparatus monitors personal e-mail and blocks many Web sites with political or religious content that it finds disagreeable, such as some sites connected with the Catholic Church or overseas Vietnamese political groups. The Hanoi regime has harassed, convicted, and imprisoned many peaceful activists under the vague catchall provision of Article 88 of Vietnam's criminal code which prohibits conducting propaganda against the state.

Earlier this month, Vietnam convicted nine democracy advocates, including 60-year-old Nguyen Xuan Nghia, who was sentenced to 6 years in prison followed by 3 years of house arrest. These violations were an affront to the people of Vietnam and to all

people of goodwill who cherish basic human liberties.

All of us in this body, human rights and free trade advocates alike, welcome this opportunity for the House to speak with one voice in favor of the freedoms of speech and expression for the people of Vietnam. I am pleased to join the bipartisan cosponsors of this measure in calling for the release of political prisoners, including the 18 Vietnamese bloggers and cyberactivists listed in the resolution. It is also my hope that global and United States-based Internet service providers will refuse to be complicit in the Vietnamese Government's human rights violations.

I want to thank the gentlelady from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ) for introducing this measure, which I strongly support.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentlelady from California, LORETTA SANCHEZ.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. I thank the gentlelady from California, my good friend.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today in support of my resolution, House Resolution 672, which calls on the Government of Vietnam to release imprisoned bloggers and to respect Internet freedom.

I would like to thank, first and foremost, Chairman BERMAN and the committee staff for allowing us to bring this to the floor; and in particular, it's important right now with respect to what the Vietnamese Government is doing.

Since I came to the Congress, I have been a strong advocate for human rights in Vietnam. As a co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam, my fellow caucus members and I have focused on urging the Government of Vietnam to respect individual rights, in particular, those of religion and of speech and expression.

We have also worked with multiple U.S. administrations to make human rights an important part of the U.S.-Vietnam relationship. Unfortunately, instead of improving, the human rights conditions in Vietnam continue to deteriorate, and I have been concerned that the United States has not yet taken a fervent stand against the Government of Vietnam's blatant disregard for human rights.

I have been on this floor a number of times, many times, many of you know that, to call attention in particular to the bloggers and to the democracy activists in Vietnam, the ones who have been detained and imprisoned simply for advocating for democracy.

The Internet has become a crucial tool for the citizens of Vietnam to be able to exercise their freedom of expression and association. It has become a medium to share information freely, to promote social and economic development, and of course to fight for democracy. However, in recent months,

the Government of Vietnam has taken what I would call unlawful steps to tighten its control over the Internet.

In October of 2008, the Government of Vietnam created the Administration Agency for Radio, Television and Electronics Information and issued Circular 07 in December 2008 to restrict Internet freedom, to censor private blogs, and to compel information technology companies to cooperate with them to monitor personal information on users. Imagine, if we had that going on here in the United States, how unacceptable that would be.

In response, I, along with the Vietnam Caucus members, sent letters to Internet service providers like Google and Yahoo, et cetera, and urged them to continue advocating for the freedoms of speech and expression on the Internet in Vietnam; and then I introduced this resolution to raise the awareness of the lack of Internet freedom in Vietnam.

House Resolution 672 urges the Vietnamese Government to support the right of its citizens to access Web sites of their choosing and to repeal statutes like Circular 07 and Article 88, which restrict Internet use in Vietnam.

The consideration of this resolution comes at a perfect time. The Government of Vietnam has arrested bloggers Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, Bui Thanh Hieu, Pham Doan Trang, and many other bloggers. Some of these bloggers, like Quynh, have been released; however, there was a condition. In exchange for their freedom, they had to say that they would not blog about democracy or new political parties or freedoms of expression and human rights.

Just recently, nine dissidents were convicted by the Vietnamese Government for publishing articles on the Internet which was basically just practicing their rights of freedom of speech and expression. By the way, this is all about democracy. That's what these blogs are about.

The situation took a turn for the worse 2 weeks ago when Tran Khai Thanh Thuy was forcibly denied entry to the courthouse to attend the trial of nine democracy activists and was instead harassed by the Vietnamese police. The following night, I received a phone call that one of the democracy activists, Do Ba Tan, and his wife, Tran Khai Thanh Thuy, were beaten in front of their 13-year-old daughter and imprisoned by the Vietnamese Government and police. When I heard about it, I immediately called the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission in Vietnam, Virginia Palmer, and urged her to take action on this matter. Our U.S. Embassy in Vietnam responded by making inquiries about the 13-year-old daughter to make sure that she was being taken care of.

These actions are not the actions of a country that respects fundamental values and principles of human rights and democracy. A country that uses violence against its own citizens because

they decide to exercise their fundamental freedoms does not deserve to be a member of the World Trade Organization, nor do they have the right to be acting as the President of the United Nations Security Council, a position that Vietnam currently holds.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and yet they continue to detain and imprison their own citizens for using the Internet to promote democracy and human rights.

How can a country that blatantly disregards a U.N. declaration be allowed to act as the President of the Security Council? I believe that we, the United States, must take a stand against Vietnam's human rights violations. We are a beacon of freedom, of democracy, and it is our responsibility to speak out on behalf of those who have no voice.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. CAO), a member of the Homeland Security and Transportation Committees and the only Member of this body who was born in Vietnam.

Mr. CAO. I thank the gentleman from Arkansas.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 672, calling on the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to release imprisoned bloggers and respect Internet freedom.

It is vital that the United States take a bold stance against the tyranny of the Vietnamese Government and more effectively promote democracy there and throughout the world.

While the Vietnamese Government continues to control and stifle its citizens, this bill lays out very specific goals that will push for freedom of speech in Vietnam. It promotes the actions of the Vietnamese people who desire to have a say in government policy and actions. It will repeal statutes that restrict an individual's Internet usage and calls for the release of all political prisoners who have been incarcerated under the false pretenses of causing unrest and disturbance.

The Vietnamese Government fears these changes and continues to promote backward policies that restrict the Vietnamese people's basic freedoms. In the United States, we have been blessed with these rights. With these gifts comes great responsibility. It is necessary that we advocate on behalf of the Vietnamese citizens who simply hope for a better future.

We, as leaders of the most powerful democracy in the world, must not only pass this resolution, but we also must pass the Vietnam human rights bill. We must put Vietnam back on the CPC list. We must require Vietnam to pay the \$3.5 million in restitution that the High Court of American Samoa adjudicated 10 years ago. We must deny Vietnam the GSP status that it so desires until it improves its labor laws.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Members of the House support House Resolution 672.

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, and a very long-standing advocate for human rights in Vietnam.

Mr. ROYCE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

What brings us here today, of course, is this resolution, intended to address a longstanding problem but really brought to light again earlier this month when we had nine young bloggers in Vietnam, all of them convicted under Article 88 of the Government of Vietnam's statute, which the interpretation of Article 88 is in direct conflict with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which the Government of Vietnam is itself a signatory.

So what is happening is that Article 88 is now being used in Vietnam as just a tool to basically criminalize what they call propaganda against the state, but which is simply the free speech rights which are recognized everywhere else and to which Vietnam is a signatory to the agreement. It is being used to go after anyone who argues against the concept of a one-party state. So, if you get into the realm of religious liberty or you get into the realm of freedom of association, freedom of speech, you suddenly run afoul of this Article 88 and you find yourself facing a long prison term. That is why I rise in support of House Resolution 672, because what this bill does is call on the Government of Vietnam to release those imprisoned bloggers and basically to respect Internet freedom.

Mr. Speaker, the one-party Communist government in Hanoi is a serial human rights abuser. Citizens are denied basic rights, such as the right to freedom of religion, the right to freedom of speech. And like most despotic regimes, Hanoi seeks to censor all information that it deems in any way damaging to a one-party state.

As longtime dissident Dr. Nguyen Dan Que correctly stated some years ago, he said, "The state hopes to cling to power by brainwashing the Vietnamese people through stringent censorship and through its absolutist control over what information the public can receive."

These are the actions of a totalitarian tower that has no respect for the rights of the individual citizen. Those last words were mine.

□ 1245

Newspapers, television and radio stations remain under strict government control in Vietnam, of course. Now, with a greater percentage of the population seeking an alternative way to express itself, seeking a way to even

communicate in ideas, the government has dramatically stepped up its campaign to confront and to curtail the country's vigorous blogosphere because, in Vietnam, just like in the United States, the young Vietnamese really enjoy the ability to use the Internet to engage in a simple dialogue between each other with respect to ideas.

International press freedom groups rank Vietnam alongside China and Burma, right now today, as the riskiest countries for bloggers; and as you saw, human rights groups are increasingly speaking out about the violent nature of the crackdown in Vietnam on human rights.

As I have, there are those of us who have traveled to Vietnam. In the past, I met with the venerable Thich Quang Do, with Le Quang Liem and with others who have been involved in the issue of religious freedom. We saw the consequences of monks who had been beaten, some of whom had been killed. Certainly, many of them were under arrest for attempting to counter the state with respect to their assertion—Father Ly would be an example—that the state should not rewrite religious text.

For the Buddhist faith, this is a particular problem because the Communist Party in Vietnam is trying to change their faith by rewriting the text. The reason the venerable Thich Quang Do is under such pressure and is under such constant attack by the state is that he objects to this. He says religious freedom should exist in this society without control by the state.

Certainly, Bui Thanh Hieu and Pham Doan Trang would agree with this because these two bloggers were detained after writing in opposition to policies by the Vietnamese Government. Now, what were they writing about? They were writing about an environmental issue, about the new bauxite mining project in Vietnam's central highlands.

Chinese mining in this region has already caused severe environmental damage, and that damage comes at the sole expense of the local residents in this area because this is the area that grows much of the coffee, rubber and so forth in Vietnam. So, now, with the runoff from these mines and the way in which it's polluting the local lakes and the way in which it's killing off the vegetation, basically, you've created a no-man's area. It is absolutely incapable of supporting any crops in the future in much of this area.

Dieu Cay, another prominent blogger, also knows the lesson well, as he was sentenced to 2 years for running a series of articles, exposing what? Exposing government corruption.

Now we have another introduction of Chinese bauxite mining on top of what is already occurring that is going to cause further environmental damage in the central highlands. What you basically have is the state's cracking down in Vietnam, saying nobody can tell the people about what's happening to their land, that nobody can tell the people

about the health hazards to their children in this region as a result of the state's making this decision to invite the Chinese in to do this kind of bauxite mining.

Hanoi knows that its grip on power is shaky and that the ideas that these journalists spread carefully chip away at the monopoly on power which the state has. That's why they spend so much time trying to shut them out. The practice of detaining these bloggers for spreading ideas like freedom and democracy is very odious.

We are here today to call on the Communist Government to end this practice. That is what this resolution does. It calls on the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to release these imprisoned bloggers and to respect Internet freedom.

I urge my colleagues to support it.

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, having no more speakers on the subject, I again thank the gentlewoman from California for bringing this important resolution forward, which I very much support, that of freedom in Vietnam; and I urge my fellow Members to lend their support, also.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 672, Ms. SANCHEZ's resolution calling on the government of Vietnam to release imprisoned bloggers and respect Internet freedom.

The resolution draws attention to the Internet-restrictive practices of the government of Vietnam. Often, when we speak of the Internet repression of the Chinese or Iranian government, we forget that many other nations suffer under Internet-restrictive governments, including, according to Reporters Without Borders, Vietnam, Cuba, Burma, Egypt, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan. The Vietnamese government is one of the most repressive of these, and models its apparatus of repression on that of China. According to the State Department's 2009 Country Reports on Human Rights, the government of Vietnam:

... monitored e-mail, searched for sensitive key words, regulated Internet content, and blocked many Web sites with political or religious content that authorities deemed "offensive." ... Authorities continued to detain and imprison dissidents who used the Internet to publish ideas on human rights and political pluralism ... The government continued to use firewalls to block some Web sites that it deemed politically or culturally inappropriate, including sites affiliated with the Catholic Church, such as Vietcatholic.net and others operated by overseas Vietnamese political groups.

Mr. Speaker, this excellent resolution also calls on the government of Vietnam to release all imprisoned bloggers and cyber activists, and provides the names of 18 men and women known to be held as political prisoners due to their use of the Internet. I have visited former Vietnamese political prisoners, including Father Ly and have heard first-hand about what they suffer in those prisons. These men and women need our help, and Ms. SANCHEZ's resolution will afford them a measure of protection.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of Internet freedom becomes more urgent every year. In February

of 2006 I held a major hearing that revealed the involvement of U.S. companies in enabling the Chinese government's Internet censorship and surveillance. I then introduced legislation, the Global Online Freedom Act, which would prevent U.S. IT companies from enabling repressive governments' Internet censorship and surveillance. The legislation was blocked in two successive Congresses, while, sadly, the tempo of repression increased, and the technology of repression improved. We saw this in the Chinese government's repression of Tibetan protests last spring. The government blocked Yahoo! and the video-sharing site YouTube, and ramped up its blocking of international news sites. We saw it again in that government's repression of protests in Xinjiang in June of this year. Again the government cut off Internet and phone service, and actively removed and altered comments about the protests on numerous Internet fora and Web sites. Then in Iran, when great numbers of Iranians protested the Ahmadinejad government's stealing of the election, the government responded by cutting off Internet access as well as, with mixed success, to social-networking sites like Twitter and Facebook.

Now every time a repressive government crushes a protest movement, or a movement for freedom or democracy, it also engages in cyber-repression—the Internet is such a strong force for freedom that dictatorships and repressive government can hardly exist without cyber-repression. In recent years cyber-repression has emerged as no less than one of the most dangerous threats to human rights, freedom, and democracy.

Congress has an obligation to better address this issue and help those who are suffering under Internet-restrictive governments. I want to draw members' attention to three other bills which, like H. Res. 672, deserve our support: Mr. WU's H. Res. 590, expressing concerns about China's Green Dam filtering software; Mr. SHERMAN's HR 3284, prohibiting federal agencies from entering into procurement contracts with anyone who exports computer technology to Iran; and HR 2271, my own Global Online Freedom Act. All of these bills speak strongly, responsibly, and constructively to cyber-repression. The Global Online Freedom Act, in the last Congress, passed all of its committees and was ready for an up or down vote on the floor; I have improved the bill and re-introduced it in this Congress, and ask colleagues to consider sponsoring it.

I strongly support this resolution in support of the persecuted bloggers of Vietnam, and thank my friend for introducing it.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise here today in support of House Resolution 672, which calls for the release of imprisoned bloggers and Internet freedom in Vietnam.

It is estimated that over 20 million Vietnamese use the Internet to organize around environmental issues, blogger freedom, labor rights, and anti-corruption. Yet, in 2008, the Government of Vietnam launched a new entity—the Administration Agency for Radio, Television and Electronics Information—to restrict Internet freedom, censor private blogs, and compel information technology companies to cooperate with authorities.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted by the United Nations, UN, General Assembly. However, this move to censor the Internet by the Govern-

ment of Vietnam is an extension of Article 88 of the Penal Code which criminalizes free speech. All these restrictions violate the above international covenant.

Despite abundant evidence to the contrary, Vietnam has asserted that it has no "so-called 'prisoners of conscience'"; that no-one is arrested for criticizing the government, only for violating Vietnam's laws; that its national security laws "conform to international law"; and "there is no practice of torture or degrading treatment of law offenders and those under detention for investigative purposes."

Vietnam—a member of the U.N. Security Council—has made a charade of its engagement at the U.N. Human Rights Council. Vietnam rejected even the most benign recommendations based on the international covenants it has signed, such as allowing people to promote human rights or express their opinions. Despite Vietnam's denials that it arbitrarily arrests and imprisons peaceful government critics, human rights defenders, political bloggers, and independent church activists, the government has arrested scores more since May of this year.

Vietnam's ongoing arrests of peaceful dissidents and church activists—conducted even as the U.N. was evaluating its human rights record—shows its flagrant disregard for its international human rights obligations. Member states should deliver a clear message to Vietnam that it needs to uphold its international rights commitments.

This resolution provides us with a chance to rekindle our role as a human-rights advocate around the world. It can show Vietnamese citizens that we notice when their rights are restricted, when their freedom is limited, and when their voices are silenced. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this resolution. We have a moral responsibility to provide the Vietnamese with the same kind of freedoms we value in this country. And we have a moral responsibility to protect those who value what our men and women die for—freedom of speech.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 672, a bill which I am proud to cosponsor. Introduced by my good friend, colleague, and co-chair of the Vietnam Caucus, Representative LORETTA SANCHEZ, this legislation calls on the Vietnamese government to respect Internet freedom and to release a number of jailed pro-democracy activists.

I am deeply concerned about Vietnam's human rights record, which shows no signs of improving. Just last month at its United Nations Universal Periodic Review, Vietnam rejected 45 recommendations from member states, including the release of peaceful prisoners of conscience and to lift internet and blogging controls and prohibitions on privately-owned media.

This situation is unacceptable. We need to send a message to the Vietnamese government that the United States Congress does not condone its repression of free speech and democracy. Using anti-propaganda laws to silence opposition and maintain one-party control is not democracy and should not be tolerated.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. BOOZMAN. With that, 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. 672.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONDEMNING PERSECUTION OF BAHA'IS IN IRAN

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 175) condemning the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 175

Whereas in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2006, and 2008, Congress declared that it deplored the religious persecution by the Government of Iran of the Baha'i community and would hold the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all Iranian nationals, including members of the Baha'i faith;

Whereas in November 2007, the Iranian Ministry of Information in Shiraz jailed Baha'is Ms. Raha Sabet, 33, Mr. Sasan Taqva, 32, and Ms. Haleh Roohi, 29 for ostensibly "indirectly teaching the Baha'i Faith" and "engaging in anti-government propaganda" while educating underprivileged children and gave them 4-year prison terms, which they are serving;

Whereas Ms. Sabet, Mr. Taqva, and Ms. Roohi were targeted solely on the basis of their religion;

Whereas, on January 23, 2008, the United States Department of State released a statement urging the Iranian regime to release all individuals held without due process and a fair trial, including the 3 young Baha'is being held in an Iranian Ministry of Intelligence detention center in Shiraz;

Whereas in March and May of 2008, Iranian intelligence officials in Mashhad and Tehran arrested and imprisoned Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, and Mr. Vahid Tizfahm, the members of the coordinating group for the Baha'i community in Iran;

Whereas these seven leaders have been imprisoned for well over a year and are yet to stand trial, the trial having been delayed multiple times;

Whereas official Iranian media has announced they will face charges of "espionage for Israel, insulting religious sanctities and propaganda against the Islamic Republic";

Whereas these seven Baha'i leaders were targeted solely on the basis of their religion; and

Whereas the Government of Iran is party to the International Covenants on Human Rights: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights;

(2) calls on the Government of Iran to immediately release the seven leaders and all other prisoners held solely on account of their religion, including: Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, Mr. Vahid Tizfahm, Ms. Raha Sabet, Mr. Sasan Taqva, and Ms. Haleh Roohi; and

(3) calls on the President and Secretary of State, in cooperation with responsible nations, to immediately condemn Iran's continued violation of human rights and demand the immediate release of prisoners held solely on account of their religion, including Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, Mr. Vahid Tizfahm, Ms. Raha Sabet, Mr. Sasan Taqva, and Ms. Haleh Roohi.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) 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 may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to 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. I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I would like to thank my good friend, the gentleman from Illinois, Congressman MARK KIRK, for his leadership in introducing this important resolution.

H. Res. 175 condemns the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and of its continued violation of the international covenants on human rights.

Mr. Speaker, resolutions in support of the much persecuted Baha'i communities in the Middle East have a long and proud tradition in the House of Representatives and in the other body. While past resolutions have chronicled the abuse and harassment Baha'is have experienced in several Middle Eastern countries, nowhere is the situation as dire or does it require more urgent action than in Iran, where Baha'is are routinely arrested and face the death penalty.

Iran's Baha'i community forms that country's largest religious minority. It is difficult to know the exact number because Iran has banned communal Baha'i institutions since 1983, but it is estimated that they number over 300,000.

Since 1979, some 200 Baha'is have been executed, and thousands have been imprisoned. They have been systematically denied jobs, pensions, access to higher education, and the right

to inherit property. All Baha'i cemeteries, holy places and other community properties were seized soon after the 1979 revolution. Many sites of the greatest historical significance to the Baha'is have been destroyed, and the graves of Baha'is have been desecrated throughout the country.

In the spring of 2008, seven individuals who had been serving as leaders of the Baha'i community on an ad hoc basis were arrested and were put in Tehran's notorious Evin prison. Their trial date has been repeatedly postponed, and it is still unclear if and when they will face trial.

Official Iranian news agencies have reported that they are charged with espionage for Israel, insulting Islam and with propaganda against the Islamic republic. Family members have been informed of a fourth charge, that of spreading corruption on Earth. Some of these charges could carry the death penalty. The circumstances of this possible trial are particularly worrying because the Government of Iran has arrested and executed the Baha'i leadership on three previous occasions.

In addition to the seven Baha'i leaders, some 25 other Baha'is also remain in prison, including three young people in Shiraz who were arrested in 2006 for indirectly teaching the Baha'i faith and for engaging in antigovernment propaganda while merely carrying out a literacy program for underprivileged youth. These young people are currently serving 4-year sentences under very harsh conditions.

As the United States and the international community seek to engage Iran on the crucial issues of non-proliferation, we must not forget about the basic human rights of the Iranian people. International attention to the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran has been critical to preventing an even worse deterioration of their situation.

As large sections of the Iranian population are now being increasingly repressed and denied the opportunity to have a voice in their own country, it is crucial that others in the international community speak out on their behalf and support them. I urge all of my colleagues to support this important resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) for bringing forward this important resolution.

I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 175, which condemns the Iranian regime's continuing persecution of members of the Baha'i faith, Tehran's notoriously cruel regime, which for decades has denied the people of Iran their fundamental human rights and civil liberties.

While the most recent demonstration of the regime's brutality and authoritarianism was the crackdown in the aftermath of the June leadership selection process; for years, Iran has