

Washington, D.C. - In response to renewed tensions and unrest in Lebanon following the assassination of a Lebanese cabinet member, the House of Representatives today passed a resolution co-introduced by Reps. David Price (D-NC) and David Dreier (R-CA) condemning the terrorist act, and reaffirming the commitment of the United States to support and promote that country's democratic institutions.

Price is the Ranking Democratic Member of the House Democracy Assistance Commission (HDAC), and Dreier is currently the Chairman. Their Commission has partnered with the reform government of Lebanon in order to help build and promote its parliament. Price and Dreier traveled to Beirut with the Commission in July where they conferred with Lebanese political leaders, including the recently assassinated Industry Minister Pierre Amin Gemayel.

Price's floor speech on the bill and the text of the resolution as passed follow. The vote was 408 to 0 in favor of the resolution.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina: "Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and am proud to add my voice of commendation in support of House Resolution 1088, which I have cosponsored with the gentleman from California, chairman of the House Democracy Assistance Commission.

"In July, I traveled with the commission to Beirut to initiate a partnership with the Lebanese Parliament. While there, I had an opportunity to have lunch with Pierre Gemayel. I was struck then by his charismatic personality and his enthusiasm over the prospects for real reform in Lebanon.

"In many ways, Pierre Gemayel represented the promise of Lebanon's future. A strong advocate of democratic governance in Lebanon, he shook off the constraints of confessionalism to battle side by side with Christians, Sunni and Shia Muslims to guarantee Lebanon's sovereignty against the persisting threat of Syrian domination.

"Pierre Gemayel was named to lead the Industry Ministry in the wake of the Cedar Revolution demonstrations of March 14, 2005 and the subsequent national elections which brought to power a cross-sectarian coalition of pro-democracy politicians, determined to reform the Lebanese Government to make it strong and effective and to resist foreign domination.

"Our Nation celebrated the courage of the Lebanese people in registering their demand for democratic government in these elections, but we have not done enough since the elections to support the democratic institutions that leaders like Pierre Gemayel have worked to strengthen.

"This resolution before us sends a clear signal that the United States must do more to support these institutions if we hope to help the Lebanese people achieve their dreams.

"I thank my colleague, DAVID DRIER of California, for his strong leadership as chairman of our House Democracy Assistance Commission. This commission, as he has stated, has allowed Members of this body to work colleague to colleague to strengthen the Lebanese Parliament and other parliaments in emerging democracies. I look forward to joining with him in the next Congress to continue this important work.

"And I join my colleagues in expressing condolences to the Gemayel family and the people of Lebanon on their tragic loss. We must also acknowledge that Mr. Gemayel is but the latest in a succession of leaders recently martyred in Lebanon because of their fight for democracy, beginning with former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. We must fight to bring justice to the perpetrators of these crimes and to bring fulfillment to the goals these pro-democracy leaders have sought.

"Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the resolution and to support efforts to strengthen democratic institutions in Lebanon."

H. RES. 1088

Expressing support for Lebanon's democratic institutions and condemning the recent terrorist assassination of Lebanese parliamentarian and Industry Minister Pierre Amin Gemayel.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

December 5, 2006

Mr. DREIER (for himself and Mr. PRICE)

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for Lebanon's democratic institutions and condemning the recent terrorist assassination of Lebanese parliamentarian and Industry Minister Pierre Amin Gemayel.

Whereas on November 21, 2006 Pierre Gemayel, a Member of the March 14 parliamentary coalition, was assassinated in New Jdeidé, north of Beirut, Lebanon;

Whereas a series of targeted attacks and killings of public leaders working to promote democracy and autonomy in Lebanon has placed a heavy toll on Lebanon's intellectual and democratic freedoms;

Whereas the prosecution by the proposed International Independent Investigation Commission of persons accused in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri could deter future assassinations;

Whereas Pierre Gemayel was born on September 24, 1972 into a prominent Lebanese family;

Whereas Pierre Gemayel was first elected to the Lebanese Parliament in 2000;

Whereas Pierre Gemayel was named Minister of Industry in the Lebanese Government in 2005;

Whereas Amine Gemayel, the father of Pierre Gemayel and former President of Lebanon, has urged the Phalange party supporters and all Lebanese citizens to promote cooperation and solidarity and hamper attempts to instigate civil strife;

Whereas, on November 21, 2006, following Pierre Gemayel's assassination, President George W. Bush stated that "the United States remains fully committed to supporting Lebanon's independence and democracy in the face of attempts by Syria, Iran, and their allies within Lebanon to foment instability and violence";

Whereas supporting the development of democratic institutions in Lebanon is critical to promoting the interests of the United States in the Middle East region, building upon the momentum of the March 14, 2005 "Cedar Revolution," fighting terrorism, and supporting negotiations for peace in the region; and

Whereas the House Democracy Assistance Commission has worked in partnership with the Lebanese Parliament to strengthen its institutional capacity, and met with Pierre Gemayel during the Commission's delegation to Lebanon in July 2006: Now, therefore be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives--

(1) Expresses its condolences for this heinous crime to the people of Lebanon and to the members of Lebanon's Cabinet in which Pierre Gemayel served with distinction;

(2) Affirms its support for the international tribunal to try suspects in the 2005 assassination of

former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri;

(3) Urges that the perpetrators of the assassination of Pierre Gemayel be brought to justice;

(4) Conveys concern regarding the increasing polarization of Lebanon's religious sects and calls on the Government of Lebanon to actively pursue electoral reform as a first step in reducing confessional tensions;

(5) Recognizes that a regional peace in the Middle East will greatly contribute to Lebanon's long-term security and stability; and

(6) Reaffirms the commitment of the United States to support and promote the development of autonomous, effective democratic institutions in Lebanon, including an independent Parliament and a strong central government that represent and serve the interests of the Lebanese people.

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