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House of Representatives

Urging German Financial Support to Medical Care for Holocaust Survivors

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey... Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 129, urging the Federal Republic of Germany to further fulfill its commitment to support the welfare of Holocaust survivors by ensuring that they receive the medical, mental health, and long-term care they require.

In 1952, the West German government concluded an agreement with representatives from major Jewish national and international organizations and the State of Israel to provide indemnification and restitution directly to survivors of the Holocaust. This agreement reflected an overdue but basic recognition at the time by many, including then-German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer who saw such restitution as, quote, “easing the way to the spiritual settlement of infinite suffering.”

Mr. Speaker, that infinite suffering inflicted by the genocidal Nazi regime continues to this day. It is a daily reality for the aging survivors of that infamous crime who live with the mental and sometimes physical consequences of being tortured and abused.

There are over 500,000 Holocaust survivors living around the world today, and over 100,000 live here in the United States—witnesses to both the stunning evil and miraculous resilience of which humanity is capable.

Their quiet presence in our midst is a treasure seldom sufficiently cherished. Today, as they age,

they are increasingly in need of support and assistance that will allow them to live their remaining days with access to quality care and the peace that comes with it.

Mr. Speaker, I support H. Con. Res 129 because I think it is right that the Federal Republic of Germany deliver direct support to Holocaust survivors to guarantee that they live the rest of their lives with the dignity, comfort, and security that was deprived them decades ago.

The resolution calls on the German government to make every effort—whether through direct assistance or negotiated arrangements—to support the medical, mental health, and long-term care needs of Holocaust victims.

This support would be fully consistent with the German government’s longstanding commitment to Holocaust survivors and it cannot wait.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, to also note the important steps already taken by the Federal Republic of Germany and the tremendous efforts and achievements it has made in making amends for the genocide committed under the Nazi dictatorship. H. Con. Res. 129 urges Germany to continue on this path and as such deserves our support in the House.

Finally, I would like to thank my friend and colleague Rep. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, for introducing this laudable resolution.