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S. RES. 109

Commending the bravery of the girls who attend the Mirwais School for Girls in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 22, 2009

Mr. CRAPO (for himself, Mr. LUGAR, and Mr. RISCH) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Commending the bravery of the girls who attend the Mirwais School for Girls in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Whereas, on November 12, 2008, 15 girls who attend the Mirwais School for Girls in Kandahar, Afghanistan, were attacked by militants and sprayed with acid, causing them varying degrees of disfigurement;

Whereas the militants committed the egregious attack to intimidate the girls and their families and to discourage the girls from continuing to attend school;

Whereas, less than one week after the attacks, Headmaster Mahmood Qadari asked parents to return the girls to school;

Whereas, by January 14, 2009, nearly 1,300 girls, almost all the students, had returned to the 40-room Mirwais School for Girls;

Whereas the families of the girls from the Mirwais School for Girls defy threats of personal harm and staunchly assert the right to educate their daughters;

Whereas, according to the United Nations, educating girls and women reduces the incidence of domestic and community violence and raises the standard of living in a country;

Whereas, according to a study published by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, it is a “fact that child marriage takes place in a frequent and pervasive fashion” in Afghanistan;

Whereas, according to that study, of women surveyed for the study, 43.6 percent stated that they married to solve their economic problems, 7.1 percent referred to the resolution of conflicts as the reason for their early marriage, 37 percent said that “badal”, or the exchange of girls between 2 families, was the reason for their marriage, and 12.3 percent cited other reasons for their marriage, such as local traditional practices and parental interference;

Whereas, according to 2007 information from the World Health Organization, the health of women and children in Afghanistan is among the worst in the world;

Whereas, according to estimates from the Department of State for 2008, the literacy rate for women in Afghanistan is 12 percent;

Whereas it is a continuing priority of the United States government to advance the rights of women in Afghanistan by facilitating women’s participation in social, political,

and economic affairs and by ensuring women's safety and well-being;

Whereas the United States Government looks to the government of Afghanistan to proactively support the rights of women and girls, and recognizes that the recently-passed personal security law would severely diminish such rights;

Whereas the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has integrated women-focused activities into most of its programs by strategic design, with the goal of increasing women's political participation and access to education, health care, economic opportunities, and roles in civil society;

Whereas USAID has noted that, despite women's nearly non-existent access to health, education, and political participation in 2001, there has been a 25 percent decrease in maternal mortality since 2001, due in great part to women's significantly improved access to health and hospital services;

Whereas, since 2001, Afghanistan has experienced a surge in school attendance to more than 6,000,000 children enrolled, of which 35 percent are girls, and has greatly increased participation of women in civil society, with women representing 26 percent of the civil service and holding 27 percent of the seats in the national assembly and 29 percent of provincial council seats; and

Whereas, despite significant gains made through assistance programs in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban government in 2001, there remains a great deal more work to be done toward achieving reasonable development in still one of the poorest countries in the world, and such development can be achieved only by empowering

the 50 percent of the population that is women: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) recognizes and commends the extraordinary
3 bravery shown by the girls and families of the
4 Mirwais School for Girls in Kandahar, Afghanistan,
5 especially the girls injured in the November 2008 at-
6 tack, in the decision to return to school in the face
7 of threats of bodily injury, or worse; and

8 (2) continues to support efforts to decrease illit-
9 eracy and gender-based violence in Afghanistan.

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