

April 28, 1999

STATEMENT OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY (D-IL)

WASHINGTON, D.C. "The systematic campaign of brutality by Slobodan Milosevic has forced the United States and NATO to take forceful action. As the human tragedies mount a growing number of refugees existing in desperate conditions, families being ripped apart, torture, rape and murder the House considered important measures about how the United States should proceed.

"I joined my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in supporting H.R. 1569 to assert the Constitutional authority of Congress. We made it clear that the President cannot commit the United States military to a ground war without the explicit consent of Congress. The House today made it clear that the President must first receive the approval of Congress should the nature of the mission require a shift in military operations. At this time, the President and his military advisors have not signaled a change in the current strategy of air strikes, but if and when they do, I want the opportunity to vote on whether or not it is in fact necessary to deploy ground troops to end the genocide.

"I cast a vote in favor of Senate Concurrent Resolution 21 explicitly authorizing the President to conduct military air operations and missile strikes in Yugoslavia. By doing so, I put myself firmly on record in support of the United States and our NATO allies in this moral struggle to rescue the victims of ethnic cleansing and to put an end to such atrocities. As an American who believes in freedom and a Jew who remembers the lessons of the Holocaust, I could do no less.

"Even as we engage in these air strikes, the United States must place the highest priority on exploring and implementing all diplomatic options to end the conflict and to redouble our commitment to humanitarian relief."