

pounds of food from Campbell's Soup. Since the "Stamp Out Hunger" program's inception nearly 400 million pounds of food have been collected and distributed to hundreds of local food banks and pantries. The food drive comes at a critical time to help food banks and pantries restock their bare shelves that have emptied from the winter months.

I commend the thousands of letter carriers and the millions of postal customers that contributed to the success of this year's "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive. These individuals can should be proud knowing that their contributions will make a difference.

RECOGNIZING ANN BANCROFT

HON. BILL LUTHER

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 16, 2001

Mr. LUTHER. Mr. Speaker, my home state of Minnesota is proud of its strong and historic pioneer spirit. The often-brutal winters of Minnesota that early inhabitants endured, however, are no match for the icy tundra of Antarctica, recently traversed by a woman from Scandia, Minnesota.

Ann Bancroft is the first woman ever to cross the ice to the North and South Poles. She dogsledded 1,000 miles to the North Pole as the only female member of the Steger Expedition and led the 67-day American Women's Expedition to the South Pole on skis. Not content with these outstanding achievements, she also founded and led the nonprofit Ann Bancroft Foundation, dedicated to celebrating the successes of women and girls.

In the true spirit of a pioneer, Ms. Bancroft not only crossed geographic boundaries, but she traveled across gender barriers as well to become an inspiration for women and girls around the globe. Her work continues to celebrate the potential and the victories of women every day. I want to take this opportunity to recognize Ann Bancroft for her bravery not only to go where no woman has gone before, but also for encouraging young women to reach for their own dreams.

HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS IN KAZAKHSTAN

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 16, 2001

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the lamentable human rights situation in Kazakhstan. On April 4, in a meeting with Kanat Saudabaev, Kazakhstan's new Ambassador to Washington, I welcomed his desire for cooperation and his willingness to improve his country's image, but I emphasized that Kazakhstan's reputation has indeed been badly tarnished and that concrete actions, not implausible pledges of democratization, were necessary. Considering the recent political trends in that important Central Asian country, I would like to share with my colleagues a number of the concerns I raised with Ambassador Saudabaev.

As a Washington Post editorial pointed out on May 1, President Nursultan Nazarbaev has

recently been intensifying his longstanding campaign of repression against the political opposition, independent media, and civil society. Especially alarming is the escalation in the level of brutality. In the last few months, several opposition activists have been assaulted. Platon Pak of the "Azamat" Party was stabbed on February 7. Fortunate to survive, he said his attackers told him to "deliver their message to the head of his political party." On March 1, Ms. Gulzhan Yergalieva, the Deputy Head of the opposition "People's Congress of Kazakhstan" and a well-known journalist, was—along with her husband and son—attacked and robbed in her home. Prior to these incidents, both opposition parties strongly criticized the Kazakh Government's running of an electoral reform working group. In late February, Alexandr Shushannikov, the chairman of the East Kazakhstan branch of the "Lad" Slavic Movement, was beaten by unknown assailants in the town of Ust-Kamenogorsk.

Less violent harassment of the opposition has continued unabated. Amirzhan Kosanov, the Acting Head of the Executive Committee of the opposition Republican People's Party of Kazakhstan (RNPK), found threatening graffiti in the stairwells of his apartment building, on the doors of his apartment, and on neighboring buildings on March 17. Later that night, hooligans threw rocks at the windows of the apartment of Almira Kusainova, the RNPK's Press Secretary. In one case, a large rock shattered one of the windows.

To add insult to injury, Mr. Kosanov has been barred from leaving Kazakhstan. He is the former Press Secretary of Akezhan Kazhegeldin, Kazakhstan's former Prime Minister and now the exiled head of the RNPK. Claiming Mr. Kosanov had access to "state secrets," the authorities have confiscated his passport—even though he had left Kazakhstan many times before. To round out the campaign against Mr. Kosanov, a series of articles and reports in pro-government media have accused him of adultery and pedophilia.

In addition, Pyotr Afanassenko and Satzhan Ibrayev, two RNPK members who were Mr. Kazhegeldin's bodyguards, were sentenced in April 2000 to three years in prison for a weapons offense; an appeals court upheld the convictions. The OSCE Center in Almaty has stated that it considers the charges to be political in nature. Moreover, these two individuals, as former members of the security forces, should be in special prisons instead of being incarcerated among the general prison population, where they are in danger.

Along with the targeting of opposition activists, the ongoing crackdown on freedom of the press has continued. Most media outlets have long been under the direct or indirect control of members of the president's family, leaving independent and opposition media under constant pressure and at serious risk. After the opposition weekly XX1st Century printed articles last October about alleged corruption by President Nazarbaev, the publication's editor, Bigeldy Gabdullin, was charged with "harming the honor and dignity of the President." On April 3, Yermurat Bapi, editor of the opposition weekly SolDat, was convicted of "publicly insulting the dignity and honor of the President." The court also ordered that the print run of SolDat in which the offending article appeared be destroyed.

Mr. Bapi, who was sentenced to one year in jail and ordered to pay \$280 in court ex-

penses, was immediately pardoned under a presidential amnesty. Still, his conviction remains on the books, which will prevent him from traveling abroad, among other restrictions. Mr. Bapi is appealing the verdict. As for Mr. Gabdullin, the prosecutor's office issued a press release on April 6 stating that it had dropped the case against him due to "the absence of [a] crime," although his newspaper has not yet received formal confirmation.

While both editors are currently at liberty, as the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) points out, their newspapers cannot publish in Kazakhstan because local printers will not risk angering local officials. In an April 17 letter to President Nazarbaev, CPJ concluded that "we remain deeply concerned about your government's frequent use of politically-motivated criminal charges to harass opposition journalists" and called on him "to create an atmosphere in which all journalists may work without fear of reprisal."

Apart from intimidating individual journalists and publications, Kazakhstan's authorities have taken legal action to restrict freedom of speech. The country's Senate on April 17 approved a draft media law that limits the retransmission of foreign programs and will also subject Internet web pages to the same controls as print media. Moreover, media outlets can be held responsible for news not obtained from official sources. In other words, if the New York Times or CNN runs stories Kazakhstan's leadership finds distasteful, Kazakh media outlets risk legal sanction for re-running those reports. Considering the ongoing investigations by the U.S. Department of Justice into high-level corruption in Kazakhstan, it is easy to draw inferences about what kinds of stories the authorities would eagerly spike. Indeed, although Mr. Gabdullin and Bapi were formally prosecuted for articles in their newspapers, both had also previously signed an open letter, published in the January 15 edition of Roll Call, expressing their support for the investigation.

Mr. Speaker, Kazakh authorities have also stepped up harassment of NGOs. The OSCE Center in Almaty, the Washington-based National Democratic Institute (NDI), and Internews-Kazakhstan had jointly organized public forums in 9 regions of Kazakhstan to educate local citizens, media, and interested parties about the proposed amendments to the media law. After the law's passage, local organizers of these Forums on Mass Media were called in to the Procuracy for "conversations." Other government agencies which took part in this intimidation were the Tax Police and the Financial Police.

According to OSCE sources, the authorities offered local NGOs "friendly" advice about not working with the OSCE and NDI. In Atyrau, one NGO contacted by the Financial Police did not even participate in these forums but that did not stop the police from sending a written request for information on "whether or not your organization had contacts with the OSCE or NDI in 2000–2001." Clearly, the authorities are singling out NGOs which maintain contacts with the OSCE and NDI and warning them about the possible consequences. In some instances, the authorities have made good on the implied threat and opened tax investigations into NGOs, seizing their documents and even computers, as happened in Almaty and Karaganda. This campaign is a blatant attack on the activities of the OSCE, of