Mr.

Speaker, I join my colleague, the gentleman

from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), in

speaking out for equality, equal opportunity,

freedom of choice, and freedom

to live. There was once a time when

these words were only meaningful to

men. However, more than 50 years ago,

the universal declaration of human

rights declared once and for all the

principle of equality for women and

men around the world. Then why is it

that in the year 2000, the beginning of

the year and the decade of hope and advancement

and greater opportunity

that there is an entire population of

women who still live in constant fear

and violent oppression?

Since 1996, the Taliban, an extremist

militia, has seized control of 90 percent

of Afghanistan and then unilaterally

declared an end to women’s basic

human rights. Women are banished

from working, girls are not allowed to

attend school beyond the eighth grade,

women are beaten for not fully covering

themselves, including their eyes

and ankles. Women and girls are not

allowed to go out into public without

being covered from head to toe with a

heavy and cumbersome garment and

escorted by a close male relative.

Women are not allowed to seek health

care, even in emergency situations,

from male doctors. The Taliban has allowed

some women to practice medicine,

but women must do so fully covered

and in sectioned-off special wards.

And even these services are only available

in very few select locations, leaving

women to die from otherwise treatable

diseases.

A 16-year-old girl was stoned to death

because she went out in public with a

man who was not her family member.

A woman who was teaching girls in her

home was also stoned to death in front

of her husband, children, and students.

An elderly woman was beaten, breaking

her leg, because she exposed an

ankle. These are atrocious actions and

they are real. They are happening now.

They will continue tomorrow as long

as the extremist Taliban government is

still in control.

The restriction on women’s freedom

in Afghanistan is not understandable

to most Americans. Women and girls

cannot venture outside without a

burqa, a heavy and expensive restrictive

garment, that covers the entire

body, including mesh over the eyes.

For some women, not having the

means to afford and purchase this expensive

garment will banish them to

their homes for the rest of their lives.

The effects of this decree have been

severe. Many Afghan women are widows

and have no means of income because

they cannot work. And unless

they have a close male member in their

family, they have no access to society

for food, for their families and for

themselves.

It is no wonder that under these conditions,

the Feminist Majority Foundation

reports that the Physicians for

Human Rights found that 97 percent of

Afghan women show signs of major depression.

I join my colleague, the gentleman

from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), in condemning

the Taliban regime. We must

continue to speak out against the

Taliban, on behalf of the women and

girls that risk death for speaking out

for themselves.

We must not accept the Taliban as a legitimate

government.

We must send a strong and clear message

that gender apartheid is unacceptable and a

gross violation of the most basic human rights.

Afghanistan may be physically located on

the other side of the world, but the voices of

the women and girls suffering there are heard

loud and clear here.

I urge my colleagues to continue their support

of the women and girls in Afghanistan by

cosponsoring my resolution, H. Res. 187, to

prevent any Taliban led government from obtaining

a seat in the United Nations, and refused

any attempt to recognize any Afghan

government, while gross violations of human

rights persist against women and girls.

In closing, I want to share with you an excerpt

from a poem written by Zieba Shorish-

Shamley called ‘‘A poem dedicated to my Afghan

Sisters’’:

To the women of Afghanistan I say, we remember

you, we will not forget you, we will

fight for you!