

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 396

Rep. Kuppa offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to recognize the Bangladesh Genocide of 1971.

2 Whereas, In August 1947, British rule in India ended, creating
3 the two independent sovereign countries of India and Pakistan, the
4 latter of which included the noncontiguous regions of West Pakistan
5 (Pakistan) and East Pakistan (Bangladesh), also known as East
6 Bengal; and

7 Whereas, The Pakistani ruling elite was comprised
8 overwhelmingly of West Pakistanis who concentrated the country's
9 resources and development efforts in West Pakistan to the detriment
10 of East Pakistan's development; and

11 Whereas, West Pakistani officials harbored well-documented
12 anti-Bengali sentiment and considered Bengalis to be a lesser

1 people group that had been corrupted by un-Islamic practices; and

2 Whereas, During elections held in 1970, the Awami League, led
3 by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won a majority in Parliament on a
4 platform of autonomy for East Pakistan; and

5 Whereas, Negotiations to form a government between Pakistani
6 President, General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto
7 leader of the Pakistan People's Party, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
8 failed; and

9 Whereas, At a meeting on February 22, 1971, General Yahya Khan
10 is recorded as saying to his top military brass "[k]ill 3 million
11 of them and the rest will eat out of our hands"; and

12 Whereas, On the night of March 25, 1971, the Government of
13 Pakistan imprisoned Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Pakistani military
14 units, in conjunction with radical Islamist groups, began a general
15 crackdown throughout East Pakistan code-named "Operation
16 Searchlight" that involved widespread massacres of civilians; and

17 Whereas, Atrocities continued during the ensuing nine month
18 Bangladesh War of Independence as the Pakistani military
19 scapegoated ethnic Bengalis and Hindus and targeted supporters of
20 the Awami League, Bengali military or police personnel,
21 intellectuals, students, and professionals, while victims included
22 members of both majority (Bengali Muslim) and minority (non-Muslim)
23 communities; and

24 Whereas, The genocide against ethnic Bengalis and Hindus is
25 one of the forgotten genocides of the 20th century and its lack of
26 recognition remains an open wound for millions of people who were
27 directly affected by the atrocities; and

28 Whereas, Estimates of the number of those killed in these
29 atrocities vary, with the Government of Bangladesh estimating that

1 3,000,000 persons were killed; and

2 Whereas, Over 200,000 women were raped. Due to stigma, the
3 full number will likely never be known nor the victims remembered;
4 and

5 Whereas, As a result of the atrocities and the war, nearly
6 10,000,000 refugees fled to India. Countless others, up to 50
7 percent of Bangladesh's population, were internally displaced; and

8 Whereas, The Government and people of India magnanimously
9 cared for the refugees until the culmination of hostilities; and

10 Whereas, In a seminal column on June 13, 1971, for The Sunday
11 Times, titled "Genocide", journalist Anthony Mascarenhas wrote "It
12 seems clear that the 'sorting out' began to be planned about the
13 time that Lt.-Gen. Tikka Khan took over the governorship of East
14 Bengal." And continues "When the army units fanned out in Dacca on
15 the evening of March 25, in pre-emptive strikes against the mutiny
16 planned for the small hours of the next morning many of them
17 carried lists of people to be liquidated. These included the Hindus
18 and large numbers of Muslims; students, Awami Leaguers, professors,
19 journalists and those who had been prominent in Sheik Mujib's
20 movement."; and

21 Whereas, On March 28, 1971, Archer Blood, the United States
22 Consul General of Dacca, sent a telegram to Washington titled
23 "Selective Genocide" in which he wrote "Moreover, with support of
24 Pak military, non-Bengali Muslims are systematically attacking poor
25 people's quarters and murdering Bengalis and Hindus. Streets of
26 Dacca are a flood with Hindus and others seeking to get out of
27 Dacca. Many Bengalis have sought refuge in homes of Americans, most
28 of whom are extending shelter."; and

29 Whereas, On April 6, 1971, in what became known as the "Blood

1 Telegram", Consul General Blood sent by way of the State
2 Department's dissent channel an objection to official United States
3 Government silence on the conflict signed by 20 members of the
4 United States diplomatic staff of Consulate General Dacca which
5 reads in part "But we have chosen not to intervene, even morally,
6 on the grounds that the Awami conflict, in which unfortunately the
7 overworked term genocide is applicable, is purely internal matter
8 of a sovereign state. Private Americans have expressed disgust."
9 and in which objection Blood concurs stating "I believe the views
10 of these officers, who are among the finest U.S. officials in East
11 Pakistan, are echoed by the vast majority of the American
12 community, both official and unofficial. I also subscribe to these
13 views but I do not think it appropriate for me to sign their
14 statement as long as I am principal officer at this post."; and

15 Whereas, On April 8, 1971, Consul General Blood sent another
16 telegram which states in part "'Genocide' applies fully to [this]
17 naked, calculated and widespread selection of Hindus for special
18 treatment ... From outset various members of American community have
19 witnessed either burning down of Hindu villages, Hindu enclaves in
20 Dacca and shooting of Hindus attempting [to] escape carnage, or
21 have witnessed after-effects which [are] visible throughout Dacca
22 today.";

23 Whereas, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate
24 Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee To Investigate the Problems
25 Connected with Refugees and Escapees published a report to the
26 Committee on November 1, 1971, which states "Nothing is more clear,
27 or more easily documented, than the systematic campaign of terror-
28 and its genocidal consequences-launched by the Pakistan army on the
29 night of March 25th. Field reports to the U.S. Government,

1 countless eye-witness journalistic accounts, reports of
2 international agencies such as the World Bank, and additional
3 information available to the Subcommittee document the continuing
4 reign of terror which grips East Bengal. Hardest hit have been
5 members of the Hindu community who have been robbed of their lands
6 and shops, systematically slaughtered, and, in some places, painted
7 with yellow patches marked 'H'. All of this has been officially
8 sanctioned, ordered and implemented under martial law from
9 Islamabad."; and

10 Whereas, The war ended on December 16, 1971, and Bangladesh
11 became an independent country; and

12 Whereas, In a legal study published in 1972 titled "The Events
13 in East Pakistan", the Secretariat of the International Commission
14 of Jurists states "There is overwhelming evidence that Hindus were
15 slaughtered, and their houses and villages destroyed simply because
16 they were Hindus."; and

17 Whereas, In 1994, reflecting on his time covering the war, New
18 York Times correspondent Sydney Schamberg wrote "Later I toured the
19 country by road to see the Pakistani legacy firsthand. In town
20 after town there was an execution area where people had been killed
21 by bayonet, bullet and bludgeon. In some towns, executions were
22 held on a daily basis ... This was a month after the war's end (i.e.,
23 January 1972), ... human bones were still scattered along many
24 roadsides. Blood-stained clothing and tufts of human hair clung to
25 the brush at these killing grounds. Children too young to
26 understand were playing grotesque games with skulls. Other
27 reminders were the yellow 'H's the Pakistanis had painted on the
28 homes of Hindus, particular targets of the Muslim army."; and

29 Whereas, In its "Declaration in Commemoration of the 50th

1 Anniversary of the Bangladesh Genocide" United States
2 nongovernmental organization Genocide Watch states "Throughout the
3 nine months of their anti-independence occupation of East Pakistan,
4 the Pakistani Military Forces persecuted, tortured, and murdered
5 representatives of Bengali culture and identity, including poets,
6 musicians, professors, journalists, physicians, scientists,
7 writers, and film makers."; and

8 Whereas, The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and
9 Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, signed in Paris on December 9,
10 1948, declares that genocide "means any of the following acts
11 committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a
12 national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing
13 members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to
14 members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group
15 conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical
16 destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to
17 prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of
18 the group to another group." and "The following acts shall be
19 punishable: genocide; conspiracy to commit genocide; direct and
20 public incitement to commit genocide; attempt to commit genocide;
21 complicity in genocide."; and

22 Whereas, United States nongovernmental organizations Genocide
23 Watch and the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention have sought
24 international recognition of the atrocities committed by the Armed
25 Forces of Pakistan as genocide; and

26 Whereas, It is of the utmost importance to recall and document
27 crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide for the sake of
28 posterity, to preserve the memory of the victims, and to deter
29 future atrocities; now, therefore, be it

1 Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the members of
2 this legislative body recognize the Bangladesh Genocide of 1971. We
3 condemn the atrocities committed by the Armed Forces of Pakistan
4 against the people of Bangladesh from March 1971 to December 1971;
5 recognize that such atrocities against ethnic Bengalis and Hindus
6 constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide;
7 recall the death and suffering of the countless victims of such
8 atrocities and express deep sympathy for the suffering; and
9 recognize that entire ethnic groups or religious communities are
10 not responsible for the crimes committed by their members