Mr. Speaker, last week this House voted to end the

occupation of Iraq. Some of those who opposed that action argued that

bringing our troops home out of Iraq will increase the violence there

and perhaps even lead to a humanitarian catastrophe. But what they

forget, or choose to ignore, is that a humanitarian catastrophe has

already occurred in Iraq. It is getting worse every day. That

catastrophe includes the refugee crisis in that devastated nation.

Last week the United States Committee for Refugees reported that the

number of refugees in the world rose last year to its highest level

since 2001. One of the main reasons was the great exodus from Iraq. All

told, more than 2 million Iraqis have been forced to flee their

country. Close to 2 million more have been displaced internally. That

is a total, Mr. Speaker, of 4 million refugees, 50 percent of whom are

children, and tens of thousands more are leaving every single month.

Many of the refugees are in dire straits. Recently United Nations

inspectors visited one refugee camp and found more than 2,000 people

living in tents. They had no clothes except for the clothes on their

backs. They had no medical care. They had no drinkable water. They had

no toilets. Many of the children had typhoid and other illnesses and

were living among snakes and scorpions.

Sweden, to its great credit, is accepting more than 1,000 refugees

every month. The population of Sweden is only 9 million people. The

United States, with a population of 300 million, accepted only 202 last

year. Not 202,000, but 202. We have accepted only somewhere around 700

since our occupation of Iraq began.

That is a disgraceful record. Every Member of this House should feel

ashamed. That goes for all of us; those who support the war and those

who oppose it. We may disagree about policy, but surely we can agree

that we have a moral obligation to do more about a terrible refugee

problem that our occupation has created. After all, many of the

refugees have had to flee because they cooperated with our troops in

the first place, or they cooperated with American contractors. We can't

turn our backs on them now.

That is why I am urging all of my colleagues to support H.R. 2265,

the Responsibility to Iraq Refugees Act of 2007, sponsored by

Representative Blumenauer along with Representative Shays and

Representative Schakowsky.

I especially challenge those Members who want our occupation of Iraq

to continue to support this bill. Don't just warn us about a

humanitarian crisis. Do something about the one that already exists.

The bill would provide special immigrant status to 15,000 Iraqis

every year for 4 years. The bill would also provide a safe haven for at

least 20,000 more Iraqis, including children, who have been left all

alone in the world. Giving these young people a chance in life is not

only honorable, it is smart because these impoverished children could

become prime targets for recruitment by terrorists.

To me, this bill represents the true heart of America, the good and

caring heart that has compassion for the people of the world. But our

leaders do not seem to share this compassion. Recently, for example,

former U.N. Ambassador John Bolton denied that the United States has

any responsibility

for the refugee crisis. He said,

This is the kind of arrogance, Mr. Speaker, that has destroyed

America's reputation and credibility around the world. We must reclaim

our moral leadership. We can start by helping the Iraqi refugees. It's

the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do as we bring our

troops home.